

Yeshua

MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"—our Jesus.

Dear Friends,

On December 12, 1997 just before sunset I looked out our office window. As I gazed east across the city of Colorado Springs, I could just barely make out the full moon faintly appearing on the horizon. Because the sun was still up and the sky still bright, the moon was almost imperceptible.

About 40 minutes after sunset Sue and I began our two-mile walk home from the office. The sky was darker by then and the moon much brighter and higher in the sky. As I stared at the moon the Holy Spirit impressed in me this thought: "At this point in time the message of *Restoration* is like the moon when it was on the horizon. It is almost imperceptible because most do not see a *need* for it. But things in the United States are going to become darker than anyone has experienced before. At that time the message of *Restoration* will shine bright against the darkness. Be patient and continue to share the light with all who will hear." Sue and I were greatly encouraged to press on.

A few days later we were having lunch with our friends Griff and Reva. As we sat at the table I shared the revelation about the moon and my heart's burden for 1998. Griff got his Bible and a poem God had given him. He read Psalm 35, applying it to our

ministry for 1998. [You may want to scan the Psalm before you read further.] Sue and I knew immediately that God had given Griff this message to alert and prepare us.

The above anecdotes do not refer to Sue and me alone. We believe that everyone whom God has convicted about the *Restoration* needs to be forewarned about testing and trial just as He has alerted us. We want those of you who by His grace are altering the priorities and focus of your faith pilgrimage to not be surprised if Psalm 35 becomes more real for you in the coming year.

Our Desire for 1998

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:23,24).

For 1998 we sense that God would have us continue to emphasize the Gospel of the Hebrew Bible. This is the Gospel Jesus speaks of in John 7:38. Our heart's desire is to see more and more people manifesting the sign of our Father's covenant with them—the life-changing evidence of the Holy Spirit.

We also yearn to see the restoration of pastoring by the *zakens*, the biblical elders of the Bible.

You may wonder why we chose the age 50 since Scripture

sets no specific parameter regarding age. First, an ancient Hebraic tradition held that "those who reached age 40 were considered to have attained understanding, while those over 50 were considered worthy to counsel those younger" (see *Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church* by Dr. Ron Moseley). Also, the Hebrew word for elder, *zaken*, refers to an older, gray-bearded man, especially one who exercised community leadership.

We have encountered three categories of men in the near-50 to over-50 group:

- Those of age, maturity, and character who are biblically qualified to pastor God's people.
- Those of sufficient years but are missing the complete character development God requires to shepherd His people.
- Those approaching the appropriate age but still requiring more wisdom and experience.

Men who are biblically qualified to elder *must have the privilege* of assuming their rightful place of authority in their respective faith communities. The second and third groups need meaningful time with the first group of men in order to be trained into the fatherly leadership qualities our Lord requires.

Some men may have squandered their time and missed some of the character development God

had for them. These must have the² opportunity to repent and to be disciplined by true elders. Those approaching the age of *zaken* need special attention so that they, too, can be prepared to lead faith communities in the future. The elders and “almost elders” must have the “right of first refusal” to take their appropriate place in the *Restored Church*.

We are including some excerpts from *Pastoring by Elders* in this letter so that you can understand the direction we are taking in this book.

“Discussion: Humbly Seeking What’s Right, Not Who’s Right

The willingness for a man to discuss his plans with others before he acts is an important litmus test for God’s leaders. Wisdom gleaned over years necessitates a humble walk that is open to counsel and advice. Men who are wise endeavor to *listen closely* and to *interact* with what they hear: “*But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere*” (James 3:17). Discussion, or what some call “interactive communication”, is normal interplay for the wise with other people. You get to know a wise man on a transparent level. He is willing to share even the mistakes he’s made and the wisdom he’s gleaned from his errors.

Those who throughout their lives have foolishly sought knowledge rather than wisdom evince a narrow communication quality. Most are uncomfortable in discussions where *what* is right is cherished above *who* is right. For these people, “knowledge is power”; the information they possess is used to control others or

These men speak *at* rather than speak *with*: “*Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up*” (1Corinthians 8:1). It is difficult to know or draw close to this type of person. His pride acts as a barrier, and his lack of love for others keeps him from being God’s choice for leadership.

There are also those who, for various reasons, have missed the corrective devices of life. Some, through divorce or death of a parent, escaped the corrective training of childhood. Others consciously avoid authority figures, staying just out of reach of those who might confront them. Those who are shrewd may project a disarmingly pleasant demeanor, hoping to forestall reprimand. Their mind tells them, “Correction means rejection.”

Many of these people are often great story tellers. By their lengthy, intricate tales they prevent conversations from becoming interactive. Without interaction, listeners tend to shut their minds off after awhile. You never get to really *know* these talkers, although your library of stories grows immensely.

Another type of person who resists transparency is the one who has “hidden secrets”. He is friendly, but his conversations reveal little about his inner person. During a deployment aboard a ship, Mike befriended another officer named Ralph. Ralph was likable and easy to be around. After several months aboard the ship Mike overheard a conversation with Pete, one of Ralph’s friends: “Ralph, you and I first met four years ago at Officer Candidate School. We’ve been stationed together ever since and I’ve been your roommate all these years. But Ralph, I *don’t*

know you!”

Months later back in San Diego, Ralph and his wife Karen invited us to dinner. After dinner, Karen suddenly broke into tears and blurted out, “We need your help. I’ve been married to Ralph for three years, but I don’t know him! If things don’t change I plan to leave him!” Mike immediately remembered Pete’s comment.

Until the wee hours of the morning we talked with this couple. Ralph kept giving excuses for why he didn’t reveal anything about himself. As Mike prayed to himself, the Holy Spirit spoke to him: “Ralph has been lying to you all evening.” Mike, tired and frustrated, stared hard at Ralph and said, “The Holy Spirit just told me that you’ve been lying to us all evening. I’m leaving if you don’t start speaking the truth.”

Breaking into tears, Ralph revealed a secret about his past which he had told no one. He had always feared that if he began to share anything about himself with others, this “dark incident” from his past would come out and people would think less of him. We all sensed that this one thing was destroying his relationships with others. But Ralph took the risk of transparency and opened up to us that night. Karen immediately embraced him warmly, as did we. Over the next few months Ralph’s relationship with Karen and with others changed dramatically for the better. Transparency shared with discretion is a powerful instrument in the Spirit’s hands, and is indispensable in pastoring.

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

No greater purpose can there be for an elder pastoring a

flock than to faithfully represent³2). Paul emphasized for the our Father's love. The central issue of the Bible as a whole, and the Ten Commandments specifically, is God's love toward mankind and man's responsibility to love God and keep His commandments. *"I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20: 5,6).

The Hebrew word for "love" in this passage is *ahav*, a passionate desire to cherish and to be in the beloved's presence. This kind of love holds a tremendous emotional connotation, a devotion which results in obedience.

The same emphasis on *ahav* is found in Deuteronomy 6:5, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* Again the connection is made that loving God necessitates keeping His commandments and teaching them to succeeding generations: *"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up"* (vv. 6,7). The kind of love our Father is calling for can only be obtained through personally repenting and asking Him for the power to love.

The issue of love is reinforced in the New Testament by *agape*, the Greek equivalent of *ahav*. In 1 Corinthians 13 the whole issue of *agape* love is so important that Paul could state that *without it, "I am nothing"* (v.

Galatians, who were besieged by agitators teaching them perversion of the Torah, that, *"In Christ Jesus. . .the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through [agape] love"* (Galatians 5:6).

The issue of *ahav* and *agape* love is the critical character element for leadership of God's people. In Ephesians 5:33 our Lord stipulates, *"Each one of you also must [agape] love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."* God's love is to be physically demonstrated not only to those close to us, but even to our enemies: *"But I tell you who hear me: [Agape] Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you"* (Luke 6:27,28).

A wonderful parable demonstrates the differences between a self-focused attitude and the heart attitude needed by the leaders of God's people today:

"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be

exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

A man who develops a correct heart toward God and his fellow man will have a heart of *ahav* and *agape*. The keeping of the Law (Torah) and the Prophets is based on the issue of love: *"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments"* (Matthew 22:37-40)."

I'd like to make an observation about some of the men whom God is developing for leadership in the faith communities of the Restoration. They are not intellectual thinkers who prize knowledge over wisdom. Daniel foresaw the men who would lead in the Church Jesus is restoring: *"Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time"* (Daniel 11:35).

Some of these men have made grievous mistakes in their lives, but their Lord has enabled them to learn mercy and compassion through their repentance. David understood such men when he wrote, *"If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand"* (Psalm 37:23,24).

Don't judge a man only by his sin, but also by the mercy God imparts when he repents. Our Father's compassion is often sown in the hearts of men who come to the same point as the Prodigal Son, savoring the graciousness of the Father's forgiveness.

Why Do We Use the Word Hebraic?

We're glad you asked. This question comes up frequently. As we were writing *Restoring the Early Church*, we prayed and deliberated for a long time for God to give us a word that would epitomize the message He'd given us to share. The word "Hebraic" has a unique understanding. First, the Father of the Bible is a God of the heart and spirit. He *loves*, dearly and more deeply than any human could fathom. Many Jews missed this key truth about their God. A large number let themselves be sucked into a religion of *correct behavior*. Correct behavior without the right motive is what builds dung heaps in God's Kingdom.

At the time of Jesus there were Jews who understood the centrality of love. These were the ones whom God had kept as a *remnant* (see Rom. 11:5) throughout the generations. When the Messiah came, this remnant clearly understood that obedience to the Law and the Prophets *hung* on the issue of love. Because of love they could pray for their persecutors so that the Word would go forth with greater boldness. (See Acts

4:29.) Love caused them to sell their possessions in order to help others in the "family" (see Acts 2:45). Hebrews 11 is the roll call of those whose "*faith produced the fruit of loving obedience.*"

In this light God established His teachings—the Torah—as a guideline of what the righteous life looked like. He sent his prophets to *prod* the people out of their complacency and paths of disobedience so that they would wholeheartedly love and serve Him.

We want to emphasize that we are *not* espousing a return to Jewish forms or customs. We recognize that there are many today who mistakenly believe that this is what the restoration is about. If, out of your love for God, *He* calls to you to specific observance of certain Jewish forms, then do so in loving-obedience. But keep in mind that practice and form *without love* will gain you nothing. When the Messiah came, the hallowedness of Jewish practices and traditions blinded the religious establishment to the issue of love. Jesus severely chastised these leaders: "*You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.*"

Many Gentile churches have fallen into the same trap through

their own traditions and programs. These appear hallowed but hinder believers from the loving relationship our heavenly Father desires. Paul, whose love caused him to write, "*I resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified,*" warns us today, "*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ*" (Col. 2:16,17). The *reality* of our love is found in a living relationship with Jesus. This is what our Hebraic forefathers understood as they embraced the Messiah. The Hebraic Restoration is one of *obedient love, repentance, and reconciliation*. Won't you join us?

Try the following with your family and faith community:

1. As you study the Bible, develop a personal and/or family *halakhah* for how God's love can grow and mature in your life.
2. Discover how God desires you to pass His love along to your succeeding generations.
3. Discuss with those who are load-bearers with you how each of you can encourage and spur on one another in these vital areas of obedient love, repentance, and reconciliation.

May God bless each of you,
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