
☞ Preface ☞

It has never been God’s intention to hide Himself from us. On the contrary, we have been the ones to hide ourselves from Him — a habit we inherited from Adam and Eve. Our determination to hide, however, is no match for God’s ability to seek and find us. When He does draw us from darkness into light, and as we surrender ourselves to His love and grace, the roles of hide and seek are gradually reversed. Instead of God having to seek us, we begin with our whole hearts to seek Him. We have an amazing Savior Who makes the process of getting to know Him life’s most rewarding adventure.

God assists our quest for Him by revealing Himself to us on many levels — the grand as well as the microscopic. The entire creation from the expanse of space to the elegant mathematical balance of a molecule proclaims the wisdom and love of our great Creator. Paul wrote: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”¹ The evidence is apparent to any person with a seeking heart.

Because many remain stubbornly indifferent to nature’s proclamation of a wise and loving Creator, God has provided a more articulate expression of Himself in the form of a witnessing people who demonstrate His presence in their lives. Messiah refers to these godly ones as lights of the world.² But even the most dedicated believers are fallible. As “lights of the world”, God’s people sometimes produce precious little wattage. Therefore God has provided the world with a timeless, supernatural, and infallible witness — His Word, the Bible.

Many inspirational books have been written which help open our understanding to the wonders of God’s Word. But I hope to take the reader a step closer to God’s heart by examining some of the minute, untranslatable features of the Hebrew scriptures. As we take this journey of discovery, we will encounter letters in the Hebrew Bible that are printed oversize or undersize for no apparent reason. We will encounter letters that are printed upside down, broken in half, or suspended in mid-air. We will

¹ Romans 1:20

² Matthew 5:14

discover why nearly every column of a Torah scroll begins with a letter that symbolizes a hook, and why some passages of scripture are printed in such a manner so as to look like a brick wall. These peculiarities, and many more, are found only in the Hebrew scriptures and were validated by Jesus when He said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one *yod* or one *tagin* shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”³ In other words, Jesus was saying that neither the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet (the *yod*), nor the seemingly insignificant decorations on the letters (the *tagin*) are accidental — even the smallest details contain a message. Thus the purpose of this book is twofold: to examine some of the intimate details of the Hebrew scriptures, and to explore some of the spiritual principles which are reflected in these details.

This book is the result of an adventure that began in 1992 when I made my first visit to Israel. I had been a student of the Bible for nearly 25 years, but visiting Israel provided an entirely new perspective on the scriptures. Having grown up in western society, I was prone to view God’s Word through the lens of 20th century western civilization. But visiting Israel changed that forever. As a result of exploring the rugged beauty of the land God gave to His chosen people, my mind was opened to a dimension of His Word that had till then been entirely foreign. Visiting the birthplace of the Bible indelibly impressed upon me that the things of God are Jewish in nature. I learned that if I wanted to embrace God’s Word in its fullness, I must also embrace its Jewishness. I began to study the history of Judaism in order to gain a better understanding of the Jewish roots of my own faith. This study opened my eyes to the differences between the Judaism described in the Torah, and the Judaism practiced by the legalists of Jesus’ day. Moreover, I discovered how very similar Christianity is to biblical Judaism. In fact, in their pure forms they are nearly indistinguishable.

In order to complete my studies I began to learn Hebrew, which opened up a whole new world of insight into the Scriptures and the ways of God. Though I have much to learn about this fascinating language, my efforts thus far have been richly rewarded. One rabbi has said that studying the Bible by means of a translation is like kissing a woman through a veil. Through the following pages I hope to lift the veil a little so that the hidden beauty of God’s Word may to some degree be perceived by the reader, for the ruggedness and stark beauty of the land of Israel are reflected in the sounds, textures, and rhythms of the Hebrew language. But more importantly, many spiritual insights are contained in the shapes and

³ Matthew 5:18

arrangements of the Hebrew letters. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said it best when he wrote, “It is not enough to know how to translate Hebrew into English; it is not enough to have met a word in the dictionary and to have experienced unpleasant adventures with it in the study of grammar. A word has a soul, and we must learn how to attain insight into its life.”⁴

I suggest that you read this book slowly and meditatively so that you may not only grasp the truths set forth, but also that you may do so despite the deficiencies of the author. This book also requires you to think open-mindedly about concepts and insights which are “strong meat”⁵ and need to be chewed carefully. One will certainly find things which raise a question or perhaps an objection. In such cases just press on to pursue God through the revelation He has given us of Himself through His holy Word. My prayer is that of Paul’s, that “...the God of our Lord Yeshua HaMashiach, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.”⁶ With God’s help we will gain insight into the lessons contained in the Hebrew letters as we study the Hebrew scriptures ... in His Own words.

⁴ *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, p116, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996.

⁵ Hebrews 5:14

⁶ Ephesians 1:17