



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

REACH TEACH ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE



JUNE 2008
**DELIGHTING OUR
HEAVENLY FATHER**
become a soothing aroma



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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

There is only one assembly of chosen ones/elect, the people of Israel, of which all Believers in Messiah are a part. God does not have two groups of elect: Israel and "the Church."

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be followed and studied by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the saints after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

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OIM UPDATE

June 2008

As the Counting of the Omer toward *Shavuot* has ascended daily, this past month has been a period of ministry seed-planting, watering, and business travel for me—as our preparations to celebrate here in Orlando over June 13-15 have accelerated. Please come join us here if you are able, but certainly gather with others for this appointed convocation, and be sure to make a proclamation about the goodness of our loving Father and His mighty works!

While on the road to Dallas, a place where I lived for twenty years as a Believer, and where my daughter, son-in-law, brother, sister-in-law, and nieces live, and on to Boulder, Colorado, where my aging parents, sister, brother-in-law, and nephews live, I had the privilege of communing with them while interacting with many other brethren on other matters. It was a great blessing to me to be able to combine ministry challenges with business opportunities, and all the while visiting loved ones along the way. The efficiencies of eliminating hotel bills and car rentals are two ways to circumvent expenses, while spending precious time with family and friends in evening and morning conversations.

Along the way in my solitude away from my home routine and in various interactions, the Lord had an inimical way of weaving some old memories of family circumstances, with past futuristic visions from my former real estate career which are now physical realities, into a mesh of positive thoughts about the here, now, and future. In this issue of Outreach Israel News, my lead article touches on some of those thoughts and conclusions.

The inspiration for “**Delighting our Heavenly Father**” came from being reminded by one of my spiritual brothers about the common discipline of reading a chapter of the Book of Proverbs each day throughout the month. By simply reading through Proverbs out loud, and hearing a couplet of God’s Word, an underlying theme for my conversations with fellow Believers was inaugurated. Hopefully, this article will make you think about where your spiritual priorities are focused.

In our ongoing efforts to help and encourage people with their physical challenges, I not only make some true confessions about my own negligence, but also will report on what I witness going on in the world. Increasingly, we see that people are embracing the urgent concept of not only thinking about health and nutrition—but most importantly, are doing something positive about it! I desire each of you to be at your fullest physical potential to serve in the Kingdom of God.

My prayer is that this newsletter will reach you and inspire you to not only pursue His Kingdom and His righteousness, but also create a sense of urgency that maintaining your physical temple is of utmost importance to not only fight the fight of faith, but strongly finish the race!

Until the restoration of all things...

William Mark Huey

DELIGHTING OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

become a soothing aroma

by Mark Huey

During a recent trip to Dallas to visit friends and family, and meet some new brothers in the Messiah, I was reinvigorated by some of the conversations I had which centered around the Holy One of Israel. First let me admit that after thirty years of walking with the Lord, I am confident that my knowledge and understanding of Him are still limited by my human liabilities and frailty. I am always open to listen to other spiritual perspectives, and at times gain insight from others who are struggling through victory on the same journey I am treading. After all, we are each “works in progress” who continually strive for greater perfection via His work in us!

As a result of multiple interactions, a confluence of comments and actions by my brethren actually inspired me to reflect upon some of my previous spiritual encounters experienced during my twenty years of being a Christian in Dallas. Coupling them with a Messianic perspective derived from the past thirteen years (since 1995) of studying and applying the Torah to my walk of faith, prompted me to consider just what it is that actually delights or brings joy to our Heavenly Father. So if you will bear with me, I am going to try and relate how a few Spirit-motivated actions and statements were used to pull together the following thoughts.

Just the thought of pleasing or delighting our Heavenly Father brings this verse to mind, emphasizing the requirement of faith in the formula:

“And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Let us always remember that without faith in Yeshua’s accomplished work for us, by challenging or denying its significance, you **cannot** please God. But when you do exhibit faith and walk by faith, there is the strong possibility that God will reward you for your faithful actions.

On the other hand, the Apostle Paul should remind us that fallen human flesh **cannot** please God. As he summarizes the difference between walking by the flesh versus walking by the Spirit, he teaches that in faithfully walking by the Spirit, we evidence our status as sons and daughters of the Living God:

“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh **cannot please God**. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of

Messiah, he does not belong to Him. If Messiah is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Yeshua from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Messiah Yeshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. **So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**” (Romans 8:5-14).

With these two passages, we must recognize that pleasing God or bringing Him joy or delight can only be achieved by faithfully walking by His indwelling Spirit. In order to do just this, every one of us has to put the deeds of the flesh to death. Each one of us is required to willfully choose to let the Holy Spirit guide us and use us for the glory of the Father. Now this is where the proverbial rubber meets the road—because it takes a volitional decision on our parts to submit our wills to the will of the Father. John the Immerser understood this principle when he recognized that he had to decrease so that Yeshua could increase (John 3:30). In certain respects, this is what all of us must do.

Back in February of 1992 while living in Dallas, I was given the opportunity to do this by making a written covenant with the Lord, which to this day has had profound consequences in my life and the direction He has taken me. After several years of struggling with my first marriage and through the godly counsel of a particular ministry, I was presented with the opportunity to sign a document, which in essence, committed me to totally surrendering my will to the will of the Almighty. For the past sixteen years I have carried this written contract around in my wallet, having signed it in red ink (representing a blood covenant) on 02-12-92, after two days of contemplating the consequences of an unconditional surrender to the will and purposes of God for my life. The challenging verse that established the basis for giving up all of your “rights” came from the urging of Paul, as he understood what is required to be all that the Father has created us to be:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as **God has allotted to each a measure of faith**” (Romans 12:1-3).

If you would like a copy of the document I signed for your own consideration, please let me know. However, as I performed this exercise some sixteen years ago, I knew that the consequences of it for me would bring the full and complete death of my own self and fleshly desires. It was by no means something to be done on a whim, but had some severe repercussions. In fact, to a certain extent, this document is like a death certificate that one willingly signs in order to submit his or her will to the Father’s will.

The other day, prior to writing this article, I was reading out loud the fif-

teenth chapter of Proverbs with my Messianic Jewish brother, who has followed the daily discipline of reading a chapter of Proverbs corresponding to each day of the month. As Proverbs 15 tells us,

“The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not so. **The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves one who pursues righteousness.** Grievous punishment is for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof will die. Sheol and Abaddon *lie open* before the LORD, how much more the hearts of men!” (Proverbs 15:7-11).

In particular, it was Proverbs 15:8-9 that hit me like a proverbial ton of bricks: “The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright *is* His delight. The way of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, but He loves him who follows righteousness” (NKJV).

These verses have caused me to think about not only the sacrifices and the ways of the wicked, but both being an abomination to the Lord. In a religious environment like Dallas, I thought about all of the people who are truly trying to *appease* God with their offerings, tithes, gifts, or whatever, thinking that they *might* be pleasing God in order to incur His favor. However, I quickly realized that the omniscient One sees right through all of the facades that human beings—in *any* location on Earth—might try to offer Him. He looks at the heart of each person who is making any kind of sacrifice. My mind flashed on some contemplations that I had a few weeks earlier, when I dealt with the accountability each of us has for not only our deeds and words, but also our very thoughts. I recognized that God looks at and tests the heart, to determine exactly what the motivation is for a person making any kind of sacrifice. Is it unto Him? Or is the person simply trying to purchase His favor?

In this proverb we are told that God simply delights in the prayers of the upright, and loves those who are pursuing righteousness. He is not impressed by those who try to bribe or buy Him off! The juxtaposition between His way of wanting to be pleased, and human means of wanting to be pleased, cannot be any clearer. My heart truly goes out to those in the religious world who are trying to fool God with various “sacrificial” actions, not realizing that God sees right through to what the true motivation is for making any kind of sacrifice—be it the giving of your time, talents, or treasure. God sees to the heart of the matter, be the person a fool or a wise person before Him.

On the other hand, the Prophet Samuel’s words to King Saul tell us that obeying the Lord with proper motives is more important than any kind of sacrifice that we can offer before Him:

“Samuel said, ‘**Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.** For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being king*’ (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

King Saul had disobeyed the word of the Lord, by failing to eliminate the Amalekites and their livestock. Even though in Saul’s own mind, he was ready, willing, and able to offer up all of these sacrifices to the Lord, it is obvious from

what Samuel says that the Lord was not pleased with disobedience to the command He delivered to him. In fact, Samuel compares Saul's disobedience to rebellion, the sin of divination, insubordination, iniquity, and idolatry. We see that God was very upset when Saul thought that mere burnt offerings and sacrifices could appease Him.

The more I contemplate the common dilemma of obedience versus sacrifice, given that He does desire that we place ourselves on the altar daily as our spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1), the more I understand that our obedient actions are to become a pleasing or soothing aroma to the Lord. Is it possible that the smell of the "burning flesh" of our submitted wills, is a blessing to Him? Throughout Scripture, we do frequently see that when God commanded a burnt offering to be presented before Him that it pleased Him with a soothing aroma. Noah discovered this after coming through the deluge:

"Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. **The LORD smelled the soothing aroma**; and the LORD said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease'" (Genesis 8:20-22).

The Prophet Ezekiel states that a day is coming when all Israel will be gathered back to the Promised Land, and through their contributions, choice gifts, and holy offerings, God will be pleased:

"As for you, O house of Israel,' thus says the Lord GOD, 'Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols. For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,' declares the Lord GOD, 'there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things. **As a soothing aroma** I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations. And you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers. There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done. Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel,' declares the Lord GOD" (Ezekiel 20:39-44).

There is hope for the future that the people of God will wholeheartedly offer up sacrifices of praise and worship through obedience to His Word. And, not only will they do this properly, but they will be rewarded for their choice to serve, honor, and *obey* Him. No doubt this is why Paul commends His disciples with words of encouragement, which evoke the image of a fragrant sacrificial aroma that actually pleases or delights our Heavenly Father:

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as

Messiah also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Notice that Yeshua’s sacrificial offering up of Himself is something that we are to emulate in order to be imitators of God, being a fragrant aroma.

What does all of this mean for you and me in the here and now? For me it means offering up my will daily before Him so that the will of God, via the power of the Holy Spirit, can operate through me. Obedience actually requires recognizing when the flesh starts to get active, and willfully placing it on the altar of sacrifice. Somehow I believe that when one volitionally does this, the Father is well pleased with the aroma of death to self.

Finally, let us be reminded of Paul’s greeting to the Believers in Colossae, where he describes ways to please God with one’s walk of faith that bears fruit of the Spirit—as opposed to the stench of flesh-derived sacrifices which are an abomination to Him:

“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (Colossians 1:9-12).

Looking back on the past several weeks, do you believe that by remembering the Passover, Counting the Omer, or the coming celebration of the Feast of Weeks you will be a pleasant aroma to Him? Surely, if these things are done in the proper spirit, whereby we seek to offer of ourselves and commune with the Lord, they will be pleasing to Him. But if these things are remembered for no other reason than to prove ourselves better than others—then it is no better than just burning an animal before Him with a wicked heart and wicked motives. As the proverb says, this type of sacrifice is an abomination and probably a stench in the Father’s nostrils!

Dying to self requires that we each walk by and be led by God’s Spirit—but death to self will is never easy. Nevertheless, the Scriptures give us an analogous agrarian example of dying to self by describing the death of a grain of wheat that must die in order to bear fruit:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:24-26).

Therefore, choose to lose your life. Obediently sacrifice your will to His will, so that you will be a pleasant aroma unto Him. And never forget that if you love Him, you will obey His commandments via what that love has brought to your heart! In so doing, your daily sacrifice will be your spiritual service of worship. You will be a soothing aroma to Him and be His delight. What are you waiting for? Why not start today?

THE MESSAGE OF HABAKKUK

by J.K. McKee

The Book of Habakkuk is a text that is not read by today's Messianic community, yet it has profound and important lessons to teach of us as the people of God. Struggling with the problems of corruption and wickedness in the world, and why unrighteous people seemingly get away with these things, is not something at all unique to the Twenty-First Century. The Prophet Habakkuk not only spoke against these grave sins, but even wrestled with God in dialogue as to why He somehow appears to allow them. Understanding Habakkuk is important for any Believer to have a well-rounded view of the actions of God toward people, and where those who are righteous and loyal to Him fit in the cosmic scheme.

It is agreed among many conservative commentators that Habakkuk prophesied sometime before the fall of Judah to Babylon, perhaps sometime near the end of Josiah's reign (640-609 B.C.E.) or the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign (609-598 B.C.E.). This was a period of great prosperity for the Southern Kingdom (as seen in other prophetic books), as well as wantonness and oppression of the poor. Looking back on this time period, God judging Judah not only for its idolatry against Him, but also the exploitation of the less fortunate at the hands of the rich, was inevitable. But it did not necessarily seem this way for Prophets such as Habakkuk.

Habakkuk issues His first call before the Lord, citing things that are not at all uncommon to any person who has cried to Him. He cries, "How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails" (1:2-4a). Habakkuk is surrounded by unrighteous behavior, manifesting itself in harmful activities. He is in a situation where "the Torah is weakened and justice never emerges" (ATS). Somehow, God's Divine Instruction is supposed to be upheld as a standard for order, yet all that is manifested is anarchy.

The Lord answers Habakkuk's first cry before Him, asking Habakkuk to look at the bigger picture of what He is about to do. He no doubt listens carefully to the Lord: "Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told" (1:5-6). Specifically, the Lord tells Habakkuk "I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor... They fly like a vulture sweeping to devour; they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and cap-

ture them. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—guilty men, whose own strength is their god” (1:6-7, 8b-11).

If Judah thinks that it is going to get away with ignoring the clear imperatives of God’s Law (1:4), and let gross unrighteousness prevail, then God is going to turn them over to the mercy of the Babylonians whose “justice and authority¹ originate with themselves” (NASU). Their actions speak for themselves as Babylon is a power that laughs at Earthly kings and rulers, spreading its hordes out like a plague. Having achieved so many military victories, their “own might is their god!” (RSV). Because of Judah’s gross sin against the Lord, it now happens to be one of the next targets on Babylon’s hit list, and will one day find itself deported away from its homeland.

Habakkuk’s first question is answered; God is going to judge the evil of Judah by sending the Babylonians. But Habakkuk is never told by God *when* this judgment will come, and the Prophet does have a great burden for what He is seeing happen to the people living *right then* in his day. In his second cry to the Lord, he exclaims, “O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish. Your eyes are too pure to look upon evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?” (1:12b-13). If God is One who is “from everlasting” (1:12a) and is perfect, how can He then tolerate those like the Babylonians who commit worse sins than His own people?

Habakkuk feels that he has to remind the Lord as to what Babylon will do to those of Judah:

“The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?” (1:15-17).

The Babylonians are likened to the fisherman who worship the net that he uses to catch fish. God is clear to tell Habakkuk, “the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay” (2:3). The Lord’s perfect timing for the judgment He has said will come upon Judah cannot be hurried; it will only be released after an ample amount of warning has been issued. And, Habakkuk is not the only prophet seen in Scripture that is displeased with Judah’s lack of righteous behavior. God’s judgment via the hand of Babylon will only be enacted when He is ready.

It is at this point that the Lord tells something very poignant to Habakkuk, which would not only have important meaning for his generation, but for many others to come:

“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, **but the righteous shall live by his faith.** Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers

¹ Heb. *mishpato u'se'eto*.

for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples" (2:4-5, ESV).

Babylon has been advancing by gobbling up nations into its empire, but it is to be considered a power that is "puffed up" (NIV) that is drunk on its own power. Its arrogant desire to conquer the world will ultimately be its undoing, as it will die and be consumed by *Sheol*, the shadowy world of the (now-condemned) dead. The answer for any person not wanting to suffer the same fate as Babylon is clear: "the righteous will live by his faith" (2:4). Whether this is the faith a person places in God, or perhaps the *emunah* or faithfulness God displays toward His people, it is clear that the LORD God and not any human achievements or idols are the focal point. In order to have an eternal life that has overcome the power of Hell, one must trust in God, and have confidence in His promises by demonstrating the fruit of a godly life.

The Lord tells Habakkuk that even though the Babylonian Empire will be a means of His judgment, the Babylonians will suffer their own penalties incurred from their own ungodly actions:

"Woe to him to piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on? Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim. Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood, you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain...You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life" (2:6-9a, 10).

In spite of the Lord using Babylon to judge Judah, He is innately aware of their gross sins, telling Habakkuk, "Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (2:13-14). Any nation that commits injustice, exhausting itself for its own glory, will come to nothing. For it is "awe for the glory of the LORD" (NJPS) that will envelop the world that empires such as Babylon can only attempt to conquer. The day will come when such empires "will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed!" (2:16a).

The need for God's people to live by their faith (2:4), and in turn trusting in His faithfulness toward them, is fully realized by what it is contrasted to: "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. Woes to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it. But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (2:18-2).

Those who place their *emunah* in the Lord have the ability to live eternally before Him—versus those who are silenced by the futility of the gods that they made with their own hands, perhaps representing their meaningless human accomplishments.

Habakkuk's questions have now been answered and he understands. All he can do is stand in the majesty of God, exclaiming, "LORD, I have heard of your

fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy" (3:2). The Lord is the One whose "glory covered the heavens...and [whose] praise filled the earth" (3:3). God as Creator has dominion over what He has made (3:6, 8-11, 15-17), yet while "In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations. You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us" (3:12-14).

Having communed with God, and imploring Him for insight, Habakkuk can rightfully say "I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (3:18-19). Habakkuk has arrived a point of peace in his life where he can be patient with the timing of God's judgment against Judah, *and later Babylon*, knowing that He has a specific time when this can be properly executed.

What does Habakkuk teach us as the Messianic movement, which we need not overlook? We are a community that emphasizes the role of God's Torah as a standard of proper living. Yet, so did many of the Ancient Kingdom of Judah in which Habakkuk lived, a society where injustice, lewdness, and oppression got the better of it. We have the severe responsibility to learn not to repeat the mistakes of these people, **and not forget the Torah's imperatives that are to create an environment of peace and wellness.** The *shalom* that Yeshua the Messiah brings to us is something that we must emphasize in our faith community, lest we one day find ourselves having to be judged by God by some outside force because we failed to look at the *whole Torah*, and only emphasized those parts which made us different from our Christian brethren and thus made us "better." I never want to see the Messianic world fall into a condition where we have forgotten what the Torah tells us about standing up for the justice of God in the world! God forbid that He ever has to judge *us*, with the ample warnings we have been given from Prophets like Habakkuk.

Those who are truly righteous are those who will live eternally because of demonstrating faith in God (2:4), versus the idols of one's own hand (2:18-19). This is a concept that is built upon by the Apostle Paul in his letters to the Galatians (3:11) and the Romans (1:17). This is not a faith that does not obey God; but is a faith which has a firm confidence in Him versus any idols.

Can today's Messianics avoid the Book of Habakkuk any more? Perhaps the Rabbis of the Talmud can answer this question for us, as they conclude what the most important principle of the Torah is to be considered:

"Isaiah again came and reduced them to two: 'Thus says the Lord, (i) Keep justice and (ii) do righteousness' (Isa. 56: 1). Amos came and reduced them to a single one, as it is said, 'For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel. Seek Me and live.' *Objected R. Nahman bar Isaac*, "Maybe the sense is, 'seek me' through the whole of the Torah?" Rather, [Simelai continues:] '**Habakkuk further came and based them on one, as it is said, "But the righteous shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4)"**' (b.*Makkot* 24a).

THE ABUNDANT LIFE VERSUS DEATH TO SELF

The other day while having a conversation with a Messianic minister living in the Dallas area, I was amazed that for the past fifteen years, this brother had been receiving the same insight that I had been receiving from the Lord. For the first hour of our conversation, I just sat there listening and agreeing with his soliloquy about how, where, and when He had taken him from a position of high responsibility in an internationally known ministry, to simply ministering every week at a Torah study at his home. It was a breath of fresh air to find someone else who simply wanted to help others with knowledge and understanding which had been imparted to him by the sovereign grace of our Heavenly Father.



Among the many nuggets of wisdom and experience that were shared, there was one statement he made that almost summarized some of the frustrations, which on the surface tend to discourage, and to a certain extent confuse, those pursuing a Messianic lifestyle. In the midst of moving from topic to experience to subject to observations, the simple statement “We are attempting to model and encourage death to self,” while on many street corners there is often a church promoting a so-called abundant life and prosperity, is quite a contrast. In fact, the competition is almost too much for many people to overcome. The more I meditated and commented on his conclusion, the more I realized the profundity of it.

Yeshua the Messiah taught His Disciples things which must be understood from a spiritual perspective. These things are to follow with commensurate actions, indicating that one truly believes what is said:

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. **He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.** He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (Matthew 10:38-40).

“Then Yeshua said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. **For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’” (Matthew 16:24-26).

A true Believer in Yeshua is required to lay down his own life, ambitions, dreams, aspirations, and if you will—“rights”—in order to gain eternal life. One must commit oneself fully to Him!

As we discussed this reality, it actually struck a chord with something I fearfully did on February 12, 1992. I remember the date vividly, because to this day, I have carried around in my wallet the document/contract that I signed with the Lord in red ink—to remind me of His blood covenant made with us—that I thoughtfully embraced after two days of praying. This is what is labeled a Romans 12:1-2 “total surrender” contract, which absolutely conveys all of your perceived “rights” to the Lord God Almighty. The document I signed concludes with: “I give God permission to do anything He wishes, to me, with me, in or through me that would glorify Him.” By signing this covenant with God, I essentially gave up all of my rights and became His bondservant for life. It was a written commitment for me to serve Him completely.

Sitting there and discussing this, I remembered that earlier in the day, I had actually made a copy of this document for another brother who was struggling through the finaliza-

tion of his divorce, combined with his desire to serve God in his new life as a divorced man. I just happened to make a few extra copies, and so I gave my new friend a copy so that he could contemplate the reality of total surrender. Glancing at it for a moment, the conviction of the Holy Spirit was intense. He commented that he could already read that some of the items were going to be a challenge to give up, and that he would consider the contents with great trepidation. While that was not my motivation, I am thankful that the Lord used me to give this brother another opportunity to consider the reality of losing one's life in order to gain eternal life with our Savior, based on the exercise I was convicted to follow in 1992.

Recalling my past experience is always important for me, as I consider the course of life that the Lord has had me follow ever since. Yeshua came to bring us a great and abundant life, one where we would not be taken away as helpless sheep—but rather one where we benefit from His service toward us as the Good Shepherd:

“So Yeshua said to them again, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.** I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*. *He flees* because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and **they will hear My voice;** and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:7-18).

Yeshua the Messiah is the Door, through which one must enter to inherit eternal life and enter into God's purpose. His sheep have the ability to absolutely hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and in accordance with His teachings, willingly give up their own lives serving themselves in order to gain the eternal life and great abundance *He offers*. The abundant life is not necessarily having a worldly prosperity that gives one temporal, physical things (not that those are necessarily bad). The abundant life is one where a person gets to serve and worship the Lord to his or her fullest potential! Many religious people today have a tendency to emphasize living “the good life,” and if you do all of the things that they recommend, you will live “abundantly.” This means that you will (financially) prosper in all that you do (even if one's spirituality does not necessarily improve).

Can you see the problem with believing what is often promoted? Does it really benefit a person to have material wealth, but be spiritually bankrupt? Many religious people are not serious about their relationship with God and how they serve Him, lacking eyes to see and ears to hear what is really communicated by Yeshua. Are you able to see and hear what He says, or is the lure of an abundant life of Earthly riches actually worth more than dying to self and inheriting the eternal benefits of believing Him?

If you are interested in a full copy of the contract that I signed years ago, please let me know. But do realize that whatever exercise might get you focused on Him, dying to self is not easy and the pain you may experience is real. On the other hand, the eternal rewards for obedience are beyond anything that can be ruined by moth and rust! If you love Him, you will obey Him and seek to follow Him to the fullest extent. Dying to oneself and being molded by the Lord is a part of following Him, *if* you are truly of His sheep. Are you presently doing this in your walk of faith?

Mark Huey

TRUE CONFESSIONS

June 2008 Health Update

by Mark and Margaret Huey

Achieving optimal health is an awesome goal, especially when you begin to see the results of your decision to go for it. But along the way, some of us just might have a tendency to “fudge” a little with our commitments, so I will just confess now: **“I was not taking my supplements as recommended for the first six months of my new regimen.”**

I was taking them faithfully in the morning, but due to lack of habit, I often missed a number of evenings throughout the course of a week. As a result, while I noticed some improvement in my already good health, it was not as dramatic as others were reporting. *Then*, I made a commitment to a friend to not only take my supplements without fail, but also hydrate properly, exercise daily, and eat primarily “superfoods” that are alive. The difference went from being only nominal to extraordinary. I now truly believe that I am in the best shape of my life! I lost the ten pounds that I had been trying to lose around my waist. My energy level—already high—has exceeded previous levels by leaps and bounds, as I am continuing my ministry efforts while helping others with their physical challenges. My mind is getting much sharper. Those occasional memory lapses are absolutely gone, with my mind and mental acuity noticeably enhanced. Suffice it to say, I do not think I will get off of this new regimen until they *finally* lay me to rest, hopefully a very long time from now—that is how good I feel!

On the other hand, during my travels this past month, I was amazed by how much people are obviously quite concerned about their health, diet, and nutrition. It was clear from multiple conversations that proper diet, hydration, exercise, and supplementation were already high on people’s agendas for maximizing their lives. While being reacquainted with old friends, inevitably the comments about *how good* or *great* I looked were simply reflections of being healthy and full of life. As an exhorter and encourager, those words were well received—but more importantly for someone like me with my gifting I tried to encourage or inspire others to make the same decisions I have made to be healthy. I am still of the conviction that as children of the Most High, we have a responsibility to maintain our health so that we can continue to minister to others throughout our lives here on Earth. As I told family and friends, I cannot find a retirement plan in the instruction manual that I am using for my life. The blessing of passing on the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of a life pursuing God’s Kingdom and His righteousness is something that I look forward to sharing with future generations.

Additionally, when I have heard health and nutrition being discussed in diverse sectors of the marketplace, I am convinced that its dynamics are going to expand my opportunities to minister. Can you imagine how much we are going to hear about the debate for universal health insurance here in America during the ongoing election cycle and new administration? This is a topic that will be at the forefront of people’s minds, and could be a non-threatening subject where we as Believers can become engaged in talking and ministering to an increasing group

of people. The possibilities seem endless to me, especially when ministering to someone's physical needs can readily turn into ministering to their spiritual needs. I find this all to be a great opportunity to expand one's ministry among family, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers!

Here in the United States, in particular, we are a society that is heading toward a disaster when it comes to our reliance upon the pharmaceutical industry, in collusion with medical practitioners and health insurance companies. A vicious cycle has been created, with the perpetual funding almost guaranteed by legislative bodies that are *supposed* to serve the people, rather than the interests of those who exploit government for the sake of profits, as detailed in the following article:

More Americans are taking prescription medications

14 May 2008

by Linda A. Johnson

For the first time, it appears that more than half of all insured Americans are taking prescription medicines regularly for chronic health problems, a study shows.

The most widely used drugs are those to lower high blood pressure and cholesterol - problems often linked to heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

The numbers were gathered last year by Medco Health Solutions Inc., which manages prescription benefits for about one in five Americans.

Experts say the data reflect not just worsening public health but better medicines for chronic conditions and more aggressive treatment by doctors. For example, more people are now taking blood pressure and cholesterol-lowering medicines because they need them, said Dr. Daniel W. Jones, president of the American Heart Association.

In addition, there is the pharmaceutical industry's relentless advertising. With those factors unlikely to change, doctors say the proportion of Americans on chronic medications can only grow.

"Unless we do things to change the way we're managing health in this country ... things will get worse instead of getting better," predicted Jones, a heart specialist and dean of the University of Mississippi's medical school.

Americans buy much more medicine per person than any other country. But it was unclear how their prescriptions compare to those of insured people elsewhere. Comparable data were not available for Europe, for instance.

Medco's data show that last year, 51 percent of American children and adults were taking one or more prescription drugs for a chronic condition, up from 50 percent the previous four years and 47 percent in 2001. Most of the drugs are taken daily, although some are needed less often.

The company examined prescription records from 2001 to 2007 of a representative sample of 2.5 million customers, from newborns to the elderly.

Medication use for chronic problems was seen in all demographic groups:

- Almost two-thirds of women 20 and older.
- One in four children and teenagers.
- 52 percent of adult men.
- Three out of four people 65 or older.

Among seniors, 28 percent of women and nearly 22 percent of men take five or more medicines regularly.

Karen Walker of Paterson, N.J., takes 18 prescription medicines daily for high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic back and shoulder pain, asthma and the painful muscle disorder fibromyalgia.

"The only way I can do it and keep my sanity ... is I use pill boxes" to organize pills for each morning and night, said Walker, 57, a full-time nurse at an HIV clinic. Her 69-year-old husband, Charles, keeps his medicines lined up on his bureau: four pills for arthritis and heart disease, plus two inhalers for lung problems.

Dr. Robert Epstein, chief medical officer at Franklin Lakes, N.J.-based Medco, said he sees both bad news and good in the findings.

"Honestly, a lot of it is related to obesity," he said. "We've become a couch potato culture (and) it's a lot easier to pop a pill" than to exercise regularly or diet.

On the good side, he said, researchers have turned what used to be fatal diseases into chronic ones, including AIDS, some cancers, hemophilia and sickle-cell disease.

Yet Epstein noted the biggest jump in use of chronic medications was in the 20- to 44-year-old age group - adults in the prime of life - where it rose 20 percent over the six years. That was mainly due to more use of drugs for depression, diabetes, asthma, attention-deficit disorder and seizures.

Antidepressant use in particular jumped among teens and working-age women. Doctors attributed that to more stress in daily life and to family doctors, including pediatricians, being more comfortable prescribing newer antidepressants.

Dr. Sidney Wolfe of Public Citizen's Health Research Group said the increased use of medications is partly because the most heavily advertised drugs are for chronic conditions, so most patients will take them for a long time. He also blames doctors for not spending the time to help patients lose weight and make other healthy changes before writing a prescription.

The study highlights a surge in children's use of medicines to treat weight-related problems and other illnesses previously considered adult problems. Medco estimates about 1.2 million American children now are taking pills for Type 2 diabetes, sleeping troubles and gastrointestinal problems such as heartburn.

"A scarier problem is that body weights are so much higher in children in general, and so we're going to have larger numbers of adults who develop high blood pressure or abnormal cholesterol or diabetes at an earlier age," said Jones, of the heart association.

Dr. Richard Gorman, an American Academy of Pediatrics expert on children's medicines, said more children are taking medicines for "adult conditions" partly because manufacturers now provide pediatric doses, liquid versions or at least information to determine the right amount for a child.

The Medco study found that among boys and girls under age 10, the most widely used medication switched from allergy drugs to asthma medicines between 2001 and 2007. Gorman said that's because over the last decade, asthma care has gone from treating flare-ups to using inhaled steroids regularly to prevent flare-ups and hospitalizations. (<http://apnews.myway.com/article/20080514/D9oLDFNGo.html>)

As you can read, American society has **some serious health issues**. Hopefully, we can each be a part of the solution, rather than being a part of the problem. We are each the sum total of all the choices and decisions we make, given the circumstances of our lives. It is our solemn prayer that you choose wisely what you do regarding your physical condition. **Nevertheless, as my confession admits, even when we make the right choices, we do have to follow through properly with execution.** I have done this, and without a doubt have seen that the results are beyond my greatest expectations. Perhaps now you know why I am compelled to share it with others!

Mark and Margaret