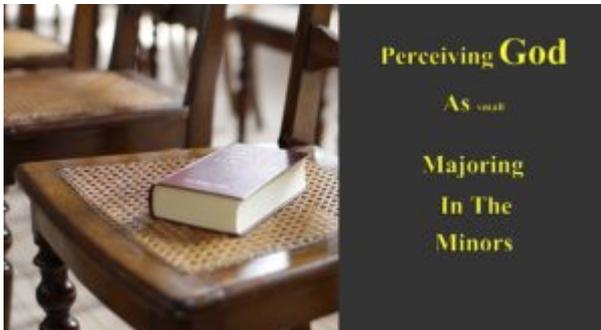


Perceiving God as Small: Majoring in the Minors



What does it mean to perceive God as smaller than we are? To see ourselves as huge and Himself as small?

Why do kids so often walk away from the faith when they walk out of the house? It's very simple – we as parents don't generally understand the purpose of Scripture. We have historically never instilled into them the idea that the Bible is a revelation of the character and nature of God – even though we think that's exactly what we are doing. We impose rules and regulations, yes, but those were only ever meant to be the basic outer boundaries of decent behavior towards God and one another – the milk we feed the babes on – while we starve for the meat of being conformed to the character of God while we use the Bible for other, more self-serving, purposes.

What we have actually done with the Bible is abominable – we have used it as a tool of self-justification. Before anyone thinks that this only applies to unbelievers or “other denominations” let me make it clear that it is across the board and coming to Torah doesn't change it for people – because it is a cultural paradigm. We were raised this way, it is a carefully trained blindness rooted not in religion actually, but a natural dislike and fear for anything that is different – especially anything that is a challenge to self.

We memorize verses that fit our doctrines, and those are the verses we teach to our kids – not that they will use them to

worship and adore God, but so that they will follow the correct doctrines. We want everyone to do things the way we do them – otherwise, our foundations are challenged. Although we may claim to be zealous for God in defending our doctrines, generally it is about ourselves and wanting to be right.

We want to be right when we talk to scientists, so we turn the Bible into a science book when God never revealed Himself to man in order to teach science (I mean, what kind of a waste of time would that be and would we even be able to begin to understand science through His eyes?). The Bible becomes not about preaching the Gospel of God's deliverance, but about overcoming the Big Bang Theory and Evolution, theories that by their very nature cannot be proven nor disproven (and I am speaking as a degreed chemist here – one who still loves science, in fact, and first saw God in the perfection of the periodic chart). In our hands, the Bible becomes a tool for justifying what we believe because in our heart of hearts we as a whole are embarrassed and seek to justify what we believe on the scientist's turf. So we take the Bible over to them, we use a revelation of God's character, written in Ancient Near Eastern and First Century context, and twist it into a scientific manifesto for our own purposes. Of course, science is only one of the areas in which we do this.

Now, our kids go off to college or into the world, and they often have only been indoctrinated with memory verses and Torah portions for the express purpose of making sure they believe the right stuff and associate with others who believe the right stuff. Some clever Science or Bible professor who knows more about the Scriptures than the parents brings other verses into the mix, and the now grown-up child who was only trained to justify doctrine now has a terrible quandary. The Bible was misused, it was treated as a tool for self-justification under the auspices of defending God, but it was honestly just being used for defending denominational doctrines.

All someone has to do is bring down one questionable doctrine and everything tumbles. They were trained in doctrine and had tied them all together and had mistaken doctrinal knowledge

for a knowledge of God Himself. God was made small, and doctrine was made huge.

I rewatched a movie this weekend called Temple Grandin – although some parts are largely fictionalized, it teaches a powerful truth about perspective, and how we see things. I have been meditating upon it ever since because we have a very skewed perspective of our lives – we are always very large, and by and large we make God very small (yes, I do it too). We make doctrines big, and God small.

We do this through living lives of fear and self-justification – and we mask our self-justification as righteousness in many ways. It is easy to see self-justification when it is used to excuse sin – but it isn't as easy to see when we have camped around a small doctrinal issue and have made it big.

Case in point. Two people are in a room talking about God – they both agree that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the one true God and that Yeshua is the prophesied Messiah. They believe in the validity of Torah. They keep the Sabbaths and the Feasts.

Pause for a moment and look at how much they have in common, it is huge in this life to meet someone who has those things in common with someone else. They ought to be worshiping and thanking God to meet such a person, right?

They get talking and find they disagree about the way the name is pronounced, or about whether the six days of Creation were or were not literal 24 hour days, or when the day or month begins and ends, or how to keep a certain commandment or whether a certain tradition is pagan, or whether we are all literal priests now. Just choose one of those things and watch what often happens:

Believing in the same God becomes small, and the point of disagreement becomes huge.

Believing in the same Messiah becomes small, and the point of disagreement becomes huge.

Believing in the same Torah becomes small, and the point of disagreement becomes huge.

Believing in the same Sabbaths and Feasts becomes small, and the point of disagreement becomes huge.

And suddenly, that “other” person is judged not based on these huge pillars – but upon opinions, which sometimes amount to nothing more than matchsticks waiting to kindle an unrighteous fire of division between brothers. And each side in the argument credits their stance and that judgment with zeal and righteousness – and both sides are deceived – because it is almost never a righteous zeal, it is ego and the defense of self and of one’s own way of doing things. It has nothing to do with God and everything to do with self. If the zeal were righteous, there would be respect, kindness, patience and love instead of division, derision, and even hatred.

That right there – that is a picture of the First Century and what was going on with the Jewish factions, and a large part of why they hated each other so desperately and were so divided. That was the context of the coming of Messiah the first time and a big part of the reason why He was murdered. The Jews didn’t kill Messiah – perspective killed Messiah, a perspective that many of us show we still share today. The revelation of God’s character was made small, in a culture that professed to live for Him wholeheartedly. We are as they were. Interestingly, the Jews grew up and figured it out and are now working together to rebuild the Temple. Groups that are radically different are coming together in love and respect to build an earthly throne for the God we all agree is the One True God and Whom we all agree should be worshiped with one voice. But here we are, arguing and divisive – and our kids are walking away from God because we lack perspective and major on the minors. I submit that most of our kids aren’t actually walking away from God because they were never really walking *with* Him in the first place, not if all they know is

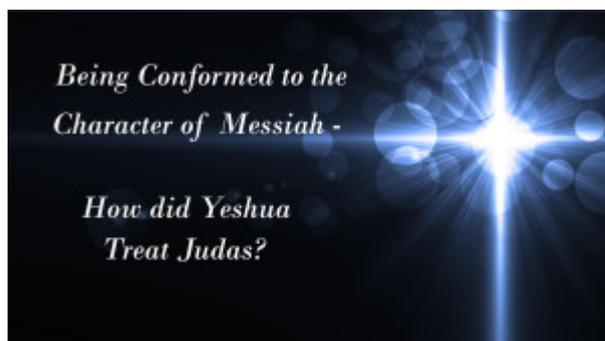
doctrine and memory verses. Doctrine and memory verses devoid of inner transformation and the production of mature fruit – they can be cold companions when the times really do get tough.

Make God big and allow everything else to be small. Make His character huge, and let other things be small. If we reflected God's character, for real, most of our kids wouldn't be able to bear walking away – because there would be nowhere else worth going. Doctrines are easy to drop, but truly godly character, humility, and a love for others borne out of keeping life in its proper perspective is hard to walk away from.

I want to share the part of the movie that introduced the focus of perspective

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chxCNEsu3YU>

The Character of Yeshua (Jesus) Pt 2: How did Messiah treat Judas?



If you don't want to be seriously challenged then I suggest not reading this because this is not easy material. It isn't the sort of thing that you can respond to with "Yeah, but.."

We are supposed to be conformed to the image of Messiah, which

means coming to grips with the fact that He only overturned tables and made a whip twice (and then only within the confines of the Temple where criminal activities were being perpetrated by the Roman appointed High Priest), He saved His rebukes for people who were either actually criminals (like the Sadducees) or who were actively trying to shame Him in honor contests – and He walked side by side with a man, who He knew was going to sell Him out and betray Him, for the entire duration of His ministry and treated him so normally that no one suspected a thing. Ouch.

No one suspected a thing about Judas. Yeshua knew, of course, because He knew the hearts of all men. He chose him, knowing his heart. We walked with him, knowing his heart. He ate with him, taught him, slept alongside him, laughed with him and cried with him.

Yeshua understood the reality of Covenants – and Covenants don't give us the right to be treacherous to those who have been or will be treacherous to us. Covenants are about loyalty to those with whom we are in Covenant, regardless of their character. It doesn't mean closeness and intimate relationship, and in fact people who have proven treacherous need to be kept at arm's length, but we cannot respond to untrustworthiness with being untrustworthy ourselves. We can't fight the fruit of the evil one with more of his own fruit – we have to respond with the fruit of the Spirit and nothing is harder.

Nothing seems less righteous and less honorable.

There are sometimes some very important lessons to be learned in the myths of ancient cultures and one of the most common is the tale of an Oracle giving someone a prophecy that such and such a person would destroy them. So the recipient of the oracle goes out and preemptively tries to destroy that currently innocent person, setting in motion the very chain of events that eventually leads to their own destruction. Funny

how that works, eh?

Yeshua could have outed Judas as a thief, a liar, and a treacherous dog – but He didn't. Yeshua treated Him according to the innocence of His own heart – He gave Judas no reason for betrayal. He also, in responding to the betrayal, didn't call for revenge and resort to name-calling. Yeshua showed Himself the most innocent of the charges in that, once betrayed, He didn't retaliate. Not retaliating is hard, living side by side with someone who you know will or might someday betray you is difficult – excruciatingly so.

We live in a world, especially a religious world, where betrayal is sadly the norm. People think nothing about tearing each other apart, undermining each other, and bringing shame on our God in so doing. Everyone who calls upon Messiah and believes that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's actual begotten Son came in the flesh and dwelt among us, was crucified and was raised from the dead – anyone that foolish in the eyes of the world is in Covenant together with every other person who believes that. We are joined together by the King of kings and yet we treat each other largely like dogs, and worse than dogs – scoffing and mocking and engaging in the worst kinds of public and private character assassination. Often over nothing, and generally because of our own fears and lack of trust in God, ambition, need for approval, over a misunderstanding, or simple offense.

And yet look how patient God is with us even as we engage in this shameful behavior – not even treating us as we deserve, not preemptively punishing us for what He sees in our hearts.

Covenant means that we are all connected, every single believer according to the current level of revelation of each individual. Covenant means that how we treat each other is actually how we are treating our mutual Master. In the ancient world, if you messed with a man in Covenant, you were messing with absolutely everyone whom that man was in Covenant with.

People were a lot more cautious with their mouths and actions, realizing that what they did and said reflected not only on themselves but upon their God and their clan. Nowadays, in our individualistic (and therefore to varying degrees narcissistic) world view, we really don't consider the global or even the local impact of our words or actions – we are blind to the way they effect anyone but ourselves. The Bible wasn't written to people like us, and so when we read the words and try and speak them as individuals, they don't carry the same meaning.

We are all connected, and therefore we all have to be entirely innocent and full of good fruit in our dealings with each other. It is easy to not be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle, faithful and self-controlled and simply call it zeal but zeal has never been an excuse for bad fruit.

Yeshua didn't treat Judas as Judas deserved to be treated. Yeshua dealt with Judas according to the content of His own character, not Judas' character. He does the same with us, walking with us, teaching us, dealing with us in long-suffering kindness – oh my goodness how can we justify doing any less?

Had a dream in December that I would be dealt with treacherously and by the time I woke up it had already happened. I spent the next two months struggling, hurting, and wanting revenge. Life was an agony in so many ways, so much hurt dredged up as I dealt with the consequences of someone else's publicly vented frustration and wanting so badly to respond in kind, really still wanting to because treachery is contagious (all of the works of the enemy are infectious). Just as I finally began to come to terms with it, yesterday morning I had a dream that it is about to happen again, a different person this time. As far as I know it hasn't happened yet, and I am left with only the example of Yeshua vs all those ancient myths. Do I behave as Yeshua and treat him like Yeshua treated Judas, or do I provoke the treachery by

punishing him for something he hasn't even done yet?

I am appreciating the character of our Master now in new and painful ways. He walked side by side with His betrayer, who would all but place Him on the cross. His loving character is beyond overwhelming, and it is, frankly, shaming me in how far I fall short of it.

You know what? Bad things happen to "good" people but more than that, bad things happen to all us normal people too, and it happens so that, if we are willing, it can transform us little by little into the image of our Messiah.

Who is My Mother, Brother, Sisters? The Shame of the Cross in Perspective.



This is the grown up version of Lesson #42 of my next book designed for families – Context for Kids: Honor and Shame in the Bible, due out next month. Ever wonder why even children in non-Western cultures won't deny

Messiah – even when threatened with death?

Never have I labored over a teaching to the point of becoming physically ill, nor have I ever before been burdened with such overwhelming grief over the responsibility of teaching something in such a way as to be absolutely honest and to bring honor to my Savior. I couldn't comprehend how to do it – how do I teach adults, much less adolescents and teens, about

the shame of the cross. After soliciting prayer from a good friend and mentor yesterday afternoon, it finally dawned on me and I saw diverse elements in the Scriptures come together in an unexpected way.

I admit it, I never saw these Scriptures as being applicable beyond the confines of a fictive kinship group.

Matt 12:48 But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Mark 3 and Luke 8 also record this account, which I always simply took at face value. A fictive kinship group describes the phenomenon where people claim family status with non-blood kin based upon some other agreed upon criteria (the best example might be the kinship between men who were part of the same platoon for the duration of a war). In this case, Yeshua (Jesus) claims that all who do the will of God are part of Yeshua's kinship group. So what then is the will of the Father in Heaven? Sometimes we come up with easy, pat answers. I was laboring in prayer yesterday afternoon, deeply distressed, about the crucifixion of Yeshua – even to the point of being physically ill. I was wondering how to present the horrifying shame of the cross to younger people – because even Mel Gibson's *The Passion* portrayed a dignified Messiah on the cross, in terrible pain and yet allowed to retain His dignity. We in the West like to focus on His suffering as though physical pain is the worst possible, and yet a teenager who cuts himself in order to avoid the pain within testifies to the fact that physical pain is not the worst manifestation of agony. Crucifixion wasn't about physical pain, it was about stripping a man of his most precious commodity, his honor – subjecting him to utter and complete ruination, agony within and without, stripping Him of every shred of dignity and then allowing him to endure that shame as he died very slowly to

the delight of the gathered crowds. There are things about crucifixion that no movie would ever dare portray. Our Savior was humiliated beyond our ability to comprehend, but we don't like looking at a shamed Messiah. We like to see Him up there, wronged but still a picture of dignity. He had to bear our shame, and our humiliation – and our shame and humiliation, well-deserved, could not be dressed up in dignity. We don't want to really see what our shame looked like. Really, it doesn't look nearly as bad when the only pain being inflicted is portrayed as physical. People from honor/shame cultures understand this intrinsically, and are unwilling to dishonor Yeshua once they have tasted His salvation; they die before denying Him whereas in the West, we often don't even want to face our family's wrath if we choose to celebrate Passover and Sukkot instead of Easter and Christmas.

But back to the story, as I was praying about how to do this, heartbroken and sick – these verses came to me and I finally got it.

John 19:25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Why the mention of this? I always wondered. Mary had several other sons – she had men to take care of her. Why give her to John? Yeshua, as first born, could only hand His mother over to a family member, and why was John always referred to as the "disciple Jesus loved?"

"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

And I understood, there at the foot of the cross we learned

the will of the Father – look upon the full shame of the cross and never, ever look away again. Never forget what our shame looked like. Never forget the sight of the Man who bore it for us. We can't turn our heads away from the shame that He endured, our shame, the full measure of it. In crucifixion there was no dignity afforded the victim. He was not given the dignity of being clothed even in a loincloth, the flies and birds probably didn't leave Him alone, flogging and crucifixion were designed to wear a man out so quickly that he wouldn't even retain control over his own bowels and bladder. We want a dignified Savior because it hurts too badly to look at the true measure and seriousness of our shameful sins. Over and over again throughout the Scriptures, front to back, we are told of that shame, and the penalty of that shame. That shame had to be taken away by someone, and we can at least look at it, and once we do we had better never think we can turn away or deny it. We were freed yes, and we should rejoice, but we don't dare forget it.

“Take up your cross and follow me.”

To be crucified was the greatest shame imaginable, and we are commanded to own that shame as having been our own, and to live in such a way as to never purposefully shame Him again.

Heb 6:4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt

We cannot accept His suffering for our shame and then reduce Him to shame again by denying Him. If we deny Yeshua, we are saying that He rightly died as a criminal for the crime of claiming to be the Son of God. We are guilty of convicting the one who was shamed for our sake – we cannot hold Him up to

that shame and contempt again after that. Peter denied Yeshua before He went through that shame, but never afterwards. Not one of them denied Him or ran away afterwards.

Hebrews 9:27 tells us plainly that man is destined to die once – we cannot crucify our Master again.

People in honor/shame cultures understand this. They are willing to face death, even at the hands of their own families.

Six times in I Corinthians, Paul talked about the foolishness of the cross, and of the foolishness of the wisdom of God – as perceived by the world. To follow a shamed criminal in the first century world was a stumbling block for the Judeans (many of the Jerusalem elites) and foolishness to the Gentiles.

In the end, as He was about to die, Yeshua hung there in full sight of the mockers and scoffers who watched crucifixions for the entertaining public spectacle that they were – and He hung there in front of His mother, brother and sisters – naked, His genitalia swollen for the crowd to gawk at, His body distorted out of shape, covered in His own blood and feces.

His mother Mary

John

Mary, wife of Cleopas

Mary Magdalene

They did not despise the shame of the cross, they looked at that shame with both eyes opened – they did the will of the Father in Heaven and never turned away. It is loyalty, and not genetics, that set them apart as His family – and in the end, that meant that Yeshua only had one brother to whom He could entrust His mother.

Do you see the love with which He has loved us? Do you see the absolute loyalty demanded of us?

Glory be to our Great King that Yeshua is no longer on that cross, no longer shamed but instead honored, exalted and glorified – but we can't afford to forget what He endured so that our shame could be removed. We must live such lives that we never bring Him to shame on purpose ever again. I don't cherish that old rugged cross, but I cherish the One who died upon it – may my life be well-spent in His service.

I am picking up my cross, I am owning my shame that was taken from me, and I am following Him.

Recommended online reading/viewing:

[Despising the Shame of the Cross](#) by Jerome Neyrey

[The Restored Honor of Our King](#) by Rico Cortes

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

The Character of God as Father Pt 15: Don't Mock His Disabled Children

I am going to share this two part revelation based on Lev 19:14, a verse which is etched deeply in my mind.

.

Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

Now, even most bullies won't mess with the disabled in the PC

environment of the US, and I have to say that's one area of political correctness I am grateful for as a special needs mom. But this verse goes deeper than it would appear, because in scriptures blindness and deafness are also equated with the spiritual concepts of not being about to hear or perceive the Words of God. So how are we to treat them? Do we mock them and trip them up? Or do we assist them as we would someone who is physically deaf and/or blind? Is there any honor at all in creating barriers between God and the people who are spiritually blind and deaf to His Word? Is it not God who controls who sees and who is blind, who hears and who is deaf?

.

*Ex 4:11 And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the **blind**? have not I the Lord?*

When we mock those with closed eyes, do we not sit in judgment of the One who could lift the veil and restore their sight and cause them to hear? Do we dare make fun of someone who has not been the recipient of God's mercy? Did we obtain mercy by merit? Were our eyes and ears opened because we earned it? Mine were not. And are we wise enough to always know the difference between those in actual rebellion to what they know, vs rebellion to what we are telling them? If they do not believe us because they cannot perceive the truth in what we are saying, are they to be equated with those who know, intimately, the truth and have walked away? Do we dare mock them?

.

When we mock the deaf and trip up the blind, are we not falsely representing the character of the One who came to open ears and eyes?

.

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Why on earth would we mock the people who have not received this blessing? Why would we even risk it with our angry, self-righteous presumptions?

I have been laid terribly low with a dream that I had this morning. I will share it here, the dream was two-fold.

.

In the first part of the dream, I was preparing foundations for living quarters in a house. Beds and bathrooms had been placed in rooms that had no floors, and I was planning and counting the cost of building those foundations. Some of the rooms had refrigerators with good and bad foods in them so I had to get rid of the bad foods. As I was going through the house making plans, I walked outside and into a courtyard where I saw a great many refugees. They were cold and so I went and got the blankets off the beds in the foundationless rooms, assessed people's needs and handed out the bedding that was available, covering people according to their level of risk. I never asked why they were there, or who they were, I just handed out coverings so they would be warm.

.

In the second part of a dream, a former ally became an enemy to myself and my companions – because we were not giving him leadership over us, we refused to hear his words. That former ally desired to compromise us. I was the last person that he tried to attack, and he did so by making cruel and taunting accusations about my disabled son (who as many of you know, is also adopted) in front of a crowd of people. As he did it, even though some of the accusations were true or could be

true, I rose up and addressed his audience. Full of passion and wrath I did not know existed, I explained my son's situation, I pleaded his case, I appealed for mercy – no, I demanded mercy by the forcefulness of my defense. I never mocked the man who was attacking my son, I simply defended my son so ardently that his audience was forced to recognize my son's merit. The man attacking my son lost in a stunning public display.

.

What are we called to do?

.

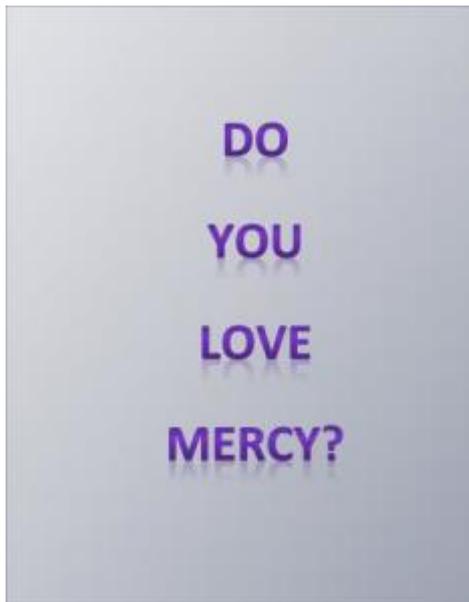
Are we called to acts of mercy? Are we called to minister to the wretched within the reach of our grasp, those we can see around us? Are we to assess their needs and fill them? I tell you the truth, in one way or another, every single one of us is like those refugees in my first dream. In one or more (or many more) areas of our lives we are naked, cold and filthy. If someone is able to keep me from dying, should they not cover me? Or should we yell at people and tell them how cold and naked and filthy they are. The second is a lot easier to do. It appeals to the flesh. It seems like righteousness. But what does YHVH require of us?

.

Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Do you love mercy? Do you walk with such humility that you hate it on those occasions when you have to rebuke? Are you so concerned with justice that you agonize over whether you are tripping a blind man or saving a rebellious one? God requires

all those things of us. Nowhere does He require us to mock people. And just because someone in scriptures is recorded as doing it does not make it right. All of the forefathers sinned, sins that were not called out as sin in the text, but were indeed sin. We cannot use the acts of men to excuse our actions. We cannot equate their situations with ours so easily, in order to justify ourselves.



Now for the second dream. I sometimes think that I was made an adoptive mother not only as a blessing to myself, but so that I could understand the passionate love between parent and adopted child. I believe I was made a special needs mom in order to bless and refine me, and to help me understand our condition before our Heavenly Father. The man in my dream who was mocking my son was retaliating because we were not listening to him. His intention was to wound and conquer so that people would listen to him and follow him and agree with him. But he made the mistake of attacking my child, based on how his disabilities compromise him – without explaining his disabilities at all but only focusing on his behavior. He withheld the information that would have moved his audience to mercy.

.

But it was the very things that compromised him, that I rose up and used in his favor. I was filled with such outrage, such love, such overwhelming wrath and grief. Everything I said was borne out of loving my son, defending him from unfair accusations born out of a lack of mercy. The man accusing my son should have attacked me instead. You do not attack someone's disabled child without facing wrath. As I told the crowd about my son, about his challenges, the crowd came to see the humanity of my son (whereas before they were snickering) and they came to have compassion on him.

.

I woke up with the realization that when we attack our brothers and sisters, the adopted children of God, when we accuse them and mock them we never take into account why they are doing what they do. We never stop to wonder about the unseen disabilities. Is the person drowning in an endless sea of false teachings that they are too afraid to let go of?

Were they beaten or molested by their father and unable to embrace a religion that is centered around a Father figure?

Are they dedicated to being good, yet with unopened eyes and ears because their time has not come yet? Were they rescued from a perverse Hollywood lifestyle and now desperately cling to and defend what they see as their life-preserver, sometimes in wrong ways but with good intentions? Are not all these people disabled children? Do we want to risk incurring the Father's wrath by touching them with our merciless scorn? Do we want to assume willful rebellion? Do we want to presume what they do and do not truly understand? Do we ever want to be laid low by an angry Father who rises up in defense of His disabled child? Do we want to hurt Him, the way I was hurt in that dream, on behalf of my son?

.

Let me tell you, I do not love the way He does. I wouldn't even want to face my wrath, the way it was meted out towards

that man. I am not God, my wrath pales in comparison to the efficiency and purity of His. I do not want to provoke His wrath and anguish by mocking His disabled children.

.

I don't ever want to mock anyone ever again.

Misunderstanding Yeshua: Why on earth did He call that woman a dog anyway?

It had bothered me for many years, but this morning as I was praying the Psalms, I happened upon the key to breaking down a very serious misunderstanding I had about one of Yeshua's (Jesus') most notorious confrontations. And it came down to a very simple parallelism.

.

Psalm 22:16a For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me (KJV – yes they used inclosed, and it bothers me that it is spelled that way, but it isn't my spelling mistake)

.

Psalm 22:16a
For dogs have
compassed me:
the assembly of
the wicked have
inclosed me

Now a parallelism is something we see in Hebrew writings where a concept is expressed in two different ways but means the exact same thing. Here we see two concepts –

dogs have compassed me

the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me.

.

The Hebrew word for dog, of course, is keleb, which is very similar to the name of the great Biblical hero Caleb – one of the two faithful spies who alone were allowed to enter into the Promised land out of all their generation. Caleb was the representative for Judah, even though he was not an Israelite by birth, but a Kenezite (Joshua 14:14). I will get into why that is applicable later.

.

The word for compassed is sawbab and the word for inclosed is nawkaf. They both have similar meanings, but nawkaf is a bit more aggressive in nature. In any event, the recipient of both these words end up closed in and surrounded, which is how we know that the phrases are parallel. What does this mean? This means that as sawbab and nawkaf are being linked, so are the words keleb (dog) the phrase “assembly of the wicked.”

.

So, unlike what I had previously thought, dogs are scripturally equated not only with male prostitutes, but also with the assembly of the wicked.

But why did I bring Caleb into the discussion? Well, because it helped me solve a question that had always irked me, relating to the character of Yeshua.

How many of us have always hated this exchange between Yeshua and the Caananite woman?

.

*Matthew 15:21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, **It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.** And she said, **Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.** Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

.

I never liked it that He called her a dog, just being honest here. To someone of my generation, a dog was one of the worst things you could call a woman short of using profanities. And to top it off, He was up in Tyre and Sidon – not in Israel! It's like, He went to someone else's house and insulted them

for living there, I never got that.

.

But, if we substitute in “assembly of the wicked” for dog – things get a lot clearer.

.

“It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to the assembly of the wicked. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet those from the assembly of the wicked eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

.

Now that reads entirely differently and ties in perfectly with Matt 7:6a Give not that which is holy unto the dogs (assembly of the wicked).

.

It is no longer a personal insult towards this woman but a recognition of what she already admitted in coming to Him. Her people were not following the way of righteousness, they were not of the righteous assembly of YHVH – if they had the right way, if they were not the assembly of the wicked, she would not have been compelled to forsake her gods on her daughter’s behalf. Yeshua wasn’t insulting her, He wasn’t telling her anything she didn’t already know. Her very actions were an admission of this truth. What He was doing was provoking her testimony. And what was her testimony?

.

“yet those from the assembly of the wicked eat of the crumbs which fall from THEIR MASTER’S TABLE.”

.

This woman was given an opportunity to proclaim that YHVH is Master. And she did it. Her actions had already proclaimed it, and now her words followed suit. And Yeshua's response to her is no longer to a dog, but He calls her "Woman."

.

Now, how does this tie back in to Caleb? As I said before, Caleb was not born a Hebrew, but a Gentile, and yet he was sojourning with Israel – why? Because he also had, through his actions, admitted that he was from the assembly of the wicked (the Kenezites), and through his actions declared that YHVH is Master.

.

Caleb and the Syro-phoenician woman are pictures of those in the Gentile community who confessed and denounced their position as dogs, as part of the assembly of the wicked, and who receive deliverance for themselves and their children. I think that is just beautiful.

.

I have been waiting to understand this passage for decades, and my soul is just delighting in YHVH this morning. It is wonderful to receive peace after being vexed for so long about this exchange that seemed so out of character for Yeshua. Context really is everything!

The Character of God as

Agriculturalist Pt 7: All things in due season

So much of scripture involves seasonal language, and so the reference cannot be ignored.

.

Ecclesiastes 3

3 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

² A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

³ A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴ A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

⁷ A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸ A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

.

Thanks to the musical group The Byrds, this might just be the most famous passage of scripture on earth. But what is it telling us? I believe this passage by Solomon is about patience and wisdom, I believe it is about the Fruit of the Spirit. In it, I see the development of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control.

I look at this beautiful passage and see that things do not start out perfect, that we can expect tribulation. I see the refinement process. I see maturation and things moving forward. I see that things have to happen in seasons so that we can reap a harvest later. I see the balance that should come with experience.

.

Let's be honest, we start out as the types of people who want to know it all now, we want to be mature now. But knowledge and maturity come with a price. Knowledge comes with time, experience and dedicated study. Maturity comes with time, experience and endurance. But neither knowledge nor maturity are complete without the revelation of God. We can have a worldly sort of knowledge, we can have a worldly substitute for maturity – but without a connection to the divine it is largely empty.

.

Unfortunately, the church has pushed us towards worldly excess in knowledge and worldly standards of maturity.

.

Knowledge for knowledge sake is an empty pursuit. To be a holy pursuit, that knowledge must be for the purpose of being conformed into His image, into the very representation of His character, into the sort of person who can fit into the community of His earthly Temple of living stones. If our final goal is not to glorify Him through our character and through His collective community, then our pursuit is worldly. It

isn't that we be known, but that He be known.

.

Maturity, as the world views it, is pretty much behaving yourself in a way appropriate to the given situation, as determined by the cultural norms. Generally when I hear someone say, "Oh grow up!" it is not because they want me to behave in a godly manner, but according to an ungodly manner.

They want me to have no standards outside of the cultural norms of THEIR community – whether that community be the local church or Hollywood. Godly maturity is a self-sacrificial maturity. We decrease so that He can increase. We stop assuming that our desires are holy, or Spirit led, or even honest. We begin to question ourselves, as all children do when they begin to develop empathy. Only now we are adults who have come into the community of faith and the rules that governed our behavior as worldly children are no longer sufficient. We are more dangerous now, we are more willful in many ways, and we are often convinced that we are mature because we are now adults.

.

But God never called us to be adults. He called us to be mature children. Adults are independent, but children are by their nature dependent upon their parents. Adults forge their own way, but children are learning to be adults by watching their parents. Adults do as they wish, but children have restraints. Adults are masters of their own homes, but we are brides waiting for our Bridegroom and as such have not left our Father's house. You see how the mature child mindset is completely at odds with the mature adult mindset?

.

All good things in time. We do not start out mature. It is unreasonable to expect people to come out of the world with any sort of real maturity. It is unreasonable to try to train

up a dependent babe as you would a mature adult. With adults you tell them what to do and expect them to do it, but children have to be guided and allowed to figure things out so that they can truly learn, and part of that is watching to see what they are ready for and not just pushing them according to what we want them to know and how we want them to do it. One of the biggest problems we have in religious circles is not allowing for immaturity and ignorance (not in the nasty insulting sense of the word, but the recognition that we naturally do not know what we have not been taught!). I don't expect someone new to God's ways to do very much right, and why should I? How unfair would it be? And the temptation is there, while we are immature and unloving still, to start to impose heavy burdens upon those who are still learning to walk. And it is most unloving (and unbiblical) to want rigid conformance now.

.

Can you imagine taking a 9 month old who is still crawling, or not even crawling yet, and telling them to stand up and walk? And then telling them they are rebellious for their inability to do it yet? To everything there is a season. No one walks their way out of the womb.

.

Can you imagine taking a preschooler and telling them to do multiplication because you don't want to take the time to teach them their numbers and addition and subtraction first? To everything there is a season. Even prodigies need to be taught the basics, or they will fail.

.

Can you imagine criticizing a deaf person for not being able to hear, or a blind person for not being able to see? To everything there is a season. If you want them to be able to hear or see, then get to work praying for them.

.

Can you imagine getting angry at a seed for not producing a hundred-fold harvest the day after it was planted? To everything there is a season.

.

I look at these examples, and what I see is not a failure in the babe of the Kingdom, but in those who do not recognize the seasons. If we do not understand the seasons, then we do not understand the community life as recorded in scripture. The seasons were given to us, by God, in order to teach us about the patient nature of His character, that He not only understands the concept that things take time, but that it was part of His design. Yes, He expects growth, but He expects it to happen "in season." We need to do the same. It's part of His compassion and mercy, and when we do not display that patient compassion and loving-kindness and gentle mercy, then we are sowing chaos, faithlessness and our lack of self-control into the lives of others. If we cannot tolerate immaturity in season, then our fruit is not where it needs to be and we are the ones who need to be taught, not the ones who should be teaching.

If we cannot tolerate
immaturity in season,
then our fruit is not
where it needs to be
and we are the ones
who need to be taught,
not the ones who
should be teaching.

The Character of God as Agriculturalist Pt 6: Focusing on Fruit First and Foremost

Fruit, from a purely scientific standpoint, exists for one purpose and that is the transportation of seed from one place to another. Fruit is supposed to be mobile. A bird will carry away a berry laden with seeds, eat it and deposit the seeds far from the original plant. Humans and animals do the same, we take the fruit, and eat it and the seed goes elsewhere. How interesting is it that it was YHVH's plan that all seed which is eaten is deposited in the earth WITH fertilizer!? Now that is brilliant planning. Blessed be His Name. Yes, fruit nourishes us, but its actual job is to make more fruit by making more trees or bushes.

.

But what is our fruit? Is it the things we try to do?

.

Look at the tree. Does it put any effort into making fruit? Certainly not, the fruit is what happens naturally in season, in response to the external stimuli of heat and moisture. We are much the same, we are creatures whose fruit will manifest in due time in response to our internal and external conditions. Fruit is not something we can force, fruit happens – or more often than not, is revealed. Works, on the other hand, can be forced and faked. Works are what we do, fruit is about who we really are – and most importantly, it

determines the type of seeds we ourselves plant in others, for better or worse. Are we figs or thistles? Both of them are full of seeds, chock full of them!

.

What species of fruit we are does not change, but the quality of the fruit can. Our fruit starts out naturally inferior – Leviticus 19:23 even clearly tells us that for three years you shouldn't even eat the fruit off of a new tree! It's uncircumcised! Can I just say how wonderful it is to serve an Elohim who expects and makes allowances for the fact that our fruit will not be immediately good upon entering the Kingdom, that He allows us [time to grow](#)? That is the Father's heart!

.

So why is the fruit of the Spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22)? Because when we are [grafted into the tree of Israel](#), that is the lifeblood that tree should be pumping into us, the very character of Messiah! It should be changing us, it should be changing our fruit. Our obedience or disobedience to the commandments will play a big part in how quickly our fruit changes, as will our willingness to be humble and loving and yes, gentle. We will do mercy, justice, and kindness in the lives of others.

*what type
of seed
are you
planting
in people?*

Are we bearing the fruit of Messiah or of the evil one? His fruit will not manifest itself in mercy, justice or kindness.

Messiah's fruit tempers our flesh, while the fruit of the evil one encourages our flesh. The seed Messiah plants produces good fruit and that 100 fold harvest, while the seed of the enemy sows tares that chokes off the full potential of the harvest.

.

Fruit is who we are and what we propagate, works are what we do. Works can be fake – but fruit is revealed as soon as it falls into the ground and produces something. Whatever it produces will show you exactly what it was in the first place.

Fruit can be transported and propagated through works, and fruit can be displayed through works, but flesh-driven works can also obscure our true fruit. Works committed under great pressure are often the true physical manifestation of our fruit. You see how deceptive works can be, and yet also full of truth? This is why the Kingdom is not only about works, but also about fruit. A works focused Kingdom can be an illusion, hence the focus in the Gospels on fruit in partnership with works! What we do is important, and if we claim that we are loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good faithful and self-controlled but never show it in our actions – then we do not truly have that fruit yet. We are

still yielding evil or mixed fruit. Striving for the classic good works (church work, for instance), if it distracts us from producing good fruit (which requires submission to and discipline from our Father in Heaven), is a very deceptive trap. It seems like the right thing to do, but it is really just for naught if it springs up from a sense of guilt or obligation instead of pouring forth from the abundance of love in our hearts. Better to do nothing now, and spend time growing and maturing towards developing godly fruit, so that we can produce a hundred-fold harvest later, instead of settling for a 30-fold harvest.

.

Torah shows us the works we are commanded to do in order to show love to one another in truth. But the Spirit is the One who makes it possible for us to feel love towards one another.

Worshiping God in Spirit and Truth is a response to both sides of the equation – be love, don't just do love and don't just feel love, don't neglect one for the other, but embrace both. Be love. There is your good fruit, when you can be love.

The Character of God as Agriculturalist Pt 5: Why would anyone graft a wild branch on a cultivated tree?

In January, I published a note called The Trauma of Being Grafted In, For the Tree and the Branches and I have seen it reposted on different blogs so I figure I ought to post it

here as well, but then I changed it and added to it.

I always preface a discussion of grafting with this, because I think it is important to establish who we are – no longer Gentiles but Israelites.

*Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being **in time past** Gentiles in the flesh, who are **called** Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

*12 That **at that time** ye were **without Christ**, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** from the **covenants** of promise, having **no hope**, and **without God** in the world:*

*13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are **made nigh** by the blood of Christ.*

*14 For he is our peace, who **hath made both one**, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

*15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain **one new man**, so making peace;*

*16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in **one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

*19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellow citizens with the saints**, and of the household of God;*

When we look at who we were and who we are called to be – we cannot overlook the realities of the grafting process. Paul used it as a picture of what happens for a reason.

Romans 11:17 *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

18 *Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.*

19 *Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.*

20 *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:*

21 *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

22 *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

23 *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.*

24 *For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*

Now, I have heard people say that we are grafted into the vine, Yeshua (Jesus), but Paul says that we are grafted into

the olive tree of Israel, spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah.

.

*Jer 11:16 The Lord called thy name, A green **olive tree**, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken.*

.

Grafting takes a branch of an uncultivated (wild) tree that has some favorable qualities, cuts it off from the tree it is currently a part of, strips it of its leaves, and then cuts the host tree in order to incorporate the mutilated branch.

It isn't a pleasant thing. The grafted branch has to change, and the host has to support and nourish.



.

But here are some important facts about grafting – the host never changes. The cultivated tree stays exactly the same, other than being cut to accept the graft. It is the graft that changes, but the graft will never, ever make the newcomer exactly like the natural branches. The fruit won't ever look or taste exactly the same as the fruit the host tree originally produced, but it will change. Wild fruit is generally not as abundant as cultivated, or as large.

Grafting changes that – and within a few years, the grafted branch will produce fruit that is far superior in quantity to

what it once produced when attached to the natural wild stock.

.

Grafting is not a fast process, it takes time – in nature and in the Spirit. Grafting occurs for the express purpose of changing the branch, giving it a strong root and disease resistance – BUT no one would ever graft a wild branch onto a cultivated tree unless they wanted fruit that looked and tasted slightly different than that of the original tree!

.

When we, who are not natural branches (meaning that we come from stock that is hostile to cultivation, or in other words, hostile to God), are grafted into the root of Israel, our fruit and flavor will never be identical to the natural branches that are already there (those who are by birth descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). We are still going to produce olives, the same species of fruit, and far more of it than before, but we aren't supposed to taste or look exactly the same. When someone sees our fruit they should be able to say, "Aha! Look at that grafted branch, glory to YHVH! The fruit is indeed good and abundant!"

.

The grafted branch has nothing to apologize about for looking and tasting different – it is the job and duty of the branch to accept nourishment from the host and to change, all the while accepting that it will never, ever be exactly like natural branches of the host tree. What the grafted branch shows us, is that YHVH purposefully ordained that the olive tree of Israel would be a veritable smorgasbord of tastes and textures and appearances. He wanted it that way. What He doesn't want is for the olive branches to produce apples or oranges, but the fruit He has ordained.

.

And so what does that tell us about the character of God?

Let's go back to the Exodus out of Egypt. Now I was never taught this in Sunday School, but even the movie the Ten Commandments got this one right – not only did the sons of Israel (Jacob) come out of Egypt, but so did a “mixed multitude.” (Ex 12:38) This ‘ereb rab (and for the record ‘ereb is where the word “arab” came from, meaning a mixture) was not only Egyptians but a mixture of a great many people.

It is my belief that in Egypt at that time, being THE world power because of Joseph, there were slaves and citizens from every people group on the earth. I believe that the sons of Japheth were there, alongside the sons of Shem and Ham. I believe that people of every tribe, tongue and nation were around the base of Mt Sinai, hearing the words of YHVH in the thunder and fire and smoke. I believe that those of every tribe, tongue and nation went through the red sea and were baptised into Messiah and drank water from the rock that was Messiah

.

*I Cor 10:10 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that **all our fathers** were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;*

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

.

Do you see here what Paul is saying to the Church of Corinth? Now, some assemblies were significantly Jewish communities

like we find in Galatia, but in Corinth, those people were a mess, former pagan Gentiles who were having a hard time giving up their paganism and immorality. Now usually when Jews speak of "our Fathers" they are referring to the patriarchs, but here it is instead worded "all our fathers." This was a recognition of two important truths – the first being that Paul was speaking to the "lost sheep of Israel," those descendants of the 10 northern tribes who went into exile and became assimilated, for the most part losing their identity after having been cut off from the covenant when they rejected it through centuries of pagan idolatry in the Land. But the second truth is that Paul is also addressing those whose physical forefathers were not even at Sinai, who did not go through the Sea, and who were not under the cloud. He was calling on the precedent set by God Himself in the acceptance of the 'ereb rab into the people of Israel at the formal founding of the Nation as it was given the covenant. As the mixed multitude were grafted fully into Israel at Sinai, becoming as the native born through faith in YHVH, becoming sons and not foreigners through faith as evidenced by obedience to the covenant, so were these wild olive branches at Corinth and in all the assemblies of the saints, grafted into Israel. Now back to Paul's words in Ephesus – no longer strangers, no longer without hope or without God or without the Covenants, no longer foreigners – but fellow citizens of Israel. There is no longer any difference. It is important to note that at the end of their 40 years in the desert, there is no mention of any mixed multitude because it no longer existed. They were Israel.

.

Our children, Matthew and Andrew, were grafted into our family – they were not natural branches. Adopted children don't look like their parents, but they are family just the same as any natural born child. There aren't separate rules, or different expectations, and they aren't treated differently. What is

wrong or right for the natural child is also wrong or right for the adopted child. And the adopted child is probably going to look different than the others – on the outside – but their fruit will be the same. Depending on how old they were when they were adopted, they may sound different, depending on what country they came from, they may look similar or very different, but in the end you will have a family unit. That is grafting. And that is why, in Messiah there is no Jew nor Greek, Male nor Female, Slave nor Free. Yes, those external differences are still there – but Israel is Israel is Israel – one Nation under God – one family under YHVH. Even if the kids are too busy disowning each other to admit it.

.

Grafting is a beautiful thing. It's a painful, time-consuming, ugly way to make a bunch of branches produce a lot of good fruit. But the result is beautiful. The result is detailed in Rev 7

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

The Character of God as Agriculturalist Pt 4: Don't

eat that fruit yet!

What do Leviticus 19:23-25, Galatians 1:17-18, and Daniel 1:3-5, 18-20 have in common?

.

Lev 19 ²³ And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: THREE YEARS shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. ²⁴ But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the Lord withal. ²⁵ And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the Lord your God.

.

Galatians 1 ¹⁷ Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after THREE YEARS I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

.

Daniel 1 ³ And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; ⁴ Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. ⁵ And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them THREE YEARS, that at the end thereof they

might stand before the king.

Daniel 1¹⁸ Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. ²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

Father had been showing me about the little fruit tree for over 2 years now, but I didn't see the scriptural connections in my mind until last April as I started reading Daniel again, and one morning as I was painting the basement and praying, Paul's journey to Arabia came to mind.

Here's the deal, and this runs absolutely counter to the practices of the modern church – new believers need YEARS to mature and grow before their fruit is going to be fit for others to benefit from and should not immediately be pressed into service wherever there is a need. In Leviticus we see the pattern beginning – the tree must be left alone, to grow, for three years – in fact, any fruit it yields is considered to be uncircumcised, not fit for human consumption! By the fourth year, the fruit is for God, presented to Him, if you will, set apart, and only in the fifth year can a man eat of it. But before that time, the ground must be prepared so that it is suitable for growth, the roots must be covered and well protected, there must be adequate nutrients, fertilizer must

be applied, the bad branches must be pruned and the unruly ones tamed, suckers must be sheared away from the roots, and it must be well watered.

.

Now, if I am right that this is also a picture of the believer, we will see this pattern again in scripture. So let's look at Daniel – four young men were chosen and trained up for three years in the Babylonian language and culture – so that they could stand in the presence of the King of Babylon in the 4th year, and when the time came the King was very much impressed by their wisdom and knowledge – later in the narrative we see that the King placed them in authority over his people (Dan 2:48-9)

.

Let's look also at Paul, from his testimony in his letter to the Galatians. After Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, he took a three year sabbatical in Arabia (where many believe he went to Mt Sinai). Despite being one of the most learned men on earth as far as knowledge of the scriptures, he went back to the drawing board – instead of being immediately pressed into service (although he did briefly attempt it in Damascus, as reported in Acts 9, but it would appear that after the attempt on his life he left for Arabia before heading to Jerusalem). Despite his knowledge, he was incredibly bogged down with the oral laws and traditions and teachings. He needed time, as any new believer, to detox and get back to what the scriptures actually said. All of us who have emerged from the world can relate to this! And in addition, whenever we come into a radical alteration in our beliefs, as when many of us realized that the Torah is still for followers of the Messiah, so we can walk as He walked, we need that time to unlearn and relearn.

There is some debate as to whether or not the ministry of Messiah was three years or one year – but if it was three years then it also fits the pattern of how long a person must be disciplined before being entrusted with the responsibilities of caring for people – certainly the most precious treasures YHVH possesses.

.

The reason for my writing is this – the religious system shortchanged us and misrepresented the character of God, which is to care for the young as a Father, and by extension, we as older brothers and sisters must be willing to nurture the newcomers instead of using them as resources. The mature ARE the resources, not the immature. But the religious mindset has scared the beejebies out of us and guilted the joy out of us if we don't hit the ground running. Oddly enough, greasy grace doesn't extend to how we treat those who have an obvious anointing on their lives. If we see that you are an evangelist – better get out there and win souls, boy! Doesn't matter if you are still messed up – lets get them in the pews because if they die tomorrow and go to hell it will be all your fault! If we see that you are a teacher – we'll just send you out to teach our children before you even know the basics, here's a curriculum – even though you don't know enough to question it or verify the contents! Pastor? Gotta get you to divinity school! Prophet? Please go away and never come back – unless you have something nice to say don't say anything at all! Apostle? We'll send you to Africa to plant our denominational flags so you can make them twice the sons of hell that we are.

.

NO! This should not be! YHVH spoke very clearly to me about this once:

.

IT TAKES TIME TO LEARN!

.

It takes – time. And that requires patience. A believer is a precious investment, and we should treat our new brothers and sisters better than we do. We should encourage them to take some years to be still and quiet, so that when they open their mouths they don't have to regret it in a year when they figure out that their understanding wasn't where it needed to be.

Maybe they thought they were knowledgeable, and haven't yet come to the humbling realization of how little they know.

Like a baby tree, they should be propped up, and fed and watered, and pruned and protected from the elements – not forced to try to bear good fruit before their time. It is a cruel thing we do, and we do it because we have inherited lies, religious expectations instead of the compassion that comes through the Spirit. Perhaps if we had been given the opportunity to simply learn and grow and change with no other expectations foisted upon us, we wouldn't be hazing the newcomers. But it's time to recognize that the new lambs, and the old lambs who have come into Torah, are not yet equipped to minister and we need to stop pushing them to do it.

.

The Holy Spirit does not equip us immediately – there is work that must be done, or the roots will not go deep enough and that beautiful young believer will topple over by being forced to carry too much of a load. We need to make sure this doesn't happen. And if we push someone too hard and too fast and they fall away, well shame on us. I know it was done to us, but it's just plain hazing. Let's try to be better spiritual parents than we were given when we came to the faith. After all, what are we saying about the character of our King when we treat saplings like mature trees? Shalom!

*What are we saying
about the character
of our King when
we treat saplings
like mature
trees??*

The Character of God as Agriculturalist Pt 3: Feeding the Sheep

John 21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep

.

I love what Yeshua said here, "Feed my sheep." Notice what He did not say because it is just as important.

.

“Rule over My sheep.”

“Discourage My sheep.”

“Devour My sheep.”

“Use My sheep to build an empire.”

“Make sure My sheep aren’t asking any questions.”

or my personal favorite –

“Force-feed my sheep.”

.

Sometimes I wonder if He is thinking, “What part of feeding My sheep is so difficult to understand?”

.

The first recorded martyr was Stephen, a man full of the Spirit, and his job was.... making sure the Greek widows were taken care of. Stephen was feeding Messiah’s sheep. Now, right after Yeshua’s exchange with Peter, He plainly tells him that he will be martyred. He says, feed my sheep, and you will die for me. In Acts 6, Stephen was given the job of feeding the sheep, and then he died for the testimony of Yeshua.

.

What does this tell us? Because I don’t feel this was an accident, not at all, I think it is deliberate.

.

I believe there is a death to self that must occur in order for a person to see that the sheep are fed. I believe that those who truly embrace the job of feeding the sheep die,

perhaps not at the hands of the enemy, but they do die. Who would be content to feed others year after year, never getting wealthy for it, in fact getting a lot of grief in the process?

Who would not weary when the widows were never depleted, year after year. Who would be more content to feed instead of being fed? Who desires to serve instead of be served? Who desires to seek out those who need fed, instead of seeking out a reputation as someone who feeds? There is no earthly glory to be had in simply feeding people. It is not glamorous, it's often times not pretty. Dealing with hungry sheep is laborious, and often thankless. Leading them to green pastures, and then allowing them to eat – hardly something worth bragging about.

.

Feeding the sheep is what Yeshua commanded Peter to do, right before He told Peter that he would one day be martyred. But what did the disciples do as soon as they found some needy people? They gave the job to others, and then one of them died the prophesied death of the feeder of hungry sheep. Of course, Stephen was meeting the needs of the Greek widows in the physical, but there is also the spiritual principle to be considered. Getting people what they need, and not simply what we want them to have, requires humility and restraint.

.

God's sheep must be led towards good things, but so often I see them being directed towards the bad – in order to steer them away from it. As I was praying last night, I had to laugh at the picture that came to my mind. I saw a man feeding something poisonous to a sheep and telling them never to eat it again. And so often that is what we do, instead of feeding His sheep the good stuff and making sure they develop a healthy taste for it, we wave the bad in their faces, we sometimes even let them get a tantalizing taste for it. Oh, don't listen to that. Stay away from that teaching. That is

junk food! Perhaps. spiritually speaking, we would be better off not mentioning it unless absolutely necessary! You never know when someone might enjoy the scent of poison, and develop a hankering for it – simply because we mentioned it. Because we know our children run from everything we tell them to avoid right? Right? No, mine don't either.

.

When shepherds find a poison weed in the field, they uproot it and burn it – they don't call all the sheep over, let them get a good whiff of it and expect them not to go looking for another. It's just such an awesome responsibility, as I said in my last [blog](#), finding that living food and living water, and allowing the sheep to eat their fill at their own pace, and not forcing it down their throats.

.

Lead the sheep to a good field, and the sheep will eat. The food doesn't need to be pre-processed, painstakingly inspected, placed into their mouths, and we don't need to work their jaws for them and tell them to swallow and digest. Sheep know how to eat. Shepherds need to know when to leave them alone and let them do it.

*Sheep know how
to eat.
Shepherds need
to learn how to
leave them alone
and let them do
it.*

