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Bridges for Peace

Israel Teaching Letter

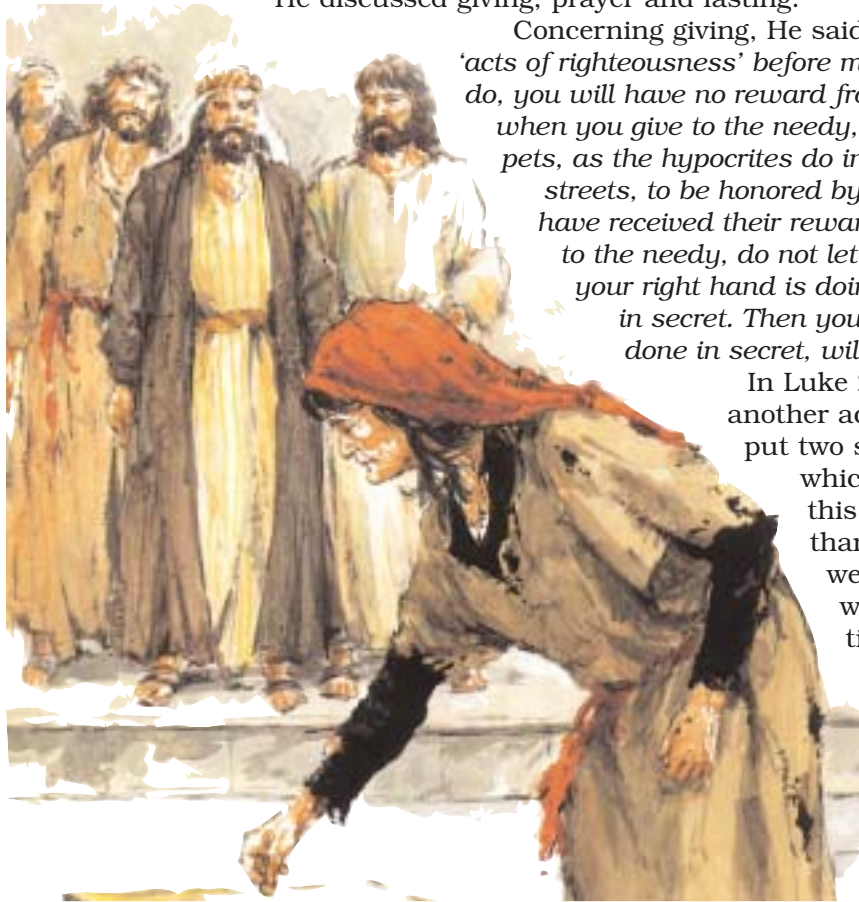
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HOW WELL DO YOU WORSHIP GOD?

The worship of the Lord involves much more than going to a service where we sing some songs and hear the preaching of the Word. Worshipping God is a lifestyle that encompasses our whole being, day in and day out – what we say, what we do, and most importantly, how we do it.

Yeshua (Jesus) addressed the issue of “how” we practice our faith in Matthew 6 where He discussed giving, prayer and fasting.



Concerning giving, He said, *“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you”* (Mt. 6:1-4).

In Luke 21:1-4, Yeshua describes another act of giving where a widow put two small mites into the offering, which was all she had. However, this was considered a better gift than a large gift given by a wealthy person, because for the wealthy, it was a small proportion of much, and for the widow it was *“all she had to live on.”*

Back in Matthew 6:5-15, Yeshua addressed prayer and said that it is better for us to go into our own room and seek God in private, not standing in the synagogues



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and the streets like the hypocrites where they can be seen by men. Those who pray in secret are heard by God, while those who make a public spectacle only get the acknowledgement of men as their reward.

Likewise, in Matthew 6:16-18, Yeshua tells those who fast not to disfigure their faces and tell everyone they are fasting, so as to receive the praise of men for their "piety." Rather, He says "*when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*" In Yeshua's day, Jews would put ashes on their heads when fasting. However, putting oil on the head and washing the face were reserved for joyous occasions. The point was to keep your fasting between you and God, so that God would be the one to honor your efforts.

What is the common thread in all of these examples? God is more interested in the quality of the expression of faith as an act of worship than the quantity. The depth of the devotion to God alone is greatly noticed by Him and desired by Him. After all, God is a jealous God and He is happiest when our devotion is directed to Him exclusively, and not shared with men. As He is blessed by our acts of devoted worship, He in turn, rewards us with abundance.

This quality in worship is a concept well defined in Judaism, and the Jewish readers of Matthew 6 and Luke 21 surely did not miss the point as to why Yeshua called those who seek the praise of men hypocrites. They knew better, which is why it was being emphasized so strongly.

The quality of worship is what we want to delve into in this month's Israel Teaching Letter. In a recent lecture for our BFP Staff in Jerusalem, Ron Cantrell, our Publications Director, gave the following presentation on worshipping the Lord, as he taught about the Hebraic concept of *gadlut* and *katnut*. What is this, you may ask?

Lets find out as we read this special presentation by Ron Cantrell:

Jewish tradition says that it may be erroneous to say that God chose the Jewish people. According to their own resources, all nations were given the opportunity to accept God's laws, but it was the Jewish nation that said "Yes." Whether or not this exact rendition is true we don't know, but we do know that the origins of the giving of our Scriptures is within the context of that nation known as the Hebrews. Therefore, our spiritual heritage has a Hebraic flavor. I suppose that if it had been the Chinese that had responded favorably to God's offer, we would be studying oriental influences on our faith. But, emerging from the hot, dry desert air of the Sinai, and infused with Hebraic cultural and linguistic influences the Israelites would add, our spiritual roots are in Jewish soil and still growing there.

Why should we consider our Hebrew roots? When we study the origins of our faith, we become gleaners of traditions that reveal facets of God's character that we may never have noticed before. In the context of time and place, the Israelites in all phases of their culture, language and existence are the robe in which our spirituality is cloaked. The context of Scripture is definitely a Middle Eastern one.

The study of the Jewish roots of our faith is not aimed at turning Gentiles into Jews. On the other hand, the attempt to take our faith out of the Jewish context by some currents within Christianity, has made the stew insipid. "*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good,*" (Ps. 34:8) is the instruction of the psalmist. Indeed, a flavorful delight awaits us as we sample spirituality seasoned with the spices of the patriarchs of our Scriptures.

PRAYING WITH A PURPOSE

Visitors to Israel are often perplexed when seeing a Jewish person praying. Lost in prayer, they sway, rocking back and forth as he or she addresses the Lord. Jews call prayer by a Yiddish word, *davening*. Even the sound of the word gives a mental picture of movement. I have been questioned many times about this custom. There are several explanations, but the one most often told by the Jewish people themselves is that they view the human spirit as a candle flame. The word for spirit in Hebrew is *ruach*. Not only does it mean spirit, but it also means wind. Therefore, if the person lost in prayer is in the presence of the Ruach of God (the

Spirit of God), their candle flame will be set in motion as His Presence (Ruach-wind) moves across their spirit. Thus, the “flickering” of their body is witnessed by their swaying.

A secondary benefit of motion during prayer is that it focuses concentration on the prayers themselves. Since Jews mostly pray in a standing position, the movement also helps one to pray longer and to keep the rhythm of the prayers they read, than if they just stood fixed in one position. Jewish people believe that they must not pray in a repetitious unthinking manner. The prayers must be said with understanding and meaning each time they recite them. The movement helps lock the mind of the one praying on his prayer. In Christian congregations, as well, you can observe in times of worship or prayer, people find that swaying is an almost unconscious reaction to the feeling of the nearness of God.

The Hebrew word *kavanah* means with “direction and purpose.” It is a traditional exhortation to observant Jews that their prayers are supposed to be said with *kavanah*. An important Hebrew concept at the heart of *kavanah*, has to do with two Hebrew words, *gadol* and *katan*, meaning “large” and “small.” The noun form of these Hebrew words, *gadlut* and *katnut*, represent concepts of a person’s application of spiritual lessons.

In light of our discussion of prayer, it simply means that a person who prays routinely or by rote, prays with *katnut*, or “a small mind.” However, *gadlut* is one who possesses “greatness of mind,” the goal at the heart of *kavanah*, which is demanded of God’s followers. In prayer, *kavanah* is stressing the quality of our prayer, not the quantity. This cannot happen if we are more interested in how others perceive our prayers, or if we are reciting them absent-mindedly while thinking about something else. Our focus in prayer needs to be the Lord and our conversation and adoration of Him.

THE REAL MIRACLE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

Israel’s exodus from Egypt is a picture of *katnut* changed to *gadlut*. The wave of plagues that befell Egypt, but did not touch the Hebrews, showed the Hebrews and the Egyptians the power of their God.

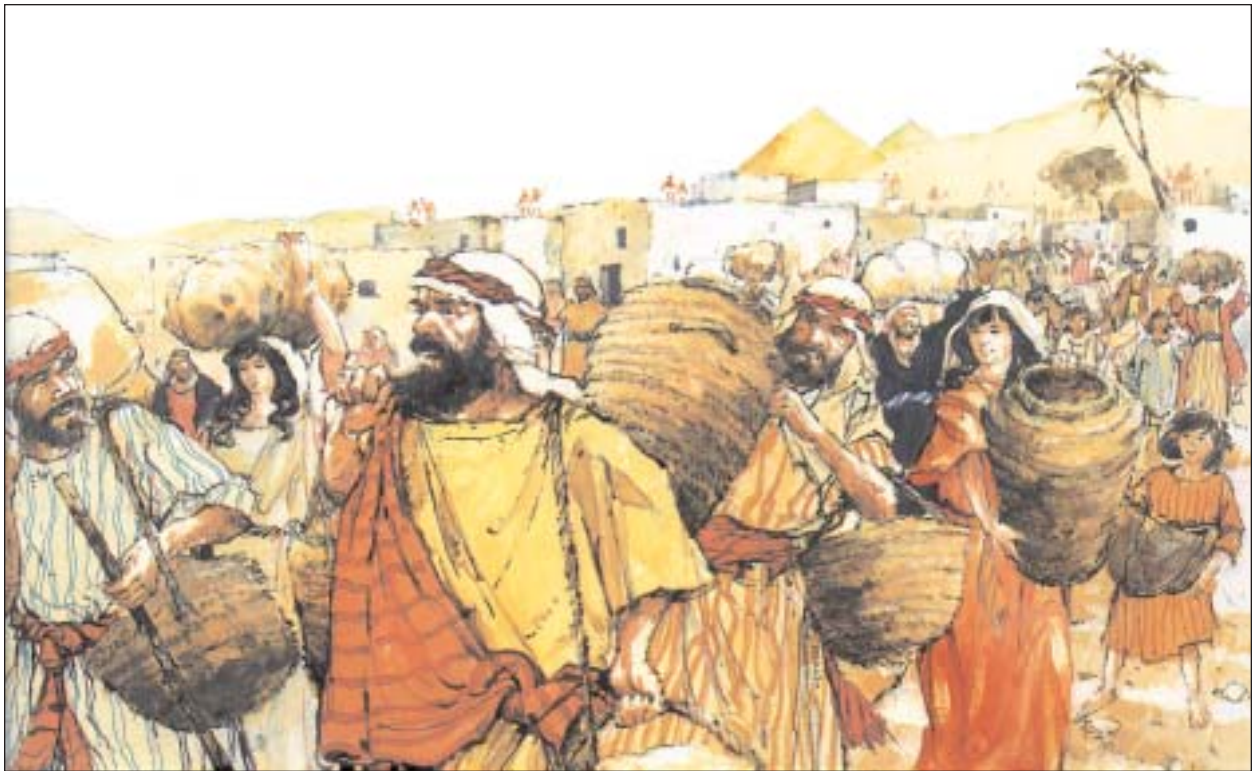
The Hebrews feared the Egyptians under whose bondage they were made slaves. They were even afraid to make a sacrifice of a sheep to the Lord because they feared the Egyptian response. “Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.’ But, Moses said, ‘That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the Lord our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us? We must make a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, as He commands us’” (Ex. 8:25-27).

The occasion of the conversation was after the fourth plague had hit Egypt and Pharaoh was now asking Moses to sacrifice to the Hebrew God to stop the plagues. Moses was willing, but wanted to go off into the desert and do it privately because he knew such an act would anger the Egyptians. Pharaoh said the Hebrews could do this, IF Moses entreated God to stop the plague of flies. Moses did, the flies left, but Pharaoh reneged. Therefore, more plagues followed, culminating in the passing of the angel of death over the homes of those whose doors



*Jewish worshippers
at the
Western Wall
display various styles
of prayer.*





were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. Knowing that the Hebrew slaves feared to slaughter sheep near the Egyptians, the directive in Exodus 12:3-6 to take a sheep into your home for four days, and then slaughter it, is a demarcation line in the sand. It showed that Israel had moved from knowledge of God with a small mind to seeing Him who would lead them out of their bondage with a dramatic demonstration that would never be forgotten.

The wave of plagues that inflicted the Egyptians and spared the Hebrews served to change the hearts and minds of both. It moved the Hebrews from *katnut* to *gadlut*, when they saw the sheer power of their God, and from arrogance to fear in the Egyptians. Had the Israelites just managed to sneak away, Egypt, then a world-dominating military power, would have found them and killed them. Egypt ruled as far north as the border of the Hittite empire (now eastern Turkey). That took in all of Israel. God had to teach Egypt not to touch His anointed before they left, and He had to teach the Israelites not to fear Egypt's threats.

HASIDISM AND THE FERVOR FOR GOD

The importance of *gadlut* to our spirituality transcends time barriers. We can see it throughout the ages with God's people who are part of His covenant.

The Baal Shem Tov was the rabbi who charged into the midst of mediocre Judaism in Europe (1700-1760) with controversial ideas. He told of a God who was directly accessible throughout His universe; of a world capable of unimaginable evil that was really longing for redemption; and of an essential role that each Jew had to play in the joyous transformation of the mundane into the holy. The Baal Shem Tov was the originator of the orthodox Jewish movement called Hasidism. Some of the most intimate love songs to the Lord have come to us from the hasidic movement. *Yedid Nefesh* is one of the most beautiful of their songs. In English it means, "Lover of my Soul." My wife, Carol, recorded this song with English translation on her CD, *Shalom, Shalom Jerusalem* and we have constant comments of its depth, beauty, and warm haunting melody. Here is the translation of the song from Hebrew:

"O Lover of my soul, Father of mercy,
Draw your servant to your will.
As the gazelle runs to her home
Lord, I run to bow before your throne."

It is one of the most popular songs with Israelis of all times. Not only the orthodox embrace this song, but Jewish people from all walks of life love its melodic message. The impact of Hasidism changed the face of Judaism as much as any movement in history. Often, we Christians think we have cornered the market on spiritual joy and worship, and might be surprised that the Spirit of the Lord God of Israel is still invading the hearts and lives of those He called His covenant people.

The Encyclopedia of Religion remarks about Hasidism, "... it transformed everything by its emphasis on divine immanence, on constant communion with God in thought and prayer, on faith in the inspiration and wonder working powers of those close to God and on ecstatic joy and fervor in worship. It became the vital singing faith of the people. Its major appeal was not apocalyptic visions of speedy messianic deliverance from trouble, but by lifting the gloom from the depressed and impoverished masses, easing their pain and suffering and quickening the despondent with renewed hope.

"Hasidism preaches contentment, meekness and modesty without suppressing the natural impulses of the heart. The stress on salvation by faith rather than by works or study of the Torah endangered the very foundations of rabbinical Judaism in Europe. There was "great opposition" but nevertheless, Hasidism made great progress during the first half of the nineteenth century winning nearly half of the world's Jews at that time. It is still well known today for its folklore and folk songs, which have enriched every phase of Jewish life and culture."

SLIPPING FROM THE RUNGS OF THE LADDER IN THE DESERT

Wisdom from the Hasidic movement sheds light on our Hebrew wanderers in the matter of the fifth commandment, which has an additional phrase in Deuteronomy that it does not have in Exodus. The difference can be explained by the concept of *gadlut* and *katnut*.

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev (1740-1810) was the successor of the Baal Shem Tov. Two paragraphs from his writings give us insight in the concepts of *gadlut* and *katnut*, which He relates to the Ten Commandments.

Rabbi Yitzhak wrote: "Some serve the blessed creator because of the great bounty that is bestowed upon them by obedience, this is called the "lesser mind." A service of God with a small degree of consciousness - i.e., *katnut*. Others serve Him because He is master, ruler, and king, paying no attention to the blessings or rewards that God may shower upon them. All such benefits and pleasures are as nothing to them compared with the true joy of serving their blessed Creator. Such a one is said to be serving God with the "greater mind," or *gadlut*."

Rabbi Yitzhak makes an interesting point from the Exodus and Deuteronomy records of the Ten Commandments. In Moses' first trip down the mountain with God's tablets of the law (Exodus 20), the commandment to honor your father and mother went thus:

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12).

Moses descends the mountain to find that the Israelites, in fear of being abandoned, have reverted to the idol worship of Egypt. Creating a replica of Egypt's Apis Bull, used to forecast the national future of the people of Egypt, they have attempted to replace the leadership of Moses and God with something more familiar and predictable. They then celebrated the golden calf as they had seen Egypt celebrate the birth of a young apis bull - a national celebration of submission to Egypt's gods. It was not disco music that they rose up to dance to - it was celebration in ritualistic cult style.

This has to explain the Deuteronomy record of the same Ten Commandments where the fifth commandment has an addition:

"Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long, and that it may GO WELL WITH YOU, in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Dt. 5:16).

The phrase, *"And that it may go well with you"* lema'an yitav le-cha, is the addition here. Yitav is from the Hebrew root "tov" meaning "good." But here in context of the phrase, it has the connotation of "if you do this, I will do that" type of reward.

Rabbinic commentaries say that the first time down the mountain, God expected of His people that to serve Him as Almighty was enough - His people proved Him wrong. The second reference adds the qualifier to make an everlasting impression upon all of us.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH US?

God's manifest presence is different than God's sustaining presence. Aaron saw God's manifest presence in the fire of the mountain and he was terrified by God's voice at Horeb. And yet, Aaron built a golden calf to appease the people. There was his brother Moses upon the mountain talking to the God of the Universe. Soon Moses would come down and tell the people what God had said. This was a moment of *gadlut* and Aaron was turning it into a moment of *katnut*. Signs and wonders are certainly not to be disdained, but the evidence says that they will not turn *katnut* to *gadlut* in the spirit of a human being. The account of the thunder and lightning going on atop the mountain, surrounded with dark clouds with the earth rumbling at the presence of God, certainly did not make much of an impact on the people.

The Levites saw God's glory. Yet, at the time of the monarchy, they turned to idolatry between the time of the monarchy and the last years. They moved from *gadlut* in their worship to *katnut*. Sadly, they also led others into the same. *"The Levites who went far from Me when Israel went astray and who wandered from Me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin. They may serve in My sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the Temple and serving in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before the people and serve them. But because they (the Levites) served them (the people) in the presence of their idols and made the house of Israel fall into sin, there I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign Lord. They are not to come near to serve Me as priests or come near any of My holy things or My most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices. Yet will I put them in charge of the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be done in it"* (Ezek. 44:12-14).

In contrast, the sons of Zadok saw God with different eyes. Their perspective was *gadlut* in all matters concerning service to God Almighty. *"But, the priests, who are Levites and descendants of Zadok and who faithfully carried out the duties of My sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from Me, are to come near to minister before Me; they are to stand before Me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares the Sovereign Lord. They alone are to enter My sanctuary; they alone are to come near My table to minister before Me and perform My service"* (Ezek. 44:15,16).

On this somber note we must take heart from other sections of Scripture. Paul's letter to the Hebrews is a ray of sun breaking through the clouds, as God will reverse the process from *katnut* back to *gadlut*.

"The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First He says: This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

Then Paul adds: *"Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great Priest over the house of God, Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful"* (Heb. 10:15-23).

One final but very encouraging word comes to us from King David in one of his most intimate Psalms. David begins Psalm 18 telling the Lord that he loves Him. But the word he chooses to use is used only once in the Scriptures. The first verse sets the tone for the Psalm . . . *"I love You O Lord, my strength."* *Erchamcha* is the word David uses whose Hebrew root is *rachem* (mercy). But, *"rechem"* (womb) is from the same root. In verse 35 of the same Psalm David shows what has made him great.

"You have also given me the shield of Your salvation: and Your right hand has held me up, and Your gentleness has made me great" (Ps.18:35). The word translated as "gentleness" is the Hebrew word *anvah*, which is much more than meets the eye. *Anvah* also means to stoop down to a lower level - to condescend. By sending His Messiah, God stooped down and made the way for us to be great. God wants to move us up to a new *gadlut* position in Him.

TRUE WORSHIP IS THE END PRODUCT OF GADLUT



Greatness, our Hebrew *gadlut*, should lead to praise and worship, because praise and worship is the highest form of thanksgiving that one can offer. Like the words of the rabbis quoted above, the joyous transformation of the mundane into the holy is the expectation of the Lord by His people. In the Bible, Hebrew words that are generally translated “praise” in English, provide a more full and rich picture of the believer’s intimate life with the Lord in the original Hebrew. Let’s look at some of these words and learn what praise is from the Hebrew so that we can capture the fullest expression of *gadlut* praise:

Hallel: Means to boast, rave or celebrate clamorously.

Ps. 44:8 - *“In God we make our boast (hallel) all the day long.”*

Yadah: From the Hebrew root for hand (*yad*) means to cast with the hands, to extend something, perhaps linked to the wave offerings.

Ps. 44:8 - *“... and we will praise (nodah . . . form of todah) your name forever.”*

Todah: Thanks, but also from above root for hand. To extend the hands in adoration.

Ps. 50:23 - *“He who sacrifices thank offerings (todah) to Me honors Me, and prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.”*

Barach: To bend the knee, to bow low, to empower for success, blessing.

Ps. 103:1 - *“Praise (barach) the Lord, O my soul.”*

Shabach: Shout, mirth and loud adoration offered with an unashamed voice.

Ps. 117:1 - *“Praise the Lord all you nations, extol (shabach) Him, all you peoples.”*

Teruah: A shout as at the walls of Jericho but also the long loud sound that the shofar (ram’s horn) makes.

Ps. 89:15 - *“Blessed are all those who have learned to acclaim (teruah) You ...”*

Hishtachavey: Worship in the act of bowing oneself down in awe of the Lord in submission. Generally a quiet act.

Gen. 22:5 - *“He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. We will worship (hishtachavey) and then we will come back to you.’”*

Gil: To turn around, spin, dance in exuberant joy.

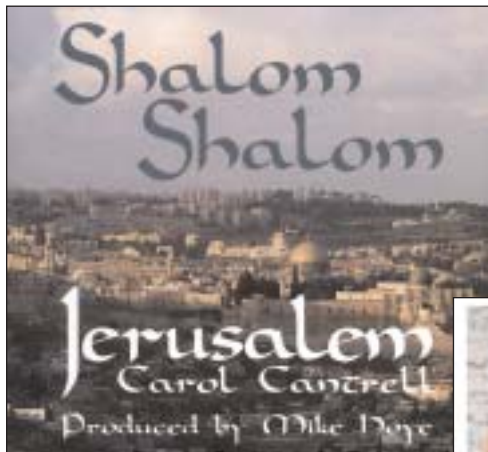
Zeph. 3:17 - *“The Lord your God is mighty in your midst; He will save. He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love. He rejoices (ya-GIL-elyeick - form of gil) over you with a joyful shout.”*

Hopefully, this look at heaven's perspective on greatness has been encouraging. It has been purchased for us, but to take it for granted is a grave mistake. Exploring all its facets makes it come alive. Thankfulness for His gift of greatness is the proper response coupled with a new awareness of two types of spirituality. Greatness is not like a badge to be worn in pride of accomplishment, rather it is a way to see and interpret God's will to the world around us.

I don't know about you, but the message Ron taught certainly made me take stock as to my own spiritual walk with the Lord. How many things am I doing automatically? Have I lost my first love? Do I need a spiritual reawakening to reverse areas of my life that have slumped from *gadlut* to *katnut*? I am now in a process of self-examination, because I want to not only "be" the best I can be for the Lord, but also to live and express it to the fullest measure, so that "it might go well with me."

May the Lord use Ron's teaching to help all of us become better disciples of the Lord. Until next month...

P.S. The beautiful song, Yedid Nefesh (Lover of My Soul), is sung by Ron's wife, Carol Cantrell, on her CD *Shalom, Shalom, Jerusalem*. You can order it from our US office. CDs are US\$ 15 plus \$1.47 ea. shipping and handling. Cassettes are US\$10, plus \$1.26 ea. shipping and handling. Send your check or credit card information to Bridges for Peace, P. O. Box 33145, Tulsa, OK 74153.



- ♦ Shout, Rejoice!
- ♦ Sh'ma
- ♦ One God
- ♦ Make A Joyful Noise
- ♦ Rock Of My Salvation
- ♦ Forever I'll Call On You
- ♦ In The Shadow Of Your Wings
- ♦ Rivers Of Babylon
- ♦ Jerusalem Of Gold
- ♦ He That Keepeth Israel
- ♦ Yedid Nefesh
- ♦ Oh Lord God of Israel
- ♦ Shalom, Shalom, Jerusalem

Many pastors, Bible teachers and even lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding, YES! That is why I am sending out this *Israel Teaching Letter*. It is my hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3).