



Eye For an Eye

By GARY ALLEY

This past month, on May 2nd, the world woke up to the news that Osama bin Laden, founder and leader of the terrorist organization, al-Qaida, enabler and financier of countless murders, most notably the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 on New York and Washington D.C., was killed by American special forces in a residential compound, outside of Pakistan's capital. When President Barack Obama announced bin Laden's death, he invoked the word "justice" five times during his speech—"we can say to those families who have lost loved ones to al-Qaeda's terror: Justice has been done."

Justice can be summed up in the well-known biblical verse of retribution, "*if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise* (Ex 21:23-25)." Within the Old Testament tradition, that command—"an eye for an eye" was used to punish the actual criminal while protecting innocent family members related to the guilty party. "An eye for an eye" was to limit damages to the guilty and thereby cease cyclical, highly subjective grudge and vengeance.

We know in the time of Jesus, Jewish legal tradition was already beginning to interpret "eye for an eye" as financially compensating someone for the value of their lost eye. This tradition is followed today in our modern judicial system which financially compensates an injured plaintiff according to their suffering and loss.

Jesus also weighed in on this law of retribution: "*You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well* (Mt 5:38-40)." Here, Jesus is not promoting pacifism, nor is he telling us not to defend ourselves when attacked. Rather, he is expanding on the rule of retaliation but from an unexpected perspective—how are we to respond to someone who feels *we have wronged them*? While "eye for an eye" says we need only compensate for the harm we've done, Jesus commands us to go farther. Did I hit someone? So if they hit me back, let me doubly compensate them, by offering my other cheek as well. Did I cause someone to lose their shirt? Let me give them both a shirt *and* a coat for the suffering I caused them.

Jesus' interpretation does not nullify this practical law of justice and compensation, rather, he prods us first toward reconciliation. Likewise, may our desire for justice ultimately focus on restoring relationships, when possible, rather than destroying them.

JCF STUDY TOURS

Masada, the Zealots' Last Stand

Join Yoni Gerrish and the JCF staff on a tour in 2011 that investigates "The Backgrounds of Jesus' World". See JCFtours.com for details

Masada is one of the most visceral, ironic, and symbolic places in all of Israel. Designed by King Herod as an impregnable sustainable palace-fortress, Masada towers over the unforgiving arid environs of the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. While average annual rainfall for the Dead Sea region is 2-3 inches, Herod dug out 12 massive cisterns and a network of intricate channels to collect and store up to 40,000 cubic meters of water. But instead of Herod, this citadel will always be synonymous with protecting his enemies—subversive Jewish extremists. It was at Masada in A.D. 73 that these Jewish rebels made a final stand against a Roman legion that sieged their stronghold and constructed a 375 ft siege ramp that guaranteed Roman victory. According to Josephus, imperial triumph though was muted the next day when Roman forces entered their enemy's lair, discovering a mass suicide of Masada's 960 inhabitants who refused a life of slavery and submission. Thus began the legend of Masada.



BIBLICAL PEARL: *Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Evangelicals in the 21st Century*

By GARY ALLEY

In March, a new book by Rob Bell, pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, took the Evangelical world by storm. Even before Bell's book, *Love Wins*, was released, some Evangelical leaders were quick to give their opinions about its theological deficiencies, specifically Bell's allusions to universalism, or ultimate reconciliation between God and all of humanity.

Bell's book insists that God's love cannot be denied, hence the title *Love Wins*. While Bell can be vague with his theological specifics, he understands God's core character as "good" not desiring to watch billions burn in Hell. Yes, he says, we have free choice in the matter, but eventually, in the afterlife, many, most, or even all of humanity will come around to seeing things God's way.

Of course, Bell's short treatise, has spawned very pertinent responses. While good is one aspect of God's character, what about the holiness and justice of God that cannot condone sin? What is the point of missions and sharing our faith if this life is not our sole chance at salvation?

If anything, *Love Wins* is a wake up call to the Evangelical community to dive into the Scriptures and understand why we believe what we believe. Too often, the church crowd can accept what is preached from the pulpit without verifying the source. We also need to be reminded that Scripture is not always black and white, while our opinions and interpretations unfortunately are.

Obviously, there must be an appropriate response to a teaching that may compromise the Gospel, but the Evangelical community should be mature enough and wise enough to realize the world is watching how we debate and even disagree among ourselves. One day in the afterlife, we may be surprised to discover that unbelievers were converted to the Gospel not always by what we said but because of the manner in which we treated each other.



CHARITY REPORT: *Your Gifts Helped these Individuals and Families during May*

Wilma and Issa are a Christian Palestinian couple living in Jericho with young children. In the past, JCF has been able to help with various medical bills. Their eldest daughter, who is 10 years old, underwent surgery on her eye several years ago following a car accident, but it seems her eyesight is deteriorating quickly and she will need much more treatment, which the family cannot afford. Also, Christians in the Palestinian territories desiring to send their children to non-government, and therefore non-Islamic schools, must pay high tuition fees at the local Christian private schools. JCF provided funds to help the family register the children for school this coming fall.

Theresa and Assaf are an Ethiopian couple with a newborn baby girl. Though Assaf works cleaning homes, they still struggle financially. These funds helped purchase baby formula and diapers.

Rauf Family are Palestinian Christians from near Bethlehem. Neither one of the parents are able to work due to severe medical conditions. The family is currently living rent-free in a home belonging to a relative of theirs, but since the house is located in a Hamas-controlled neighborhood, the Rauf family has endured

much harassment on account of their being Christian. Moving out, however, is a financial impossibility for them. As a result of their medical problems and expenditures, the family is unable to pay for their basic food needs. They are always behind in paying the children's (private Christian) school fees since they must first collect what money they can from various relatives and friends. With these funds, JCF is helping this family register their children for the fall semester.

Benjamin is an Ethiopian believer. He is married and has one young boy. Benjamin is currently unemployed and his wife works cleaning homes. They have no immediate family in Israel and are really struggling to get by.

Sarid Family was a part of the SLA (South Lebanese Army) that allied with Israel against the PLO and Hezbollah before Israel's evacuation of Lebanon in May, 2000. JCF has helped different SLA families over the past decade as they have struggled to survive in a new country, culture, and language. This past month, JCF helped fund the Sarids' attendance at a reunion of former SLA families. In addition, the family was able to use the leftover money to buy some basic necessities.

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OUR PROGRAMS

Biblical Language Center (BLC) teaches intensive biblical Greek and Hebrew courses using a unique immersion method that makes learning fun, effective, and for everyone.

Biblical Study Tours (BST) brings the Bible to life through in-depth thematic trips that are customized to suit the specific needs of groups for any size and age.

Israel Relief (IR) provides financial assistance for families and individuals with urgent needs from all areas of the country. Ongoing funds are needed for food and clothing vouchers, housewares, emergency medical, dental, and general aid.

Educational Fund (EF) assists a number of needy students and individuals hoping to obtain degrees and skills that will enable them to rise above their societal limitations.

Children's Fund (CF) helps children in orphanages, post-orphanage situations, and kids handicapped by political and social conflicts. Ongoing funds are needed for school supplies, holiday gifts, and general aid.

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Randall and Margret Buth are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary with a reception at the Narkis Street Congregation, Jerusalem on June 6th. The Buths began visiting Israel in 1974 and have lived here since 1996.

PRAYER REQUESTS and PRAISE REPORTS

Yoni Gerrish and Family are having to find another apartment to rent as their landlord has decided to sell their current residence.

Randall Buth and the *Biblical Language Center* will be leading their 14th annual Summer Biblical Hebrew Session in Israel (June 19-July 29). Afterwards, Randall and other staff will fly to Fresno, CA to lead a Fluency Workshop for Koine Greek Instructors (Aug 3-11).

Gary, Sharon, and Sa'ar Alley will be traveling through the United States visiting friends and family (June 13-Sept 22).

Dania Minor and Family are relocating to Nairobi, Kenya this summer as her husband, Wes, will begin working for the administration of Rosslyn Academy.

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