



# And I Pleaded

va-etHanan !N:x.t.a.w"

## Reflections on Rabbinic Thought Regarding the Book of Deuteronomy

By Yoni Gerrish

This July/August in synagogues around the world, the weekly Torah reading focuses on the book of Deuteronomy, *dvarim*, Hebrew for 'words', containing discourses of exhortation and reproof that Moses spoke to the people of Israel while beyond the Jordan River. In the section entitled *va-etHanan* (Deut. 3:23-7:11), Moses entreats God to let him go over to touch "the good land beyond the Jordan" (3:25).

Moses begins his prayer with an exhortation of God, thanking him for showing "greatness" and "mighty acts" to the people of Israel, and afterwards makes his personal petition.

According to Rashi, a prominent 11<sup>th</sup> century French rabbi, Moses did not base his request to touch the Holy Land on his life-long service of Israel, but rather on God's grace, or *chen*. In the opinion of one modern rabbi, Abraham Kook (1865-1935), prayers for mercy will not change the will of God:

*One might think that prayer is some sort of magic loophole, built into the framework of divine decrees. As if by pleading our case, we could cause God to change His mind! This idea - that it is possible to modify the Will of God - has no substance. Rather, we should view prayer as a wonderful gift, which enables the individual who prays to uplift and perfect his soul. Prayer does not effect a change in the world around us. Prayer effects a change in us.*

Not everyone will fully agree with Rabbi Kook's view on prayer, yet the fact remains, Moses mercy-laden request is rejected by God. How does Moses respond? He gracefully acquiesces. In effect, the prayer worked to change his heart about the matter, and he returned his energies to the tasks of instructing the people about their future responsibilities across the Jordan.

## A Hebrew word to think about

The root of *va-etHanan* 'and I begged/pleaded' is *Hanan*, the same root as in the word *Hen*, 'grace or favor'. It is also the basis for a number of popular Hebrew personal names during the Second Temple period and today. In the New Testament, there are some well-known figures who had *Hanan*-based names such as John (*YoHanan*) the Baptist, Ananias (*Hananiah*) the high priest, Ananias (*Hananiah*) in Damascus (Acts 9) and others (e.g. Acts 5).

From a Dead Sea Scroll fragment unearthed in cave 4 at Qumran, we read in Hebrew about several sect members facing disciplinary action:

*YoHanan ben [sir name missing]... he has a quick temper, an evil eye and is vain/glorious... Hananiyah Nuthus...because he turned aside from the community... Hananiyah ben Simon...because he loves the good life (4Q 477).*

Three out of the four names mentioned in this above Qumran text are variations of the *Hanan* root.

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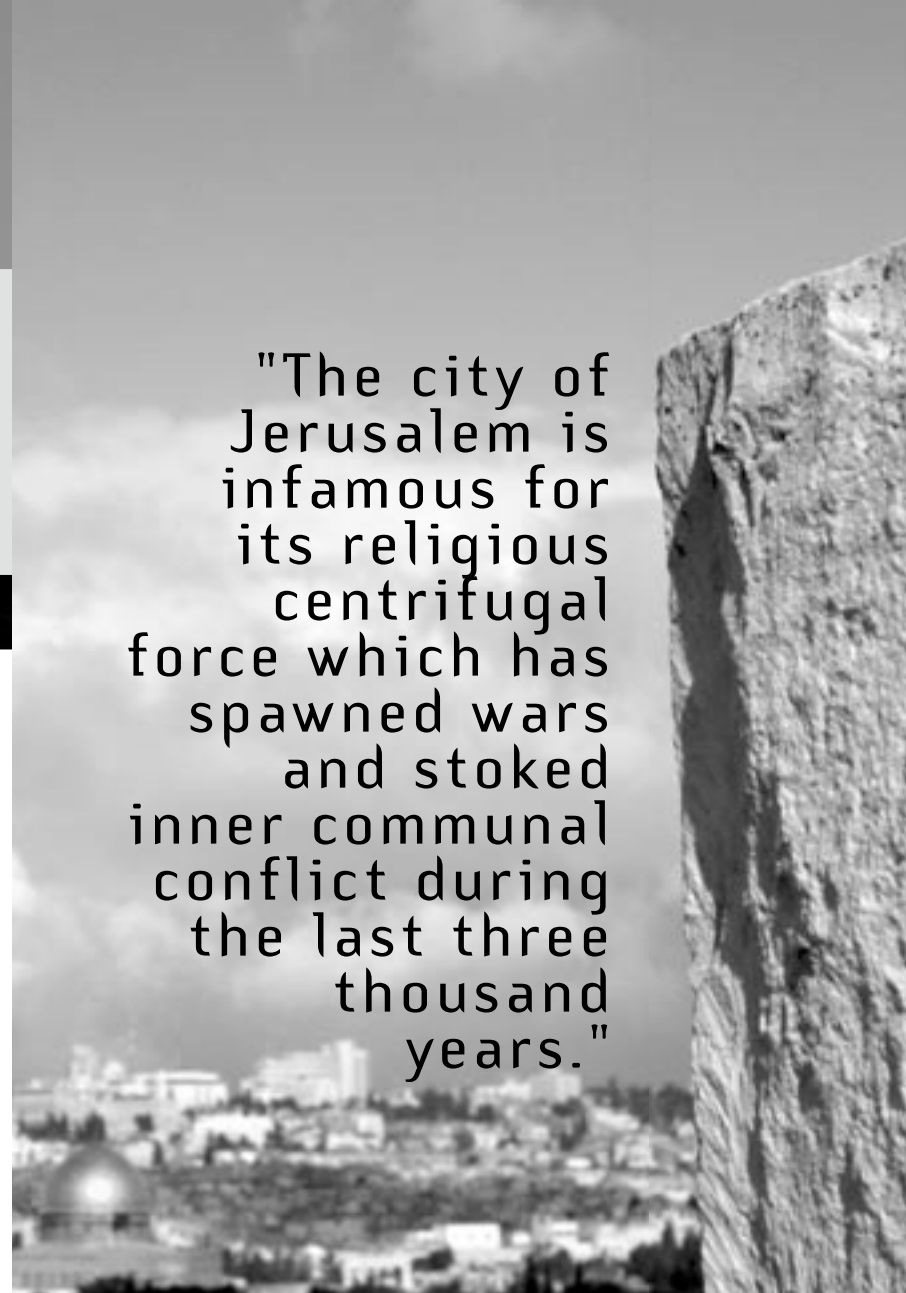
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*"Suffering Messiahs" continued*

Since the JCF staff were notified of this elderly couple's dire straits, we have been working to improve their situation. Regular house calls have been made to ensure the access of doctors, nurses, medical checkups, and daily needs. In spite of their horrendous living conditions, every doctor and nurse that has stepped into the stench of their poverty, has treated Shlomo and Hannah with the utmost respect.

Finding suitable housing was difficult due to the couple's combined disabilities. Having searched the city for an appropriate place, Jerusalem Cornerstone moved Shlomo and Hannah into a lovely two bedroom, ground floor apartment on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Their newly renovated apartment is in the neighborhood of a JCF staff member who will check on them regularly. Tall trees, sprawling vines and beautiful flowers surround their new residence.

A lovely quilt was presented to Shlomo and Hannah as a housewarming gift. This quilt was made by the Pontier family of Oregon, being moved to compassion after hearing Shlomo and Hannah's story. This June Shlomo turned 78, and Hannah 88, and what a celebration it was in the comforts of their new home. We at Jerusalem Cornerstone will continue to seek out and aid those who have been forgotten and discarded whether neighbors, strangers, or crippled messiahs.



"The city of Jerusalem is infamous for its religious centrifugal force which has spawned wars and stoked inner communal conflict during the last three thousand years."



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אבן פינה



## Caring for One of Jerusalem's Suffering Messiahs

By Liz Kopp

Jerusalem Comerstone reported in its January/February 2004 article, "Slipping Through the Cracks," about a handicapped elderly couple, Shlomo and Hannah which had been found living in unbelievable squalor due to their deteriorating health and neglect. Liz Kopp continues their story and informs us of the help that JCF has brought into their lives.

The city of Jerusalem is infamous for its religious centrifugal force which has spawned wars and stoked inner communal conflict during the last three thousand years. The Holy City has even mutated its own home-grown religious disease that psychiatrists have dubbed, "*Jerusalem Syndrome*." This clinical psychiatric diagnosis involves a temporary state of sudden and intense religious delusion brought on while visiting or living in Jerusalem. Those who suffer from Jerusalem Syndrome, both Jews and Christians, are usually tourists whose clinical symptoms begin with an indistinct yet intense excitement. They typically adopt biblical or otherwise eccentric clothing, sometimes merging their identity with that of a character from the Bible. Not surprisingly, "the Messiah" is a popular choice of character for those suffering from Jerusalem Syndrome.

Shlomo has suffered from Jerusalem Syndrome for many years, writing



and presenting himself as the Messiah more than thirty years ago. As his health has declined with the onset of age, he has been forced to grapple with his messianic inadequacies. Now, rather than being the Messiah, he believes his "body" to be that of Bathsheba. With Shlomo no longer able to walk—not to mention mentally debilitated—and Hannah, his faithful wife, nearly deaf and blind, Jerusalem Cornerstone extended a hand of compassion in this messiah's darkest hours.

There is a happy ending to Shlomo and Hannah's story, thanks to a number of caring people who helped turn a nightmare into a home-sweet-home. It took four strong volunteers to lift Shlomo from the garbage heap that had become his home into the JCF van that moved him to the comforts that every senior citizen deserves.

*-continued on back*



*In the last JCF newsletter (May-June 2004), Francois and Ronel Smit reported on their initial visit with terrorist victim, Chan Hua. In this article, the Smits tell Chan's story beginning in China, coming to Israel for work, finding God, overcoming the horror of a bus bombing, and witnessing the salvation of his sister.*

# Chan's Story

## Beauty from Terrorism's Ashes

By Ronel and Francois Smit

**JCF:** If Nazism grew out of a revival of paganism, then how much more diligent and prayerful should we be in these "neo-pagan" times. While sensitive to the diminishing effect of "crying wolf" too often, I believe there is cause to be desperately concerned about today's society. The separation and dichotomy of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world are becoming more distinct by the hour. The Judeo-Christian heritage that many of us have been used to, or immune to, is fast becoming a thing of the past.

During my trip to the U.S. this past June, I observed that secular culture is affecting the church rather than the opposite. While there are some shining examples of God's rule breaking through the darkness, I generally witnessed the contrary. One example is an apparent lack of respect for anything. On a Howard Stern TV show, people with Down's syndrome were paraded before the audience and made fun of, ridiculed with raucous laughter. To think that anyone could find amusement or entertainment in such sport is beyond belief. Yet many are slowly becoming desensitized to similar situations that are being served up to us as "humor."

Another very disturbing phenomenon in our world of late is the sawing off of the head of Nicholas Berg and now the copy-cat sadistic behavior that has followed. What started as a radical Islamist act of inhumanity toward a defenseless victim is quickly spreading. The spirit of the god Molech is active and has merely taken on a different religious garb. This ancient insatiable demon's glorification of death continues to take the lives of our young.

Is there not a cause to rally to? Who will raise a standard for war? Prayer is a key battlefield of our faith. God's Kingdom is alive—it is breaking out of the four walls of the church like a stirring giant. We must see the spiritual dimension in the events of our world and realize that our problems are not just socioeconomic. We must awake and take responsibility for our families, our schools, our neighborhoods, our towns, our cities, and our countries. It only takes a candle to bring light into the present darkness.

*Charles Kopp-Chairman*

We were waiting for him in front of 25 Shivtei Israel Street, as we had arranged. It was already dark. We saw an Asian-looking man approaching on the opposite side of

the street but immediately concluded that this could not be him, since Chan's legs were badly injured and this man was walking effortlessly. To our surprise, he called out to us. It was him, walking without the crutches we last saw him on, and without even a limp! The evening sure had an exciting start. As we walked to the apartment where he currently house-sits, he told us more about himself.

Chan used to work in the fishing industry in China until economic hardships caused him to lose his job. With a wife and two young children that he had to support, as well as elderly parents in poor health, he had to find another source

of income. At that point, he started looking for opportunities outside of China.

He first arrived in Israel in 1998. While working at a restaurant, there was an accidental gas explosion, and a number of his friends were injured. Remarkably, he wasn't hurt. Looking back, he recognizes this as a sure sign of the Lord's hand upon his life. His Savior had plans for him. In 1999, he came to faith in Jesus as his Redeemer, and became actively involved in the Jerusalem Chinese Congregation.

Five years later, Chan was riding on bus number 19 in the heart of Jerusalem's Rechavia neighborhood, when a suicide bomber detonated himself, annihilating Chan's bus. This bombing, last January 29<sup>th</sup>, was the same terrorist attack in which JCF's Adam Focht administered first aid as an ambulance driver (reported on in March/April 2004 newsletter). Chan was seriously injured in the attack—he lost his right eye, needed reconstructive surgery to his nose, ears and teeth, had serious leg injuries and suffered severe burn wounds on his hands.

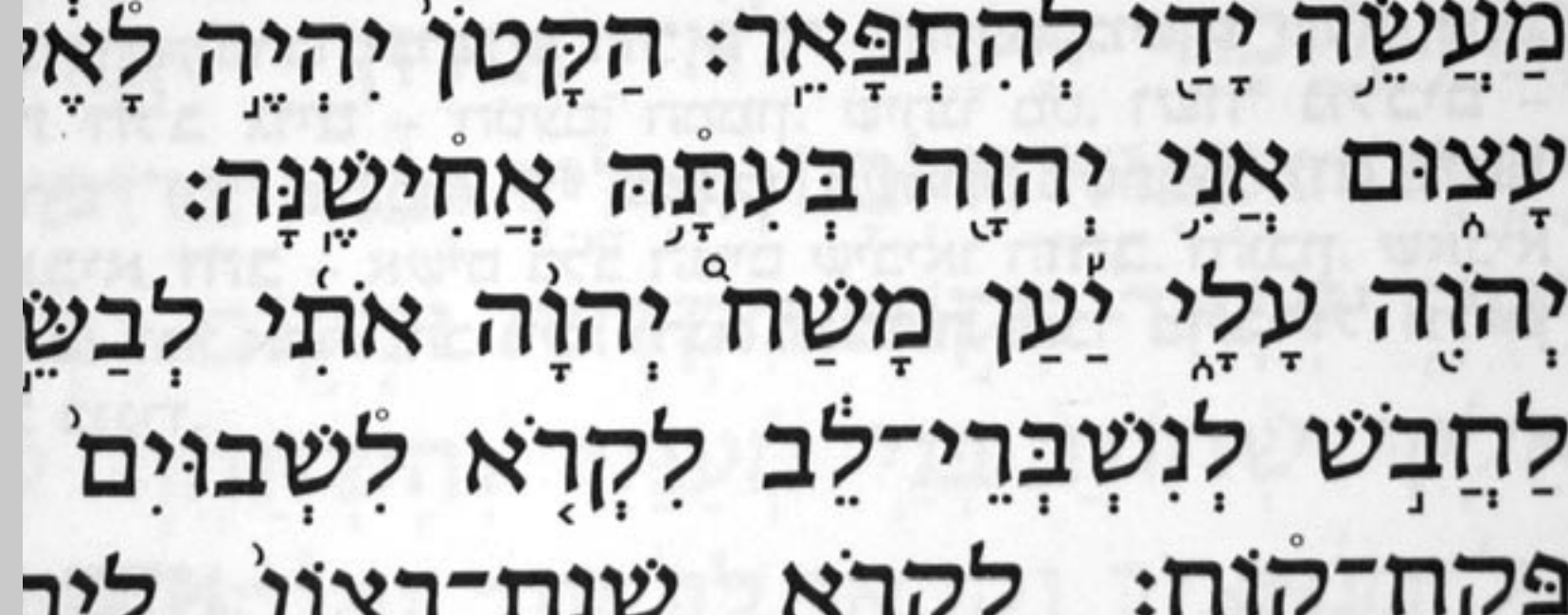
He recalled the event: "I remember the terrible noise. And then I remember experiencing the overwhelming presence

of Jesus. I wasn't alone! He filled me with peace from that very first moment, a peace so strong that there was no place for fear. It was a peace that stayed with me throughout the weeks and months of treatment, surgery and rehabilitation." With this same peace still on his face, he told us about the endless opportunities he had to share his faith with nursing staff, journalists, and a variety of other people crossing his path.

We made a comment on how much his walking had improved since our last visit. "Yes," he replied, "I am exercising a lot. I walk at least an hour every day. But I am recovering much quicker than anyone expected. I can only praise the Lord for His help!" He now has only one month of active rehabilitation left, though he still has to wear pressure garments for the recovery of skin on his burnt hands, and is still receiving dental treatment.

During our first meeting with Chan at the hospital two months ago, we had also met his sister. She had left her job in China to come and assist him in the process of rehabilitation – a prerequisite for the hospital to discharge him. She did not then know the Lord, and we had previously prayed with him for her salvation. As he served us coffee, we asked how she was doing now. She was visiting the Chinese congregation with him, since this was the only opportunity she had to meet other Chinese. It was with excitement in his voice and a deep joy in his eyes that he shared with us how these congregational meetings, along with God's provision for him and his speedy recovery, had brought her to the realization that there really is a God—a God that loves her so much that He not only sent His Son to die for her brother's wounds, but also for her own sin and imperfections. She has since been baptized in the Chinese congregation.

As we came home much later that evening, we allowed our thoughts to reflect on the day. We serve a God who can bring forth good from evil; who can create beauty from ashes; who doesn't hesitate to bring a young woman all the way from China under the weariest of circumstances to give her life in abundance. What an awesome God we serve!



# Biblical Hebrew Revolution

By Gary Alley

They have come from all over the world—South Africa, Spain, Philippines, England, Switzerland, China, Korea, Germany, Finland, the United States, and even Bermuda. And they are all here for one thing, to read the Bible in its original language—Hebrew.

This summer, Jerusalem Cornerstone's Randall Buth has been leading a team of six biblical Hebrew instructors, Gary and Sharon Alley, Rachel Buth, Aaron Hornkohl, and Brian Kvasnica which are guiding around 40 students into the world of the Bible. During June/July, three biblical Hebrew classes—two beginning and one advanced—are being conducted at Yad HaShmonah, a retreat center in the Judean hills outside of Jerusalem. This is the 7th summer that Dr. Buth has taught biblical Hebrew in Israel through his galvanizing living language methods.

This is not your ordinary dead language class. Teachers do not sit and read repetitiously while their students are dreamily gazing out of a window. Instead, teachers are barking commands in biblical Hebrew as students jump, stand, and sit, open and close windows/doors, pour and spill water, dance and sing, touch their head and feet, and battle in war gear. Students are hearing the language from the very first hour, enacting and internalizing it as a child would.

The students for this summer's course come from varying backgrounds—pastors, Bible translators, teachers, university/college students, housewives, and executives.

Jonah Mancini, 24, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, heard about this unique program when Dr. Buth spoke in his area last November. Though Mancini has a prior degree in Computer Science, he decided to begin an MA degree in Archaeology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School located outside of Chicago. He came to study biblical Hebrew in Israel because he realizes that learning

the language is foundational for studying the Scriptures and a necessity for biblical archaeology. Mancini says that studying biblical Hebrew in the Land of Israel is doubly advantageous, as students not only hear Israel's speaking Hebrew, but can also contextualize the ancient language within its landscape.

Mancini has also enjoyed class times in Yad HaShmonah's biblical garden, where students can experience biblical trees like the fig, olive, pomegranate and date palm. Ancient reconstructed biblical structures, like a watchtower, winepress, threshing floor, tomb, and olive press, aid the students in visualizing and interacting with the biblical, hebraic world.

The beginning class will complete the book of Jonah by the end of the intensive six week course. The three-week, advanced class will have read through more than 30 chapters of the Hebrew Bible, including writings and inscriptions from Qumran, Lachish, and Hezekiah's tunnel.

For Connie Chang\*, 31, a Chinese Bible translator, this biblical Hebrew course will be crucial for her future work as a translation consultant. Wycliffe Bible Translators and the United Bible Societies are in desperate need of translation workers with a keen understanding of the original biblical languages. Unfortunately, even in our advancing and educated globe, many foreign Bibles are being translated, not from the source languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, but from English, French, Spanish or other mainstream language versions. Chang notes that for Bible translation work, it is vital to know the language, the people, the culture, and the sites of the biblical world.

*\*pseudonym*