

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,

Sue and I have just returned from our four-week, 4600-mile journey. We've had a wonderful opportunity to visit many Native Americans, both during the Many Nations/One Voice Celebration in Calgary and on several reservations during our return trip to Flagstaff. We're very excited to see how open the Native peoples are to the truths of the Hebraic restoration.

Particularly affirming were the Native grandmothers who understand the plight of their people and have seen no hope for the future. Many were openly critical of the false relational divisions created by denominationalism on the rez (reservation). After listening to what we shared and why God sent us, they warmly received us and asked us to return to help their people.

One grandmother in particular stands out. We met Norma Blacksmith, a Lakota, on the Pine Ridge, SD reservation. She had such love for her people and was using *Demolishing Strongholds* to help many become free. Also, each week she goes to the high places using *DS* to bind the spirits that plague the reservation. Because of her efforts we found a great deal of freedom to share on the rez. After spending two days with her and hearing of her loving courage for her people, I said to her, "If Mike Dowgiewicz were

physically born again, he would come back as a Lakota woman named Norma Blacksmith." She was honored by my words and prayed for Sue and me that we would return soon.

The Love in Restoring Dignity

Our desire is that through our endeavors, dignity will be restored to the Native people. The Hebrew term, *Ahavat haBriyot* [ah-hah-vaht' hah-bree-oat'], means giving the love and dignity to which every person is entitled. This is the basis for Jesus's words, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the [Torah] and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12). Tolerance, understanding and compassion are part of the respect each of us desires and are responsible to give. We are all made in God's image and any defaming acts or words are an attack on Him. [More on this later.]

"Turning the hearts of the fathers to the children..."

Beginning with our time in Calgary, the Lord began to show me how He could best use Sue and me in the future. I met with our Board of Directors on the way back and received their permission to pursue the direction God had given me.

Currently, the vast majority of

ministry on the rez is to the youth. Sadly, we encountered nothing being carried on, other than alcohol programs, to restore the men, especially the *older* men, to their rightful places. In the eyes of many Anglo missionaries, Native men are held in incredible disdain. In essence, the Bureau of Indian Affairs began so many decades ago to destroy the Native culture, and the church has been a willing ally.

We have begun to develop specific ways to restore Native men. The biblical foundation is from Malachi, "Turning the hearts of the fathers to the children..." The potential of restoring dignity to the men encourages me a great deal. [Some of you who have been with us since our retreat center days may remember that church leaders asked me in 1986 to involve myself in the restoration of men.] In the intervening years there are two things that have hindered our progress:

- 1) Ministries that draw men away to big "groupie" events but have done little to enable a man through adequate role models to live as a man of God with his family.
- 2) The overwhelming amount of church ministries to youth and singles that by-pass the wisdom of older men, or compen-

Equipping the Church to Go Back for its Future

sate for irresponsible fathers² the Morale Officer. Our ship spent long periods at sea off the coast of Vietnam, and keeping up morale was something I thought I could do. One thing that destroyed morale was false rumors. Whenever I heard about a rumor, I'd follow the trail back to the person who started it. I'd bring him before the Executive Officer who would then deal with the man appropriately. It did not take long for those who started rumors to realize I'd pursue them. All rumors stopped!

By failing to equip men to take their rightful places with "*hearts toward the children*," our land has been smitten with a curse: generations of rebellious youths and adults. Sadly, these methods have been exported to the rez, annihilating whole families.

Fortunately for us, some ministries have seen the fruitlessness of their decades of work on the rez. Hopefully one of these will cooperate with us to see a time when the Native people themselves are ministering to and raising up other Native people. In our travels we have not encountered one ministry that has turned their work over to any Native people. I believe there were several who were affronted by my questions, such as, "After 50 years, why are you Anglos still here in leadership?"

Sue and I ask you to pray with us for God to give us wisdom in rewriting our materials to better suit Native experience. Also, that more Native people might join us to share this message with their own culture. The Lord gave us a visual image as we observed the extensive irrigation canals in Phoenix two months ago: As Sue and I fulfill the Lord's word to "Share this message", we are like the Salt River bringing water to the head of many canals. We are to give the Hebraic truths to those we meet at the head of each canal, but are not to go down the canal. Those who are in relationship downstream are to carry these truths with them.

Iniquity of the mouth— *Lashon hara*

During my first deployment to Vietnam I asked the Executive Officer of our ship to assign me as

the Morale Officer. Our ship spent long periods at sea off the coast of Vietnam, and keeping up morale was something I thought I could do. One thing that destroyed morale was false rumors. Whenever I heard about a rumor, I'd follow the trail back to the person who started it. I'd bring him before the Executive Officer who would then deal with the man appropriately. It did not take long for those who started rumors to realize I'd pursue them. All rumors stopped!

Years later, when I began to read the Bible for the first time, I came across, "*then you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly...*" (Deu. 13:14). I remembered my time as Morale Officer. In my 23+ years of following Christ, I've met only three other men who, when they hear something bad being spoken about another person, inquire and investigate thoroughly.

Lashon hara [lah-shone' hah-rah] literally means "tongue of evil" in Hebrew. It refers to gossip, backbiting, rumor mongering, slander, and other misuses of speech. *Lashon hara* is the opposite of *ahavat haBriyot*, mentioned earlier. The sin of *lashon hara* is weighed equally with the sins of idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder in ancient Jewish texts. In previous newsletters we've shared these definitions:

GOSSIP: Sharing detrimental information about someone with those not part of the problem or the solution.

SLANDER: Telling *part* of the truth, or error, with intent to hurt.

Frequently we find the stronghold of jealousy at the root of *lashon hara*. Symptoms are: spiteful, gossip, slander, betrayal, critical nature, judgmental, suspicious.

The *Lashon hara* of Ephraim

Many years ago the Lord impressed on me to study the tribe of Ephraim. They were lukewarm in keeping God's commands and became experts at *lashon hara*, especially against those who fully obeyed God. [We see this same pattern among many church people today.] The Ephraimites failed to obey God's command: "*Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer, but the Canaanites continued to live there among them*" (Judges 1:29).

As a consequence to their disobedience, the Ephraimites badmouthed those who did obey God. Gideon, after winning the great battle against the Midianites with only 300 men, is met by the Ephraimites: "*Now the Ephraimites...criticized him sharply*" Judges 8:1).

Jephthah, returning from a mighty battle against the Ammonites, was falsely accused by the Ephraimites: "*The men of Ephraim called out their forces, crossed over to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, 'Why did you go to fight the Ammonites without calling us to go with you? We're going to burn down your house over your head'*" (Judges 12:1).

When King Hezekiah wanted to renew the celebration of the Passover, he sent word to all Israel to come and celebrate in Jerusalem: "*The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim... but the people scorned and ridiculed them*" (2Chr. 30:10).

The Psalmist describes the fear which plagues the lukewarm when warfare comes: "*The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle; they did not keep God's*

covenant and refused to live by³ person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (Jam. 3:2,5,6).
They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them” (Psa. 78:9-11).

Hosea goes on to describe the lack of staying power and the half-baked attitude produced by lukewarmness: “What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears” (Hos. 6:4) and, “Ephraim mixes with the nations; Ephraim is a flat cake not turned over” (Hos. 7:8).

Avoiding Lashon hara: The Influence of Wisdom

It may be easier to fly to the moon than to ever fully conquer participation with this sin. Yet, we must, because it is this sin that has produced so many destroyed relationships, sullied so many reputations, and left all of us feeling vulnerable.

Consider your own walk with Jesus: Does your mouth reflect your heart? In your home, is bad-mouthing confronted? Do your ears tolerate bad reports about others?

These are tremendous times of loneliness and isolation among God’s people. Many run to Christian conferences like groupies hoping to fill this void. Confidence in Christian relationships to bear the load with each other is at an all-time low. The evil of the heart-mouth combo has dealt not only faith communities but many families a death blow. The culprit? Your tongue:

“The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole

person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (Jam. 3:2,5,6).

Your tongue often reflects a deeper issue. During your life pilgrimage you have three positions which affect your relationship with others: *influence, authority, or control*:

1). The Bible strongly encourages us that wisdom is the means to influence. All of us should seek this path. “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” (Jam. 3:16).

2). *Authority* comes with positions that have the responsibility to include or exclude, to commend or correct others. Not everyone will have authority over others.

3). *Control* is a desire to have evil power over others. Often, in this culture, control comes by obtaining negative information about another person and using it to manipulate or even destroy him/her. “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (Jam. 3:17).

Exposing Lashon hara

Symptoms of people controlled by *lashon hara*:

- Focus on their own rights
- Wrong expectations about others
- Use people for personal ambitions
- Distrust & apathy toward leadership
- Need for detailed instructions
- Lack of follow-through
- Conflicts in priorities

- Sympathize with and encourage discontent in others
 - Easily take up offenses for others
 - Magnify reports of discontent
 - Create an inability to restore
- [From Institute in Basic Life Principles]

- Are you a wife who calls her mother to belittle and complain about her husband? Sue and I have seen the Christian landscape strewn with divorces that could have been saved if *lashon hara* had ceased. This isn’t a new problem: “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good” (Tit. 2:3).
- Are you in a small group with a ‘seemingly needy couple’? We have encountered married couples who destroy small groups by using the group to air their problems about each other. Neither really wants help. They are trying to recruit people to take sides with them against their spouse. Deal with them as you would a divisive individual: “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him” (Tit. 3:10).
- Are you in a second marriage in which the spouse of the first marriage is negatively brought up?
- Are you a closet psychologist, always robbing people of dignity by inferring motivation? The epitome of control is to imply a motivation without asking the person *why* he/she does something. While speaking at a mission school, an Anglo teacher complained

that the Indians didn't respect the whites because they were never on time. I asked a Native man to come forward to explain his motive. The teacher withdrew his complaint.

- Do you use racial or sexist slurs?
- Are you a meddler where you haven't been invited? Jesus was asked, *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."* Jesus replied, *'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?'"* (Luke 12:13,14). Jesus refused to meddle. Peter warns, *"If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief...or even as a meddler"* (1Pet. 4:15).
- Do you bad-mouth your parents? If you do, you will find it very difficult to relax in relationships, especially with people in authority over you.

Lashon hara(ing) God

God is also an object of the bad-mouthing of His people. Many fail to receive answers to their prayers for several reasons, and as a result begin to speak with doubt about God and His character.

The most common reason for prayers not being answered is unconfessed sin: *"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer"* (Psa. 66:18,19). Second, wrong motive for the prayer: *"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures"* (Jam. 4:3).

We have noticed that some of the worse complainers are peo-

ple who refuse to tithe. God commands all of us: *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it'"* (Mal. 3:10). People who have accepted God's "challenge" are wonderfully blessed. But, like the Jewish people of old, there are those who refuse and use *lashon hara*:

"You have said harsh things against me," says the LORD. 'Yet you ask, "What have we said against you?" 'You have said, "It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?"' (Mal. 3:13,14).

As we travel and meet new people, we find you don't have to be with them long to discern God's blessings on the righteous ones: *"And you will see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not"* (v.18). These are the people with whom Sue and I are most comfortable. Their lives show a genuine interest in giving dignity to others. It's easy to talk "God-talk" with them—you know, the things of the Spirit.

If you seek a life of righteousness and avoid *lashon hara*, you can have confidence approaching our Lord: *"Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: 'Here am I.' If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of*

the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday'" (Isa. 5:9,10).

Our Mode of Native Ministry

Our desire is that we would bring *Ahavat HaBriyot*—love and dignity—to the Native people. We want to respect the "protocols" of each group and cooperate with the older people to affirm their rightful place among their people.

I pray that each of you reading this letter will do all you can to restore the dignity of the oppressed and to guard the dignity of others through avoiding *lashon hara*. I pray that you would have the loving courage to investigate, probe, and expose those who destroy with their mouths.

May each of us use our mouths and lives to glorify the Father through His Son.

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