

Being a Hebrew

In this writing we want to reveal what it means to be a Hebrew. We will look at natural and spiritual truth. Our purpose is to bring much needed revelation on our identity and heritage. As God's people living today we cannot fully comprehend the calling we have unless we know who we are and where Yahweh is actively bringing us. When Paul calls himself a Hebrew of Hebrews he has a dual meaning in mind. We know about what he means in the natural, but miss the deeper meaning.

The word Hebrew is first used to describe Abraham in Genesis 14:13. He is dwelling by the Terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite. He settled there after his separation from Lot. He has an alliance with three Amorite brothers. Word comes of the capture of Lot and his family. Immediately he arms the trained servants born in his house and along with the three Amorite brothers pursues and rescues Lot. On the way back from victory, Melchizedek brings out bread and wine, ministers to Abraham, who then refuses any of the spoil. The brothers who went with him are given their portion and the story ends.

The word Hebrew is related to a verb meaning "cross over" or "pass through". Other meanings are "one from the other side" or "one from beyond." This identifies Abraham as a stranger and sojourner who has come from another land to dwell. His life has identified him as one from another place. A foreigner whose ways, traditions and God are different from the inhabitants of the land. This difference though, does not keep him from seeking strong relationships among those with whom he lives. He lives among the Terebinth trees of Mamre. Other places in scripture identify terebinth trees as a place of pagan worship. The alliance he makes with the Amorite brothers must have been deep and meaningful. The men were willing to risk their lives for Abraham and he for them. The point to be made here is that being identified as a Hebrew didn't mean one who kept to himself or sought separation. Surely Abraham was viewed as unique and even mysterious. Who was this man really? The Amorites liked him but could never really understand him. He lived in the midst of their pagan worship, but remained true and faithful to his God. He entered into strong alliances based on trust and friendship with people who could count on him to keep his word, yet never lost his aura of being

from somewhere beyond. To be a Hebrew means being real in the real world, but having a quality that is not of this world. To move about in the land that God has promised to give you, but not being allowed to find a continual dwelling place there. "Here we have no permanent dwelling place for we look for a city whose builder and maker is God." Abraham's journey into an ever deeper knowledge of the true God was a calling that made his life in the natural something to be admired by others, but not understood. He was one who had crossed over from somewhere else, had passed through realities others had not, and had an other worldly vision of a destiny from beyond.

Let us now move on to Paul. In the third chapter of Philippians, Paul calls himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Literally this means one who is beyond those who are beyond. One who has crossed over from those who have crossed over and passed through those who have passed through. Looking at Chapter Three in this light illuminates the deeper points he is making. He begins in the natural with his heritage as one of God's chosen people, his condition as one of those people, and the confidence he could put in that heritage and condition. These put him squarely in the camp of the Hebrews. He then quickly confesses he has counted all that loss for the Messiah. Then comes a revelation of going beyond. The suffering of the loss of all things and counting them as rubbish that he might gain more of the Messiah. Moving beyond self-righteousness from the law to God's righteousness which comes from faith in the Messiah. "To know the Messiah and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death." In this statement, Paul aligns his life to the working of the Spirit. Suffering, death, and resurrection form the core of relationship knowledge with Yahshua.

The on-going journey toward fullness is now revealed. His hope is an out-resurrection from the dead. The word for this unique resurrection is used only here. The ultimate goal of the journey is moving on beyond the common experience in the camp of believers. His attitude is forgetting what is behind and pressing on to lay hold of that for which Messiah Yahshua has also laid hold of him. "Reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God." To be a Hebrew of Hebrews we must have this sense of call and love for being on the move. No camp will

do. Paul was caught up into the third heaven. He heard and saw many things. Some he could share, others he was forbidden to share. After that life changing experience he was truly one from beyond. Where exactly did he go and can we make a similar journey? The answer is yes! The way has been made through the veil. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we await a Savior who will transform our lowly body to his glorious body." Because we still live in this lowly body a trip into the third heaven in a literal way still awaits our transformation, but in the Spirit we can follow the scriptural pattern and find spiritual realities. There are places we can step into by faith which bring experiences every bit as real as those of Paul. He said he was one born out of due time. His life is an example for those living at the end of the age to follow.

The tabernacle of Moses gives us the clearest pattern of a journey into spiritual places and a way into the deeper knowledge of God. The pattern was given to Moses on the mountain where he also looked into the third heaven. In the tabernacle that was built, God dwelled on the mercy seat in the holy of holies. A priesthood was chosen to approach him in various degrees because at that time not everyone could go all the way in. The Levitical priesthood ministered to the Lord at different levels. Aaron's family was chosen as high priests. Each year on the Day of Atonement, one priest could go through the veil into the holy of holies. He took incense and blood, approached the ark and extended his hand over the ark. He sprinkled the blood with his finger in front of the ark and onto the east side of the mercy seat. This extended finger sprinkling blood on the ark marked the limit of "going on beyond" for the Levitical priesthood in the order of that day.

With the coming of Messiah a new priesthood was instituted. The Melchizedek priesthood is vastly different from the former order. This order is revealed in the book of the Bible called Hebrews. Now when we read this book we can see from a new vantage point. The book of "the ones from beyond" reveals a priesthood and the journey they can make through the earthly realms into heaven itself.

Let us begin this journey with a quick walk through the tabernacle. We will not spend time describing in detail all that can be known and experienced at each stop, but will instead, concentrate on the holy of

holies and beyond...

To be continued.