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Horses Ready for Battle
Dan and Benjamin
Common Root for All the Branches

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Horses Ready for Battle

“Hast thou given the horse his strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Cans't thou make him afraid as the grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and with rage: neither believest he that it is the sound of the trumpet He saith to the trumpets, ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting” - Job 39:19-24

MAN AND THE HORSE

The Lord of Hosts delights in the horse. Over nearly four millennia mankind and man's slave and companion - the dreadful and fearful horse - have maintained an unequal partnership of prodigious importance to history.)^{1,2} The Bible itself contains more than three hundred horse-related citations. Outside of the Bible lands there is a collective testimony of deepest respect for the horse's dynamism, fleetness and instinctive powers, which spills over into a superstitious awe of the horse's wisdom, intellect and supposed prophetic, psychic and magical abilities.³

HORSES IN THE WRITINGS OF THE HARVEST MESSENGER

To begin our investigation of the scriptural use of horse let us completely survey the writings of Pastor Russell. Surprisingly, there is virtually no treatment of the horse, with the exception of one insightful comment on Isaiah 31:1 from Volume 3, page 316.

“Woe unto them who go down to Egypt [to the world] for help [for worldly ideas and plans, and for counsel as to how they should act in the crisis of this great day]; and stay on horses [who endeavor still to ride the old, false doctrinal hobbies], and trust in chariots [worldly organizations] because they are many; and in horsemen [the great leaders in false doctrines] because they are very strong; but who look not to the Holy One of Israel,

neither seek the Lord ..”

The several score repeated references to this citation in the 1907 *Bible Student Manual* beclouds the fact that there are no additional significant comments on horses by Pastor Russell *anywhere* in his other writings. Five verses earlier, in Isaiah 30:28, we find the image of the bridle in the jaws of people [as a horse] about to be drowned in a willful attempt to charge forward and cross an overflowing river [of God's breath, or spirit]. It is the juxtaposition of horses as people (Isaiah 30:28), and horses as doctrine (Isaiah 31:1), that suggests a depth to this image and draws the Bible student to further examine and appreciate the underlying beauty and harmony of these two related texts.

HORSES AND WARFARE

Approaching the horse image in scripture, we recognize that the horse invariably is associated with war. This may be a surprise. Usually we think of horses pulling wagons, hitched to plows, used by cowboys for rounding up cattle, and good-naturedly receiving a friendly pat on the muzzle from young children lifted up in their parents' arms. But these jobs have come to horses since Bible times. In scripture, the horse was a fearsome weapon for cavalry.

This development was gradual. In their original wild state horses were about the size of the Shetland pony, making it impossible for them to carry any but the smallest of riders.⁴ Consequently the first military use of horses was as draught animals to draw chariots in the second millennium BC (Genesis 41:43; Exodus 15:1-4).⁵ Following this more than one millennium passed before selective breeding for increased size, and changes in customs of warfare, led to the highly mobile, horse-back mounted, light cavalry rider the Bible first mentions in Amos 2:15.⁶

Cavalry use of horses continued until times within living memory. Their last tactical use - in Poland during the futile resistance of 1939 - showed that tank warfare has rendered horses technologically obsolete. However, this technological advance has not ended their impact on the terror of war. Two of the most successful tank commanders of World War II, Rommel and Patton, were both ardent students of the savage Mongol cavalry commander Subedi.⁷

THE LORD OF HOSTS THE GREATEST HORSE LOVER

It seems remarkable that the Lord of Hosts, the God of Peace (Romans 15:33) attaches such great importance to horses. We read in Zechariah 6:8, “Behold - these that go up into the North country have quieted my spirit in the North country” In context we see this refers to the black horses drawing war chariots (Zechariah 6:1-2). What could possibly be in the disposition and actions of these black horses that has quieted the spirit of the Lord?

Could it be that these black horses represent the church itself, *a class that has aggressively lived out sound doctrine*? But why are the horses black and not white? In the Song of Solomon 1:5-9 the Beloved is black, but comely. Moreover, she is likened to the horses of Pharaoh's chariot. Today a young man would not be advised to give this complement to his beloved, but this shows the esteem in which horses were held and this illusion makes perfect sense to any horse lover.

Scripturally, justification is represented by whiteness. The church goes *beyond* this justification and gets out in the sun, working in the field, as the Beloved did in verse 6: “I am black because of the sun”

Another reason black is chosen in Zechariah may be that genetically recessive black is the rarest color for the Arabian horse. This characteristic, together with the belief that black was a color of bad luck, caused the blackness to be almost bred out of these noble creatures. Surely, black Arabian horses are rare gems like the church.

But all of this begs the question: Why are there constant allusions to warfare with horses? As we think of war, perhaps images of suffering, death and depravation that accompany warfare crowd upon some of us. Perhaps indignation at falsehoods, greed, and viciousness that spawn warfare crowd upon others. Warfare is a hostile struggle of wills, where one group of men, through any means including violence, determines to impose its will on others. Horses, man's greatest source of strength and movement in warfare, thus picture highly *motivated* people people of iron will, people who live their doctrines. People who believe doctrines but do not put them into practice are not horses, they are the "footmen" of Jeremiah 12:5. The concern is only with those people who are motivated to act on their doctrines.

However, horse-likeness goes well beyond motivation based on correct or incorrect understanding of *Biblical* scriptural doctrine. The willful class (in this case "the nations"), plunging forward into the flood of Isaiah 30:28, have little or no knowledge of scripture. Neither did Sennacherib whom the Lord directed like a camel and a horse: "Therefore I will put my ring in thy nose [as one would direct a camel], and my bit in thy lips [as one would direct a horse]" (Isaiah 37:29, Rotherham).

In the broadest sense, *Horses seem to be an image for our inner motivating energy*. This is a psychological energy, that special portion of the general physical energy that mankind draws on for *motivation*. Horse energy can be directed for good or for harm. For harm, it can motivate us to literally pick fights or aggressively pursue false religion, ill-gotten wealth, licentiousness, sinful pleasure, or "unbridled" power.⁸

Exercised positively, it opens our hearts to the good things of the Lord. This "horse power" revitalizes us to go to an evening ecclesia meeting even after a day where we have missed deadlines, listened through the petty arguments of our co-workers, interceded for our children at school, had our hands full as our toddler's fever kept up through the night, and after all this, have heard that we need to do more, faster, and with less help than ever.

For the Christian, horses are the driving power of our consecrated living They picture the holy Spirit in action. Horses are directly equated with *spirit* in Isaiah 30:3 and Zechariah 6:5.⁹ Now it becomes apparent how *doctrine represents a special manifestation of horse-likeness*. O that we might be black horses and that all our energy and drive might be motivated by energy of Biblical doctrine lived!

SCRIPTURAL LESSONS FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE HORSE

What special lessons, then, does the Lord have in the character of the horse?

1. *Endurance.* The Arabian horse is a marvelous creature admired everywhere for its grace of form, endurance, intelligence and loyalty. The Argentine Paso Fino may have the smoothest riding gait, the Dutch Warm Blood the highest jump, the Andalusian Lippinzer more dressage tricks and the Thoroughbred the fastest sprint, but when the hundred milecross country endurance races are run those who finish first are still the purebred Arabians. The lesson for us is to run the race with endurance, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling (Philippians 3:14)

2. *Loyalty.* A famous Arabian account illustrates how exacting the Bedouins were in selecting horses. According to the story a group of exhausted, weary mares returning from a long patrol were turned loose near their drinking hole. As the horses galloped to the water a surprise attack caused the trumpet to sound the battle cry. Only five of the weary mares halted, turned and raced to their masters. These five loyal mares were selected to become the founders of the five major sub-families of Arabian horses we know today. The lesson for us is faithful service even at the sacrifice of our flesh.

3. *Singleness of Vision.* The eyes of beasts that need to constantly watch for enemies are set far apart on the sides of their head, giving them great breadth of vision. They are able to see almost a full circle around them.

However they can only properly judge depth in a narrow band. The lesson for us is the importance of the Lord's instruction in Matthew 6:22, "If therefore shine eye be single, then is thy whole body light"

4. Carefulness around the Unusual. As we read the description of this well-trained war horse in Job, we might think horses are fearless. But remember the words in Job about being "afraid as the grasshopper." Horse people call this being "spooked."

Perhaps we have had this experience. We are in a discussion with a brother and say something perfectly fine but find they are "spooked" by it. There was no danger, the concepts were fully in harmony with the Lord's plan, but the concepts were unfamiliar and frightened them. The lesson for us is to gently present scriptural ideas to our brethren, and to measure each new experience and idea with caution, but not bolt away in terror when no real danger is present. Remember that we are going to be seeing new and unusual things for the rest of eternity.

5. Horses have tremendous need for fellowship. Horses are happy with other horses in the herd. Indeed, many horses become desperately nervous and unruly if left out in a field by themselves. They have a social structure with their favorites, and those who annoy them are kicked at with no apparent provocation. The scriptures constantly admonish us to continue in our fellowship, as in 1 John 1:7

But there is a problem with what horse people call being "herd bound." This is when the horse does not wish to serve his master except when the other horses are there. We recall that impetuous Peter wanted to know what would become of John, and received the terse reply "Follow thou me" (John 21:20-24). The lesson for us is to esteem fellowship but not be "herd bound"

6. Horses can become "Barn sour." Horses love the barn. With no effort on their part they are fed the richest grain, watered and protected from the weather. "Barn sour" means the horse never wants to leave the barn. He loves his stall. These horses have even been known to run back into a burning barn and perish.

The horse in its natural state is not in a barn. It feeds up to eighteen hours a day and runs across the fields. We remember Matthew 13:38, "The field is the world." The lesson for us: be cautious in this arrangement called the ecclesia, where we are fed, watered and secure. We must not become "barn sour" and wish never to leave for duty in the fields.

7. Horses are quiet, waiting to hear their master's voice. We, likewise, should listen quietly for the master's voice.

8. Horses are absolute experts at reading body language. Clever Hans, the famous nineteenth century "counting horse" is still remembered for his purported ability to solve simple math problems. Hans related the solution by appropriately tapping his front hoof to count the correct integer answer. Subsequent scientific investigation showed that Hans was sensing when to stop by the nervousness of his owner as the correct answer was approached. Even audiences without Hans' owner present were unable to disguise the correct answer from him by their unconscious tension.¹¹ The lesson for us is to be attentive to our Lord's voice, and even to his slightest gesture.

9. Horses are very cautious about what they drink. You have heard the expression, "You can bring a horse to water, but you can't make him drink" Horses at a barn need close to 100 gallons of water per day - the same high demands city planners figure for their citizens' needs. Horses are very cautious about what they take in for water, and even the sniff of something not quite right will stop them from drinking. We also have high water demands to keep our spiritual health, but this "water of life" is the doctrine taken in and applied in our hearts and showing forth in our lives.

10. Horses cannot vomit. Colic is a sometimes fatal condition that afflicts horses. It seems such a

disadvantage that even the most clever evolutionists have given up trying to explain why it may be an advantage to survival.¹² Perhaps this condition has been permitted in horses to serve as a sign to the church. Normally the horse is careful about its food. On the occasion when it takes in something poisonous or tainted, most animals vomit out the offending portion, but horses are incapable of this. They must suffer through the experience. So with the Christian.

When we take in a bad experience we cannot just throw it out. We must go through the experience so that it becomes part of us, part of making us faithful and compassionate high priests. Yes, we are to be careful in choosing our food. We remember what is bad, and we avoid it. (Contrast this with the dogs of 2 Peter 2:22.) But the lesson for us is that tribulations are needful to serve as the steps to a higher plane.

SUMMARY

Dear brethren, how can we daily live the doctrines of the Bible more fully? Will we be out in the fields, in the sun, until we are black like those who comfort the Lord's spirit when they go into the North country? May the Lord richly bless your further study.

— *Richard Doctor*

¹ Toynbee, A., *Mankind and Mother Earth*, Oxford, 1976, page 94. This was the last book by the pre-eminent historian of our times. Any of his writings, but particularly the abridged *A Study of History*, are very highly recommended to Bible Students. He is the only historian to my knowledge to particularly mark out 1875 as the high water-mark and turning point for western civilization.

² Morris, D., *Horsewatching*, Crown Publishers, NY, 1988, page 3.

³ Cooper, J.C., *Symbolic and Mythological Animals*, Harper Collins, 1992, page 131.

⁴ As a general rule the horseback rider should be approximately one-sixth the weight of the horse.

⁵ Toynbee, *op cit.*, page 93.

⁶ Between the time of *Solomon 10th century BC*) and Amos (8th century BC) the ferocity of warfare increased with the advent of horseback mounted archers armed with iron, rather than bronze, weapons.

⁷ Chambers, J., *The Devil's Horsemen - The Mongol Invasion of Europe*, Athenum, NY, 1979, page 67.

⁸ One additional lesson may help to amplify on the text in Job quoted at the start of this article. The phrase “clothed his neck with thunder” is an *obvious* reference to the horse's mane, but there seems to be some confusion as to why this simile was employed. As it turns out, one of the Arabian sub-families has a gray coat with a flowing black mane. As I was watching one such handsome Arabian gelding peacefully grazing, a thunderstorm approached. In the afternoon light, the leading edge of the thunderhead's blackness contrasted against the gray sky in a perfect match of the contrasting coat and mane.

⁹ The psychological term “libido” seems to map into the scriptural image for horse exceedingly well. While the original Freudian use of “libido” was limited to sexual energy, analytical psychology has broadened its use to be consistent with the application here. Jacobi, J., *The Psychology of C G. Jung*, Yale, 1973, page 53.

¹⁰ At another time it may be a blessing to explore the specific use of horses in Zechariah. The Bible student should not be surprised to find that the chariots of Zechariah 6 match one for one with the planes on the Chart of the Ages during the Messianic Age (right down to the detail of two horses - Israel “grilled” and the world “bay” linked in their journey to the “south” country, or the earthly phase of the kingdom.) This interpretation can be reconstructed if the horse colors of Zechariah 1 are *accurately* reconciled with Zechariah 6, recognizing that Zechariah 1 takes place during the “bottom” (Zechariah 1:8) of the church's 70 year captivity (Zechariah 1:12) when the heathen, led by the “red” man of sin, are at ease (Zechariah 1:15).

¹¹ Morris, D., *op cit.*, page 81; 10. Horses have a great desire to make their master happy, but it is believed that they never know quite what to do with us. If you want to know whether a horse is happy, you watch its ears. When a horse's ears are forward, they are “happy ears.” Our ears, laying flat and backward on our heads, are “sour ears” always signaling in horse language that we are unhappy.

Dan and Benjamin

In a previous article (May 1997) evidence was presented that Samson pictured the church. The narrative of his experiences appears in Judges chapters 13-16. Following this appear two other narratives which close this book. The first is about the tribe of Dan, explaining how a large portion of this tribe fell into a form of idolatry which continued “until the day of the captivity of the land” many centuries later (Judges 18:30). The second is about the tribe of Benjamin, explaining how an uncorrected sin nearly led to the death of the tribe.

We understand that these two episodes are pictures of the other parts of the spirit begotten class, those who enter into the second death (Dan) and those who become the Great Company (Benjamin). The purpose of this article is to examine these narratives with this view in mind.

DAN

It is well known that in Revelation 7 there is a list of the 12 tribes of spiritual Israel, the church, from which Dan is omitted. It is largely supposed - we think correctly - that he is omitted because he represents that portion of spiritual Israel which fails to gain life on the spirit plane: the second death class. As Paul, Peter and John all pointed out, it is possible for the spirit begotten to fall away completely. Paul says of these “it is impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance,” for “if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-29). Peter says “it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment,” “to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever” (2 Peter 2:21,17). John affirmed, “There is a sin unto death” (John 5:16).

Of course we are speaking here not of saints who slip, or are detracted, or are repentant of their sins. Those who fall into the second death are those who after experiencing the benefits of the holy Spirit then turn away and walk contrary to the Lord and his goodness, and frowardly continue in this path.

Probably the tribe of Dan represents this class because of their turn to perpetual idolatry. This apostasy, and its evil influence among others in Israel, was intimated in the predictive words of Jacob, “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward” (Genesis 49:17).

THE BEGINNING OF THE APOSTASY

Not all of the tribe of Dan fell away. Samson, for example, was a Danite. But this tribe had learned to fear the might of their Philistine enemy, and unlike Samson most of them did not have the courage or the will to resist. Instead of leaning by faith on the “everlasting arms” as Samson did, they gave up. They abandoned the fight, left the land apportioned by God, and sought a place far to the north, more attractive to their tastes, and easier to obtain.

It is a lesson for us not to abandon our fight of faith, or be drawn away of earthly lusts to things attractive to the natural senses, and easy to obtain. We should keep our sight focused on our God-given inheritance beyond the veil, and pursue it daily in our thoughts, our studies, our fellowship with others. We are called to a glorious and wonderful inheritance beyond the veil, so wonderful, so magnificent, it is beyond all description of words to express. If we could but draw back the veil and glimpse for a moment the treasures beyond, no doubt it would change us forever. No longer would a comfortable life and worldly pleasures so readily captivate our affections. “At thy right hand there are pleasures forever more,” and they will be rich, satisfying, wholesome and pure. Let us never lose sight of our goal.

For the present we see these things only by faith, and this is for the best. The Lord is looking for those who trust Him and who desire first what is righteous and good and holy, irrespective of present comfort or advantage. “Love, so proved, is sweeter far, than all the trophies won by pride.”

THE PARTICULARS OF THE STORY

There was a man of Ephraim named Micah whose mother had a sum of money she set aside “to make a graven image and a molten image.” Ostensibly she had “wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord,” but it was seriously misused. It reminds us of the “mother church” ostensibly dedicated to the service of the Lord which through apostasy became “the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit” (Revelation 18:2). The sum of money involved was 1100 shekels of silver, and our sense of foreboding is alerted when we recall this was the same sum collected by Delilah from each of the Philistine Lords for betraying Samson (Judges 16:5).

The result was that “the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and seraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became a priest” He subsequently had the opportunity to hire the services of an actual Levite for this position, and though the whole arrangement was perverse, apparently this made it seem more respectable.

About this time the tribe of Dan sent out five men “from Zorah and from Eshtaol” (the range of Samson's early exploits, Judges 13:25), to spy out a better land northward. Five is a number which identifies the new creation. But just as there were five wise virgins, so her companions the Great Company are pictured also by five (foolish) virgins, and here the Danites are represented by five (very foolish!) men, representing the apostates among the spirit begotten.

As they passed northward they became acquainted with the house of Micah and the Levite priest he had hired. They passed further north and found a land which seemed lovely and unprotected. They reported back to the Danites, who on this news sent a contingent of 600 (cf. Revelation 13:18) men with weapons to take the territory. On their way they stopped by Micah's house, stole his “graven image, and the ephod, and the seraphim, and the molten image” and influenced the Levite, to his delight, to become priest for all of them. “And they set up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh” So began the apostasy of Dan. It is a picture of the spiritual apostasy of the Christian age which was begun by “them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

BENJAMIN'S SAD STORY

The next narrative, and the one which closes out the book of Judges (chapters 19-21), is about a serious crime committed in the tribe of Benjamin. The crime is detailed in chapter 19. Chapter 20 explains that when this crime was formally brought to the attention of the tribal leaders, they refused to deliver over the offenders and do justice for the offense. As a result there was a civil war in which many lost their lives, until the tribe of Benjamin was almost exterminated. Benjamin lost 25,100 men who “drew the sword” (Judges 20:35), and the remnant who escaped numbered only in the hundreds (Judges 20:47). The Israelites then realized that the future of Benjamin was at peril, and devised a plan to ensure enough wives to repopulate the tribe (Judges 21).



Abducting Wives for the Tribe of Benjamin (Judges 21:12)

Elsewhere in scripture Benjamin represents the Great Company, as for example when he was born through the great pain and finally death of his mother Rachel. Rachel's two children represent the spiritual seed, Joseph standing for Christ and the saints, and Benjamin the Great Company who come “out of great tribulation”

(Revelation 7:14) just as the spiritual call of the Abrahamic Covenant expires at the end of the Gospel Age.

Probably the tribe of Benjamin represents the Great Company in this picture in Judges also. The Great Company is a class of those who fail to rectify the failings and sins apparent before them, until they are purged with fiery trials in order to spare their life. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15). It is of note that the purging experience of the tribe of Benjamin was also, literally, a purging by fire. "When the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven. And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them ... also they set on fire all the cities that they came to" (Judges 20:40, 41, 48).

THE BROADER PICTURE

Judges closes with the three narratives of Samson, Dan and Benjamin. Respectively they represent the three spirit-begotten classes of the Gospel Age: the Church Class, Second Death Class, and Great Company.

When we note that the historical period of the Judges preceded the Kings of Israel, we observe a certain sense to why these pictures appear where they do, for the Gospel Age is the period which precedes the Kingdom Age.

But if this is the right view, do any of the other narratives in Judges also fit the Gospel Age? Evidently they do. The stories of Barak, Gideon and Abimelech (Judges 4-5, 6-8, 9) all narrate episodes in which the enemies of Israel are destroyed, and represent the demise of the great institutional oppressors of the saints. In Revelation these are designated the "dragon .. . beast and ... false prophet" (Revelation 16:13) which fall during Armageddon. These are the governments of Christendom, Papacy, and the Protestant denominations, respectively (*The Battle of Armageddon*, 1912 foreword, page xi). We propose that one each of these enemies is specially represented in the three narratives of Judges 4-9.

(1) The enemy of Barak was King Jabin of Hazor, whose general was Sisera. Their forces included the formidable "900 chariots of iron" which seemed invincible until bogged down in a quagmire by the Lord's providence. They were defeated near "the waters of Megiddo," reminding us that Revelation uses Armageddon as a picture of the final demise of the institutions of this world. The 900 chariots of iron emphasize the strength of civil government, just as the iron in the 10 toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image represents the strength of civil government.

(2) The enemies of Gideon were the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunnah, and the two princes Zeeb and Oreb. The dual leadership in each case reminds us of the false prophet, composed of two parts: (a) the church of England and (b) her protestant allies. Gideon's attack is memorable for the breaking of the pitchers and the sounding of the trumpets which threw the Midianites into disarray. The light from the pitchers represents the truth shining from the broken vessels of the saints as they give themselves in the service of the truth, and the trumpet blasts picture the judgments of our conquering leader Jesus. The "Midianites" most upset by the truths of the Divine Plan scattered through Christendom have been the Protestants. (Psalm 83:9,11 connects the battles of Barak and Gideon to the final struggle of this age.)

(3) Abimelech was a usurper. He reigned for three years as a king when no kings were authorized, during the period of the Judges. At the end of three years there was a rebellion among his subjects. At first he was able to overcome the resistance, but irrespective of some stunning victories his base of power was collapsing, and he finally perished by a millstone thrown onto his head. Likewise Papacy usurped dominion at a time when no earthly dominion was authorized for the church. At the end of 3 1/2 times of Papacy's rule there was a rebellion among her subjects during the French Revolution, and irrespective of their recovery their base of power was dissolving. Finally great Papacy will be overthrown "like a great millstone" (Revelation 18:21), ruined forever.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The book of Judges contains many faith strengthening examples of valor and noble struggle in the cause of God and his people. It is even more encouraging to recognize that these experiences represent the struggles of faith in the Gospel Age. We must be overcomers like Samson was. We must “keep [ourselves] from idols” (1 John 5:21), which Dan failed to do. We must be diligent to root out each sin which presents its ugly face before us, which Benjamin refused to do. And like Gideon's band we should be engaged in the struggle of truth against darkness by letting the light of truth shine out from us to others.

As the period of Judges preceded the period of the typical Kingdom, so the struggles of the present time are but preliminary to the glorious Kingdom of righteousness. Already that kingdom is coming into executive power, and this will be complete when the last member passes beyond. Then that kingdom, whose power is even now felt in the breaking up of the kingdoms of this world, will extend its influence for right and truth to every corner of the globe.

- *David Rice*

Common Root for All the Branches

From the beginning, God chose Abraham and his seed for blessing all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3, 22:17-18). Careful Bible Students recognize that at the end of the Jewish dispensation “God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). “I will call them my people, which were not my people” (Romans 9:25). “If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

Yet it is also recognized that the Jewish cast off condition and blindness is not permanent. “Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light ... If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever” (Jeremiah 31:35-36). “If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? ... How much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? ... As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers' sakes ... that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy” (Romans 11:15, 24, 28, 31).

We see in this a cooperative endeavor with the spiritual and natural seed in the work of the New Covenant according to Isaiah 2:3 and Micah 4:2. “Many nations shall come, and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:' for the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”

While Israel is still largely trusting in the Mosaic Law and also recognizes a larger prophetic responsibility toward Gentiles, yet they have little regard for the integrity and trustworthiness of the Gentiles in today's society. This is not surprising, given the history of persecution, compromising teachings and proselytizing practices. However, we have seen in recent years an exploring of Israel's Gentile connections and responsibilities by contemporary Rabbis and teachers. Many Jews, faithful to the Zionist cause of returning to the land, have been truly grateful for the message in the program, “Israel, Appointment with Destiny” and the genuine mission of comfort from Bible Students in recent years.

We extract liberally from two articles in the Jerusalem Post, both by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, dean of the Ohr Tora Institutions, chief Rabbi of Efrat. One sees in Jethro's support of Moses a clue to the need for God's use of a Gentile element to confirm their covenant relations. The other properly sees in the Abrahamic covenant a Jewish responsibility toward all humanity. Are the eyes, once partly blinded, beginning to see?

JERUSALEM POST, February 2, 1992, “A *Gentile or Convert Can Provide the Missing Link*”

Exiled from our homeland for close to 2,000 years, we lived on the edge of history, our national - but not spiritual - life arrested. And despite threats to our very existence, we learned to suffer our host cultures, usually as the perennial scapegoat - trod upon, cursed, made to wear identifying garments. Sometimes we'd be wooed by the nobility when they became aware of the special talents of this “nation within a nation,” or protected by the pious of the nations of the world, who on occasion risked their lives to save some of us. In total, however, Israel could hardly be condemned for agreeing with the quotation from the Midrash: “The law is known that Esau hates Jacob” (Genesis 27:41).

But with the birth of modern Israel - a state equal to others on the globe - it becomes possible to see the gentile world from a broader perspective. And the lenses through which to look can be found in [the account] of Jethro . . . What is so special about Jethro?

Is it because he is Moses' father-in-law? Not likely. Far more significant is his role in alerting Moses to a more effective means of administering justice -invaluable advice, since it served as a “strength preserver” for the master of all prophets. Seeing Moses teaching and judging the entire nation by himself, Jethro was not afraid to admonish him: “What you are doing is not good. You are going to wear yourself out, along with this nation that is with you. Your responsibility is too great, you cannot do it all alone ... Seek out from among the people capable, God-fearing men.... You must then appoint them as leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties....” (Exodus 18:17-22)

This places Jethro on an extraordinary level. In effect, Jethro the gentile teaches Moses the administrative technique critical in establishing a nation to be governed in accordance with Tora doctrine.

Jethro's practical wisdom is only part of what Moses learns from the gentiles. The woman who drew Moses out of the Nile gave him his name, brought him into her home and sheltered him ... consequently, the first lesson Moses learned from his adoptive mother is “*hesed*” or true benevolence, even if it means risking your status and even your life....

Contrasted with the darkness of Amalek is the light of Jethro. Not only is Jethro *not* bent on destroying Israel, he is the perfect ally, a gentile who understands the mission of the Jews, who is cognizant of the one God and of His presence in the world through the Jewish people.

“Jethro expressed joy because of all the good that God had done for Israel, rescuing them from Egypt's power. He said 'praised be God, who rescued you from the power of Egypt and Pharaoh, who liberated the people from Egypt's power. Now I know that God is greater than all deities... ’” (Exodus 18:9-11)

Jethro's blessings are the basis for Psalm 117, included in the Hallel, where the nations are commanded to praise God along with the Israelites. Jethro's blessings foreshadow the truest *Kiddush Hashem* [Holy Name], then the Divine Name shall be exalted and sanctified in the eyes of the gentiles....

As far back as Abraham we see the first links between one man's monotheism and the rest of the world. In the very same breath that God elects Abraham, we are told that through him “all the nations of the world will be blessed” (Genesis 12:4). Similarly, Ruth, ancestor of King David from whom the Messianic seed sprouts, was a convert to Judaism, so that carved into the Messianic soul is the vision of reaching out to the world.... Indeed, the descendants of Jethro and Pharaoh's daughter have much to teach the descendants of Moses about realizing God's promise: “And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,' a light unto the world.

JERUSALEM POST, October 27, 1990, “*Three Biblical Covenants*”

My teacher, Rabbi Joseph Soloveichik, speaks of three Biblical covenants, the first being between God and Adam, the second between God and Noah, and the third between God and Abraham. The process that began with Adam and Noah - in effect a dialogue between God and a reluctant mankind struggling against the demand to live in accordance with a divine imperative - ends when Abraham turns out to be the one person who can correct his predecessors' shortcomings....

In the beginning, God made a covenant with Adam: “of every tree of the garden you may eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for on that day ... you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-18). Had Adam kept this one commandment, a creature of dust would have established an eternal relationship with God, embodying the attributes of compassion, truth and goodness....

Ten generations after Adam, the world was trapped in moral quicksand, ripe for destruction. But one man, Noah, finds grace in God's eyes, and there is a gradual lifting of the past's heavy shadows as Noah and his family emerge from the Ark and God gives the commands [and covenant] of Genesis 9:3-6. In the Tractate *Sanhedrin*, 56a, the rabbis deduce seven laws from these verses: Prohibition against blasphemy, incest, idolatry, robbery, bloodshed, eating flesh from a living animal, and the command to establish law courts. Called the Seven Noachide Laws, they apply to every human.

After the one commandment given to Adam failed, and the subsequent failure of the seven ethical laws of Noah, Abraham's spiritual journey becomes the final attempt to halt the planet's descent into a pagan labyrinth ... the world is simply not yet strong-willed enough to live by the seven Noachide Commandments, and morality alone is insufficient to create a truly morally enthused people.

Enter Abraham! Through perfect faith in God, he will create a family, and from this family will spring a nation which shall commit itself not to one, nor to seven, but to 613 commandments. They will live and breathe the laws of God - this time comprising both ritual and ethics, and will become, as promised in Exodus, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Thus the elevation of Abraham is not meant to exclude the world. On the contrary, the task of this nation of teachers is to bring the blessings of God upon the families of the earth despite all obstacles.

Maimonides, in his work *Sefer Hamitzvot* [The Book of Remembrance], writes that the commandment to love God does not mean we should be satisfied with the feelings in our hearts; rather, we have to bring the love of God to the entire world - something neither Adam nor Noah achieved. To love God means to share Him and His laws with the world ... if only we will be the proper models and teachers.

Our responsibility is to all of humanity, since in the world of atomic weapons, not only every Jew but every human being becomes a co-signer for the others. We must truly become disciples of Aaron, loving humanity and bringing them closer to Tora, so that the God of Israel will be the God of the entire world.