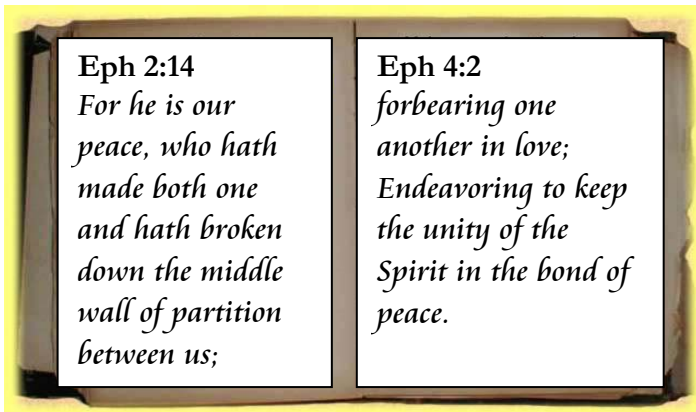


THE NEWS AND TEACHINGS OF

ECHO Ministries



Beth Shalom — — — — *Instruments of Peace*

One in Messiah

One in Yeshua

Halachah

Have you ever struggled to figure out what God really wants?

For instance, let's say you're David, and you're looking back on part of your life, that really tough time after you had been anointed king and before you were installed as king, and then a little later when you had enough peace in the kingdom to focus on God, and then a little later still when you had enough success to lose your focus on God.

And wouldn't you be puzzled? Let me show you what I mean.

Look at I Sam. 21:1-6. David and his rag-tag army are running from Saul. He comes to a priest, Ahimelech, and he and his army are starving. Ahimelech says, "What on earth are you doing?" And I can't really tell if David is actually trying to deceive him or if he is speaking sarcastically (which I think is the case, because Ahimelech was afraid of him, and apparently understood the situation), but, at any rate, David says he's on an errand for the king, but they need

food. Ahimelech had just taken the shewbread from the altar, replacing it with fresh bread. The shewbread was for him to eat. Any of the priests could eat it. In fact, if you were from the priestly line, even if you were disqualified by physical handicap from serving before the Lord, you could still eat it.

But David was, quite literally, a Jew, from Judah—not a Levite from Levi. And it was illegal for him to eat the shewbread. Ahimelech made a weak attempt at making sure everything was all right. He made sure that none of the men were unclean from having had relations with a woman—but that still didn't make them Levites. (see Lev. 8:31; 21:6)

But David took the shewbread, he ate it, and he didn't die.

Then, a while later, after the Lord had delivered him from all his foes, David ruled Israel. He subdued the Philistines, and, very rightly, wanted to place the ark of the covenant in a place of honor. He brought it toward Jerusalem, loaded on a cart.

But the road was not smooth. The cart hit a bump. Those of you who are parents can probably relate. Have you ever been driving, had to stop suddenly, and reached out your hand to protect your family, even though the passenger is belted in? I've done that—and my passenger was Brent!

So you know how it happened. The road was rocky. The oxen stumbled. Uzzah, in concern for the ark, reached out unthinking, touched the ark, and died.

Don't you think David was upset, and puzzled, and worried? We know so, for scripture tells us.

See II Sam. 6:8 "And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day. 9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? 10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite."

If you read on, you find that David saw the household where the ark was residing was blessed, so he continued the journey, but with some pretty significant modifications.

So here, even though his heart was toward God, the Lord had just "*zot*" killed someone for breaking a rule, while before, David and his men were untouched. How come?

And then there's that whole "numbering the house of Israel" incident. In II Sam. 24, against the advice of his counselors, David sent Joab out to number the standing army of Israel. It took him 9 months and 20 days. By that time, David had had time to realize that it was only his pride, his vanity, and his desire for security in his own numbers and strength that led him to count his army. He repented, but even so 70,000 men died from the plague that was punishment, and that

plague only stopped when David asked for the punishment to be on him and his house—and it was, by the way.

So, like, I don't get it. You have to follow the rules, except when you don't, and having good intentions don't count, except when they do???

Well, even though this was long ago and far away, the questions these incidents engender are as real as today and tomorrow. What are we as believers to do?

All through Deuteronomy it says that if you obey the commandments, you shall live by them.

And Paul says in Rom. 10:5 "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." But we know that the Israelites tried to live by them and failed. Sometimes pretty spectacularly! So what are *we* going to do?

As part of the answer, let's explore the Jewish concept of Halachah. That is not "Kalakah"—which is ancient Babylonian for car-pooling, if you'll recall from the old advertisement. But this is Halachah.

In fact, a very interesting paper was presented at the AJCB conference in Houston about Christian Halachah—and the question was asked whether that was an oxymoron or a contradiction in terms, like "army intelligence"—with apologies to the military!

So what is Halachah?

Halachah is the rabbinic attempt to help people avoid getting *zotted* for inadvertently breaking the law.

In Eldersheim's, The Life and Times of Jesus, he says,

“In the developing and establishment of the law there evolved a law of custom, besides the written Torah (law), called the Halachah (Heb. halaka, "that which is current and customary").

The Halachah contained "either simply the laws laid down in Scripture, or else derived from or traced to it by some ingenious and artificial method of exegesis; or added to it, by way of amplification and for safety's sake; or, finally, legalized customs. They provided for every possible and impossible case, entered into every detail of private, family, and public life; and with iron logic, unbending rigor, and most minute analysis pursued and dominated man, turn whither he might, laying on him a yoke which was truly unbearable. The return which it offered was the pleasure and distinction of knowledge, the acquisition of righteousness and the final attainment of rewards" (Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus*, 1:98).

Authentic Halachah was succinctly described by Rabbi Doctor Jonathan Sacks in his book Traditional Alternatives as follows: “To be a Jew

was to be subject to Halachah, the vastly ramified provisions of Jewish Law. That Law, in turn, was derived either directly or indirectly from the Torah, the written record of Divine Revelation at Sinai. Rabbinic Judaism, as the ongoing application of the oral law, gave Torah its authoritative interpretation and safeguarded its observance through protective enactments and decrees.”

In other words, Halachah teaches the way along which the Jew is required to walk in accordance with Torah. Halachah is the application of the Torah to life.

So just how does Halachah translate into the life of a modern messianic believer? Do we accept the words of the rabbis? Do we make up our own minds? Or do we just ignore the question and hope it goes away?

Join us next time to explore the law, its application, and the life of the believer.
By Susan Fiedler

Book Review Blind Sports by *Coach McCartney*

It has been said that ignorance won't kill you, but it will make you sweat a lot. This is true of individuals, but it is also true of the church. *Blind Spots* is an eye-opening look at several areas in which the American church is hurting because it is ignorant of what is truly needed. Blind spots can be weaknesses that we haven't discovered yet, misinformation we act upon without thinking, or anything that divides us. They survive in selfish or fearful attitudes, and they are conquered through humility and repentance. Bill McCartney, founder of Promise Keepers, illustrates these problems with a vast array of personal experiences. He believes the enemy is using our misperceptions about ourselves and our own brothers against us. Therefore, we aren't fighting effectively because we don't even see him coming.

The first issue McCartney addresses is a huge blind spot the church has for its Messianic brothers. He describes how Promise Keepers came under intense spiritual warfare when it officially partnered with the Messianic leadership. This did not surprise Messianics at all. They have great insight and knowledge to share with the church. The unity of Jew and Gentile may be one of the greatest partnerships possible. It is a prophetic relationship. Historically the Jewish population has been the biggest target of the enemy, and it is therefore not surprising that Scripture emphasizes this unity more than any other. This blind spot is a foundational one.

This is not to diminish the division in the body between Anglo believers and their Hispanic, African-American, or American Indian brothers. In the past minority groups have been disadvantaged financially making the divide one of economics as well. Between urban and suburban churches McCartney suggests there is a theological divide as

well. So many suburban churches have fundamental roots that emphasize salvation by grace alone. They are strongly committed to personal holiness, but are wary of social programs. The urban churches, however, are very aware of the need for social justice in their communities. Often, they have organized outreach programs but little financial strength. These churches have much to give experientially and culturally, but suburban churches do not recognize the strengths they have to offer or their need for them. Therefore, the Biblically inseparable concepts of justice and righteousness are disconnected among American churches. McCartney says, "A community that adopts a lifestyle of justice and mercy with their neighbors and that exercises personal discipline in prayer and Bible study attracts seekers." Compassionate justice is an extension of personal holiness, and as churches work together tenaciously our neighbors will see that.

These issues can be worked on as churches reach out to one another. In order for that to happen the local pastors need to work together closely. Therefore, McCartney has interwoven challenges for everybody, but specifically for them. He sees a need

for integrity and tenacity in ministry. There are so many men in the church serious about God, but not on fire for him. Pastors need to coach their men to greatness, so he gives some advice about leadership, the heart of which is servanthood. Essential for any leader is a team dedicated to praying for him. There is something uniquely powerful about a men's prayer team and it can be energizing for all the men involved. As men catch the vision their lives will be changed, and the church will be changed, and the world will be changed for Y'shua.

This book is encouraging, challenging, and beautifully empowering. I hope you will find this book personally convicting. Even if you don't change your mind, you will come away with more empathy for differing positions. Even if you do not have an opportunity to make a difference now, this book will inspire you to see opportunities in the future, and resolve conflict with creativity and sensitivity. The church cannot afford to be ignorant any more. Knowing is half the battle. Is there something you are not seeing?

submitted by C. Davidson

Anyone interested in learning Hebrew from a Sabra , a native Israeli, you may want to check out the site

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