

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
Volume 17, Number 4, November 2006

If He Love His Master

"If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing ... And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever" (Exodus 21:2-5, 6).

The servant here makes a decision to serve his master forever and in looking at the detail of these verses, we see this as an excellent picture of consecration from a different perspective than that shown in Leviticus 8 on the consecration of the priesthood. In Leviticus 8 we see the types, the various features of consecration, the legal "contract" aspects of God's responsibilities and our own responsibilities, how our Lord "signs" it, then we "sign" it; then God recognizes that the blood of His own son makes up for any deficiencies we have in contract performance. Since His son endorses the contract, God Himself endorses the contract.

BOND SERVANT

The realities and the reason for what we have done and what we are doing through this consecration may be understood by reviewing both Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 15:12-17. Both these passages use the same language with a little variation. These provisions were written initially for the bond servant in Israel and if one is a bond servant, it means that one owes a debt of some sort. One became a bond servant when another said, "I will pay your debt if you serve me." The way this law worked is the bond servant would pay this debt back by six years of servitude. During this time of six years, the bond servant was not abused in any way. They were treated well — they were fed, clothed, housed, and they could have families. The Bible gives a reminder to the masters to treat the bond servant well because all of Israel were bondsmen in Egypt. Servants would serve for these six years, but in the seventh year they could

go out for free at no cost, because they had served for the required six-year period.

In Deuteronomy there are instructions that provisions be given to the servant when released. This was because they did not have possessions of their own at that time. The master would send the servant out with some of the flock, grain, wine, clothing, or other provisions to help him get re-established.

VOLUNTARILY SERVING THE MASTER

But, the servant had a choice as we read in Deuteronomy 15:16: "And it shall be, *if* he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee ..."

Note, there is a provision beginning with the word "if." "If" he loves his master, and in his master's house he sees his blessings there; "if" he sees his master as the one who bought him, the one who paid his debt; "if" he sees his master as the one who cared for him for these years; and "if" the servant decides that he really loves his master and wants to continue serving him, he can do so. The servitude now is not for a finite period of time, *but forever*. However, this must be the *voluntary* decision of the servant and a mutual agreement with the master.

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), Carl Hagensick, Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Richard Suraci. Online, www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org

In the type, in order for this permanent transaction to take place, the servant would be brought to the judges by his master — the judges would witness the intent of the servant to pledge his all to his master. The judges then acknowledge and ratify the covenant between the two. The servant is then taken to the door of the master's house: Deuteronomy 15:17: "Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever." His ear, probably the earlobe, is pierced with an awl in a conspicuous manner — on the door post. Blood is shed in the enactment of this type. This is done right on the doorpost where everybody can see. In this manner, he then continues in service to his master for the rest of his life.

KEY WORDS CONSIDERED

Reviewing details of the key words used in Exodus 21:

Servant (S.5650) "*ebed*" — bondage, bondman, [bond-] servant, (man-) servant. "Servant" plainly means bondman, or someone who went into bondage because of a debt. If one is in bondage, one cannot free oneself. Through the sin of Adam, we are all debtors to God, and we have all been condemned to death. We understand that we are debtors, we understand that we *were in bondage* to sin and death and could not set ourselves free. It took the life of God's own son to set us free. But still we are not really free for sin and death are all around us. Outwardly, nothing seems to have changed. That is because this freedom we have is not in our flesh, it is in our new minds and the battle is in the mind and in the character. Hence Paul writes:

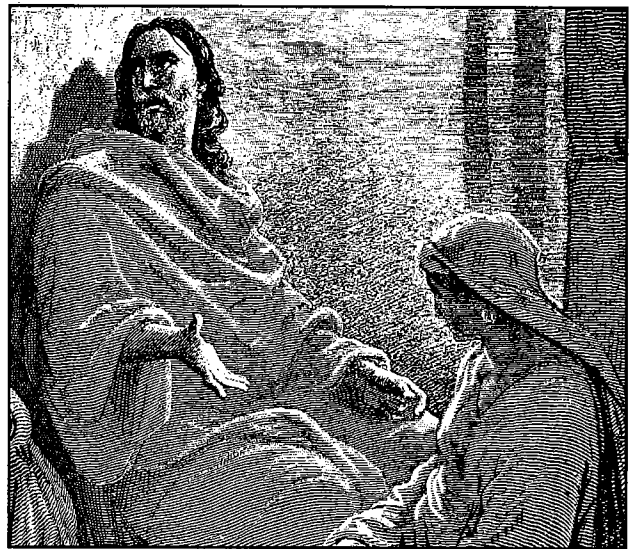
"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:3-5).

Our Lord paid the price for Adam's sin and bought us — all mankind — he paid our debt.

Lord and Master (S.113) "*aw-done*" sovereign, i.e. controller (human or divine): — lord, master, owner. It is appropriate to call Jesus Christ our "Lord," because he is the one who purchased us. Hence, Jesus is rightfully our master — our owner — not only of us but also of the whole world. Those in the world just don't know it yet.

Plain Statement — to plainly say (S.559) "*aw-mar*," avouch, certify, to declare, to promise, to make a solemn vow. This is the plain statement of the servant — the bondman who realizes his master's love and care, recognizes his undone condition and in turn wants to make this decision to plainly say, "I will not go out free."

Go Out Free (S.3318) "*yaw-tsaw*," depart, escape, fail, fall out, pull out, put away. In this case, the servant does not want to forsake the love that has been shown to him by his master; he wants it to continue. In the context of someone who is coming to understand the truth, they do not want to take the grace of God in vain and just "go out free," unlike some who do.



Our Master, Jesus, whom we love.

Bring (S.5066) "*naw-gash*," a primitive root, to be or come (causative bring) near (for any purpose); euphemistically to lie with a woman; as an enemy, to attack; religiously to worship; to present; figuratively to adduce an argument. This word "bring" is a forceful word in the Hebrew. We would like to focus on the use of the word "figuratively," where it gives the idea of an advocate who argues a case.

Judges (S.430) "*el-o-heem*" occasionally applied by way of deference to magistrates, properly "gods" in the ordinary sense; but specifically it is used (especially with the article) of the supreme God. Here is the picture of the servant who says, "I don't want to go out free;" he makes this solemn vow, and his master argues his case as his advocate before the supreme Judge, God Himself.* This is just as we are brought by our Lord Jesus Christ to God Himself to make our covenant. We make our plain statement, then our advocate states our case to God. This is consistent with our Lord's words in John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Door Post (S.4201) "*mezuzwah, mez-oo-zaw*" door-post (as prominent or conspicuous). This reminds us of the doorpost of the tabernacle. At this time, consecration is not conspicuous to the world — when we make our consecration, who knows about it? The world does not understand when we make our consecration and could not care less. But all the Brethren know, and they are overjoyed. To those who have an awareness of God's plan, this is very conspicuous. How about the heavenly host? Every single one knows and they are very pleased. Yes, this vow is conspicuous to our Master and his house. But who else knows? The adversary, Satan wants those that make a consecration dead, because they are the nails in his coffin and he knows it.

CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

In the type, the ear is pierced with an awl, blood is spilled, and the servant is saying that he will no longer live for him-

self, but for his master. That's the whole point of consecration. The individual decides not to live for himself or herself, and says, "I'm giving up all I am, all I have, and all I hope for as a human being and I am going to do my master's will. "... And he shall serve his master forever." We declare the death of our own will, and take on the will of our master eternally. This concept is essentially the same as consecration of the priesthood in Leviticus 8 but with less detail. In Leviticus 8, the bullock is slain, picturing our justified humanity, our Lord's and ours. The blood is put on the horns of the altar, and by reason of the shed blood this altar of earthly sacrifice is acceptable. And we all know that. If somebody walked in and said, "I'm sacrificing unto the Lord, "and you say, "That is wonderful. When did you give up your human life rights?" And they say, "I did not do that." Well, then they are not sacrificing unto the Lord. The sacrifice cannot be accepted because self-will is still there. Where self-will remains, God cannot accept the sacrifice. What did Jesus do at age thirty? He laid down his life in consecration. He no longer did the will of even a perfect man. He laid that down to do God's will, even unto death. That is exactly our covenant.

Continuing in Leviticus 8, the life-giving organs and fat are burned, showing our best powers — human energy. The hide and dung are burned outside the camp showing how the world sees this consecration, as a waste of time. The world cannot see these things. They cannot see what is in the Holy; they cannot see God's plan, for God has not revealed it to them. God is not dealing with them yet. Their time is future. The world thinks we are fools for Christ's sake.



Eliezer and Rebekah. "I will go!"

But we also have the blood on the ear. And we remember the ram of consecration, and this hearing ear where we can hear and then sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

The picture of Rebekah with an earring and her hearing ear shows how God sent the power of His spirit and providences to gather the church, as the bride for his son. This is done just as Abraham sent his servant — presumably Eliezer — to Nahor to find a bride for Isaac in Genesis 24:1-10. Notice that Abraham did not go off to Nahor himself, and he never sent Isaac. In other words, Jesus would not return as a man to find his Bride, for he will never become human again. Instead, Eliezer is sent, this pictures the power of the holy Spirit through his word and providences, and this is enough to call his bride.

Nahor pictures those already in harmony with God. In this harvest time it is especially those already informed about God's plan, the ransom, Adam's fall, the Abrahamic promise, and other beauties of the Divine Plan. They understand they will have the opportunity for having a perfect human life forever with all of mankind. Knowing that, they also understand the mechanism of "The Christ," the Head and Body. The offer is given, "Would you like to be part of this Christ Head and body; not just be a recipient of life with the rest of mankind, but would you like to participate in offering life to the rest of mankind?"

Eliezer was not sent to the Canaanites, but to Haran. Even so God calls from amongst his human sons those who are justified by their faith in the ransom sacrifice. Rebecca was asked to be Isaac's bride and without ever seeing Isaac, and she said, "I will go." We are offered the opportunity to consecrate even unto death — lay down all we have, all we are and all we hope for as human beings without ever having seen the heavenly father.

WHY WOULD WE DO SUCH A THING?

We would do this because our Heavenly Father has shown us His plan of mercy and love. Because God loved us so much that He gave his own son's life to do this while we were yet sinners. His son died for the ungodly so he could bring all of mankind back into harmony and blessings. When making such a decision, we saw God's character. We saw this incredible opportunity for all mankind.

And then to think that he made a special provision for the Church that is beyond our wildest expectations, would it be proper that we should ask to see the "fine print" and make Him stipulate every provision?

If our Father promises these things, that is surety enough. We see this in Rebecca saying, "I will go" without ever having seen Isaac, just as we have said, "I will go." Rebekah was given various jewels, and specifically a golden earring. In Exodus 21, no earring is specifically mentioned. However, it is reasonable that after the servant's ear was pierced, the hole would close up unless an earring was utilized to preserve the proof of this relationship. It is a great responsibility to be faithful to what we have been given.

EARRINGS AND IDOLS

When Israel came to Mt Sinai and Moses went up in the mount, he received the first set of the tables of the Law. Israel grew restless and fearful in those forty days. They demanded of Aaron an idol to lead them. Aaron called for them to bring gold for a golden calf in Exodus 32:2-4:

“And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings ... And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” [New American Standard]

This is the only gold that is mentioned, so if you want to make idols, the cost is very simple ... just break off your hearing ear. Break off this golden earring that represents spiritual understanding given by God. If you want to venerate something other than God himself, He says fine, you just won't hear me anymore. How very simple this is!

This is what the world does to allay their fears. They make gods of their own fashioning. These gods are called “money,” “power,” “prestige,” “pride,” “fame.” They sacrifice their lives to these gods, but what do they get when it is all finished? It is all fleeting because they all die. In all of these sacrifices, none can give them life. None of these gods can free them from the bondage of sin and death. When finally reaching the point of death, how unfortunate that so many have no hope and have no idea what they are facing, because they have not seen God's plan. They have been told various things but with no proof. If there is no proof, there is no belief, and there is no faith. As Hebrew 11:1 so plainly states, faith really is built on substance and evidences, but they continue to fashion idols of their own design. We must be on guard never do this. We who have entered into a covenant relationship with God must never “break off our golden earrings” and use them to make idols. For as we read the first commandment in Exodus 20:2,3,5:

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage ... Thou shalt have no other gods before me ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.”

What does this mean, a “jealous God?” Does it mean He is so selfish that He just needs this veneration from us? Is it for His health, for His pride, or for His ego? No, it is for none of these reasons. He is a jealous God, not for himself, but for us. He wants what is best for us and that can only come through Him, through the blood of His son. Anything else leads to death, sin, unhappiness, despair, and hopelessness. Only He has what is right for us. This is why He gave the best for us — the life of His own son.

HEARING EARS

When we first heard the Truth, how did we get to be so privileged to receive such understanding? Although Adam had God's character placed in his heart at his creation, the

majority of mankind has had this erased from them by the fall to a lesser or greater degree. But we had a hearing ear; this affinity to say, “I want to know the Truth.” This hearing ear is a rare thing. Very few people are really interested in taking time away from the “priorities” of everyday life to know these things.

Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 13:9 and 15: Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Notice he was not speaking to everybody even though he talked to thousands. Although many listened, only few were able to understand. For this people's heart is waxed gross (calloused), and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart.” Your heart is a picture of your desires — what you truly want. This is why we say, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” But to those with the hearing ears is the promise in Matthew 13:16-17: “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”



How do we respond?

We, like those Ancient Worthies, with this desire to hear and understand with our hearts, say to God, “I do not care what it costs, I have to know. And once I know, if I see this is the Truth, I will never leave.” Knowing this desire, our Father drew us to Him as we read in John 6:44: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”

He drew us with His word and providences. He overruled — not so that we would just get lucky enough to run into the Truth; He overruled so that one of His children would be sitting right next to us somewhere. And what is one of His children going to want to talk about? The Truth! And once this Truth is shared, the responsibility for it becomes our own and we see more clearly the features of God's plan. We learned who our Master is, and we learned how to love our Master and his house. We got to know our real family.

LAYING DOWN OUR LIVES

Jesus explained this in Matthew 12:46-50: "While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.' But he answered and said unto him that told him, 'Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?' And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, 'Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' "

This is a relationship much deeper than the blood of our natural family, for this special relationship is through the blood of God's own son. We loved not only our Master, but also we came to know and love our true family — those who do our Father's will. And what would we say on this day of release, this seventh day we are in right now, when we learned these things? We found out we had to give our all. Many have done this before, as David when he bought Ornan's threshing floor as the place where God told him to put the altar. Ornan was about to give it to David for free, but David would not permit this as we read in 1 Chronicles 21:24: "And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost."

What is the cost for us to receive the blessings and the opportunities of the Body of Christ?

ONE FUTURE PERFECT HUMAN LIFE

Did anybody get in on a discount? Did anybody pay less than that? That is what the contract requires. We lay down our lives and our wills, and we take on God's will. It is good that our natural hearing ear was not totally erased by Adam's fall, because God appeals to us in this way. But after coming to Christ, we receive a miraculous hearing ear. We receive knowledge of God's word and its depth. We receive His providences. We receive the privilege of prayer because he has committed to this relationship. He is our Father, we are his sons. He will hear us. We receive the exceeding great and precious promises. This is better than any golden earring.

CHASTENING NECESSARY

We also receive His reproofs and chastisements as we read in Isaiah 30:21: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

Every time we get a chastisement, He is saying, "I'm helping you to knock off the chunks in your character so that you will be fit in the kingdom. You will be fit to be part of the Bride of Christ." We do not shy away from these lessons, for "A wise reproof received by a willing listener is better than an earring of gold adorning the ear" (Adapted translation of Proverbs 25:12). This wise reproof by our Father is better for us than a thousand golden earrings, because if He chastises us, we know He is dealing with us. He is guiding us, He is directing us, He is showing us where

He wants us to be, and what He wants us to learn. We enter this covenant to become lifelong servants to the one who has bought us. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 Paul writes: "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

In other words, His influence or spirit is not some magical, mystical thing. This spirit means His influence — the principles of righteousness He wants us to take into our hearts and our minds to transform our character, so that His spirit and our spirit are the same. God's principles have become ours and they are now inseparable from His.

In John 12:26 we are told by the Master what the servant should do, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." We are to be "footstep followers" of our Lord and over and over, the Bible conveys the idea of servitude.

SERVITUDE IN THE GOSPEL AGE

In all the texts that follow, *italics* will be used for emphasis, not to indicate spurious, or added words. Paul said in Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves *servants* to obey, his *servants* ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the *servants* of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the *servants* of righteousness." Do you see Exodus 21 again? Do we see the servant who loved his master?

In the New Testament this word *Servant* (S.1401) is "*doulos*;" a slave, bond (-man), servant — willing slave. This is the word that Paul, James, Peter, and Jude use as they write: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a *servant* of Christ." (Galatians 1:10)

"Paul, a *servant* of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1). "Epaphras, who is one of you, a *servant* of Christ, saluteth you" (Colossians 4:12). "And the *servant* of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24)

"James, a *servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). "Simon Peter, a *servant* and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). "Jude, the *servant* of Jesus Christ" (Jude 1).

KEPT IN SERVITUDE BY LOVE

As we serve, we continue to love our family, those of our Master's house, our brethren. As the Apostle John writes in 1 John 3:14, 16: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren ... Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Note the typical significance of the setting in Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12. It was the seventh year, which pictures the great seventh thousand year day, the period of the Mediatorial phase of the kingdom. In this period, the light

shines brightly, and we know the opportunities will then be open for all of mankind. The seventh seal shall have been opened. This is the time when all of mankind will be released from sin and death.

We have learned about the earthly Kingdom and the blessings to come. Yet, when we made our consecration, we chose to stay and NOT go out free. We gave up the opportunity for a perfect human life in the earthly Kingdom because of our love of our Master.

We have many blessings of consecration. We see these blessings in the types of Leviticus 8, and Psalms. 50:5: "Gather my saints together, those that have made a covenant to me by sacrifice ..." We have the promises of Romans 12:1, 2. With all of these pictures, why talk about the servant in Exodus and Deuteronomy?

The reason is simple. It is because many of these other pictures talk about the process, the strict mechanics of the operation, the provisions of the covenant, justification, etc. These indeed are vital to know and we are blessed to understand them, but Exodus 21 gives the true reason of why this is. That reason is love.

LOVE IS THE REASON

Because of this love, we now know unspeakable joy. We give thanks to our Father for this wonderful opportunity, shown to us in the types of the law that were given to us over 3,600 years ago. These were just for us, just for the Body of Christ. It is because of the great debt that was paid, and our privilege of being recipients and participators in this great sacrifice — even at this late date.

"And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever." (Exodus 21:5, 6)

— Adapted from a discourse by Bro. Harry Wildblood

* Editor's note: Nothing in the passage speaks of arguing. The judges merely witness the transaction. They are not implored or reasoned with, any more than a young man taking a bride would come to an authority to plead for permission. The purpose of the authority is to seal the matter with appropriate witnesses.

Trample Not on Any

The Jews would not willingly tread upon the smallest piece of paper in their way, but took it up; for possibly, they say, the name of God may be on it. Though there was a little superstition in this, yet truly there is nothing but good religion in it, if we apply it to men. Trample not on any; there may be some work of grace there, that thou knowest not of. The name of God may be written upon that soul thou treadest on; it may be a soul that Christ thought so much of, as to give His precious blood for it; therefore despise it not.

— S. T. Coleridge



Mourning the Ruins of Jerusalem

The 9th of Av

Tisha B'Av (tish'ah be-ab) is a major annual fast day in Judaism. Its name denotes the ninth day "Tisha" of the Jewish month of "Av," which falls in mid-summer. It has been called the "saddest day in Jewish history." In the Bible, before the exile, this month was simply called, "the fifth month." The lunar-based Jewish calendar shows some variation of the dates each solar year, with the years from creation here conforming to standard Jewish chronology although it must be recognized that standard Jewish chronology differs from the chronology presented in Volume 2 of *Studies in the Scriptures*. Some current dates:

03 August 2006 (9th of Av, 5766)

24 July 2007 (9th of Av, 5767)

10 August 2008 (9th of Av, 5768)

FIVE NATIONAL DISASTERS

According to the Hebrew Mishnah (Ta'anit 4:6), five specific events occurred on the ninth of Av that warrant fasting. As Bible Students we note that these are tied in with the "Gentile Times" of 2520 years:

(1) On this day, according to tradition, ten of the twelve spies sent by Moses to observe the land of Canaan (Numbers 13-14) brought an "evil report" about the land that caused the children of Israel to cry, panic and despair of ever entering the "Promised land," for which they were punished by the Lord with the promise that they would not enter until the fearful generation had died: "As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun" (Numbers

14:28-31). While Ta'anit 29a says it happened on the 9th of Av, Numbers 14 just records the curse from the Lord and the revolt against Moses and not the date, from the fruits harvested such as the famous grapes of Eschol the "evil report" came in mid summer and the tradition is reasonable.

(2) Solomon's Temple (the First Temple) and the Kingdom of Judah were destroyed by the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar and the nation was sent into the Babylonian exile. The text in 2 Kings 25:8 shows that Jerusalem was breached and taken on the 7th day of the fifth month and the conflagration of the temple was complete three days later according to Jeremiah 52:12-13. The Av 9th date was the day of remembrance and fasting for the first temple which Jewish chroniclers believe had stood for 410 years. From Zechariah 7:5 we know that the custom was observed during the exile, "Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the *fifth* and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"

(3) It appears that after the building of the Second Temple, after the return from Babylon, the custom of keeping these fast-days was temporarily discontinued. However, the Second Temple was destroyed by the Roman siege on August 4, 70 AD. This date is the 9th of Av on the Jewish calendar. Thus began the long national Diaspora of the Jewish people.

(4) The following year, on the one year anniversary the Roman army plowed Jerusalem with salt on July 25, 71 AD. This date is the 9th of Av on the Jewish calendar.

(5) Finally, over sixty years later Bar Kokhba's revolt against Rome failed, Bar Kokhba was killed, as was Rabbi Akiva and many other important sages of the Mishnah, and Betar the last fortress to hold out against the Romans was destroyed. This destruction of Simeon Bar Kokhba's army took place August 5, 135 AD. This date is the 9th of Av on the Jewish calendar.

DISASTERS DURING THE DIASPORA

Additionally, the Jewish commentators sadly note four additional Diaspora disasters:

(6) First Crusade declared by Pope Urban II. 10,000 Jews were killed in first month of Crusade. Crusades bring death and destruction to thousands of Jews, totally obliterate many communities in Rhineland and France on July 14, 1095 (9 Av 4855).

(7) The Martyrs of York — 500 Jews died as a result of their Christian debtors storming a castle in York England, killing them all on July 14, 1190 (9 Av 4950).

(8) England expelled all of the Jews on July 18, 1290 (9 Av 5050).

(9) Spain expelled all of the Jews on August 2, 1492 (9 Av 5252).

A PROMISE OF JOY

Without fully realizing its significance for the return of favor, many Jewish commentators observe that there is one



The Lamentations of Jeremiah

of the most significant world events of recent history on this fateful day:

(10) World War I ending the Gentile Times began on August 1, 1914 (9 Av 5674).

We rejoice to recognize the promise in Zechariah 8:18-19: "And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, 'Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the *fifth*, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah *joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts*; therefore love the truth and peace.' Thus saith the LORD of hosts; 'It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.' Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; 'In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.' "

When this promise is fulfilled, then this day of national mourning will be changed into one of national joy.

— Bro. Richard Doctor

Wisdom That is Tender Hearted

"Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

Jesus recognized the need for blending opposites. He knew that his disciples would face a difficult and hostile world, where they would confront cold and arrogant men whose hearts had been hardened. So he said to them, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," (Matthew 10:16) while giving a formula for action, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." It is difficult to imagine an individual having both the characteristics of

the serpent and the dove, simultaneously, but this is what Jesus expects.

WISE AS SERPENTS

First, let us consider the need for incisive and critical thinking, realistic appraisal, and decisive judgment. Such a mind is sharp and penetrating, breaking through the defenses of legends and myths. It shifts the true from the false using mature judgment based on God's word (Hebrews 4:12). The wise individual is astute and discerning. With wisdom comes firmness of purpose and solidness of commitment. Who doubts that wisdom of mind is one of man's greatest needs? Yet, rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. In contrast, there is an almost universal quest for easy answers. In Isaiah's day, this was the group that said, "speak unto us smooth things" (Isaiah 30:10).

What Jesus is trying to tell us is that even the best-intentioned channels of information need to be considered using our best "critical-thinking" skills as energized by the Lord's spirit. Few people have the *natural ability* for toughness of mind to judge critically and to discern the true from the false, the fact from the fiction. Our minds are constantly being assailed by legions of half-truths, prejudices, and falsehoods. All of this needs to be weighed by the new mind exercised in the speaking of wisdom among other mature Christians (1 Corinthians 2:6). Those lacking spiritual wisdom are prone to embrace all kinds of superstitions and irrational fears. One sad example is the pitiful case of King Saul at the close of his reign.

There is always a fear of change. The gullible feels security in the *status quo*, and has an almost morbid fear of the new and reasoning is often looked upon as the exercise of a corrupt faculty. This has also led to a widespread belief that there is a conflict between science and religion. Of course, this is not true, for both are authored by God.

Science investigates; religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge which is power; religion gives man wisdom which is control. Science deals mainly with facts; religion deals mainly with values. The two are not rivals. They are complementary. Science keeps religion from sinking into the valley of crippling irrationalism. Religion prevents science from falling into the marsh of materialism and moral nihilism.

Those who are "wise as serpents" examine the facts before reaching conclusions. The gullible reaches a conclusion before he has examined the first fact; in short, he prejudices and is prejudiced. Prejudice is not "critical thinking."

HARMLESS AS DOVES

But we must not stop with the cultivation of "critical thinking." The gospel also demands a harmless and tender heart. In such a heart mercy will dwell. Wisdom without harmlessness and tenderheartedness is cold and detached, leaving one's life in a perpetual winter devoid of the warmth of spring and the gentle heat of summer. What is more tragic than to see a person who has risen to the disciplined heights of wisdom but has at the same time sunk to the passionless

depths of hardheartedness? It is for this reason that we are admonished, "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh" (Proverbs 11:17).

The hardhearted person never truly loves. He values other people mainly according to their usefulness to him. He never experiences the beauty of friendship, because he is too cold to feel affection for another and is too self-centered to share another's joy and sorrow. He is an isolated island. No outpouring of love links him with the mainland of humanity.

The hardhearted person lacks the capacity for genuine compassion. He is unmoved by the pains and afflictions of his brothers. He passes unfortunate men every day, but he never really sees them. He depersonalizes life. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Proverbs 12:10).

Jesus reminds us that the good life combines the toughness of the serpent and the tenderness of the dove. To have serpent-like qualities devoid of dovelike qualities is to be passionless, mean, and selfish. To have dove-like without serpent-like qualities is to be sentimental, anemic — and aimless. The greatness of our God lies in the fact that he is both tough-minded and tenderhearted. He has qualities both of austerity and of gentleness. For this reason Paul declares, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22).

GOD'S JUSTICE AND GRACE

The Bible, always clear in stressing both attributes of God, expresses his tough-mindedness in his justice and wrath and his tenderheartedness in his love and grace. God has two outstretched arms. One is strong enough to surround us with justice, and one is gentle enough to embrace us with grace. On the one hand, God is a God of justice, who punished Israel for her wayward deeds, and on the other hand, he is a forgiving father whose heart was filled with unutterable joy when the prodigal returned home. He does not leave us alone in our agonies and struggles. He seeks us in dark places and is moved with compassion.

At times we need to know that the Lord is a God of justice. When slumbering giants of injustice emerge in the earth, we need to know that there is a God of power who can cut them down like the grass and leave them withering like the green herb. When our most tireless efforts fail to stop the surging sweep of oppression, we need to know that in this universe is a God whose matchless strength is a fit contrast to the sordid weakness of man. But there are also times when we need to know that God possesses love and mercy. When we are staggered by the chilly winds of adversity and battered by the raging storms of disappointment and when through our folly and sin we stray into some destructive far country and are frustrated because of a strange feeling of homesickness, we need to know that there is Someone who loves us, cares for us, understands us, and will give us another chance. When days grow dark and nights grow dreary, we can be thankful that our God combines in his nature a creative synthesis of love and justice which will lead us through until we are safe in his arms. — *Selected*