

Teaching *from* Zion

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

MODERN *-ism*

THE DEATH OF OUR SOCIETY

"But the counsel of Adonai stands forever"
Psalm 33:11



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

Shalom Dear Friends,

July officially marks the start of summer vacation here in Israel, and for most years that means millions of children are out of school for two months, many of whom attend summer camps or go on family vacations, but for most Israeli families, it means trying to figure out how to watch their children since, in 90% of Israeli families, both parents work. This year, due to the COVID pandemic restrictions, schools taught via Zoom (online learning over the internet) resulting in many children not learning as much as is required in order to proceed to the next grade, not to mention the emotional challenges that the children faced. Therefore, the government has decided to continue the school year into July with a summer school program, which, in the past, was only until the age of 8 and was more of an educational babysitting program but now is meant to aid children in catching up as needed (while also providing the aforementioned babysitting).

Yet not everything is improving COVID-wise; a new strain of COVID, the Delta strain, is spreading through the population here. The government has already reintroduced the requirement to wear a mask indoors and is considering implementing once again some of the other former restrictions, such as a limit on the number of people indoors, especially younger people, who are as of yet mostly unvaccinated.

I am pleased to share with you that our food distribution program Hamotzi keeps serving and blessing the needy families of Jerusalem. Each and every week, our families come to us to receive food, and we are glad once again to be able to set up chairs and tables for them with coffee and cookies to have a friendly conversation with them which we so missed during the COVID restrictions.

The Munchkins Youth group is meeting again; the first meeting this month started with Go-Karting and will likely continue with Bowling or mountain hiking. The children that gather together are from many congregations in the Jerusalem area, and we encourage this inter-congregational socializing as we are all one body. It is good for them to have friends from all over to support them as they grow up here in the Land.

International travel is still not back to its pre-COVID stability, but we hope that as the crisis lessens worldwide, it will improve. But in the meantime, Joseph is teaching almost daily via the internet, and Yehuda is releasing weekly teachings from the TV station SHELANU.

There are other projects in the works, but for now, this letter has dragged out long enough, and I cannot stress enough that without your support—your faithfulness—none of this would be possible. It is our honor to partner with you in doing God's work in Jerusalem and around the world.

Gratefully,

Daniel Stern

ABORTION IN ISRAEL

By Sandy Shoshani

Last week, I sat in the child welfare department with a young woman, 33 weeks pregnant, who wanted to give her baby up for adoption. This is a rare occurrence in Israel because adoption is not a popular concept here. When we speak to women about this option, they typically get angry and let us know that they would prefer to abort. The boyfriend of this particular young woman would still prefer that she abort, saying “then I wouldn’t wonder where the baby is.”

At one point in the conversation, the social worker said, “Earlier on, you could have aborted. It’s your body and your choice.” A year prior, the young woman did have an abortion. She well knew the pain, shame, and guilt of that choice. She told the social worker that she “couldn’t do that again, not to this baby, too.”

“My body, my choice,” is commonly heard by proponents of abortion, calling themselves “pro-choice.” Experience tells that us that a woman in crisis pregnancy feels that she has “no choice.” Threats that her husband will leave her, her boyfriend will not support her, her parents will kick her out of the house, an empty bank account, or a million other fears and problems cause her to panic when she discovers her pregnancy. Being in a crisis—when a woman feels alone and unsupported—an unplanned pregnancy can be daunting.

Every woman has the right to decide about her body and should use that right to protect herself from poor choices and heartbreaking situations. Once pregnant, we are talking about two different individuals: the mother and the child.

An unborn child (fetus) has his own DNA

and gene pool from conception. He is a totally unique individual, created in the image of God and protected, nourished, and nurtured in his mother’s womb while not being the same person as his mother. The unborn baby’s heart beats at 23 days after conception, at forty days brain waves can be detected, at eight weeks all of his body parts are in place. After a traumatic accident, “life” is determined by the heart beat and brain activity, so is it not logical to have the same standard for every person, even those in the womb? A beating heart indicates life. In the United States, several states have passed what is called the “Heart Beat Bill” which gives protection from abortion to unborn children whose heartbeat can be detected (usually five to six weeks after conception).

In 2019, Be’ad Chaim, an Israeli Pro-life organization, sponsored a survey of two thousand Israeli women on the topic of abortion. In response to the question, “When does the heart begin to beat?” It found that 35% knew the heart beats between three and four weeks while another 35% responded that the heart beats between five and six weeks. This indicates that 70% knew that the baby’s heart is beating by six weeks, long before a typical abortion is done. In response to the second question, “When is the fetus considered a human being?” 37% said at conception, and 45% said when the heart starts beating. This indicated that 82% of respondents believe that the fetus is a human being typically BEFORE the woman would know that she is pregnant and before she would have a chance to abort. The third question clinched the crux of the Israeli dilemma regarding life issues: “Which right is more important: the right of the mother to abort or the right of the baby to live?” 60% chose the right of the mother to abort and only

40% said that the baby’s right to live has precedence.

As the number of deaths due to the corona pandemic causes havoc socially and economically around the globe, the number of abortions takes a much higher toll. According to the World Health Organization, every year in the world there are an estimated 40-50 million abortions. This corresponds to approximately 125,000 abortions per day. In Israel, every year, there are approximately 40-50 thousand abortions. This corresponds to approximately 125 abortions day. The womb, which should be the safest place for a baby, has also become the most dangerous place. More severe than the corona pandemic is the moral pandemic taking the lives of millions of unborn children globally. A baby, although created in the womb by God, is not of any value unless he is wanted. It has become the mother’s choice, by right of society’s laws, to allow the baby’s life to be discarded if he is unwanted. “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20).

Many people are surprised to learn that Israel, called by God to be a holy nation unto Him, not only allows abortion, but finances abortions through our National Health insurance program. Each year, approximately half of the abortions are done at the expense of the Israeli government and taxpayers’ money. When a nation finances abortion, and the law permits abortion, individuals feel that it is an acceptable, normal medical procedure. Our people, as a Nation, bear the onus of the shedding of innocent blood on our Land.



In Israel, the land of paradoxes, abortion is widely available, yet legally restricted. In order to have a legal, government-funded and registered abortion, a woman must apply to the termination of pregnancy committee which exists in nearly every hospital. A whopping 98.5% of applications for abortion are approved. Shockingly, a woman may terminate her pregnancy up to full gestation. Minors do not require parental consent, and measures are taken to ensure their privacy. This is, in part, related to the possibility of life threatening situations for single pregnant women in the Moslem sector. Last year, the state paid for approximately 18,000 abortions, regardless of circumstances. It is estimated that half of the 40,000 annual abortions are not registered and not approved through committees, making them illegal, although doctors are not prosecuted. The criteria to have a legal abortion are quite 'open': (1) under-18 or over-40; (2) pregnant as a result of criminal, extra-marital, or incestuous relations; (3) fetus likely to have a physical or mental defect; or (4) continuation of the pregnancy is likely to endanger the woman's life or cause her physical or mental harm (including

stress and insomnia). She must also receive permission from a three-person termination committee, consisting of two doctors and a social worker, one of whom must be a woman. But 98.5% of applications for abortion are approved, making the committees a sort of "rubber stamp."

In the 1940's, in pre-Israel Palestine, and primarily due to financial instability, abortion was the common form of birth control and so rampant that our first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion said, "If our mothers had aborted at the same rate as our daughters, we wouldn't have been able to build a nation." Ben Gurion, to increase demographics and to encourage birth, created a government financial incentive support program of children. In recent years, this funding has been cut back significantly. That being said, the birth rate in Israel is one of the highest in the Western world, 3.1 per family. On the other hand, the high rate of abortion in Israel exemplifies the paradox between the high value placed on the family and the permissiveness of our society. Religious families have very large families as they fulfill the Biblical command to "be fruitful and multiply."

The womb, which should be the safest place for a baby, has also become the most dangerous place. More severe than the corona pandemic is the moral pandemic taking the lives of millions of unborn children globally.

Many families want more than one child as a sort of "insurance policy" against losing a child in the army or through terrorism. On a national level there is a mindfulness of the need to rebuild the Jewish people after the loss of six million during the Holocaust. However, abortion is the antithesis of this equation. Whereas the lives of 1.5 Jewish children were lost in the Holocaust, at least 2 million have been lost to abortion since 1948.

Many rabbis have expressed how appalled they are by these statistics, yet none of our religious parties have taken a stand to protect the rights of

the unborn. There is no voice in our government speaking for the unborn. There is a large variance in opinion among rabbis regarding abortion with many permitting abortions within 40 days from conception. The Talmudic principle that a mother's life takes priority over the baby's life is often the guideline for orthodox rabbis to permit a mother to choose abortion, which is taken to mean, if it would 'harm her life' such as reducing the possibility of finding a husband or cause her stress and anxiety.

with the Chairman of the Board, Tony Sperandio and first director, Ted Walker, I was asked why I did not want the position. Simply stated, I believed that there were many things wrong in Israeli society, abortion being just one of them and not my interest. Tony asked, "Do you care about Israel? If you do – you need to do something about the shedding of innocent blood on our Land." He quoted Genesis 4:9-10, "And the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I do not know!' he answered. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' 'What have

know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?" I could not say that I didn't know that babies' lives were being taken because I had learned the facts. I perceived myself with the option of being like an ostrich. When an ostrich senses danger and cannot run away, it flops to the ground and remains still, with its head and neck flat on the ground in front of it. As a follower of the Messiah, I do not believe that we have the option of doing nothing when we see injustice. "For evil men to accomplish their purpose, it is

David Ben Gurion said, "If our mothers had aborted at the same rate as our daughters, we wouldn't have been able to build a nation."

There are several prolife organizations in Israel, some of them led by orthodox Jews and others by Messianic Jews. Each organization has its own emphasis and thankfully saves lives in various sectors of society.

In the early 1980's, Christians and Messianic Jews came together to take on the task of saving babies from abortion in Israel. After research, it was discovered that one out of three pregnancies was being aborted, which is the same proportion of world Jewry that Hitler annihilated. Be'ad Chaim became an official Israel nonprofit organization in 1988. The goal of Be'ad Chaim is to protect the mother and child from the ravages of abortion. A solid prayer base was created as the foundation of the work of Be'ad Chaim. Prayer continues to be the strength of our work with weekly prayer letters going out to over 850 locations around the globe.

In 2005, I was asked to join as director and declined the invitation. Meeting

you done?" replied the Lord. "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." Tony explained that the blood of Israeli babies is crying out on our Land. The shedding of blood caused the exile of our people from the Land to Babylon in 586 BC as expounded in Psalm 106:38, "They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood." Tony's words ring in my ears to this day, "There is nothing that God hates more than the shedding of innocent blood."

I was sent home with a pile of books on abortion, articles with the statistics, and videos to watch. During the month until my next interview, I studied and prayed. Proverbs 24:11-12 provoked me and troubled me deeply, "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life

only necessary that good men should do nothing" (Pastor Charles Aked). Proverbs 31 commands us, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." As I read the Scriptures, I see that God calls us to challenge the status quo of a society that does not value His values. Yeshua said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5). We are called to mourn over that which grieves the heart of God. In Ezekiel 9:4, God calls the cherub to "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem...and put a mark on the foreheads of the men sighing and groaning over all the abominations committed there."

I have met many women in crisis over the years. I will never forget a young soldier who visited our Jerusalem office. Doing a pregnancy test, she discovered that it was positive and ran out of the office deeply shaken. I later saw her at the Central bus station and gently asked

to speak with her, inquiring if she were still pregnant. She said, “yes, but I am going to have an abortion.” She cited all of the reasons why abortion was her only option. I offered her support and help in every possible way, but she was adamant. As I began to walk away, the soldier called me back and asked me a simple question, “Why am I feeling so tired and hungry? Instinctively, I responded, “Your mind and your heart don’t want this baby, but your body is nourishing and feeding the baby.” At this, right there outside of the Central Bus station, her knees buckled, and she fell to the ground sobbing. I later learned that she had a free abortion through the health care offered through the army. The IDF, as part of general medical coverage for soldiers, will pay for two to three abortions during a woman’s two year service. It is a woman’s instinct to care for her baby, but problems and pressure cause her to choose to terminate the baby’s life.

Be’ad Chaim’s goal is to protect the mother and child from the ravages of abortion. We believe that abortion takes the life of a child, hurts women, and damages society. At Be’ad Chaim, we see hundreds of hurting, needy women in crisis. Many of them have been rejected by families and partners; many have broken hearts and need the love of God to heal and soothe their pain. We do not believe that it is our job to condemn or to push people to choose life; rather it is our responsibility and privilege to love them and offer them the hope that will empower them to choose life.

Our help to women has three aspects: HOPE, HELP AND HEALING. Through our hotline and website, we offer immediate help in crisis. Women are offered firstly a listening ear and information that will help them make an informed decision about their lives and the life of their baby. They are connected with a caring counselor from one of 12 different cities and regions of Israel. Counselors are trained to respect and tenderly communicate compassion with the women in crisis. These counselors often become a precious friend to a hurting and confused woman. Practical help is offered to each woman with financial difficulties through our baby sponsorship program “Operation Moses”, providing them with a baby bed, stroller, bathtub, and monthly vouchers to purchase baby necessities. Several centers have a “baby boutique” where mothers can come and choose clothing and other items for their baby, from newborns up to one year old.

Reproductive loss counseling is offered to those who hurt after the loss of a baby through miscarriage, abortion, or still birth. All too often, women are told to “forget about the loss of the baby,” but mothers, and fathers, need the space to heal after a loss. Grief, guilt, and pain need to be addressed and processed. Our survey showed some very serious consequences to women who elected to have an abortion. For example, after their abortion, 25 % were severely traumatized, 18% were very traumatized, and 22% were moderately traumatized. When asked if there were

medical problems after the abortion, 73% said yes, 11% experienced miscarriage, and 8% were never able to conceive another child. To honor the unborn children, The Gardens of Life is a four-acre (16 dunam) forest in the center of Israel where trees are planted in memory of unborn children or children who have passed away. These Gardens have brought healing and closure to thousands of people who have lost a baby, including parents, grandparents, siblings, and others who grieve the loss.

We must beware of seeing abortion as merely a political issue, something philosophical and theoretical. To be prolife means caring about the lives of women, their children, and their families; caring about a healthy society that values and sees God-given destiny for every individual, even the smallest ones in the womb.

Let us pray this scripture and work for the day when Israel will choose life so that God will abundantly bless us with His peace in this Land:

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is your life, and He will give you many years in the land He swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sandy Shoshani is the National Director of the Israeli Prolife organization called “Be’ad Chaim”. Raised in a traditional Jewish home in the Boston area, she came to faith in her Messiah Yeshua while attending Northwestern University where she received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Speech Pathology. In 1979, she immigrated to Israel and later met her husband Oded. Together they have seven wonderful children and nine grandchildren. Oded and Sandy lead the thriving Hebrew speaking congregation Melech HaMelachim (King of Kings). Sandy is passionate about protecting mothers from the pain of abortion and protecting the lives of the unborn.



RECLAIMING OUR FREEDOM

By Tzvi ben Daniel

I have heard multiple times from believers that we should not be getting involved with politics. To be honest, until February 2020, I did not even know the name of the governor of North Carolina where I have been living for the last six years. But at that point, the governor made himself too big and powerful for anyone to ignore.

I am a simple law-abiding citizen. I stay out of trouble, pay my taxes, and try to serve my God to the best of my ability. One day, the governor said that I cannot leave my house and my kids cannot go to school. The head of the Health department took preventative measures, and they, almost as ‘loving’ parents would do, made decisions for the totality of the inhabitants of the territory they rule over. The news channels and all the “experts” seemed to agree.

It was the Covid Scamdemic. I mean, Plandemic. Sorry; PANdemic.

I would like to explore in this article, whether there exists a fine line between

“praying for our leaders” or “respecting and honoring their authority,” and “utterly overthrowing the government by force” in the best “Maccabean style.” As I am sure, I am not the only one that felt the compulsive desire to do so.

I would also like to unpack what the difference is (if there is any at all) between the kings of old, both from Israel and the nations and the modern-day rulers to whom we find ourselves currently subjected. And most importantly, is it the will of the Almighty that we should be ruled by “mighty ones,” and was this system prescribed in the Torah?

Should We Be Involved in Politics?

I am going to be completely honest here. When I was almost a “freshman” in the US, I thought it was completely irrelevant whether Trump or Hillary would win the presidency. It was clear to me from the book of Samuel that we do not need to be engaged in politics:

[The leaders of the people said,] “Appoint

us a king to judge us like all the nations.” Sh’mu’el was not pleased to hear them say, “Give us a king to judge us,” so he prayed to Adonai. Adonai said to Sh’mu’el, “Listen to the people, to everything they say to you; for it is not you they are rejecting; they are rejecting me; they don’t want me to be king over them. They are doing to you exactly what they have been doing to me, from the day I brought them out of Egypt until today, by abandoning me and serving other gods. So do what they say, but give them a sober warning, telling them what kinds of rulings their king will make.” (1 Samuel 8:5-9)

At its conception, the Nation of Israel used to be, for all practical purposes, a constitutional theocracy, and within the bounds of Torah, there was a broad concept of freedom always rooted in the premise of “live and let live” (or as Hillel the Elder would put it in Second Temple times, “do not do to your neighbor that which is hateful to you”).

On the other hand, monarchies have

The nation of Israel used to be, for all practical purposes, a constitutional theocracy, and within the bounds of Torah, there was a broad concept of freedom always rooted in the premise of “live and let live”.

existed since the oldest legends were recorded. And for the most part, whether ‘good’ or ‘bad’, kings have always sought to extract the wealth from the people.

In the case of Israel, the people “got what they deserved” with the corrupt Sha’ul, the first king of Israel. Possibly as a way from the Almighty to show Israel a harbinger of what “human centralized power” could look like.

Fast forward to the present. In modern times, we saw the birth of the concept of the State. The state, as an entity, did not do more than transfer the power from the kings and the aristocracy of old, to ‘executive kingship’ and an ‘aristocratic legislative power’. The proletariat remained precisely in the same place, at the bottom of the barrel.

Interestingly enough, there were “projects” of states that boasted about giving the power to the people, such as the beautiful beginning of the Declaration of Independence of the United States. But for whoever did not figure it out yet, that is only in paper. And if you don’t believe me, go and try to petition the government for redress of grievances.

As opposed to the oppressive absolute monarchies of old, we live now in “democracies”, where people get the “freedom” (or the illusion thereof) to vote. They can choose between the candidate that is blue-tinted muck and another candidate that is red-tinted muck. In some countries, such as Argentina, where I grew up as a child, they would

even force you to vote and choose one, force you to accept, albeit unwillingly, the rules of the system and their twisted game.

As if it was not enough that we pay taxes, purchase permits, and licenses to be able to do virtually anything and abide by every capricious law that our authorities come up with, 2020 brought a new twist to the game:

“By decree of _____ (your governor or pertinent authority on duty), every man, woman and beast shall stay in their house until we tell them that it is ok to go out. When they do go out, it will only be a certain distance and to certain places, and they shall wear a face mask at all times. When the vaccine is ready, they shall take it. And all this is in the name of public health”.

I do not know at what point in history people acquiesced to being controlled to such an extent, but nowadays simple things like deciding not to vaccinate your newborn child, not sending them to 12 years of public education, and in some extreme instances even planting a vegetable garden in the front yard or collecting rainwater from the roof can be considered controversial and even illegal in some parts of the world.

What would the Maccabees do?

We all know the story of the rebellion of a righteous group of Jews in the second century BC that fought against the Greek oppressive powers when denied certain basic religious liberties. At that point, they had lived under Greek rulership

for at least a hundred years. They could stomach having a foreign army roaming their land and a foreign government controlling most aspects of their lives to whom they paid taxes, but just like everyone, they had their line in the sand. The attacks on their religious freedoms were just too blunt.

It is said that hard times create strong men, which can apply to the Maccabees. But it is also said that after that, strong men create good times, and good times create weak men, who in turn create hard times.

When some people get fed up, they may get together with friends and grow a movement and create a revolution, sometimes even overthrowing a government.

It is said that hard times create strong men, which can apply to the Maccabees. But it is also said that after that, strong men create good times, and good times create weak men, who in turn create hard times. Currently, I believe our western society is probably in the latter links in this cycle. You see, man has paid with his very own autonomy and sovereignty the price of mere comfort.

“The Maccabees?!” you may say. “Those savage zealot Jews?! We are to look at Yeshua’s example.” Ok, I get it. There were different people in our history’s past who had different approaches to government oppression, and Yeshua was definitely on the ‘milder’ side of the spectrum (compared to the Maccabees) despite the fact that he knew that even though we can be the ‘nice guy’, turning the other cheek or paying (unlawful) tribute to the Caesar, there IS also a time to stand up against injustice. Look at the turning of the tables of the money changers, or the exhortation to his disciples to sell their cloaks and purchase swords for instance. The bottom line for me is that it all comes down to one’s own

level of tolerance against oppression.

Nothing New under the Sun

Despite the fact that some may want to have us believe that having corrupt rulers and politicians, and even fraud in a national election may be something new, I know full well, coming from Latin America, that this has been going on for quite a while, in modern times, at least as long as modern states have existed, since the 18th and 19th centuries.

And when I study history and see that before the states/countries we have today, there were absolute monarchies which drew their power based merely on their bloodline, it is not hard to see how corruption can reach the highest spheres of power. I am saying this thinking about the Middle Ages, but you may open the book of Kings in the Bible and see just the same thing, going back two or three thousand years.

Where is YOUR Line in the Sand?

Kings of old, just as the government in modern times, have exerted control over us from time immemorial. There were brief periods of time in history when nations were ruled by righteous kings and leaders, but this was by far the minority of the time. After them, the state of affairs always seems to go back to its default, which is corruption and oppression.

People adapted, and still adapt, to different circumstances, and for the most part, they put up with it. And when some people get fed up, they may get together with friends and grow a movement and create a revolution, sometimes even overthrowing a government.

Others will “allow” their leaders to trample over them, strip them of their rights, take away their guns so they cannot defend themselves and in extreme cases, even force them to labor for the

government. That happens in countries like China (and many others) to this day. This was the very thing that happened to our people during the Holocaust. Until when do we “turn the other cheek”? Because by the time we are being taken to labor camps, it is too late.

But many people may not fall into either of these extremes and may just be trying to steer out of trouble and continue to live their lives as they always have. The problem is that it has been getting increasingly difficult to do just that.

The Concept of Freedom in Torah

I was meditating upon freedom in the season leading to Passover, the time of our redemption. The Torah drills into our heads how important it is to rehearse our deliverance from slavery year after year. The Rabbis tell us that we ought to see us as if we ourselves left Egypt. The Torah in its richness has many levels of understanding, and this issue is oftentimes spiritualized. I personally LOVE thinking about all the spiritual bondages and mental demons we need to be delivered from. But what about the p’shat? What about the simple physical layer of freedom that we are to be enjoying? The Almighty delivered us, I believe, literally and historically, from the hands of a tyrant king—the Pharaoh.

Depending on where we live in the world today, we may be enjoying more or less freedom. What is clear is that last year brought less freedom for everyone across the world. Let us be honest: it is challenging to raise a cup and cheer for freedom in good conscience, when we are being prohibited from leaving our houses except for buying food and essentials.

What I find very interesting is that in Israel (and in New York) the orthodox Jews rose up against government restrictions. And forget for a moment



I could not imagine teaching my children anything more noble than standing on the side of freedom, above flags, religions, and races—just freedom.

that they oppose most of the things the government does and in many instances oppose the government as an entity in its entirety, but in this case, it is perfectly legitimate that they should protest since their most basic religious liberties of assembling in a minian were being violated.

Another group that stood up against it in Israel is the “left” of course, since they oppose the government. But this is what I’m trying to make clear: as believers, we need to have discernment regarding what is right and what is just, and we should be able to be in agreement with those that promote the same predicament regardless of their opinions on other things like their doctrinal beliefs or political biases.

Freedom is probably THE most basic tenet in Torah. And even Yeshua came about and reaffirmed its importance, stating that “the truth will make you free.”

I could not imagine teaching my children anything more noble than standing on the side of freedom, above flags, religions, and races—just freedom.

Finding the Balance

We all have different breaking points. What is “too much” for somebody will not be enough for someone else. Living in a society that magnifies flaws and ridicules those who think differently, it is challenging to go against the grain. Where is the balance between being nice to others and standing up for your rights with firmness? In the Jewish tradition, we try to find the balance between chesed and g’vurah—loving kindness and courageous might.

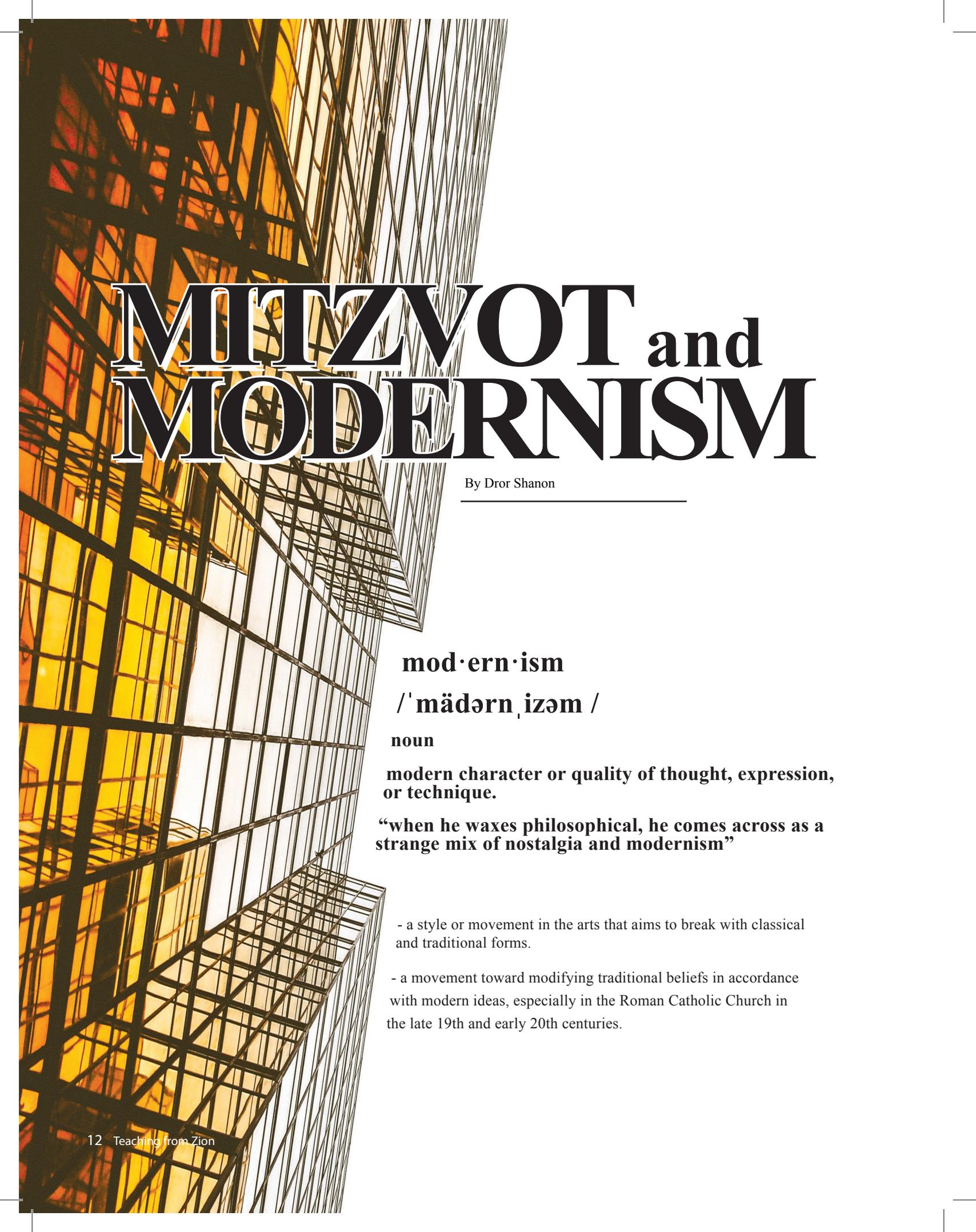
I do not think that I will be able to tell you what is right for you. I do not even want to be in that position. What I can decide is what I want for me and my family. What I will do (or not do) and Whom I will serve. Freedom is a fragile thing.

Kings and rulers have existed in this world since the world has had memory. Politicians’ greed for power and control will not cease since this is not a “politicians” problem but rather human-nature problem.

Many have come before us to show us the way to be respectful and honor the authorities that the Creator appointed to rule over us, while remaining faithful to our morals, beliefs, and good conscience. From Daniel and his kinsmen in Babylon to Mordechai and Esther in Persia and even modern examples like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Gandhi, the qualities we see and try to emulate from them go beyond the scope of legalistic religious observance. They relate to moral integrity and remaining incorruptible in the sight of the Most High, qualities that brought fear of God higher than fear of people. May the Almighty find us doing so when he looks upon us, too.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tzvi is an Argentinian-Israeli Jew who currently lives in North Carolina, USA. During his time in Israel, Tzvi worked in archaeology in the City of David and the Ophel area with Eilat Mazar. There, he developed a special interest in Biblical history and the Hebrew language. He currently teaches Biblical Hebrew to Spanish speakers online and co-hosts a successful radio show on a US based Messianic Ministry, speaking and writing articles on a variety of topics, ranging from the Hebrew language and Biblical history to current events in Israel and the world.



MITZVOT and MODERNISM

By Dror Shanon

mod·ern·ism

/'mädərn,izəm /

noun

modern character or quality of thought, expression, or technique.

“when he waxes philosophical, he comes across as a strange mix of nostalgia and modernism”

- a style or movement in the arts that aims to break with classical and traditional forms.

- a movement toward modifying traditional beliefs in accordance with modern ideas, especially in the Roman Catholic Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Modernism refers to a global movement in society and culture that from the early decades of the twentieth century sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life. Modernism has also been driven by various social and political agendas.

Modernism was essentially based on a utopian vision of human life and society and a belief in progress (or moving forward). Modernist ideals pervaded art, architecture, literature, religious faith, philosophy, social organization, activities of daily life, and even the sciences.

The movement was initially called “avant-garde”, descriptive of its attempt to overthrow some aspect of tradition or the status quo. The term “modernism” itself is derived from the Latin “modo”, meaning “just now”.

What are We Talking about?

I find it worthwhile to ensure, before a discussion proceeds, that those participating in it understand the definitions of the terms of that discussion, or at least the broad outlines of the topic. With that goal in view, let’s look at a couple more approaches to the definition of “modernism”: [From Wikipedia at: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism].

Some commentators define modernism as a mode of thinking—one or more philosophically defined characteristics, like self-consciousness or self-reference, that run across all the novelties in the arts and the disciplines. More common, especially in the West, are those who see it as a socially progressive trend of thought that affirms the power of human beings to create, improve, and reshape their environment with the aid of practical experimentation, scientific knowledge, or technology. From this perspective, modernism encouraged the re-examination of every aspect of existence, from commerce to philosophy, with the goal of finding that which was ‘holding back’ progress and replacing it with new ways of reaching the same end. Others focus on modernism as an aesthetic introspection. This facilitates consideration of specific reactions to the use of technology in the First World War as well as anti-technological and nihilistic aspects of the works of diverse thinkers and artists spanning the period from Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) to Samuel Beckett (1906–1989).

According to Roger Griffin, modernism can be defined in a maximalist vision as a broad cultural, social, or political initiative, sustained by the ethos of “the temporality of the new”. Modernism sought to restore, Griffin writes, a “sense of sublime order and purpose to the contemporary world, thereby counteracting the (perceived) erosion of an overarching ‘nomos’, or ‘sacred canopy’, under the fragmenting and secularizing impact of modernity.” Therefore, phenomena apparently unrelated to each other such as “Expressionism, Futurism, vitalism, Theosophy, psychoanalysis, nudism, eugenics, utopian town planning and architecture, modern dance, Bolshevism, organic nationalism

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Multiculturalism, as a philosophy, does not guarantee the application of equal tolerance to all communities, especially to mono-cultural Jewish ones.

– and even the cult of self-sacrifice that sustained the hecatomb of the First World War – disclose a common cause and psychological matrix in the fight against (perceived) decadence.” All of them embody bids to access a “supra-personal experience of reality”, in which individuals believed they could transcend their own mortality, and eventually that they had ceased to be victims of history to become instead its creators.

So What?

So, the essential characteristics of any of the “modernisms” expressed during the past century and a half are a disrespect of some prior status-quo and an impetus for change and newness. Hence it asserts its own form of tyranny in sweeping away the past and dominating the present with its optimistic utopian hopes for a brighter future. However, its very own impetus for change resulted in “post-modernism”, which challenged a number of the presumptions of modernism. In this article, I hope to examine some of these presumptions and their challenges,

and to consider how traditional Judaism may and must maintain itself in the face of these domineering worldviews. A further consideration I hope to examine is the place of Jewish messianism within this milieu, because it cannot escape being shaped and influenced by all of them, whether it remains immersed and integrated or adopts a reactionary haredi-style isolation.

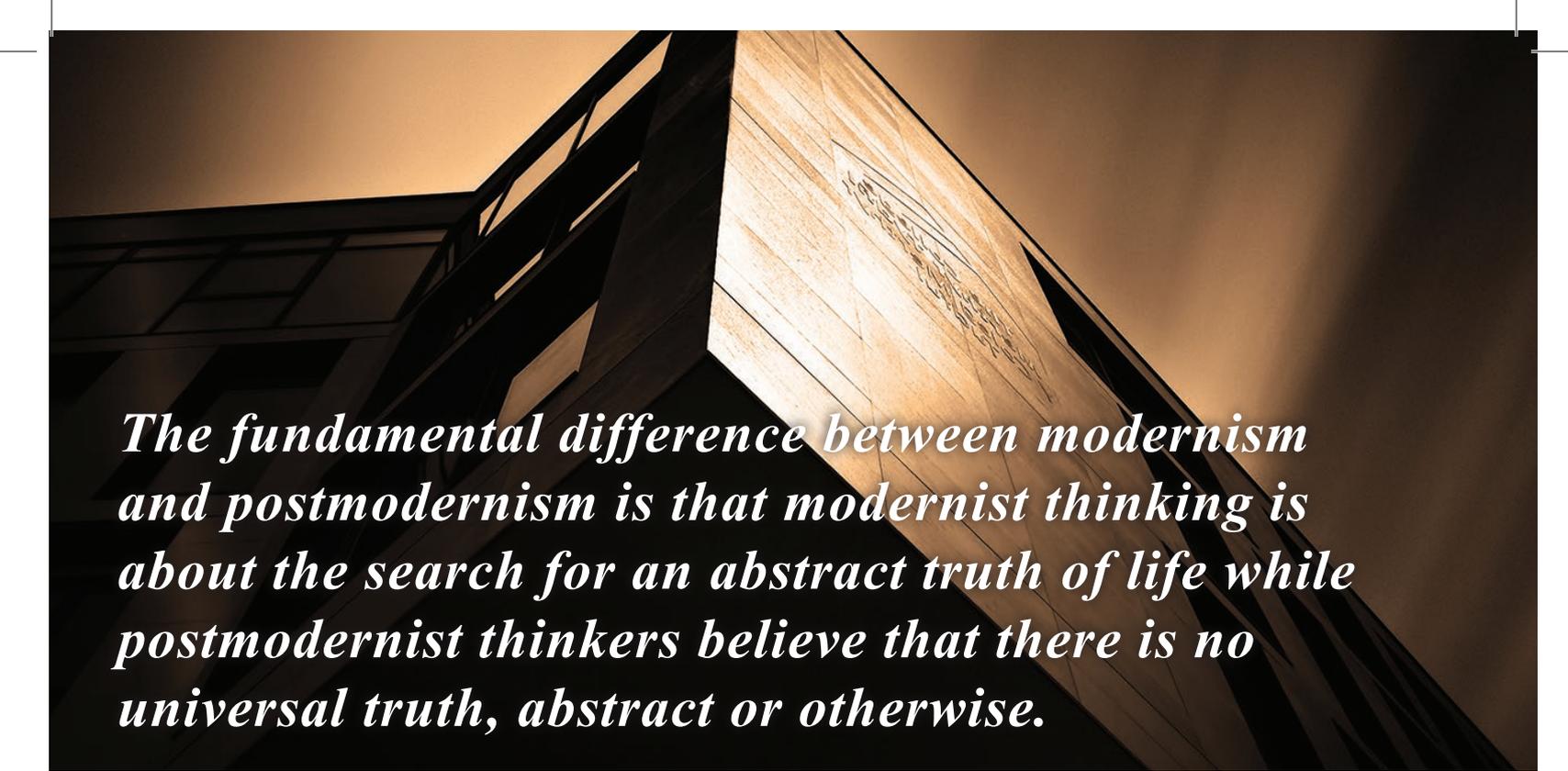
Two Worlds

One view that has been characteristic of the Jewish world in the past is that of a dichotomy between two distinct worlds. One is an insular Jewish world represented by supportive values and behaviors and a close-knit matrix of family and community. Contrasted to this is the inimical world of outsiders, rejectionists, persecutors, unkind to each other as well as toward Jews. Prior to the onset of modernism this distinction was inescapably clear. Jewish isolation and insularity were enforced by this outside world as well as having been adopted by the Jewish world in its own defense. Some degree of isolation from modernism has also characterized some Christian sects within the past, though for reasons that were somewhat less severe than the centuries of systemic persecution afflicting Jews, and they were enforced from inside the community because of its own perceptions and self-definition rather than those imposed from the outside. However, this article will limit its consideration to the responses needed by Jewish communities. Anyone else who wishes to borrow ideas from the Jewish approach is welcome to do so.

Responses to Universalistic Modernism

With the rise of modernism, which included social movements such as the Enlightenment and the Jewish Haskalah, the boundaries became soft and ultimately almost non-existent.

Prior religious boundaries also softened likewise. Jewish distinctiveness tended to become viewed as anti-social and an inhibition against receiving the economic and social benefits and acceptance offered by modernism. It appeared that modernism had embraced the Jewish mitzvah of Tikun ha'Olam (repairing the world). Out of this, there arose the Jewish Reform movement and religious stance, and also not long afterward there arose Christian missions to convert Jews to a perceivably more enlightened religion. Judaism responded to both of these movements as well as to secular modernism, embracing some aspects and repudiating others, trying to achieve a balance between universalistic inclusion and distinctive community identity that could honor an ancient covenant in the face of a world that rejected the very notion that something ancient and unchanging could remain valid. One such Jewish response that tried to balance Jewish communal identity and inclusion in the surrounding majority culture, particularly in the USA, was adoption of a Jewish Christianity or Hebrew-Christianity, not unlike what the Reform movement had done relative to its majority culture in Europe but blurring the long-standing boundaries between Christianity and Judaism. Such responses were not universally well-received in other segments of what had become a divided Jewish community. Other responses seeking a better balance were Conservative Judaism and Modern Orthodox Judaism, which also rejected Christian missionizing efforts. Yet more responses, seeking to correct the shift toward Christianity but yet to explore and reclaim for Judaism the teachings of an ancient Israeli rabbi—haRav Yeshua ben-Yosef—and to balance between the ancient covenant and the modern world, were those of Messianic Judaism and a Jewish messianism that more strongly sought the validity of Jewish orthodoxy and to develop Jewish re-interpretations



The fundamental difference between modernism and postmodernism is that modernist thinking is about the search for an abstract truth of life while postmodernist thinkers believe that there is no universal truth, abstract or otherwise.

of the Jewish apostolic literature, re-evaluating and rejecting much of prior traditional Christian doctrinal development.

A more widespread Jewish response, however, has been to embrace modernism's rejection of religion as retrogressive, embracing secularism in its place. Along with this came assimilation into the secular majority culture, intermarriage with non-Jews, and a repudiation of Jewish communal distinctiveness. The inevitable result, of course, is that within two generations much of this segment of the Jewish people is no longer legally Jewish – that is, by the legal definitions of halachah, and within three it barely remembers ever being so – except for a few cultural and linguistic flourishes. This is what the Torah describes as being cut off from the covenant and its community. This ancient threat is not confined, however, only to the secular segment that was once part of the Jewish community. Nonetheless, if there is ever to be a regathering of any of these “lost souls” to rejoin the community, significant adjustments of outlook, religious retraining, and legal conversions will be required.

Other Jews that are equally in danger

from intermarriage are the Jewish Christians and, perhaps to a lesser degree, those “Messianic Jews” (so-called) who adhere to Christian doctrine and cultural praxis. Some of these latter have shown some sensitivity and awareness of the danger, and sought to return to at least the orbit of the Jewish community via Jewish conversion procedures where halachically necessary, to eschew further intermarriages, and to progressively adopt greater adherence to traditional Jewish praxis. In this, they are like the post-modernists who challenge aspects of modernism's uniformity by advocating pluralism and multiculturalism. But even in a multicultural environment, that presumably respects the right of various communities to their own sectarian differences of belief and cultural praxis, there is a danger to Jews. Multiculturalism, as a philosophy, does not guarantee the application of equal tolerance to all communities, especially to mono-cultural Jewish ones. It is from an environment of multiculturalism and plurality that resentment would likely emerge against the notion that a uniformly Jewish nation such as Israel must be respected as valid (ignoring the multiple variations of culture extant within that very Jewish nation).

Post-Modernism

The philosophy of modernism is challenged by a more recent movement and philosophy called post-modernism. While such a term suggests a successor to modernism that may supplant it with some presumably improved view, one may wonder what yet may follow post-modernism. Regardless, the essential characteristics of post-modernism are its attitude of skepticism, irony, or rejection toward what it describes as the grand narratives and ideologies associated with modernism, often criticizing Enlightenment rationality and evidencing a general suspicion of reason along with its subjectivism or relativism; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in maintaining political or economic power. The fundamental difference between modernism and postmodernism is that modernist thinking is about the search for an abstract truth of life while postmodernist thinkers believe that there is no universal truth, abstract or otherwise. From this, one may well infer that postmodernism's view of a notion such as absolute Biblical truth is rather dim. It emphasizes pluralism and relativism and rejects any certain belief or absolute value. It conflicts with essentialism, which is the view that things have a set

of characteristics which make them what they are, and that the task of science and philosophy is their discovery and expression; for example, the view that all children should be taught on traditional lines the ideas and methods regarded as essential to the prevalent culture, or the view that categories of people—such as women and men, heterosexuals and homosexuals, or members of ethnic groups—have intrinsically different and characteristic natures or dispositions. Thus, postmodernism considers human identity to be a social construct or invention, fluid and subject to change or redefinition. It also rejects the idea that values are based on developmental realities and rejects the essential influence of human actions on human destiny, whereas modernism valued human action as the driving force of destiny.

Seeking Balance

In the musical “Fiddler on the Roof”, the main protagonist Tevye poses the rhetorical question “So how do we keep our balance?” He was referring to the precariousness of Jewish existence in the face of more severe threats than philosophical or social upheavals such as modernism or post-modernism. He was addressing poverty and pogroms. But as the story progresses, it touches on the modern threat of the Jewish involvement in Russian Bolshevism to seek progressivism and socialism as mechanisms for change and improvement, and on the threat of intermarriage. It does not give us solutions, remedies, or defenses against these threats, and viewers of this film or stage play during the past few decades have had the opportunity to observe and experience their consequences. Indeed, at the time this is being written, citizens of the USA are observing a modern outbreak of Bolshevik-style insurrection driven by Marxist-inspired socialism.

Notwithstanding this particular assault, Jewish periodicals have published many articles about the impacts of intermarriage during the past several decades. Perhaps we should reconsider whether Tevye’s answer to his rhetorical question really holds some practical value to remedy these ills. He said: “I can give you the answer in one word – tradition”. In his story, as well as ours, it has been the breaking away from Jewish traditions that has led to the breakdown in Jewish civilization. But if we wish to re-apply prior tradition as a remedy, we will need to re-examine its varying shape as it has had to accommodate changing conditions across centuries of Jewish generations, in order to shape it to our own conditions which differ from Tevye’s.

How Different; How Unchanged

One element of current conditions that differs from those which Tevye faced is so impactful that it overwhelms almost all other considerations. In our time, a sovereign Jewish political entity is again in successful operation. It is known as the State of Israel, and one of its purposes is to regather Jews from the exile that has characterized Jewish existence for 20 centuries. One of its challenges is precisely to reverse the effects of some of the traditions that have been needed for Jewish survival in that long exile. Another is to integrate those traditions with those of Jewish tradition before that exile – which is particularly difficult because those prior traditions span a developmental period that was at most only 15 centuries long, between the giving of Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu and the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE. The only characteristic that supports such reintegration at all is that the later traditions were designed to reflect and preserve the earlier ones, even if only symbolically. Thankfully, the Torah is unchanging, and all subsequent halachah was developed in response to that stable

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foundation. Indeed, the current structure of the State of Israel may ultimately be viewed as a transitional vehicle to facilitate the redevelopment and reintegration of Jewish civilization as it returns from exile. The Israeli pioneers had a slogan to describe the process: “to build and to be rebuilt”. And if we succeed to rebuild the ancient temple (may it be soon and swiftly completed in our own days), we will need to have been rebuilt to eliminate some prior shortcomings. For example, our rabbis attributed the destruction of the first temple to idolatry. This, Judaism has overcome emphatically. The destruction of the second temple was attributed to “sinat hinam”, baseless hatred, expressed as “minut”, factional sectarianism. For

Modern Jewish messianists face the same challenges as do all other Jews to integrate into the modern world the ancient traditions known and practiced in Rav Yeshua's era and since that time across 20 centuries.

this, Judaism has prescribed remedies, but they must be more thoroughly adopted and integrated into our modern expression of Jewish civilization before we are likely to be successful in building a third temple.

Building Materials

Allow me to resort to metaphor, here, by referring to the “living stones” from which a third temple or any aspect of modern Jewish civilization must be built. Shimon “Kefa” bar-Yonah, a chief disciple of HaRav Yeshua ben-Yosef, evoked a simile of “living stones” to exhort other disciples in his letter to “resident aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (presumably diaspora Jews), that they should be “... built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through the Messiah Yeshua” (cf. 1 Peter 2:5). Yohanan ben Zechariah “The Immerser” (Rav Yeshua’s cousin) had used a similar simile, cited in Matthew 3:9 and Luke 3:8, that employed a Hebrew pun or wordplay between the words “abanim”, “stones”, and “habanim”, “the sons”. It said that HaShem would raise up children truly worthy of the example of Avraham from a generation other than the ones who were

pridefully or defensively citing Avraham as their ancestor and in contrast to them because they were falsely relying on the merit of an ancestor rather than repenting of their own failings to restore their own relationship with HaShem. The parallel implication of the pun was that HaShem could make such children out of common “worthless” rocks that would be more worthy of the name “sons of Avraham” than those he was challenging to repent. A similar parallel can be derived from Isaiah 54:13 which says: “וְכָל-בְּנֵיךָ, לְמוֹדֵי; וְרַב, שְׁלֹם בְּנֵיךָ” [“And all your children shall be taught by HaShem; and great shall be the peace of your children.”]. In some ancient manuscripts this key word “banayikh” (“your children”) appeared as “bonayikh” (“your builders”), from which arose the recognition that a society’s children are the builders of its future.

What then, should characterize these builders of the future within Jewish civilization? And what may they use to hold their society together? I will answer those questions, much as Tevye did, with one word: “mitzvot”. It is their pursuit of traditional mitzvot that will enable these builders to show that they truly are “living” stones who can hold together their society that is built on its ancient foundation of Torah. Indeed,

Rav Yeshua observed that greatness in the kingdom of heaven would depend on those who performed and taught others to perform the mitzvot that illustrate the Torah and teach us its practical meaning (cf. Matthew 5:19). Modern Jewish messianists face the same challenges as do all other Jews to integrate into the modern world the ancient traditions known and practiced in Rav Yeshua’s era and since that time across 20 centuries. We messianists do not have a monopoly on the knowledge of the attitudes and outlook that will make it possible, but perhaps we are a bit more focused on them by his ancient teachings. In some ways, performance of ancient mitzvot will isolate us from modernity, or insulate us from its impact on us in our local mitzvah-performing communities. But our conscious choice to live in this manner will also require that we understand the modernism and post-modernism from which we withdraw to some degree, and why and how we are withdrawing from them to stand aloof.

For further reading, see the excellent 48-page article online at:

<https://targumshlishi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/looksteinPersp2006>.

Pdf addressing specifically “Judaism and Modernity: Realigning the Two Worlds”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dror encountered HaShem in his mid-teens through a dream that called him to the path of righteousness. He joined the then fledgling Messianic Jewish movement, married a nice liberal Jewish girl, and attended Conservative synagogues. He made aliyah, had three Israeli-born children, worked as an engineer, and served in the IDF. He had to return to America but came back 22 years as a retired aircraft-systems engineer. He now volunteers as a border police officer and as a cantor for traditional Jewish services, and he teaches seminars and Jewish self-study groups on topics like Biblical languages and traditional Jewish subjects.

MODERN EVIL

By Jessica Beukelman



The modern day we live in has some great advantages. Humanity has made some great strides in technology, innovation, and in medicine. One would think that these advances would be great for human civilization, but the realities of the advancements that have been made too often constitute great evil.

Modern medicine has made great advancements that strive to make our quality of life better as well as lengthen our lives. From cancer treatments to vaccinations, people of the modern age are able to survive illnesses and accidents from which people of the past would have most assuredly died. How can medical advancements constitute

evil? When medicine is no longer in the business of saving lives or improving them but instead moves toward ending the most precious and innocent lives, then we are in the presence of evil.

While I completely understand that there are some circumstances in which terminating a pregnancy is necessary, those are few and far between. These are certainly not the circumstances in which American liberals are pushing for women's rights with "my body my choice." The truth is that the vast majority of abortions are not performed out of necessity but out of convenience. A necessary abortion would be one performed to save the mother's life or to keep the unborn child from suffering,

not because the mother decides she does not want to be a mother or because she was trying to trap a father who refused to marry her. In the United States, the majority of abortions are obtained by women as a result of an unintended pregnancy that would interfere with school, work, or other responsibilities. Not only does this show a lack of responsibility, but it also shows a lack of love, compassion, and everything else that G-d stands for. It is pure evil to take the life of an innocent baby because their creation is an inconvenience to you and to the life you want.

Once a child is born it is our responsibility as parents and a society to nurture and teach the child right from wrong, good

When medicine is no longer in the business of saving lives or improving them but instead moves toward ending the most precious and innocent lives, then we are in the presence of evil.

from evil and show them how to live a godly life. Our modern world is no longer conducive to such moral upbringing. We are living in a time when believing that we are made in the image of G-d and that there are two genders, male and female, makes you a racist, homophobic, evil person. Evil has become acceptable. We are told by those in power that men can be women and women can be men. There are no differences between the two sexes and to believe otherwise makes you a terrible human being. I am certainly not advocating for people of the LGBTQ community to be mistreated or shown anything less than the utmost respect and love, but at the same time, children should not be taught this nonsense in school and have it pushed on them in the classroom. I have a 2-year-old son. Yes, I said it, son. He is a boy, and I am raising him as such. As his mother, it is my job to make sure that he grows up to be a good man. A man with values that loves G-d, follows G-d's moral code to the very best of his ability and leads by example. I do not want the government teaching him that he may have been born a boy, but he might want to be a girl someday and that it is okay. This backward thinking leads to my last view of our modern world

turning to evil—toxic masculinity.

When I first heard this term, “toxic masculinity,” I thought what does that even mean? How is masculinity toxic? I am a firm believer in gender roles, not meaning that men are the providers and protectors and that a woman's place is in the kitchen barefoot and pregnant. I am not a neanderthal, but I am a traditionalist. There are certainly certain roles that each gender takes on based on our genetics and biological profiles. I realize that the left would have you believe that men and women are biologically no different, but we all know that is a blatant lie. We are most certainly different. Our bodies, attitudes, desires, needs, and abilities are different. Women have a higher body fat percentage than men because we need it to have babies. That is a biological fact that the left tries to ignore. Men cannot give birth and therefore do not have a menstrual cycle despite what the labeling and advertising for feminine products may suggest. These biological inabilities of men make them different from women, but certainly not toxic. Masculinity has taken on a whole new meaning and it is wrong. Masculinity is everything great about men. It encompasses the strength,

protector, provider, and fighter that is part of being a man. It is not masculinity that is toxic, it is the lack of it. A true masculine man, does not rape, kill, or abuse women; he protects and provides for his family.

If we are to move forward and bring the pendulum back to where evil is no longer acceptable, our society needs to fight against the nonsense and stand up for G-d's word. We were created in His image and this is certainly not the image I see of G-d's people. We are meant to be what he created—as male and female He created us. He did not create 15 different genders that really do not exist because we are all the same. He did not create beings that use modern medicine to end the lives of unwanted babies, and He certainly did not create us to dishonor and disrespect men and the way they were created. We are living in the time Isaiah refers to in Isaiah 5:18-23. We are living with people that call evil good and good evil. I pray every day that G-d will deliver us from these evil people and these evil times so that the pendulum will swing away from this woke era back to G-d's kingdom and very soon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica Beukelman is a student at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia earning her Master of Theology in Biblical Studies. Once she has completed her Masters, she will be attending Rabbinical school to become a Conservative Rabbi. Her goal is to bring secular Jews back into the Synagogue and lead them back to YHWH. Jessica is a substitute teacher, wife, and mother living in Southern California. She was raised in a secular Jewish home by a Jewish father and a Lutheran mother. After a trip to Israel in 2005, Jessica went through the conversion process and earned her undergraduate degree in Religious Studies from California State University, Fullerton in 2016.

MODERN *-ism*

THE DEATH OF OUR SOCIETY

By Nancy Hook

“**T**he characteristics of Modernism are marked by a strong and intentional break with tradition, a belief that the world is created in the act of perceiving it, that is, the world is whatever we say it is, there is no such thing as absolute truth and there are no connections with history or institution.” (Definition from Oxford Languages)

In 2020, I believe we are witnessing the end of what is known as the Godly, Judeo/ Christian society that has shaped and guided our lives and the world as we know it for at least the past 100 years. Yes, there have been plenty of previous diversions from this traditional view;

politically, artistically, and spiritually, but for the most part, I would say the world that I grew up in was influenced by these principles: God, family and country. It certainly has not been perfect, but it is stretching more and more away from these thoughts and ideas almost daily, it seems. The characteristics of modernism I mentioned above are taking over the world as we have known it.

“How did this happen?” I ask myself. Modernism. How did we go from a country that loved the freedoms we have enjoyed, to a country that has given up many, if not most of those freedoms? Modernism. Modernism is

not a new concept. My mother, may she rest in peace, blamed the change on the Beatles and the rebellion that came in the sixties. She would say that as soon as the high schools relaxed their dress codes (allowing jeans to be worn), it was the beginning of the end. In her mind, she saw the decaying moral values starting to take over, however slowly. And, after all, we did spend almost eight years under the influence, so to speak, of the “make love, not war” mentality. The 1960’s was a period of change for the “baby boomers”; it was their experience with Modernism.

My generation, though somewhat

They did not have the outside influences that we have today, and they instead turned inward, to a more spiritual and familial structure. And they emerged stronger, more faithful, and more patriotic.

pampered and spoiled, was raised with the phrase, “if you can dream it, you can accomplish it! If you work hard you can get what you want.” My parents’ generation, in contrast, grew up mostly in more difficult times: two world wars, the Great Depression, and the Holocaust. They did not have the luxuries that my generation had, and their main focus was primarily on basic needs and survival. Because of the harsh times that they had to endure, I believe that their faith, family, and moral, hardworking values brought them through those dark, hard times. They did not have the outside influences that we have today, and they instead turned inward, to a more spiritual and familial structure. And they emerged stronger, more faithful, and more patriotic. “What has happened since that

generation to change the focus of family values?” I ask myself. Modernism.

An argument can be made that throughout history that there were always times when a quiet (or not so quiet) moral and spiritual rebellion occurred. There has always been sexual immorality, “alternative lifestyles,” the drug scene, and political corruption, but in the past, it was not generally tolerated by society as acceptable behavior, and it was certainly not promoted and supported by politicians and legislation the way it is now. Further, the news media used to do its best to expose political and moral misbehavior, unlike today how they seem to condone it.

I believe that because my parent’s generation experienced “hard times,” it was natural for them to want to give their children more than they had while still trying to teach us the standards and values with which they had grown up. When they strove to instill those same values in us, we rebelled. We thought we knew more than they did. Like generations before us, we thought our time was different than theirs. Modernism.

Enter the 1960’s with “free love,” the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, the drug culture, and the social and moral upheaval that accompanied it all. Not just in America, but all over the world, it became all about “me” and “if it feels good, do it”. Young people called themselves open-minded and began being tolerant of changes that maybe they did not agree with but still felt obligated to tolerate. Modernism. Slowly, slowly, certain people started pushing their thoughts and beliefs more overtly and demanding their “rights” to the extent that those who did not agree were made to at least keep quiet. Now, there are laws that state in effect, “too bad if you don’t like it. Too bad if it is against your very core values. Too bad if it is wrong!”

In these days, it is against the law to speak out against what the Bible teaches “is an abomination.” Modernism. You can even be jailed for such. I believe one of the changing points in our society was in the United States in 1973 with the legalization of abortion, the systematic killing of our unborn children in the name of choice. Whose choice? Not mine and certainly not the one being murdered. As if the disposing of these little ones were not bad enough, by law, as a taxpayer, I am required to pay for this. If I speak out against the practice and against the doctors and nurses performing such acts, the law calls it “hate speech.” I think this practice began to desensitize society and make it easier to introduce more destruction into our families and our values. Furthermore, it began taking over in the public schools, teaching our very young and impressionable children and grandchildren that it is okay to be gay or lesbian. They are taught “Tommy has two fathers” or “Susie has two mothers!” It is pressed in our face. We have no choice in the matter. What happened to my choice, my parental rights to raise my children the way I believe is right? When it seems that it

The news media used to do its best to expose political and moral misbehavior, unlike today how they seem to condone it.



cannot get any worse, here we are in 2020. Modernism.

Abortion is legal, promoted and backed by laws; gay and lesbian lifestyles are promoted and backed by our laws; and more recently “transgender” lifestyles are being promoted and backed by law! And if I am paying taxes (as I am required to do by law), I must pay for these atrocities! I ask God Almighty, what happened? Modernism.

The state I come from in America makes it legal for a 15-year-old (a minor) to get counseling and receive an abortion without her parents’ knowledge or approval. It is legal for a 15-year-old to get counseling and receive a sex/gender change operation without parental knowledge or approval. It is now legal in the same state for parent(s) to declare the sex of their child as M=male, F=female or X=non-binary (neither male nor female)! I would say modernism is the

cause of the changes we are witnessing in our society and of the destruction of the family unit.

In accordance with one of the definitions of modernism, many institutions that I grew up with have become broken: universities as well as elementary and high schools are teaching history, mathematics and social studies differently than in the past, say even 20 years ago. History, good or bad, is being altered to fit the agenda of modernism. Some major worldwide events, such as the Holocaust, are being lessened or even denied. Solving simple addition and division problems are barely recognizable. Very little, if any national patriotic customs such as saying the pledge of allegiance or saluting the American flag are encouraged. Now, lately, even professional sports team are using the time that is normally dedicated to building national pride or remembering how our ancestors fought

for freedom as an opportunity to protest the government, military, police, racism, religion and the like. One cannot turn on the television, radio, computer, smartphone, or any device or even just walk down the street without being drowned by all these agendas, like it or not!

All this being said, I want to take a moment to try and bring some sort of sense or balance to a situation which I fear is leaning toward insanity and much worse; even the destruction of our society and world as we know it.

As in most situations, there are good things coming to the surface. One good thing is the strengthening of our families. The situations are getting so out of control that it has forced our families to gather together, to help each other, and trust each other like we have not done much in the past. Because of the trust, we can depend on each other for various

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personal situations and needs.

The best fundamental aspect, in my opinion, is that because we realize that modernism has in fact changed the world and society as we know it, it has forced us as families and communities to rethink and re-strengthen what we consider to be our core values by which we have been living: the Biblical ways of God! This modernism, this “strong and intentional break with tradition and belief that the world is created in the act of perceiving it, that is, the world

is whatever we say it is,” so that “there is no such thing as absolute truth and there are no connections with history or institution,” is in direct contradiction to the word of God. It is directly contrary to His ways and to Him.

God spoke to His children long ago, and I believe it to be very relevant for us still to this day. Deuteronomy (29:21-25) especially comes to mind. “When the next generation, your children who will grow up after you, and the foreigner..., see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which Adonai has made it sick,then all the nations will ask, ‘what is the meaning of such anger?’ People will answer, ‘It is because they went and served other gods.’”

So how can we protect our families, ourselves, and our communities during these seemingly insane times? We can begin by learning to know Him! By getting to know the Creator of the entire universe and by reading His word; seeing what He says about Himself, about how we should live for Him, and how we should treat each other.

Yeshua also said, “I AM the truth. No one comes to the Father except by Me!” (John 14:6)

He also says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John: 14:15)

So, we can see that there is hope, there is only one way to know Him, and one way to learn how to live for Him so that it will go well with us, our children, and

our grandchildren. We can have all that He has in store for us, in this life and in the world to come! Eternally!

When His disciples asked Him what the most important commandment was, Yeshua answered, “‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one,’ and ‘you are to love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your understanding and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You are to love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other mitzvah (commandment) greater than these” (Mark 12:28b-31).

“For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach. It isn’t in the sky, so that you need to ask, ‘who will go up into the sky for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so we can obey it?’ Likewise, it is not beyond the sea, so that you need to ask, ‘who will cross the sea for us, bring it to us and make us hear it, so that we can obey it?’ On the contrary, the word is very close to you—in your mouth, even in your heart; therefore, you can do it!” (Deut. 30:11-14)

“I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have presented you with life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, CHOOSE LIFE, so that you will live, you and your children after you, loving Adonai your God, paying close attention to what He says and clinging to Him—for that is the PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE!” (Deut. 30:19-20).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy was born and raised in Los Angeles in a secular Jewish home. She met her husband, Don, and married in 1970. They have three sons, one daughter, 14 grandchildren, and a great grandchild on the way. She came to faith in Yeshua in 1973. When her children were grown, she made Aliyah in 2004. She lives in a beautiful home in Har Gilo and has worked for Netivyah since 2005. She says, “I am so blessed and grateful to be a part of the fulfillment of the Aliyah prophecy, the Netivyah community, and all that God is using us to do here in our beloved Israel.”

M O D E R N I T Y

A PLAGUE OF THE 19TH-21ST CENTURIES!

By Joseph Shulam

Modernity, a topic that has roots from the very beginning and existence of the human race is in the very nature of the human being to be inventive and innovative and always seeking ways to improve life and accomplishments for himself and his family. The root of the idea of being “modern” is the principle of what was yesterday is never satisfactory for us humans.

A good example from God’s Word for the natural desire for people to be modern and always seek ways to be up-to-date with their tools and life is from 1 Samuel 13:19-22, “Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, ‘Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.’ But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle, and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. So, on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them.”

The Philistines had a little bit better technology in smelting and working with iron and the Israelites were still in the bronze age and did not know that building a simple “bellows” that would pump air into the hot fire would increase

the heat of the fire and make it possible for the black smith to work with iron and not only with bronze.

This in fact is the very nature of being “modern”—being up to date—being in the front of the inventions and improvements in every field and area of the human existence. At one time, man worked with stone tools. He figured out that bronze can make better tools and more versatile instruments for work and for war. Later came the iron age, where it was no longer “modern” to use tools from Bronze, and the modern thing to do was to use iron tools. We have the story in the Bible that the Israelites had to go down to the Philistine towns to buy or sharpen their plows and their swords made from iron. Yes, the Israelites wanted to be more modern and have iron tools. This is the essence of what “modern” means. However, the word has changed, and modern is not enough for the latest generations of the 21st century. Modern has become a philosophical word. The word Modernity is much larger than just wanting to be up-to-date or have the latest fashion in tools or clothing. Modernity is a mind-set and a path that undermines the basic anchors and foundations of civilization. It is the breakdown of Biblical principles and the authority of God that is set as ironclad values and morals without which all the gates of hell are open welcoming mankind to enter freely with promises of life without restraint and freedom from God and brotherhood.

The divine characteristic of humanity is the ability to imagine (the imaginative faculty) and to invent things that will help the human do better tomorrow than yesterday. In essence that is also the difference between humans and the animal kingdom—although recently I have seen a reportage on television (may be National Geographic) that some prime mates (orangutans) have shown an ability to create tools (invent) that help them in their daily tasks.

“What is of yesterday is not satisfactory” is the main paradigm of modernism. The ancient paradigm of wanting to be modern and have the latest and most efficient tools has changed drastically with the so-called “age of enlightenment.” Add the industrial revolution and the European philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries, and you have a desire to be modern up to date with everything that becomes fashionable and trendy. With all this enters mass communication and competition and you have a breakdown of social order, the loss of ideology, and the meltdown of the idea of truth as a provable absolute. The anchors that held civilization, especially in the West, have shifted and obscured, and add to this volatile mix globalization and instant communication handy to all in a cigarette pack size handy cellular phone that can access the media and communicate around the world, and you have the birth of “Modernity.”

“Modernity” is very much the child of the natural desire to be modern, but

One of the strongest forces that carries us toward Modernity is the need to be a part of globalized culture and to fit into the cookie cutter culture of Paul Sartre's Beginning of Nothingness.

it is the illegitimate child of that ancient natural desire to “better” or “improve,” and to compete on the practical level with the Jones’ who want to be better than the “Hatfield’s”. In the old setup of wanting to be modern, both the Jones’ and the Hatfield’s went to church on Sunday, and the Levi’s and Cohn family went to Synagogue on Sabbath. “Modernity” today has no base that is considered either holy or necessary for the administration of our human lives in this world. Without such a common base for the life and progress of society, the lowest common denominator is used for decisions of how society will function. This is where the problematic issues with “Modernity” start and end. On the natural instinct to be modern and to improve and renew were added dreadful and poisonous values and ideas that have uprooted the anchors that

held that “truth” ought to be anchored on facts that are examinable. The idea that there are some values that are sacred and holy and applicable to all men equally dissipated and was blown by the winds of self-satisfaction and the undergirding of the idea that “might makes right” which expressed itself best by Germany during World War II and by Joseph Stalin on the frozen planes of Siberia—in Stalin’s “work camps” in the Gulags. The idea that there are moral values and behaviors that are carved on stone and unchangeable has dissipated. In “Modernity” and in what is considered modern society (20th century until now) all values and principles that our forefathers held sacred have lost their foothold and there are no absolute values to replace the old and sacred ones.

There is always a need in our human nature to improve and to innovate and to compete in what is better and what is new and more efficient. There is always a place for being “up-to-date” and being modern.

The American Declaration of Independence states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston drafted this text. Looking at the philosophical and religious convictions of these characters you can understand immediately the foundations of the statement, “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” What was “undeniable” and “sacred” or “truths” for the majority of the population in

Europe and America and may be for the whole world is no longer “self-evident,” “undeniable,” or “truth.”

The men who wrote and signed the American Declaration of Independence and the American constitution were truly great men, and their ideas were noble and true and based on Biblical faith. If they would live in our own day, they would be shocked to know the Ten Commandments were removed from the courthouses and that reading the Bible in some public events is forbidden.

Modernity was not born in the big bang; it is a trend that started from the 17th century liberal thinkers and philosophers like John Locke and others in Europe who wrote of “nothingness” and “meaninglessness” and doubted the historicity and the relevance of God’s Word. The philosophical undergirding of what is called “modernity” today started from the 17th century with a number of philosophical critiques who were looking for the ideology of the Modern that the Enlightenment movement initiated. Among the leading philosophers who contributed to this ideology were John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Friedrich Nietzsche. In the 20th century, philosophers like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Cornelius Castoriadis built on the earlier liberal philosophers to undermined the conservative ideas and Biblical principles to create the ideological bases for Modernity.

One of the strongest forces that carries us toward Modernity is the need to be a part of globalized culture and to fit into the cookie cutter culture of Paul Sartre’s Beginning of Nothingness. If there is nothingness in us as humans, if we are animals with just a higher intelligence than the monkeys in the jungle, then there really is nothing for us other than to drive

forward toward a nuclear horizon and march toward the extinction of humanity wherein someone's finger is able to push the red-button on the desk of the Oval Office in the White House or in the Kremlin's office in down-town Moscow, Russia.

Art and artists are considered by some in the 19th and 20th centuries as "modernist art." In a way, art often has the quality of holding a mirror to the face of society in a prophetic aspect. When you see the modernist art and compare it to the politics and culture that dominate Western 20th century, you can see the basic message that it communicates. Look for the message of modern art in the 19th and 20th century from the images of Picasso, Polack, Kandinsky, Miro, and many others. The reason that these great artists are is so popular is because their

look at Picasso's Guernica?

This picture is one that speaks to our modernistic world with loud monochromatic colors.

By the beginning of the 20th century, modernist art, politics, and culture were dominated by globalization, urbanization, and pleasure to be like everyone else, but it was called individualism which is a fake optimism that was based on the belief in constant progress and the improvement of the human race. By equality, freedom without constraints, alcohol and drugs, the freedom to choose what gender you want to be, and a crumbling concept of family, it is taking the human race to dangerous places.

The stage on which "modernity" stands

emoji pictures have taken the place of the written word. Truth has lost relevance even where there is clear evidence. What really matters in the post-modern world is the impression or effect that is transmitted and not the facts that establish something as being true and provable—the feeling is more important than the word and the impression is more relevant than the facts.

Disciples of Yeshua are people who believe the Bible from Genesis to Revelation to be the divine revelation of the Creator for all humans to receive as guidance, but the path for living modernism is a trend or philosophy that stands at odds with the basic belief that the Creator has given humanity a revelation of Himself and the rules how to live and relate to our fellow human beings of all races and colors. The



art holds a mirror to our faces and says, "here you are dear distorted, twisted, and emaciated human being." Look at modern art, and ask yourself, "where am I in this picture?" What do we learn about ourselves and our world when we

now is already called "Post-Modern." That means that the desire to be modern is already passed its usefulness, and now we have moved to the Post-Modern where the written word has lost much of its relevance, and the little icons and

Creator has defined what is "a family." He has given us humans the concept of just and unjust, right and wrong, good and evil, friend and foe, war and peace, crime and punishment, and every other aspect of our human existence in this life

so that we can inherit eternal life.

We want to be modern and up to date in all things of this world but stay in the matrix that the Creator of the world has given us in writing, from Genesis to Revelation. We can live in modern homes and turn on our hot-water heater from our cellphones. We can dress modern and modest. We can cook our food in the microwave oven. We can drive modern cars and use modern cellphones, tablets, and computers. When a new model of a cellphone comes out, I want to be up to date. If new vehicle will come out that will run off of light from the sun, I would like to have it and save on gas. All this is good and right, but to sell out the very basis of our culture and ethics and to melt down the very idea of what truth is—what is right and wrong in the spiritual, national, and ethical sense as defined by the Word of God for the existence of our human civilization—is societal suicide.

I believe that we ought to be modern and constantly to improve everything that is possible to improve always based on God's Word—what is good, right, pure, and wholesome. We also ought to watch and pray and stay away from the values and abominations of our “modern” world.

I believe that Modernism and Modernity are some of the trends that are extremely threatening to civilization as we have known since creation. If those who are cooking modernity with the intent to serve it to the world on a silver platter

have their way, and the place and honor and respect for the Word of God continues to be downgraded and dishonored and dismissed, the world for our grandchildren will look totally different from what we know today.

As disciples of Yeshua our Rabbi, our Savior, our Lord, I believe that this is the most difficult and important war that we ought to be fighting. In order to succeed, these are the things that we must do:

1. Pray intensely and daily the Lord's prayer!
2. Read the Bible (if possible, in Hebrew) from Genesis to Revelation. If you do these 15 minutes each day in one year you will have read the whole Bible. It is important to read it in order from start to finish. You cannot get a clear picture if you just pick here and there a chapter or a paragraph. There is a Holy Spirit order that makes the progress and picture clear.
3. Share your faith with anyone, anytime, and always as a person who loves Jews, loves Israel, and loves the Word of God.
4. Keep the commandments of the Lord that you can keep. You can start with some of the easy and simple commandments and grow slowly into some of the heavier commandments. Here are some instant commandments that you can and ought to keep.

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i. Do not give your alms or contributions in public like some of the churches are accustomed to do (like taking an envelope and walking to the front to put it in the zedakah box). Yeshua commanded us to give in a way that you do not show or flaunt your giving in front of the public. I never understood why the churches in the world do not keep this simple and important command.

ii. If you have a problem with a brother or sister, do not gossip and share it with others. Go first to your brother or sister, and talk face-to-face about your grievance. (See Matthew 18:15-17)

iii. Work and support your family. (See 1 Timothy 5:8.)

There are many more commandments in the New Testament that are ignored or not taught in most of the churches. If you start with keeping those simple commands, you will discover that the Lord will give you guidance to do more. If you are faithful in a little, you will get from the Lord much more.

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.



Pornography

By Oded Shoshani

*“For we know that the law is spiritual,
but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For
I do not understand my own actions.
For I do not do what I want, but I do
the very thing I hate... Wretched man
that I am! Who will deliver me from
this body of death? Thanks be to God
through Messiah Yeshua our Lord!
So then, I myself serve the law of God
with my mind, but with my flesh I serve
the law of sin”*

(Romans 7:14-15, 24-25).

Even if we try to deny it, ignore it, or paint reality in beautiful colors, addiction to pornography affects a significant percentage of the population, even among believers. The corona crisis has doubled and tripled the time we spend online (and the time our children spend on the computer). As a result, the potential for exposure to temptations increases significantly. We have two options: curse the darkness or light a candle. I believe this is a golden opportunity to light a candle! Yes, pornography addiction is a black stain in our world and in the society in which we live. However, this acute problem provides many opportunities for evangelism and discipleship, even among our own home and family. When someone approaches us with a porn addiction problem, or if we spot someone browsing such sites, we have a golden opportunity, not only because we

addiction. I also know that there is hope in Yeshua HaMashiach, that there is enough grace of Yeshua to overcome the addiction and the habit.

Let us muster the courage to speak and discuss the subject honestly and openly. Let us extend a hand of kindness, forgiveness, and hope to those who suffer, so that they may learn to live in the love of the Lord.

Defining Identity, Purpose of Life and Sexual Identity

Before we talk about pornography, it is important for us to understand what our identity is, what the purpose in life is, and what our sexual identity is.

Identity: We read in Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male

Purpose of Life: Jesus prayed for us in John 17: 3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent". The meaning of know in the Greek of the New Testament is similar to the meaning of know in Biblical Hebrew - to understand, and to know intimately—in this case our Father in heaven and Yeshua HaMashiach. The Messianic faith is not just acknowledging our sins, atonement, and forgiveness by Yeshua HaMashiach, but also and especially closeness, love, and intimacy with God.

We read in Acts 20:24 "... to testify to the gospel of the grace of God". Saul testifies that his life was meant to testify to God's grace.

Defining the "purpose of our lives," using Lauren Cunningham's words, is: To know God and make Him known.

Watching porn leads to addiction. It affects the secretion of certain hormones in the brain and feelings of arousal and high, which lead to a cycle of watching more to attain more stimulation. It is important to understand that softcore porn actually leads to hardcore porn.

understand the problem, but because we have the solution. Who can save people from abominable acts that they do not want to do? Who can free them from this body of death? "Thanks be to God through Messiah Yeshua our Lord!"

I know from experience with men and teens how hard this addiction is, how much internal suffering is caused to those who want to break free from the addiction, and how many times people fall back into the power of habit or

and female created he them". God is the one who created us! We were not created in the process of evolution. He did this in a very amazing and wise way when He created us as a man or a woman, two different beings who reflect the image of God, each in its own unique way.

Our definition of identity is summed up in the fact that we were created by God, in His image and likeness, as a man or a woman.

Sexual Identity: We read in Genesis 1:27, 28 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply..." God created two separate entities, a man and a woman. Each of these beings is unique and at the same time reflects the image of God. God created us so that man and woman have the opportunity to participate in creation through the birth of a new life.

Pornography teaches us a very wrong sexual reality. It represents a distorted and non-biblical way of thinking.

Genesis 2:24 “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”.

In this verse, there is a deep definition of how God created the process of “be fruitful, and multiply”. This is done through a process we today call “marriage.” Marriage is not just living together, and marriage is not just about having sex.

According to these verses, marriage is defined as:

-Commitment (“cleave unto his wife”) to a lifelong relationship

-Realization of the commitment (the scriptures also call this commitment a covenant) by sex, “they shall be one flesh”.

-This commitment and having sex are between one “man” and one “wife”.

-All other relationships that are not between a man and a woman (such as a man with a man, a woman with a woman, etc.) even if they have love, sex and even commitment, were not included in God’s creation.

Although it is not explicitly stated in these verses, God created sexual intercourse

as a good, enjoyable thing, which strengthens the marital relationship.

One of the questions that arises in this regard is, how is my sexual identity defined when I am not married. The answer to this is that God created you as a man or as a woman, even if you are not yet married. Remember that the purpose of life is not to marry and have children, but to know God in love, closeness, and intimacy.

The scriptural definition of sexual identity is in that we were created as a man or a woman, each in the image of God. Every man and woman is given the ability to have sex. This ability gives us the possibility to give birth to children. In contrast, there are sexual identity definitions in the world that are not part of God’s creation, such as transgender, bisexual, gay, and lesbian.

Pornography

By definition, pornography is the presentation of a person’s body or sexual behavior in order to provoke sexual arousal. There are two main types of pornography: softcore pornography and hardcore pornography.

Softcore pornography appears in TV series, on the internet, etc. It starts with photos and videos of beautiful men and women dressed in tight attire that highlights intimate parts of their bodies, clothing that reveals body parts with sexual significance, such as a woman’s cleavage, and scenes with sexual innuendos. It goes on in movies with partial exposure scenes of sex. It also includes homosexual attraction between men and lesbian attraction between women.

Watching porn leads to addiction. It affects the secretion of certain hormones in the brain and feelings of arousal and

high, which lead to a cycle of watching more to attain more stimulation. It is important to understand that softcore porn actually leads to hardcore porn.

Hardcore porn is viewing pictures and videos of explicit sexual activity of all kinds,

heterosexual, gay, lesbian, and more. It is a full exposure of intimate body parts and full, overt sexual activity.

What Happens to Us When We Watch Pornography?

Pornography teaches us a very wrong sexual reality. It represents a distorted and non-biblical way of thinking. We learn to think of the opposite sex as an object for



sexual purposes, without feelings, thoughts, and personality. It can cause you to start looking for sex without commitment. Later on, this person does not know how to talk and how to create an emotional relationship with the partner.

This later leads to sexual problems in marriage and possibly to divorce.

suffer from significant damage to their sex lives, such as impotence. Studies show some other problems that are very difficult to treat.

Users of hardcore pornography live in a sense of shame (what others will say) and guilt (why I did it again) and fear (I will be exposed as a user). Fear may lead to thoughts such as, I will be rejected by people or even by God. The result of the fear is that I live a double life so that I will not be discovered as pornography addict.

Some Statistics

Admittedly, it is difficult to obtain accurate data for today, but the data give an understanding of the trend in which both general and Messianic societies are heading. Most of the data that can be obtained is from the United States, but it reflects a global trend. The situation in Israel is very close to that.

One in seven internet searches are pornography related (some statistics speak at one in four).

-In 1998 there were 14 million pornography pages on the Internet, in 2015 there were already 1.79 billion.

-35% of online downloads are pornographic, not counting online viewing.

-The age group that uses porn the most is 15-24.

- The porn industry says that 30% of its viewers are children!

- The average age of exposure is 11, and it continues to decline.

-By the age of 18, about 90% of boys and 60% of girls have been exposed to pornography.

Watching pornography and masturbation produces in the brain a cocktail of hormones that cause addiction. Studies suggest that this addiction is similar to drug addiction.

-85% of men and 50% of women watch porn at least once a month.

-About 90% of pornography shows that violence is acceptable, through verbal violence, physical violence, sexual violence, and objectification the other. This makes him or her an object to be used for my needs negating that this person has thoughts, desires, and feelings. This is one of the reasons for the rising violence in the world and in Israel.

-Two out of three divorce cases are related to pornography.

-One in five children receives an invitation to sex via the Internet, email, Facebook, chat rooms and more.

-71% of teens hide their online behavior from their parents.

-Pornography causes children and women objectification for the purposes of sex and for the production of pornography.



Watching pornography and masturbation produces in the brain a cocktail of hormones that cause addiction. Studies suggest that this addiction is similar to drug addiction. This addiction can lead us later to sex shops, sex services and more. Because pornography encourages violence, viewers learn that it is an accepted way to express yourself, with violence against the opposite sex and violence in general. Users of hardcore pornography

Do I want to contribute to the trafficking of women and children? Do I want the violence caused by pornography to be in my life?

Statistics Among Believers

-76% of Messianic people, ages 18-24, are active in pornography searches.

-68% of men who come to congregations watch porn regularly.

-Only 13% of believing women said they have never watched porn, meaning 87% have watched at least once.

Why Not Watch Pornography?

The Bible gives us plenty of instruction on the topic of fornication (זנות *z'nut*). It is a broad topic, using different words to describe it and has the sense of sexual and spiritual deviation from the purpose we were created for. The term pornography is derived from the Greek "pornea" which is translated as fornication.

Fornication appears as the reason for the nations being driven out of the Land of Canaan (Leviticus 18 and 20).

Fornication appears in the Bible with a clear instruction to avoid and keep away from it:

Lev. 19:29 "Do not prostitute thy

daughter, to cause her to be a whore (זנות *z'nut*); lest the land fall to whoredom (זנות *z'nut*), and the land become full of wickedness".

Col. 3:5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry".

We defined at the beginning of the article that the main goal of my life is "To know God and make Him known". Do pornography and masturbation in our lives achieve that? Do I want to contribute to the trafficking of women and children? Do I want the violence caused by pornography to be in my life?

How Do I Overcome Pornography?

1-Make a decision and ask for help to overcome pornography. We need other believers to accompany us with love in the process of weaning. We also need to learn to walk in light in every area of our lives and not hide the things we have hitherto done in the dark.

2-Confession that all forms of pornography (soft and hardcore) are a sin, and repent before the Lord and before a person of your choice (James 5:16).

Confession starts before the Lord, from the heart, from the understanding that I cannot continue living before God with a clear conscience. It continues with confession before other believers. A woman can do this with the wife of the pastor or of one of the elders. A man can do this with the pastor or with one of the elders. The purpose of the confession is not only to say that I have a problem, but also that I need help.

3-Understand that overcoming pornography use is a time-consuming

process and involves renewal. We need patience and perseverance for this. For one person it might take a few days, but usually it is a process of months and sometimes years. In this process there can be a lapse or even a fall. But remember that there is always enough grace from Yeshua. Keep asking for help.

4-Find yourself an accountability partner. It is someone you can call right before you go to a porn site and ask for help in conversation and prayer. He can receive reports from software (see section 7 below) on your computer and call you to encourage you or ask for explanations. He should be someone who loves you and has the patience to go with you through the renewal process.

5-Disconnect what binds you: friends, situations and circumstances, computer/smartphone. Maybe for some of your friends, porn is normal. Our decision to overcome pornography should include the choice of good friends and whether we should keep a distance from those who pull us down. We are also used to daily use of computer and smartphone, navigation software, web browsing, social media and more. It seems to us that we will not be able to live our lives without regular use of these devices. I know a community shepherd who in the process realized that his smartphone was controlling him, and he decided to go back to the old phone without internet, just because he wanted to be a winner in the end. There is also the option of turning most smartphones into a "kosher phone", a phone with little internet access which prevents browsing porn sites.

6-Install software that prevents access to pornographic sites and has reporting software. There are programs that prevent access to pornographic sites such as K9. There are programs that report to your accountability partner where you

Our decision to overcome pornography should include the choice of good friends and whether we should keep a distance from those who pull us down.

have been on the internet, both mobile and computer, such as Covenanteyes. Both types of software are used as an aid for you to move forward in the rehab process.

7-Learn what the “triggers” from the past are that send you to pornography. Part of our detox process is getting to know ourselves better and what sends us into pornography and masturbation. In our growth process we have made various choices that still affect us. It could be that our coping with rejection was through pornography and masturbation. It may be that a relationship we had before we came to faith still affects the way we think and identify.

8-You can receive support, courses, and various treatments. There are quite a few online courses that help with this, such as Celebrate Recovery. There are also support groups that are based on 12 steps, and there are also licensed therapists and believing psychologists who will accompany you through the healing process you have decided on.

How to Protect our Children from Pornography?

Remember that about 71% of teens hide their surfing habits from their parents.

1-Parents, be the ones who guide children from a very young age on sexual development. I know from experience that when you start talking to children from a very young age (from age 3) about their physical and sexual development and accustom them over the years to discussing the issue openly, it breaks the fear, guilt and shame that may come in their teenage years when they experience accelerated sexual development. Of course, such conversations should be age appropriate. There is a variety of literature that will help you parents do this, such as the book “The Story of Me” by Navpress. It is important that you remember to teach and re-teach your children what your identity is, what your life purpose is, and what your sexual identity is.

2-Parents, learn to use the internet and seek help from more experienced people, including young adults. This is a very important field; do not give in to the feeling that it is too big to try and learn. You need to learn what the dangers are and where they lurk, read related articles, and look for help online. There are options to take care of the family network by using Microsoft Family. Also, Apple devices have different control options on your family phones. There are apps such as Qustudio or Family Link that will

help you protect your children.

3-Teach your children what the dangers are on the Internet.

4-Install a web filter and/or reporting software such as K9 or Covenanteyes.

5-Put the computer in the living room or open room at home.

6-Print an online safety statement and have all your children sign it. It can be found online.

7-Know what your children are doing online, including setting up screen time each day, using software and apps that allow you as a parent to know and control your child’s phone.

8-Be a personal example of managing your life in holiness and purity.

Pornography is a common problem in every stratum of the population and stems from sinful human nature. The implications of pornography are broad, it contradicts the identity that God created in us and for the purpose of our lives, it drives human trafficking, and authorizes domestic and social violence on a large scale.

You are not alone, there are safeguards and there are various helpful ways to overcome.

And there is hope and there is grace in Yeshua not only to break the addiction, but also to receive renewal of mind!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oded Shoshani was born in 1959 in the Tel Aviv area. After completion of his army service, he came to know Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel. Shortly thereafter he married Sandy, and he began his studies at the Israel Institute of Technology “Technion” in Haifa. He completed a degree in mechanical engineering and worked in this profession for thirteen years. In 2002, the Lord called him to full-time service in the ministry, and in January 2004, he became pastor of Melech HaMelachim, located in Jerusalem. Raising up the next generation of believers and equipping future leaders is a primary focus for Oded. He and his wife have seven children and nine grandchildren.

PLANNING KIDS? HOW IRRESPONSIBLE OF YOU!

By Adam Rosenfeld

“You’re so irresponsible!” the nurse berated my wife. “How could you get pregnant again after already having two children?” It was supposed to be a routine pregnancy checkup. But it turned into an attack on my wife. She had to endure the aggressive complaints of her nurse. It was not cool with her that a young woman, in her late 20s, was having a third pregnancy.

“So, are you planning on having any more children?” is a question I hear regularly. And I often struggle to find the words to answer it. For me, it is a non-starter. How do the words “planning” and “children” find their way into the same sentence? And why is that sentence always phrased as a question?

Sure, I can see how it makes sense to people. But to me, it seems that this question only makes sense when you have already accepted a package of social norms that such a question fits nicely within—social norms that put children lower on the list of priorities than they should be. How about this: can I ask you to please put those social norms aside for a moment, and imagine a world in which having children is not a question? Where human life is so valued that a family would not think twice about bringing life into the world?

I think that it is worth saying again – can you imagine a world in which a family wouldn’t think twice about bringing life into the world?

Does that sound like a fantasy to you? Well, as long as it does, society is not going to change much.

Parenthood is “Irresponsible”

Is it irresponsible to bring children into the world? My wife’s nurse certainly thought so. There’s so much social thinking that discourages parents from having children. It is as if it is only okay to have children if certain factors are set in place: things like income, job security, community, etc. And if the child in the womb has a defect or risk of impairment? Again, you are warned for having that child, and encouraged to terminate the pregnancy.

Well, we have not seen that nurse for a while. I do not know what she would say if she saw us today, as we are now at eight children – eight. *The average birth rate for our country (Israel) is 2.64 children per family. So, we have over three times the number of children that our country’s society is used to.

Parenthood is Blind Faith

Is this irresponsible? I do not think so. It is an act of blind faith in human life. Remember that someone paid the price

There’s so much social thinking that discourages parents from having children. It is as if it is only okay to have children if certain factors are set in place: things like income, job security & community.



*Accurate as of the date of the original article. The updated 2020 statistic is 3.01 children per family.

for everyone – those born and those yet to be born. That was an act of blind faith in human life – there was no guarantee that anyone would accept or honor His sacrifice.

And no, I am not talking about putting your faith in humanity – humanity will always let you down. Humanity is frail, broken, and evil. But human life is not. Human life is... life. Life only comes from one source. Life is worth being valued, as the Author of life is worth being valued.

and ancient. People today are much more enlightened, aren't they? People do not do stuff like that today, do they?

Here is what today looks like – today there is a culture that values bringing human life only under certain conditions. Otherwise, it is considered irresponsible—it is socially unacceptable. Which means it is just plain unacceptable. So unacceptable that parents are encouraged to terminate pregnancies if these conditions are not met. Is this not barbaric as well?

Children are a responsibility. Pets are a responsibility. Plants are a responsibility. Every form of life requires commitment in order for it to survive and grow. And today's culture spurns commitment because commitment limits your options. But what are those options worth without a proper concept of value, starting with the value of human life?

The best thing you can do is to be a father or mother. And if you are not in a family setting, it does not mean that

today there is a culture that values bringing human life only under certain conditions. Otherwise, it is considered irresponsible—it is socially unacceptable.

Irresponsible or not, having children is exactly the thing that taught me responsibility. Yes, it would have been great to know what I know now when I was a new father. But I just do not see how that could happen without first putting blind faith into becoming a father. You cannot just arrive at a destination without the journey.

Parenthood has Conditions

Our family lives on a hill atop the valley of Ben Hinnom in Jerusalem, Israel. Today that valley has a pretty green park, a cinematheque with a nice restaurant, and a municipal music center. It is also flanked by some nice cliffs that are a draw for weekend rock climbers.

But in Biblical times, it was called Tophet: the place where people sacrificed their babies to the gods Molech and Baal. Yes, that same place. It all sounds so barbaric

There is only one true condition required for responsibly bringing life into the world. It is the binding and exclusive commitment of a mother and a father. After that condition is met, why then should it be a question? And even if that condition is not met, that does not mean that you cannot rejoice and be happy over the creation of new life. Nothing is stopping you from treating that child as if he or she were just born to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Parenthood is the Best Thing You Can Do in Life

So why did we bring eight children into the world? Because the value of bringing a human life into the world to me was greater than any cost I could list. And I have listed those costs. Those costs were great. I feel them every day. But they just do not add up to more than the value of bringing a human life into the world.

you cannot act as a father or mother for those in need. You can still reach out and care for children in need of a father or mother. You can give your time and resources to support other parents. You can choose for yourself to reject those social norms that do not give proper value to human life.

Yeah, those are all commitments. Maybe it would be irresponsible of you to jump into a commitment like that. But I do not know any other way to start the journey that teaches responsibility in a way you just cannot learn otherwise. In other words – I do not know any other way to just plain grow up.

This article originally appeared on adamleerosenfeld.com and is reposted here with permission.

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.

The Letter

I didn't want to write

By Rachel Boskey

Posted on August 30,
2020 By Avner Boskey

Shalom dear friend,

This is a letter I did not want to write. Composing this letter over the last few weeks has been difficult. Yet I am compelled to tell you what I sense, writing as carefully as I can.

For many years of our marriage and ministry, Avner has been the one who has written the pertinent newsletters. I have written the more personal Boskey ministry and family updates. This time, I am the one who has written a newsletter. I have poured my anguished heart into this.

Anybody who knows me knows that I desire to think, speak, and live positively. My default setting is wearing rose-colored glasses every day. Most of the time, I choose positivity as my temporal reality, but joy is different. True joy is from God and can be experienced in the most difficult, painful, and even horrific times. True joy can walk hand-in-hand with sorrow.

So, this letter that I did not want to write is not a “happy” letter. But it is a true letter as God is my witness and my helper. I hope that this letter will encourage you to dive deeper to reach the ultimate source of unfailing joy—what I desire for myself I desire for you.

2020 Foreseen

Some years ago, I felt that 2020 would be different than previous years. I sensed that the movement of time itself, in a sense, would seem to accelerate. On January 27, 2020, I wrote these words to our whole mailing list: “For the last few years I have sensed that the year 2020 would be a time of a quickening pace in the events leading to the Lord’s return. Already, I feel this is happening, and it points to our increasing need for spiritual sobriety and prayerful vigilance. We ask the Lord to keep our eyes focused on Him and on His calling in our lives to see ‘all Israel saved’ and ‘Israel the exceedingly great army’ of Ezekiel 37:10.”

Trouble is Coming and is Here

Avner and I have traveled to over 35 countries in 41 years of marriage. For the last several decades and especially for the last five years, we have been writing and speaking about unprecedented trouble coming on the earth. We have spoken about steadily increasing persecution of the Jewish people especially in the West. We have consistently warned believers in Yeshua to be ready to help Jewish people when their lives are threatened. We have constantly encouraged people to watch, pray, and prepare.

North America is one of the primary countries where our voices have been heard. In the USA, every time I have spoken about coming persecution of the Jewish people there, I felt disbelief at the words coming out of my own mouth. I’ve usually said, “I believe trouble is coming, but I honestly do not see how it will come. I cannot imagine what it will look like. I can hardly believe it will happen.” The last time we were in the USA was November 2019. I warned then to prepare for coming trouble, especially for Jewish people, still hardly believing myself as I spoke.

Yet I proclaimed the need to be alert and watching based on my convictions from what I know of history, Bible prophecy, and God’s covenants, character, and commitment to His own Word and to His own people Israel. At the same time, I have struggled to accept how the prophetic scriptures detailing the end time events could touch the USA, especially juxtaposed with the goodness that has prevailed over the USA by the grace of God.

I just did not see how this trouble, which I knew would surely be coming to the USA, would happen.

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My Own History

I was born in 1957, a mere 12 years after the end of the Shoah. Awareness of WWII and the Holocaust are of huge significance in my life. I am the oldest of seven children and grew up in a Bible-believing home. I was born in Minneapolis Minnesota, formerly the headquarters of Billy Graham’s ministry and once a bastion of evangelicalism. I grew up listening to Christian radio, going to church every Sunday, singing hymns, listening to recordings of Handel’s Messiah, and hearing the Bible read every night by my father. My parents also read other books to us. We had no TV in our home. One of the books my parents read was “The Hiding Place” by Corrie ten Boom. Corrie’s story captured my heart. These foundational elements marked and shaped me.

My parents, today ages 94 and 88, love and pray for Israel and the Jewish people.

Both Christian and Jewish periodicals, music, art, literature, and people were present in our home. I was always in love with Israel. I committed my life to the Lord at age 16 and knew unmistakably that Israel would be my destiny, my calling, and my home. I have been watching, studying, living beside, and learning from Jewish people my entire life. Jewish people of all kinds have shaped me. I am beyond privileged to share in the destiny of the Jewish people, physically and spiritually.

My father often said that he desired for all of his children to have a sense of history, to grasp the importance of historical events, to live in light of the grand sweep of time’s movement, and to have heaven’s view of what is to come. I believe his desire has come true in my life. Now, from my vantage point of living most of the last four decades in Israel, I am watching a massive paradigm shift take place in the USA.

I remember reading “Our Dance has Turned to Death” in 1981, a book popular among some evangelicals at that time. The author identifies and explains the common pattern of family decline in civilizations which have crumbled, like the Roman Empire. I thought to myself then — yes, all of this will happen in the USA. I did not want to think too much about this decay, but I saw it coming almost 40 years ago. Since then, of course, this decline and much worse have already happened. Many faithful believers (including our respected friend and Messianic Jewish scholar, speaker, and writer Dr. Michael Brown) have correctly identified the downward spiral of the West and have offered the only solution to stop the decline: repentance and return to the moral code given by the God of Israel.

Yet, even with some measure of repentance, I believe the die has been

irreversibly cast for the USA. I grieve deeply even to write these words.

“If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3)

I love the land of my birth. I love the freedom for Gospel preaching there and from there to the world. I love the commitment to the welfare of the Jewish people and Israel. I love so much about America. But there has been a significant degrading of the biblical and moral foundations of the USA. In my innermost being, I sense that the damage to the foundations is beyond repair in either the near or the distant future.

Here is how I see it. Picture the USA as a table with four legs. Two of those legs are already broken.

One broken leg: since 1973 over 61,000,000 babies have been killed in their mothers’ wombs in the USA. There is a lot of blood crying from the ground.

The second broken leg of the table is the degradation, distortion, and attempt to mutilate beyond recognition the foundational building block of humanity — God’s order for human sexuality — “male and female” He created them. The broken parts and pieces of this foundation would include rampant pornography, human trafficking, and the homosexual agenda being forced upon society in America. A date I will never forget is June 26, 2015 when homosexual marriage became legal in the USA. I wept. For some days, I remember driving around in the Negev in my car, tears running down my face, grieving about the precipitous moral downward shift in the USA. At that point, I sensed that there was no going back, no retrieval of what had been, no

There is a ton of scripture written about and to the Jewish people in nearly every book of the Bible. Since the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God has consistently dealt with the people of Israel as His major focus.

way to reverse the trend picking up the speed of a tsunami-birther tidal wave.

The forces that maintain domestic law and order may be a third leg of the table which is disintegrating. The protection of law-abiding citizens in the USA is being eaten by termites. Lawlessness (Matthew 24:12) will damage any nation from within.

Dare I say that a weakened fourth pillar may be the spiritual status of Christians in the USA? The moral compromise, watered-down message of the Gospel, lack of widespread true repentance, and shortage of preaching on sin, righteousness, and judgment are causing the partially broken structure of my illustration to lurch and reel.

Writings from Various Sources about the Current State of Affairs in the USA

Here are some articles and quotes which have squeezed my heart.

1) “Yes, This Is a Revolution” written by Abe Greenwald, executive editor of Commentary Magazine. Here are some quotes from Abe Greenwald’s article:

- If it wasn’t clear in late May and early June, it should be well understood by now that we are in the throes of a genuine revolution of the most extravagant sort. Like messianic revolutionaries of the past, the revolutionary mob of the 21st century is out to “remake the world.” Their compass is “no longer pointed at one thing.” It’s aimed in all directions at once. As Thomas Paine said approvingly of France in 1791, “it is the age of revolutions, in which everything may be looked for.” A mission so grandiose demands the most radical assault on the current order, and changing the world begins with changing one’s country. So it was in France in 1789, Russia in 1917, and China in 1949. And this is especially so if one’s country is seen as the seat of the present evil and is also the most powerful nation on the planet. This is, then, most fundamentally a revolution against the United States of America and all it stands for.

- But more important than all this, a revolution should not be understood as synonymous with an armed insurgency. It is the transformation of popular ideas and beliefs and, most important, of a country’s national character that marks the advent of revolution. The French Revolution was inaugurated by the non-violent creation of the National Assembly, years before the Terror. The Russian Revolution was preceded by 12 days of protests kicked off by a Women’s Day March. By clinging to the colorful notions of revolution in our shared imagination, we dangerously underestimate the significance of what has transpired in the U.S. this summer.

- [referring to WWI] . . . And that war was triggered, literally, by a high-school teenager named Gavrilo Princip, who shot and killed Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. We have our own Gavrilo Princip in the person of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who might prove over time to have been the most consequential figure of the 21st century thus far. Chauvin became one of history’s epochal nobodies when he was captured by video leaning on the neck of, and likely killing, George Floyd during an arrest for suspicion of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill.

2) “NYC is Dead Forever” article (<https://nypost.com/2020/08/17/nyc-is-dead-forever-heres-why-james-altucher/>) and video (<https://youtu.be/g3mqvzN8NVM>), both worth your time

3) Another highly respected source is Mike Bickle. Here are two quotes from Mike’s July 31 2020 and August 20 2020 letters.

- When I talk about a new normal and “not going back,” I am speaking from a historical, big-picture point of view of where we are. I believe we have crossed over a line in terms of the Lord’s biblical end-time story line accelerating in a new way across the nations. We are not going back to where we were before (and not just in the way we do technology and spend money or in how we relate). History is moving on a faster track. The pace is picking up. We have crossed a line of demarcation. In that sense, we are not going back, ever, to how things were before. We are entering into a very significant prophetic hour of history that will be characterized by both escalating darkness and escalating light — even the greatest revival in history, that will far surpass what happened in the book of Acts.

- Currently, many in the Body of Christ

are disinterested in understanding the Biblical view of God's judgments. Some are simply embarrassed by them. Some preach against them. Worse than that, some born-again believers actually despise the judgments of God. Isaiah prophesied that when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9). To learn righteousness includes much more than being taught to make virtuous righteous choices in life. Those who learn righteousness learn to interpret God's judgments through the lens of love by understanding the Father's heart and Jesus' excellent leadership — both of which are significant expressions of His righteousness.

“When the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9)

I believe there are now two main objectives of the Lord regarding two groups of people in the USA.

nothing specifically written in prophetic scripture about it. However, there is much scripture written to the believers in Yeshua who dwell in every nation of the earth.

2) The other purpose is what the Lord said He will do regarding the Jewish people including those now living in the USA. This is the primary focus of my letter.

There is a ton of scripture written about and to the Jewish people in nearly every book of the Bible. Since the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God has consistently dealt with the people of Israel as His major focus. He has prioritized the Jewish people throughout their history. Their past, present, and future judgments, and their past, present, and future successes and blessings are recorded in the Word. God will always go after His people Israel, He will always remember them, He is always jealous for them, and He will always have His

Israel. More Jews are returning every day to escape increasingly anti-Semitic countries.

One of God's purposes in shaking nations is to reach, move, and ultimately save Jewish people who live in the midst of them, who hear and obey the voice of the Lord

• “For behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Israel among all nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground. All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’” (Amos 9:9-10)

• “Therefore behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ But, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the

We are now living in the unprecedented season of Jewish people returning to the land of Israel from every nation and land on the face of the earth.

1) One purpose is to purify His bride, to prepare His own redeemed people dwelling in the USA for His coming and to work through them to bring revival wherever possible. The USA, as a nation, is not the Lord's priority in the same measure as Him preparing His people.

“Behold the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales. All the nations are as nothing before Him. They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless” (Isaiah 40:15-17). As much as I love the USA, I have found

way with them. His faithfulness to His covenants and His uncompromising and particular love for them are unwavering.

Throughout their history, the Lord has more than once scattered Jewish people from their land and regathered them back to their home. We are now living in the unprecedented season of Jewish people returning to the land of Israel from every nation and land on the face of the earth. Over the last 150 years Jewish people have returned to Israel in successive waves of Aliyah. There are now 6.8 million Jewish people living in

north and from all the countries where He had banished them.’ For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.” (Jeremiah 16:14-15)

Jeremiah describes specific geographical places from which the Lord would return the Jewish people to their land. He speaks of (1) the land of the north and (2) from all the countries.

Since 1990 over 1,000,000 Jewish people have moved to Israel, from lands north of Israel. When communism fell in 1989, the gates opened suddenly to

let great numbers of Russian-speaking Jewish people out of the former Soviet Union. This is a major move of God in our day, massively eclipsing the return of 50,000 Jews to the land of Israel in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Most of the church is unaware of this huge prophetic sign taking place in our generation.

Hatred of Jewish people is once again mushrooming across Europe. There is ongoing movement of Jewish people from France, the UK, and other European countries relocating to Israel to escape persecution.

My Purpose in Writing this Letter is to Alert You

Without a doubt, this wave of Anti-Semitism is moving rapidly to the West and has already found fertile ground to spread its poison in the USA.

Anti-Semitic crimes in the USA are skyrocketing. Unprecedented in US history until just the last few years, Jewish people are being murdered in synagogues and beaten on streets in the US. Their tombstones are being toppled, hate-based graffiti is marred their community centers and houses of

worship, their lives are being threatened, and they are being chased and hounded.

Four murderous assaults on multiple Jewish people in the last three years (two of these were perpetrated by white-supremacists, two by black anti-Semites, all were ideologically based hate crimes):

- October 2018, Pittsburgh, PA
- April 2019, Poway, CA
- December 2019, Jersey City, NJ
- December 2019, Monsey, NY

Just one news item among countless others is this July 15, 2020 article: "Former NYPD commissioner warns US Jews: protect your communities. We are in a dangerous place in history, Raymond Kelly warned"

There are approximately six million Jewish people now living in the USA. The societal upheaval in the USA called a "revolution" by Abe Greenwald of Commentary Magazine is already awakening some Jewish people. There is an increase in the number of American Jews seeking to make Aliyah.

• "Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen," declares the LORD, "and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks. For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes." (Jeremiah 16:16-17)

• "In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." (Hosea 5:15)

Many theologians and Bible scholars have written about the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7, Zechariah 13:8). It is not my purpose to explain or give my views about this doctrine in this letter. My hope is that Jewish lives will be saved.

Shouting Out a Warning that More Trouble is Coming

In the 1930's, a famous man named Ze'ev Jabotinsky repeatedly warned and shouted to Jewish people to get out of Europe.

The following is a translation from Yiddish of Jabotinsky's touching and sad speech in Tisha B'Av, October 24, 1938, Warsaw, Poland. It was his prophetic warning to his people, to the masses of his brothers and sisters:

• "It is already three years that I am calling upon you, Polish Jewry, who are the crown of World Jewry. I continue to warn you incessantly that a catastrophe is coming closer, I became gray and old in these days, my heart bleeds, that you dear brothers and sisters, do not see the volcano which will soon begin to spit its all-consuming lava. I see that you are not seeing this because you are immersed and sunk in your daily worries. Today, however, I demand from you trust. You were convinced already that my

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prognoses have already proved to be right. If you think differently, then drive me out of your midst. However, if you do believe me, then listen to me in this 12th hour: In the name of G-D!! Let anyone of you save himself as long as there is still time, and time there is very little.

Corrie ten Boom is a model for me. Corrie, her family, and many other righteous people risked their lives to save Jewish people during WWII. One-third of the Jewish people alive at that time perished in the Holocaust. Even more than 6,000,000 Jewish people would have perished if righteous people had not acted to save them. Like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, many who opposed the Nazi regime perished.

Tragically, most Jews did not escape from Europe, and they perished. There are not enough words. Only fountains of tears will touch the incalculable grief of this calamity.

• “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (Jeremiah 9:9)

Right Now There are about Six Million Jewish People Living in the USA

Avner and I rarely watch films. Yet at the recommendation of one of our sons, we recently watched the six-part mini-series “Plot Against America.”

This film describes a dystopian scenario in which an extreme right-wing Nazi-allied candidate wins the US presidency in 1940. We see the story develop through the eyes of one extended Jewish family. The realities portrayed in this mini-series are disturbingly believable and ring out a prophetic warning.

Often, mainstream writers and artists have their fingers on the pulse of history. Many accurately analyze the present and predict the future. This film describes what would have happened to Jewish Americans if extreme far-right or fascist forces had ascended to leadership in the USA in the 1940’s.

*I do not believe
the future of
American Jews
is secure. If the
Jewish people
continue to have
false hope of
safety in the USA,
their future will
be jeopardized.
This causes much
grief.*

I believe the very same type of scenario could develop if just the opposite result took place — that is, if the far left ascended to leadership in the USA. Far-left/Marxist/Communist leadership in the USA would be as dangerous for the future of Jewish Americans as if the far-right were to be in charge.

With sorrow, I write that I believe that whichever candidate wins the US presidential election in November

2020 — whether the right or the left prevails — the moral compass of the USA has already been severely damaged. In the last years, I have seen America as a speeding car, dangerously careening to the left and to the right. I have seen an enormous ship in a severe storm, pitching severely toward the port side, swaying precipitously toward the starboard side.

I do not believe the future of American Jews is secure. If the Jewish people continue to have false hope of safety in the USA, their future will be jeopardized. This causes much grief.

The God of Israel is a covenant-keeping God. He fulfills His Word. His Word and history prove that He has always moved the Jewish people back — back to Him, back to their land, back to their promises, back to their destiny.

Jewish people who have sought to find safety in allegiance to godless, political, or totalitarian systems have suffered. Forgetting or ignoring their covenant relationship with God and the privileges, responsibilities, and callings that He has given them as a people have often caught them up short and landed them in dire straits.

Totalitarianism of the left or the right ends up in the same spot. Seeking to find refuge in a political system is like hoping to find water in a cracked cistern.

Jewish People who Hoped in Flawed Leftist and Rightist Systems

In the 20th century, Jewish people of Germany were some of the most faithful German citizens, loyal to their land, government, and way of life. Their loyalty was not rewarded. In France, Jewish Colonel Alfred Dreyfus, who was falsely accused of treason against the French government that he

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served and subsequently imprisoned, awakened Theodore Herzl to the need of a homeland for the Jewish people. In Russia, many Russian-speaking Jews rose to the top of the communist regime and ended up betrayed, persecuted, or dead. These are just a few illustrations of Jewish people who put their confidence in political systems, both left and right, which ultimately betrayed them.

The present leadership of the USA has a plan on record to divide the land of Israel. This plan is in opposition to God's future plans for the land of Israel. Concessions will be forced on Israel by either type of US administration, by the left or by the right. This increasing pressure on Israel will sift hearts and require Americans (believers in Yeshua, Jewish people and others) to consider the ramifications for their own lives. The present leadership of the USA is already compelling Israel to prepare for both the formation of a Palestinian state in the heartland of Israel and the dividing of the city of Jerusalem.

Whether the right or the left takes leadership in the USA, in the end, the US

government will not stand with God's covenant purposes and promises for the Jewish people (Zechariah 14:3, Joel 3:2).

Here are some recent writings which illustrate potential dangers inherent in both the political left and right, from both left-wing alliances and right-wing alliances in the USA.

On the left:

•<https://www.melaniephillips.com/progressive-world-antechamber-evil/>

•<https://davidstent.org/god-came-in-a-dream-of-the-night/>

•<https://davidstent.org/my-name-is-called-disturbance/>

•<https://davidstent.org/a-time-to-be-silent-a-time-to-speak/>

•<https://www.jpost.com/opinion/the-link-between-george-orwell-george-floyd-and-the-jews-opinion-632825?>

On the right:

•<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/can-the-temple-mount-be-a-trading-card-to-entice-the-saudis-639395>

•<https://davidstent.org/annexation-for-dummies/>

•<https://davidstent.org/clarifying-the-deal/>

•<https://davidstent.org/the-deal-of-the-century/>

•<https://davidstent.org/what-happens-when-a-nation-lifts-the-jerusalem-stone/>

Jewish people in the USA are on both sides of the divide, though most side with the left. Most Jewish people who choose to side with the political left do so because they believe this will land them

on the politically-correct side of future US history and will insure them some measure of safety. Without question, I believe they are badly and dangerously deceived. Orthodox Jews tend to vote according to their conservative values: "the two outbreaks Orthodox Jews fear most are a breakdown of law and order and rising Anti-Semitism." Yet, either way they lean, Jewish people's lives will be altered by seen and unseen forces influencing events in the USA in the future. Ultimately all Americans will have to choose where they stand.

Revolution and Civil War

We are witnessing an unprecedented and breathtaking display of hatred in the USA. At this point, extreme left-wing forces are outdoing themselves in violence, intimidation, the cancel culture, and historical revisionism in the media and on the ground (again Abe Greenwald's "Yes, This is a Revolution" article in Commentary Magazine is the best analysis I have seen).

Along with others, I hope for even a temporary return to some semblance of sanity and normalcy. However, I don't think there will be a slowdown or course correction in the paradigm-shifting American scene.

Even more, I sense that extremist elements on the right side of the divide will not long remain as subdued as they are now. Remember, my whole point in writing this letter is to alert anyone who can be alerted that trouble is coming to the Jewish people of America.

Extreme right-wing forces may well raise their ugly heads in backlash against what they see as a flood of left-wing based violence, bullying and menacing threats.

A Vivid and Chilling Dream that America was No More

In 1993, while staying with friends in Jerusalem, I had a short dream that I have never forgotten and indeed remember now more than ever. It is more relevant to me now than it has ever been.

I dreamed that Avner and I were in rural Kansas in what had been a small and poor town. Darkness and chaos prevailed. It was night. I could not see anything very well. The atmosphere was electric with danger, and I knew that my life could be ended at any moment. There was no government. There were armed vigilante gangs roaming the countryside. No one was safe. Avner and I were in mortal danger. I entered a small convenience store at night looking to find food on shelves which were mostly empty. There was really no food to buy. There was no electricity and no light in the store. There were neo-Nazi signs against Jews on the floor of the store. I met just one man who had a gun. He said to me “all this has happened, and the Jews are to blame.” I ran out of the store and said to Avner that we must flee from that place as quickly as possible.

My Heart’s Desire is the Salvation of Israel and to See Yeshua Sitting on His Throne in Jerusalem

Some of my close friends know that I love to talk about the return of the Lord. I sometimes ask my friends “when do you think Yeshua is coming back?” Even knowing that no one can answer this question, I love to talk about His return. Lately, I have sensed the Lord saying to me “don’t ask when,” but “just ask Me to come back.”

“Daughters of Jerusalem, help me find my Lover! And if you find my Lover, tell Him I am lovesick.” (Song of Solomon 5:8)

I believe there is a myriad of lovesick lovers of Yeshua across the face of the earth who are increasingly desirous to see His return. I believe He is hearing our cries, prayers, petitions, and pleas to Him to come back and fix this world. I believe He is counting our tears and hearing our wordless groans. I believe He is just as hungry to be with us as we are to be with Him. Creation is groaning. I believe the earth is experiencing birth-pangs leading to the Second Coming of Yeshua in a whole new way in these very days.

What Can We Do Now?

- Keep informed about what is going on among the Jewish people in America.
- Think about what you will do to help Jewish people in times of trouble.
- Pray that believers in Yeshua in the US will be alert, sober, and ready to help save Jewish lives.
- Pray for the Jewish people to be awakened to their calling and destiny in God.
- Pray that God will pour out His Holy Spirit on Jerusalem and on Jewish people everywhere.

Feel free to forward and to share this letter with people who can help and pray.

With a sober but warm heart I send my love in Messiah Yeshua,

Rachel Boskey



Your prayers and support hold up our arms and are the very practical enablement of God to us in the work He has called us to do.

www.davidstent.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Avner and Rachel Boskey live in the Beersheva region of Israel and are dedicated to stirring up the creative arts, worship, intercession, evangelism, and prophetic gifts within a Jewish and Israeli matrix. Rachel was born in Minneapolis MN. From childhood, she was called to join the Jewish people and dedicate herself to Israel’s Consolation. As a teenager, she founded the Star of David Singers, a Messianic music group that traveled in the Americas and Europe. Rachel’s heart is to foster intercession among believers for Israel’s salvation and restoration. Avner and Rachel are blessed by the Lord with four sons and two daughters-in-law. They oversee a recording studio where they both record their own music and help young Messianic Israeli artists develop and record their own music.

The VICTIM

By Elhanan ben-Avraham



*“Without a vision the people cast off restraint,
but happy is he who keeps the Law.”*

-Proverbs 29:18

When I grew up in the USA, underlying our collective consciousness there was a sense of patriotism—for God, family, and country—and even a certain reverence for things holy. Such speakers as Billy Graham were rather respected and only seldomly mocked, even if one disagreed with his message. There was something bigger than ourselves. We were taught that we are responsible for our behaviour and its consequences, for good or for evil. When we did wrong, we at least knew it was wrong. But things have changed radically in one generation.

Permeating the current generation is quite the opposite, a sense of entitlement—that we are owed something. Concurrent with that is the “victim mentality” that, rather than held accountable for our lives, we are all victims, and all of our problems are caused by something or someone else. Blacks are victims of the whites, the poor are the victims of the wealthy, the failures in society are victims of the government, and everyone is a victim of our past history. This self-absorbed worldview has now led to antipathy of Americans toward Americans, anger, resentment, and hatred boiling to a hot rage where pointless mass murders are now the new and daily normal, something seldom heard of in the nation when I was being raised. Children are now blaming their parents for their own personal problems and failures, even turning to betrayal and family dissolutions. This worldview is promoted by the many ‘counsellors’ and psychiatrists visited by the malcontent and disillusioned youth. There is now nothing greater than one’s “Self” and its appetites—not nation, not

law, not family, not God. There is no obligatory national or military service. There is nothing sacrosanct, nothing that is absolute and no unevolving Truth, no absolute good or evil, no right or wrong, no loyalty. This is the decline of a nation and of civilization.

This is by no means limited to Western civilization. In the Middle East, all the woes and wars of the Islamic world, especially of the Palestinians, are blamed on the Jewish state, Israel, though it is but a very tiny slice of the vast Arabic world. And when it suits the temper of the day, the Jews worldwide are once again blamed in new outbreaks of anti-Semitism. We have seen in the not-so-distant past where that can lead.

Is there a ‘Silver Bullet’ to fix this sad decline and decay? I do not think so. But perhaps in the “Great American Experiment” one might meditate on the American mottos of “In God We Trust” and “One Nation Under God” in seeking a balm of healing and a restraining and restoring factor. But here in Israel, we do have that restraining factor in that each week on the Sabbath and on every holy day from the Passover to Shavuot to Yom Kippur to Sukkot, we have a reminder of our heritage and our destiny and our Creator—our *raison d’être*. Moreover, our Bible is taught in public schools, and our real and dedicated enemies and detractors are primarily external. We are thus committed to serving in our military for our very survival and very rarely hear of violent crime among our compatriots. In our collective consciousness there is a bonding unity and vision despite our many dividing opinions.

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by something or
someone else.
Blacks are victims
of the whites, the
poor are the victims
of the wealthy, the
failures in society
are victims of the
government, and
everyone is a victim
of our past history.*

But God, like income tax and death, exists whether one wishes to believe so or not, and the judgments of God are ongoing. We are seeing them around us daily and are witnessing a current decline in western civilization. But the great and terrible day of YHVH is yet gathering like an oncoming storm upon the world, and yet a return to his great mercy is still available to all of us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elhanan ben-Avraham, born in 1945, is a professional artist, poet, writer, father of two, and grandfather of four, and he has been living in Israel since 1979. He has served in the IDF, taught the Bible internationally, published five illustrated books of poetry, painted two large Biblical murals in public buildings in Jerusalem, and most recently produced THE JERUSALEM ILLUSTRATED BIBLE, among many other works. He and his wife live in a quiet village in the Mountains of Judah.

TWO WORLDS

By John Harris

Jesus followers live in two worlds, under two governments: one is the secular domain of darkness, and the other is the kingdom of God's beloved Son. We live in both, but the Son's kingdom holds our lasting citizenship and ultimate allegiance. There is no middle realm—we are either in one or the other.

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13

Unfortunately, in Christendom, we gladly give ascent to the Colossians passage and accept it theologically wholeheartedly, but for reasons which we know in part, we have carved for ourselves a middle place of residence that frustrates us often, but we remain unwilling to change. This lesson is our reminder that there is no middle ground.

While on earth, Jesus followers live in the dark domain as expatriates of God's kingdom. We are the lights in this darkness. Our light shines through our good works (Matthew 5:14-15). An unknown Christian near the end of the second century wrote a letter describing Christians' behavior to Claudius Diogenes, procurator of Alexander. He pictured them as sojourners with their

lifestyle contrasting sharply with the pagans among whom they lived. They share everything with others. While strangers, they are model citizens as if the country is their birthplace. “They have a common table but not a common bed.” While they are in the flesh, they do not live for the flesh. Jews treat them as foreigners, and Greeks persecute them, but neither finds any wrong in them.¹ Being “strangers and pilgrims” is a lost lifestyle, worth writing about but not worth adopting as a lifestyle. We become uncomfortable at the thought of there being no option. We carry too much baggage, and our hand has been deep in the cookie jar far too long.

As Christians living in the second and third centuries needed letters like Diogenes' explaining their model behavior to the pagan powers of their day, we may need such letters explaining our ways of living to government officials today. Government agencies already question Christian institutions and schools that maintain unique Christian moral codes. We might ask ourselves, is our way of life so different from the secular domain that we need a Diogenes apologia to explain it to our culture? Since the Christian moral code differentiated early Christians, have we developed a less demanding code in order to live happily in this world.

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We become uncomfortable at the thought of there being no option.

The Enlightenment began in the 1600s when western intellectual leaders, such as Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, decided clear thinking and science would produce human progress. Indeed, incredible progress has occurred in the last 200 years, especially in medicine and engineering. We live longer, keep our teeth longer, heal broken bones more quickly and better, and build gigantic steel and glass buildings. We also have powerful engines, transport energy by wire, talk to each other in other

continents through space, and cool and heat our living spaces beyond what kings could have imagined only a century or so ago. Physical life is better in almost every way. Countries around the globe envy the material progress of the U.S., and many see it as the city set on a hill for all nations to follow. Some progressives now see the Christian understanding of light as regressive. They see Christian light as superstition holding progress back. If more of us would place our faith in science and democracy, they may argue, rather than the myth of a personal God, then human progress would follow—rather than starting with God and revelation to learn how to live, search nature to gain tranquility.

David Hume, a British atheist in government, was rushing out of his office early. His assistant asked why the hurry. Hume replied, “I’m going to hear this man from America named DL Moody.” Assistant: “But, Mr. Hume, I thought you were an atheist,” to which he replied, “True, I am. But Mr. Moody preaches as if he believes what he says.” At times, we seem to have drawn a fictitious, imaginary line between what we say and who we really are, and we have grown contentment with holding on to our understanding of Christ on one hand and Christ Himself on the other.

How did we abandon God and His overarching moral principles? The 1960s, the Age of Aquarius, certainly pushed it, but the Enlightenment of the 1700s laid its foundation. America’s beginnings coincided with this movement; Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, Enlightenment thinkers, influenced early American thought. Influential intellectuals in Europe and England advocated that reason alone is the way to find truth; they were enlightened by reason instead of by feelings or faith. Some were atheists, many believed in God, but Enlightenment theists were

Deists; they understood God as an intelligent force that created the cosmos and set physical and moral rules in place to govern it but that after creation, he let his creation run on its own, consistent with the principles he initially set in place.

N. T. Wright, perhaps the most noted New Testament scholar today, believes the Enlightenment ushered in Epicureanism, a retrieval of an ancient philosophy originating before Christ.² For Epicureans, tranquility is life’s goal of life, not sensual pleasure which often results in trouble. The gods are no help in finding tranquility given their restlessness and frequent conflict with one another. Actually, they do not care about us mortals. For atheists, since there is no God, we have to find tranquility by our wits; the preferred place to look is in nature. I certainly have no credentials as a scientific observer of animal behavior in the wild, but I see competition for food and dominance.

In many ways, we think and live as Epicureans. If God exists, he is far from us; it is up to us to search for peace of mind. And we have to find it on earth before we die because life beyond the grave is uncertain. As belief in God fades, so does belief in life beyond the grave. Paul wrote, if there is no resurrection, we might as well eat and drink.

Will we try to avoid chaos by putting political power and secular philosophy into the same hands? Plato observed: “There will be no end to the troubles of states, or of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands.”³ Would this work?

Since there is no eternal truth, according

Plato observed:

“There will be no end to the troubles of states, or of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world.”

to Nietzsche, those under the philosopher-kings’ will interpret their rules endlessly, at least within the dominant thinking of their day. By endless interpretation and reinterpretation, the rules will be diminished. In any case, the very idea of a group of intellectuals making rules for all us to live by is dead on arrival, because individualism rules our secular age. As individuals, we would not accept the authority required to enforce such rules. More likely, every person will choose his/her values, which will produce chaos. Social chaos inevitably leads to putting powerful men in charge to make the trains run on time. Chaos produces dictators.

Yet there is some vestige of a sense of right and wrong around the globe. Children around the world will call similar actions unfair. Ancient peoples constructed law codes that often reflect parts of the law God gave Moses. The Hittite and Babylonian (Hammurabi) laws had similar rules to the Torah, e.g., an eye for an eye. Many early societies applied this “eye-for-an-eye” principle literally.⁴

Ancient peoples definitely had some sense of God-given universal principles.

Many, if not most of us, assume we see reality clearly, although we look through glasses darkened by our assumptions and different biases.

Paul recognized this, “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law” (Romans 2:14).

Kingdoms, governments, and societies come and go. They only appear invulnerable at the apex of their power. As Paul made clear to the Corinthians, the form of this world is passing away. The shattering of the gigantic statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream illustrates Paul’s assertion. Daniel told the most powerful man on earth that a stone, representing God’s kingdom, would shatter all the great ancient empires, including his along with Medo Persia, Greece, and Rome. The Roman Empire lasted about 1000 years. If I had lived in it, no thought of its fall would ever have entered my mind, given its power and control. Many Americans believe something that big and strong cannot fall. Somehow, we think America can conquer anything with its advanced knowledge and might. Alexander Hamilton believed the new political science would save America from the fates of the ancient powers. Thomas J. Donohue, CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, says the American economy will rebound “because America has

the will and the strength to tackle any challenge.”⁵

When I mentioned America’s moral decline to a university president, he said, “America’s momentum will prevent its fall. We believe America’s wealth, science, and technology make it invulnerable. If we use our wits and work together, nothing will bring us down.” Should we learn anything from God destroying the Tower of Babel because they took pride in their brick-and-mortar technology and ability to work together?

Given the ease that affluence provides, we discount the signs pointing the other way. Even rational scientists often fail to see data that contradict their research assumptions. Many, if not most of us, assume we see reality clearly, although we look through glasses darkened by our assumptions and different biases.

According to John, love of our brothers enables understanding: “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 John 1:8-11).

The idea that enlightenment comes through loving rather than reason is absurd to the modern western mind. Nevertheless, the truly enlightened person is the Jesus-follower who loves others. With agape, logic and science can yield lasting results for good; without agape, our reasoning and science can bring destruction as they did in the 20th century. “...Science without love poses as the Hero to perils science alone has created...”⁶ One example is mass warfare, which depends on mechanized armaments produced by scientific engineering.

As the coronavirus threatens today’s world economies, why can we not see the fragility of all economies, military powers, and well-designed governments? Why not place our hope in the immovable kingdom? We cannot see the signs of our times because of the damage done to our vision by our evil and adulterous times.⁷ The train of western society has already left the station and is picking up speed although the downhill slope may not seem steep yet. That is what is scary: while saying, “peace and safety, sudden destruction comes.”

Have we escaped the fate of the ancient governments by practicing a modern, informed science of politics? Political theory or structure cannot make up for our fallen nature. Two major signs that we are flawed are:

1. Our reason, on which we have come to depend, has become futile.
2. Politics cannot fix a society where greed and lust predominate.

Evidence

Homosexuality. The supreme court declared gay marriage legal, which exemplifies futile thinking, as described by Paul in his Roman letter. Once a society’s reason becomes so futile to discount gender differences, it cannot rely on its reason to deal with moral principles. While gay advocates claim wisdom, Paul declared that their thinking comes from darkened, foolish hearts making their thinking futile.

“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and

creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves” (Romans 1:21-24). As Eve believed Satan that she would gain God-like knowledge of good and evil by eating the forbidden fruit; so, we in claiming wisdom have become fools.

By human reason, the West intended to design a better society; but where does society turn when human reason becomes futile. Yeats’ famous observation applies to our time.

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere the ceremony of innocence is lost.

In contrast, the Law of Moses provided rules through which landowners provided for the poor who were willing to work. For example, Ruth gleaned in Boaz’s barley harvest. Paul admonished us to live quietly and work with our hands. He wrote to Timothy that contentment is a great gain because we brought nothing into the world and will leave that way. Then he declared seeking wealth is dangerous; it is a trap of many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. As mentioned earlier, he also reminded the Corinthians that the form of this world is passing away. This is as true of America, as it was of Corinth, Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, and Rome.

As a significant portion of our society threw over belief in God as a superstition of a less intelligent age, it enviably gave free rein to the desires of the flesh. Who

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All Sandals Resorts are for adults only, designed for couples.

Advertisers know us well.

How should we then live? Look around with kingdom eyes. Unlike the frog, who can boil without feeling the heat, let us realize what the world around us is doing to us.

Do not set our hearts on earthly things (Philippians 3:19). Let us set our compass on True North, where Christ is because we have died to ourselves, and hidden our life in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4). We are expatriates in this world; our passports are from God’s kingdom. We wait for our king to come to transform

As a significant portion of our society threw over belief in God as a superstition of a less intelligent age, it enviably gave free rein to the desires of the flesh.

The best lack all conviction, while the worst are filled with passionate intensity.”

Greed. The super wealthy exercise power shaping government policies to their benefit. The following joke about Leonid Brezhnev, President of the Soviet Union (1977-1982), illustrates how materialism is always present regardless of the economic system. Brezhnev took his mother to the Kremlin, to show her his cars, his jewelry, his tailored clothes, bragging about his mistresses. His mother watched quietly and then said: “That’s nice, Leonid, but what will you do if the Communists come back?” ⁸

knows human desires better than T.V. commercial writers? A prime example might be Sandals Resorts which in 30 days airs 3,000+ ads playing on our fallen nature.

Every Sandals Vacation Includes:

- Luxurious and unique rooms and suites
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- Up to 11 bars per resort
- Unlimited premium liquors
- Robert Mondavi Twin Oaks® wines

our dying bodies into glorious bodies like His. He can do this because everything is under His control (Philippians 3:20-21).

Considering these warnings, we might conclude one should do nothing but sit around contemplating Jesus’ return and heaven to come. But nothing in Scripture suggests that we should be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. Rather, Paul suggests how we should live while waiting for Jesus’ return.

“...To aspire to live quietly, and to mind your affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Abraham was like a comfortable, wealthy American citizen, not inclined to leave a prosperous, well-ordered community to spend his life as a nomad, managing herds while living in tents without frequent baths.

Live Quietly. Cincinnatus, a Roman patrician, lost his fortune, paying his son's huge fine. Afterward, he chose to work cabbage on a small farm living in a cottage. When an invading army surrounded a Roman consul's army, a group of senators came to his farm to recruit him, and they found him plowing his cabbages. They explained that he was needed to raise an army to save a consul's surrounded army. Without hesitation, he asked his wife to bring his toga, and after putting it on, the senators made him dictator. He raised a large army, marched it to the consul's surrounded army, making prisoners of the surrounding army.¹⁰

Given his victory, the senators could have given him the highest office. Instead, he returned to his farm to plow his cabbages and live quietly. Through the ages, he has become an example of strength controlled by humility, exemplifying meekness. I believe Jesus would have liked him. As Jesus' followers should

know, high positions accompanied by big money eventually cost too much.

Mind Our Affairs. A Christian will plan his affairs to provide for his family within his means. He serves his family and community seeking no advancement while helping others, particularly his brothers and sisters.

Work with Our Hands. Based on 50 plus years in university work, I see how little universities do to help students make good career choices in terms of their circumstances, abilities, interests, and faith. Career choices consistent with these factors became more important to me when doing career advisement in the two Hickman High Schools. I watched the Career-Technical teachers instruct like coaches. Their students worked on their welding, motors, or carpentry, while the teachers made helpful comments. A young man in our community with grit and determination to get employable skills enrolled in the Tennessee College of Applied Technology in Spring Hill, and he graduated with a diploma in Maintenance Mechanics in Industrial Maintenance along with proficiencies in five other skills. He has a maintenance job in Spring Hill. Those in power in every age depend on and value craftsmanship. "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men" (Proverbs 22:29).

Having led several studies of Ecclesiastes, I often wonder if any of us truly believes the nine-word sentence (2:11), "there was nothing to be gained under the sun." This statement follows Solomon's list of his accomplishments. Each year his tax yield was 25 tons of gold, and over his reign, this would have amounted to \$2 trillion (in 2017, the U.S. collected \$3.3 trillion taxes). Solomon had the credentials to declare what true gain is, yet so many of us appear to believe we can actually gain

something over a lifetime. I once met a 90-year-old, large landowner sitting on his shady lawn in his mobile chair, and I said, "I hear you own more land than anybody in the county." He quickly responded, "I wish I did." He owned 800 acres with a large herd of Angus cattle. What more could one want?

Summary

The theme of Hebrews 11 and 12 runs through this summary. The Biblical passages cited earlier make it clear that Jesus-followers should live as expatriates of God's kingdom in this dark domain seeking the city of light with its immovable foundation. We should travel lightly, not weighed down with this world's trinkets, but focused on Christ with no thought of going back to the darkness left behind, allowing no opposition to deter us, even if it costs our blood. At the journey's end, we know we will rest on Mount Zion.

When I visited Samaria, with Joe Shulam, the founder of Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry and the Shepherd of Israel congregation in Jerusalem, he told me Omri situated his house so he could look west to see Athens and south to Jerusalem. This double-mindedness led to the tragedy of Ahab, his son, who married the daughter of the Sidonian king, worshipped Baal, and did more evil than any of the kings of Israel before him. Omri exemplifies the double-minded man. Weak in his faith in the everlasting kingdom, he became enamored with the splendor of this world's powers. Seeing Athens' rise compared to that of unsophisticated Jerusalem, he may have thought he should hedge his bet. "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8).

Ur. We may think Abraham was asked just to move from one primitive place in the Middle East to another, but that is not the case. At that time, Mesopotamia and Ur offered advanced living conveniences. He was to leave two-story houses structured to maximize cooling, with indoor plumbing, connected with a city sewer system to live in goat-skin tents, dig for water, and make outdoor toilets on the ground. With this in mind, please see the Ur endnote.¹¹

Mesopotamia

Abraham was like a comfortable, wealthy American citizen, not inclined

to leave a prosperous, well-ordered community to spend his life as a nomad, managing herds while living in tents without frequent baths.¹² In contrast, Jesus' followers, like Abraham, have eyes to see the tragic flaws of modern materialism. Seeing these flaws, they seek a better country. Like Moses, they dismiss the fleeting pleasures of the world because they consider the reproach of Christ of greater lasting value than this world's treasures.

One of my most significant learning experiences occurred when I worked with an outstanding psychologist at the University of Georgia. Joe

Hammock designed training programs for hydrogen missile operators deep in silos; later, the prestigious Bell Labs brought him on staff. I met him at the University of Georgia where he was brought in to upgrade the Psychology Department. Once returning from lunch, he referred to James' statement that whoever wants to become a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Yes, I had heard this before, but coming from Joe, it hit me like a clap of thunder.

The less we feel at home in this world and the more we long for His coming, the better. Maranatha - Our Lord, come!

1 The Epistle of Mathetes* to Diogenetus. http://scriptural-truth.com/PDF_Apocrypha/The%20Epistle%20of%20Mathetes%20to%20Diogenetus.pdf (Mathetes is not a proper name; it means disciple.)

2 "Loving to Know," First Things, February 2020, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/02/loving-to-know>

3 https://i.brainyquote.com/quotes/plato_164070?src=t_now

4 Talion, Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/talion>

5 Thomas J. Donohue. "All Hands on Deck," Washington Examiner, April 7-14, 2020, 13.

6 "Science without Love," Poetry by Casey Carney. <https://www.lakecountybloom.com/science-without-love/>

7 "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." So, he left them and departed." Matthew 16:3-4

8 <https://twitter.com/RadioFreeTom/status/949424723561197568>

9 <https://www.google.com/search?q=sandals+resort+what%27s+included&oq=sandals+what%27s+included&aqs=chrome..69j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

10 Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/editor/The-Editors-of-Encyclopaedia-Britannica/4419>

11 During Ur's heyday in the Early Dynastic period, four main residential areas of the city included homes made of baked mud brick foundations arranged along long, narrow, winding streets and alleyways. Typical houses included an open central courtyard with two or more main living rooms in which the families resided. Each house had a domestic chapel where cult structures and the family burial vault were kept. Kitchens, stairways, workrooms, and lavatories were all part of the household structures.

The houses were packed in very tightly together, with exterior walls of one household immediately abutting the next one. Although the cities appear very closed off, the interior courtyards and wide streets provided light, and the close-set houses protected the exposure of the exterior walls to heating especially during the hot summers. <https://www.thoughtco.com/ancient-city-of-ur-mesopotamia-173108>

12 Light in the home was provided by small lamps fueled by sesame seed oil and sometimes by windows (in more expensive homes). Windows were constructed of wooden grill work and, as wood was a rare commodity, windowed homes were uncommon. The exterior of brick homes was whitewashed ("a further defense against the radiant heat", and "there would be only one exterior door, its frame painted bright red to keep out evil spirits."

Palaces, temples, and upper-class homes had ornate braziers for heating the rooms, while the lower classes made use of a shallow pit lined with hardened clay. Indoor plumbing was in wide use by at least the 3rd millennium BCE with toilets in separate rooms of upper-class homes, palaces, and temples. Tiled drains, built at a slant, would carry waste from the building to a cesspool or a sewer system of clay pipes that would transport it to the river.

Homes were furnished in much the same way they are today with chairs (which had legs, backs, and, in wealthier homes, arms), tables, beds, and kitchenware. In affluent homes, beds were made from a wooden frame, crisscrossed with rope or reeds, covered by a mattress stuffed with wool or goat hair, and had linen sheets. These beds were often intricately carved and, by the third millennium, were sometimes "overlaid with gold, silver, or copper" and "had legs that often terminated with an ox foot or claw." The lower classes, of course, could not afford such luxury and slept on mats of woven straw or reeds which were laid on the floor. Tables were constructed in the same way they still are today (the more prosperous homes had linen tablecloths and napkins), and families gathered at the table for the evening meal in the same way many still do presently.

Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia, Ancient History Encyclopedia, <https://www.ancient.eu/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Harris is a retired university teacher and administrator. He taught educational psychology, instructional design, assessment of student learning outcomes, and religious education, and he published articles on higher education assessment, curriculum development, and instructional design. He held administrative positions related to university course development and instructional technology, state-wide coordination of universities, and Federal review of national accrediting associations. While professionally engaged in higher education, he leads Bible and spiritual formation classes and discussion groups for which he occasionally writes papers.

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