

Dearly Beloved in Messiah,

"...with malice toward none and charity for all..."

With these profound and historic words, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States of America began the concluding portion of his Second Inaugural Address. This address, delivered by President Lincoln one month and five days before General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant, signifying the end of the Civil War, merits our attention this month. Why? God is also saying: "...with malice toward none and charity for all." Yeshua's message was one of charity (love). The Apostle Paul expressed the Messiah's kingdom philosophy in the Book of Romans as follows: "*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.*" (Romans 13:8).

For most of his life Abraham Lincoln was not a "religious" man, even though he was brought up in a family that attended an antislavery Baptist church. Lincoln's mother once said, "I would rather my son would be able to read the bible than to own a farm if he can have but one". While Lincoln never made a public profession of faith, he was such a morally upright, honest, good and compassionate man that one day a minister said to Lincoln: "Surely you must be a Christian. Why haven't you joined a church?" Mr. Lincoln replied that if he could find a church whose creed and requirements could be simmered down to, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself," he would join that church with his heart and soul."

What a comfort it would have been to President Lincoln during the terrible Civil War years if he had experienced the close, intimate friendship of Yeshua. Like so many others before and after him, President Lincoln knew there was a God in Heaven, an Almighty God, a God of power and might, and a God of justice. Had anyone told him that this God longed to be his loving Father?

Abraham Lincoln's beginnings

Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin on February 12, 1809 in Hardin County, Kentucky. He was the son of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Lincoln's father was a carpenter and farmer. He had an older sister whose name was Sarah. A younger brother, Thomas, died in infancy. Abraham's mother died when he was nine; his father remarried the following year. Our research on Abraham Lincoln's childhood seems to indicate that he had at most, one and a half years of formal schooling as a child. However, Lincoln loved to read and was constantly borrowing books from the neighbors. His stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, whom he dearly loved, is said to have encouraged him in this pursuit. She once said that Abe was "diligent for knowledge."

Lincoln, a brilliant, self-taught man, held positions as a store manager, surveyor, postmaster and lawyer at various times in his adult life. Later, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and finally became President of the United States.

It must have been the hand of God on Abraham Lincoln that turned this unsophisticated, backwoods boy into an eloquent orator, astute politician, excellent debater, able Commander in Chief, prolific speech writer, and profound thinker.

Leaving Springfield

The Lincoln family moved to Illinois in 1830. It was there that Abraham met Mary Todd. They were married in 1842 and over the next 11 years had 4 children, Robert, Edward, William (Willie) and Thomas (Tad). The story of Abraham and Mary's life together is fascinating and inspiring albeit sad. Jamie recently watched a six hour special on PBS called "Abraham and Mary Lincoln: A House Divided." She "just happened" to tune into this special after the Lord had spoken to us about this newsletter.

At 8:00 A.M. on Friday February 11, 1861, Lincoln left Springfield, Illinois for the Nation's Capitol to assume his duties as President. He took leave of his friends and neighbors with the following words:

"My friends! No one, not in my position, can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. To this people I owe all that I am. Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century; here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. I know not how soon I shall see you again. A duty devolves upon me which is perhaps greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He would never have succeeded except by the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without this same Divine Aid which sustained him, and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support. I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine Assistance without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain. Again, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

President Lincoln knew that he needed "Divine Providence," "Divine Aid," and "Divine Assistance," from an Almighty Being, but he had no idea just how much help from God he would need. The Civil War began on April 12, 1861 and President Lincoln embarked on a tumultuous journey fraught with economic pressures, family illness and tragedy, massive loss of lives, military frustrations, setbacks and defeats, character assassination, and emotional turmoil that would have broken a man of lesser strength.

A Friend to Blacks and Jews

Most people know that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves during the Civil War. His **Emancipation Proclamation** of Jan. 1, 1863 declared freedom for all slaves in the areas of the Confederacy not under Union control. What many people do not know is that Lincoln also befriended the Jewish people, whose ancestors were once slaves in Egypt. Lincoln had close relationships with both Jews and Blacks at a time when this was not the norm. Lincoln saw all men as equal. He was not a respecter of persons.

Bertram W. Korn, a historian who wrote **American Jews and the Civil War**, has said that Lincoln "could not have been any friendlier to individual Jews or more sympathetic to Jewish causes, if he had stemmed from Jewish ancestry." The only known remark that Lincoln ever made about the Jewish people was expressed by the President to Henry Wentworth Monk, a Canadian early Zionist. Mr. Monk asked Mr. Lincoln about the possibility of restoring European Jewry to "Palestine." Lincoln reportedly stated that the vision of a Jewish state was worthy of consideration, but the U.S. was in no position to take a leading international role until it had set its own house in order. Lincoln wrote: "I myself have a regard for the Jews. My chiropodist is a Jew, and he has so many times put me upon my feet that I would have no objection to giving his countrymen a leg up." (Lincoln also had a sense of humor!)

There were two specific occasions in which President Lincoln demonstrated his support of the Jewish people. One occurred in 1861 when Congress established the office of Chaplain in the Union Army. Anyone appointed to this position had to be "a regular ordained minister of some Christian denomination." On Dec. 11, 1861, Lincoln met with Rabbi Arnold Fischel of NY who had been disqualified as a Chaplain because he was a Jew. Rabbi Fischel pointed out the inconsistency of this position with the Constitution and Lincoln promised to help. In July 1862, Congress changed the requirement of chaplain to: a regular ordained minister of "some religious denomination." That included Jewish chaplains.

Six months after this decision affirming Jewish equality, President Lincoln took a stand against what has been considered the most blatant act of anti-semitism in 19th century America. On Dec. 17, 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant issued his infamous "General Order Number Eleven," ordering the expulsion, within 24 hours, of the Jews as a class from an area corresponding to what is today Northern Mississippi, Kentucky, and Western Tennessee. Grant maintained that Jews were traitors to the Union, insisting that they were trading with the Confederate enemy.

A Jewish man named Cesar Kaskel of Paducah, Kentucky sent a telegram and went to Washington to plead with President Lincoln on behalf of his people. When Kaskel met with Lincoln on Jan. 3, 1863, the President, who knew little or nothing about the Jewish expulsion said: "And so the children of Israel were driven from the happy land of Canaan?" Kaskel said, "Yes, and that is why we have come unto Father Abraham's bosom, asking for protection." Lincoln replied, "And this protection they shall have at once." He then ordered Army Chief of Staff Henry W. Halleck to immediately revoke "General Order Number Eleven."

A New Revelation

Lincoln dearly loved his son Willie. The boy's death was the greatest grief of his life. At Willie's passing his nurse shared her Savior, Jesus (Yeshua) with the weeping President. But Lincoln did not become a Christian at that point.

During the darkest days of the Civil War a group of ministers from Chicago came to visit President Lincoln. They said to him: "Mr. President, we've come to tell you that God is on your side." Lincoln said: "Thank you very much. But I must tell you that what worries me the most, what keeps me awake at night, is not whether God is on my side or not. What worries me the most and keeps me awake at night, what gives me no rest, is the question of whether I am on God's side or not." Abraham Lincoln did not know where he stood with God personally. God was Great and Mighty, Good and Just, but distant.

But something happened between Willie's death in 1862 at the age of 12, and Lincoln's death in 1865 at the age of 56. Abraham Lincoln began to devour the Holy Scriptures. The PBS TV special mentioned that the President was seen reading the Bible daily and frequently. One White House aide saw him reading the Book of Job. Lincoln began to believe that the Civil War and the great losses connected with it were God's judgment of the sin of the nation for 280 years of slavery. Abraham Lincoln's life was drawing to a close and God was drawing close to Abraham Lincoln.

Born Again

Dr. D. James Kennedy has done extensive research on the life of Abraham Lincoln. He mentions in his article **Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian?** that in obedience to his dying mother's final words, Abraham Lincoln strove mightily to live by the 10 Commandments. This did not bring him

salvation, however. No matter how hard he tried, Abe Lincoln could not change his life to be what God wanted him to be. Dr. Kennedy asserts that visiting Gettysburg was a turning point for Lincoln spiritually. In fact, Dr. Kennedy has confirmed the accuracy of the following quote: "When I buried my son, the severest trial of my life, I was not a Christian. But when I went to Gettysburg and saw the graves of thousands of our soldiers, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ. Yes, I do love Jesus." Shortly after that, Lincoln told a friend that he had found the peace which had eluded him all of his life. He had been justified by faith in the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus).

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

President Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865, little more than a month before his death. This address is considered by every source we consulted to be a "spiritual address." This speech has been referred to as "theologically intense," "sacred," and "prophetic." Some have spoken of its "majestic biblical cadences." Others have labeled this address one of the most remarkable documents in American history and the most religious speech ever given by any American President.

Space does not allow us to print the entire Second Inaugural Address. We encourage you to read it. It is easily found in libraries and on the Internet. After commenting on the war, the importance of saving the Union and the issue of slavery, Lincoln made the following spiritual observations concerning the North and the South:

"Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully.

The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

President Lincoln's compassion, humility, magnanimous spirit, and desire for healing and unity in the United States is clearly seen in the closing words of his speech:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all

nations."

Lincoln's Tragic End

President Lincoln had planned to make a public profession of faith on Easter Sunday, 1865. Since Gettysburg, he had experienced much spiritual growth. Three days before his death he gave a speech in which he said that he was submitting a proclamation for a national day of thanksgiving to God. His last act was to issue an edict that every U.S. coin would bear the words: "In God We Trust."

The man who was known as "Honest Abe" to his fellow countrymen, "Father Abraham" to Union soldiers, and "the most revered American president," to U. S. citizens down through the years did not live to enjoy the peace, union and emancipation that he brought to this country. His rejoicing and thanksgiving were short lived. On Good Friday, April 14, 1865 Abraham and Mary Lincoln attended a play entitled "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre. John Wilkes Booth, a disgruntled actor who violently opposed Lincoln's recent suggestion that blacks be granted voting rights, entered the President's booth at 10:15 P.M. and ended Lincoln's life. When questioned about her husband's last words, Mrs. Lincoln replied:

"He said he wanted to visit the Holy Land and see those places hallowed by the footprints of the Saviour. He was saying there was no city he so much desired to see as **Jerusalem**. And with the words half spoken on his tongue, the bullet of the assassin entered his brain, and the soul of the great and good President was carried by the angels to the New Jerusalem above." (Source: William Federer, "America's God and Country" Encyclopedia of Quotations.)

Following Abraham's footsteps

May we all be as gracious and benevolent to others, especially God's Chosen people, the Jews, as President Lincoln was. May we feel the same righteous indignation that Lincoln felt toward racists, bigots and anti-Semites. May we be true and honest to ourselves and to our neighbors. May we be brave and fearless in taking a stand for what is right. May we follow Lincoln's example of not yielding to the temptation to be angry or vengeful toward those who mock or malign us. May we be people of "steel and velvet" (as Carl Sandburg so aptly described Lincoln) with wills of iron and hearts of tenderness, determination and compassion, stubbornness and forgiveness. May we, like Abraham Lincoln, know how to be steel when the time requires strength and determination and how to be velvet when the time requires reconciliation and forgiveness. And finally, may our heart's desire be to go up to Jerusalem, the City of the Great King, to meet with Him there.

In Yeshua's Love,

Neil & Jamie