



July 2012



Shalom Mishpochah,

All about Roots

Our letter to you this month is about "roots," in Hebrew *shorashim* שורשים and their importance in our lives as believers. It has been rightly said that where there is fruit there is a root, and vice versa. Good roots result in good fruit. Unfortunately, not all roots are good.

The Root that Defiles

In the book of Hebrews we read about a root that is bitter with a far reaching effect. The early Messianic Jews must have thought back to the Passover when considering this "bitter root," since each year they partook of the *maror* (bitter herbs) at the Passover seder, reminding them of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. Slavery. Bondage. That is the association in Hebrew thinking concerning a "bitter root." Consider this context as we read Hebrews 12:14-15: *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."* The bitter root referred to in this passage has to do with relationships among people. Being bitter against another, holding a grudge, holding anger or resentment and refusing to forgive, makes us a slave in bondage to *hasatan* (satan). Unforgiveness is like taking poison, and hoping that the other person dies. It is the grace of God that enables us to release our bitterness and hurts, so that we can have *shalom*, peace in our soul.

The recent mini-series on the History Channel about the Hatfields and the McCoys was a good example of a root of bitterness that not only defiled many, but resulted in years of hatred and bloodshed. Let us be the ones to pluck up any root of bitterness in our families as we look to the Tree of sacrifice where Yeshua died to make our bitter waters sweet. What Moses did with a tree at Marah in Exodus 15:25, we can do as we appropriate Yeshua's death on the tree for our sin. He cleanses us, delivers us, and makes our bitter waters sweet. The root of the righteous should yield good fruit (Prov. 12:12).

USA: Our Righteous Roots

This July 4th, the day of our national independence, our thoughts gravitate to the roots of our country. They were righteous. They were godly. They were Judeo-Christian and Bible-centered. There are historical revisionists who argue that our Founding Fathers did not want God to be part of our national identity. That is not true. We suggest that you read Dr. D. James Kennedy's little book What They Believed to gain insight into the faith of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln.

Both the Pilgrims and the Puritans came to America seeking freedom to worship in the way they chose. The Pilgrims wanted to separate from the Church of England. The Puritans sought to restore purity in the faith and practice of the Church of England. Both groups saw God as the source of both liberty and law, and were zealous for their faith in Messiah. Their personal and corporate lives were deeply rooted in the principles of the Bible.

America's Founding Fathers understood that liberty is a gift of God. The Declaration of Independence declares that all men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

Dr. Kennedy points out that Thomas Jefferson, who penned the Declaration, was concerned that one day skeptics and governing officials would attempt to usurp the role of God as the Author of Liberty. Jefferson wrote: "God who gave us life, gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the Gift of God?...Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever."

George Washington, in his first inaugural address, echoed this belief concerning the superiority of God's Law: "The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."

Many do not know that it was actually "Christian Zeal" that fueled the American Revolution. A revival known as the "Great Awakening" occurred from 1730-1770. Bible believers saw resistance to tyranny and the defense of God-given rights as a Christian duty. Men like Patrick Henry vocalized their passion for liberty. In a speech delivered at St. John's Church on March 3, 1775 he proclaimed: "Three millions of people, armed in the Holy cause of liberty...are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us...Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death." A familiar rallying cry throughout the colonies at this time was: "No king but King Jesus." At the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Adams (known as the "Father of the American Revolution") is quoted as saying: "We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His Kingdom come."

President John Adams warned that the U.S. Constitution would not be able to sustain our liberties if the American people should abandon virtue and religion. Sadly, we have done just that as a nation. God is not welcome in our schools, government offices, courtrooms or other public places. Patrick Henry said, "It is when a people forget God, that tyrants forge their chains."

George Washington, the Father of our country, spent two hours with God in prayer and in His Word daily, at four o'clock in the morning. Those who knew him personally said that Washington was a devout Christian. After being sworn in as President of our country, Washington bent down and reverently kissed the Bible. He told his troops that they could not expect the blessings of Heaven upon their army if they offended the God of Heaven by their conduct (i.e. using profane language). This great man of integrity and stellar character said, "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible Hand which conducts the offices of men more than those of the United States."

We have a godly heritage and righteous roots—worth preserving and protecting.

Surprising Roots

If you love the Lord today, there was probably someone, at some point in history, praying for you. Jamie always assumed that the prayers of her mother's father and mother, Commissioner and Mrs. John J. Allan of the Salvation Army, were responsible for her salvation and call to ministry. She assumed that her ancestors on her father's side were mainly secular, albeit Methodist church goers. Jamie's maiden name was McChain of Scottish origin. Some of her descendants were Hatfields, and it is Joshua Hatfield, captain in the Colonial Army, that qualified her to be a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The McChains? Who knew? It turns out that there was a famous Scottish preacher named Robert Murray McCheyne, born in 1813 in Edinburgh, Scotland, whose name appears in a genealogy that Jamie recently found in papers left to her by her mother. We were curious to see what kind of "roots" Jamie had, and were thrilled at what we found. McCheyne was a young minister of the Church of Scotland who did amazing things for God in his short life. He was licensed to preach on July 1, 1835 at the age of 22, and died in 1842 at the age of 29. McCheyne was born at a

time when Scotland was just beginning to experience a spiritual awakening. But he was fully awake!

McCheyne was a brilliant young man. At the age of four, as a means of recreation, he taught himself to name and write all the letters of the Greek alphabet. He also became a Hebrew scholar, entering high school at the age of eight. He matriculated at Edinburgh University when he was fourteen in 1827. After losing his beloved eldest brother, David, when he was eighteen, he began to draw close to the Lord. Years later, he wrote about this time to a friend: "Pray for me, that I may be made holier and wiser—less like myself, and more like my heavenly Master; that I may not regard my life, if so be I may finish my course with joy. This day eleven years ago, I lost my loved and loving brother, and began to seek a Brother who cannot die."

McCheyne regarded the winning of souls as his chief task. Many perceived a peculiar sweetness of the Word of God on his lips. He had a deep devotional life and studied both the Old and New Testaments with fervor. He taught his flock to turn the Bible into prayer; "Thus, if you were reading the First Psalm, spread the Bible on the chair before you, and kneel, and pray, 'O Lord, give me the blessedness of the man; let me not stand in the counsel of the ungodly.' This is the best way of knowing the meaning of the Bible and of learning to pray."

At the age of 24, McCheyne was chosen to be a member of the famous "Mission of Inquiry," a delegation from the Church of Scotland to the Jews of Europe and Asia, to inquire into their condition and assess the best means of sharing the Good News of Messiah with them. The Church of Scotland, and McCheyne in particular, were anticipating an outpouring of the Spirit upon the Jewish people. Robert Murray McCheyne returned from his mission to Israel at the end of 1839. He only lived four more years, but His passion for souls had already been shared with many in Scotland, "Our desire is to save sinners—to gather souls, Jew or Gentile, before the Lord come. Oh, is it not wonderful how God is making people take an interest in the Jews! Surely the way of these kings of the East will be soon prepared."

Besides a burden for Jewish souls, Robert Murray McCheyne loved the Song of Solomon and often preached from this book of the Bible. Could Jamie's passion for the salvation of Israel and her book **A Kiss a Day** come from this godly root? Surely, it is a good possibility.

Our Jewish Roots

The early settlers of our country highly esteemed their biblical, Jewish roots. The Pilgrims likened themselves to the Israelites fleeing from Pharaoh as they crossed the ocean fleeing from King James. They saw the USA as their "Promised Land." They wanted Hebrew to be the national language rather than English (If they had their way, we would be speaking Hebrew today!). They must have understood Romans chapter 11 in which the Apostle Paul, Rabbi Saul, argues that God has not rejected His people due to their unfaithfulness, but that their transgression was part of God's plan to include all of mankind in His Kingdom. Salvation came to the Gentiles to provoke the Jews to jealousy.

In Romans 11:16-18 Paul talks about the "root" —a "holy root": "For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you."

Paul's analogy here begins with dough. According to Torah (Numbers 15:19, 20) when dough was prepared for bread, the first part of it must be offered to God. This made the whole lump of dough sacred. The offering of the first part sanctified the whole. The analogy continues with reference to the olive tree—seen throughout the Tanach as a picture of the nation of Israel: "*The LORD called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit*" (Jer. 11:16). The holy "root" of the olive tree, in

our opinion, is defined in Romans 9:4: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises and the fathers or patriarchs. The nation sprang from these, especially from those patriarchs who had been selected and consecrated to God. A holy root.

Gentiles, from a wild olive tree, have been grafted into the olive tree of Israel, becoming partakers of the "root" and fatness of the olive tree. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word **בָּרַךְ** (barakh) means both "to graft" and "to bless." God turns the "wild" branches from being "*not-My-people*" (Hos. 1:10) into "*fellow citizens*" of the "*commonwealth of Israel*" (Eph. 2:12, 3:6). A rich, anointed root supports them. There is a great blessing that flows upward from that root.

Christianity has Jewish roots. Unfortunately, there are many churches throughout the world today who discard the Old Testament as merely a "Jewish book," and also claim that God has discarded the Jewish people and replaced them with the Church. Neither is true. We like what William Barclay said in his book **The Letter to the Romans**: "He is a foolish man who kicks away the ladder which raised him to the height which he has reached. It would be a foolish branch which cut itself off from its stem. The new faith grew from the old. The Jewish faith is the root from which Christianity grew. The consummation will only come when the wild olive and the garden olive are altogether one, and when there are no branches at all left unengrafted on the parent stem."

The Root of Jesse

The holiest, most precious, valuable, praiseworthy, eternal "root" in the Holy Scriptures is the Root of Jesse. We first encounter Him in Isaiah 11:1, "*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD*" (Isaiah 11:1-2). And again in verse ten of this same chapter: "*And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.*"

Yeshua is the Root of Jesse spoken of by the Jewish prophet Isaiah approximately 700 years before He was born. Isaiah was looking to the future Messiah who would be from the House of David (Jesse was King David's father). He was prophesying that the Jewish Messiah would also call the Gentiles unto Himself. They would find rest under the wings of the God of Israel.

In the Book of Revelation, Yeshua, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is found worthy to open the scroll sealed with seven seals (Rev. 5:4-5). In the very last chapter of the Bible we read the following words of Yeshua: "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16).

May His rest be glorious, and His Light shine brightly in your life this summer!

Love in the Root of David, 

Roots in the Holy Land: Even if you are not able to join us on our August Mercy Mission to Israel, you can plant your roots in her soil by having Jewish Jewels plant a tree there for you. It is also a wonderful way to honor a loved one for any special occasion.

New Release: Etz Chaim: Tree of Life by Messianic Rabbi Eric Walker. Rabbi Walker intertwines revelation from the Lord with a parable about a tree - from roots to fruit. We are reminded that "the life of the tree is in the roots," and the "root of the righteous flourishes." Excellent teaching. Practical application. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

The **Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible - Book of John** is an excellent sharing tool for Jewish pre-believers showing them how Yeshua became the Prophet like Moses, full of Glory, grace, and truth.