

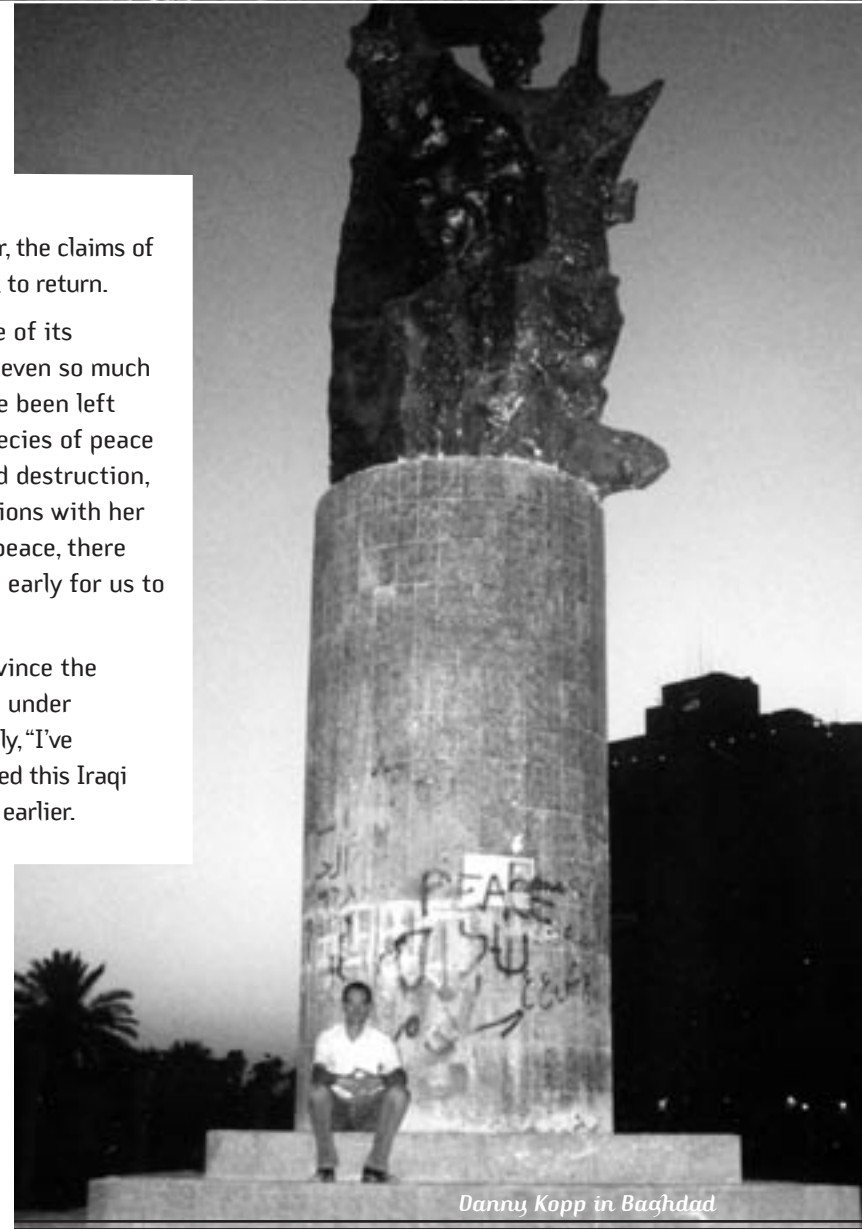
-“Shalom” continued

restoring trust and building peace, not just a strategy for war. And yet I still have a slew of prophetic emails from Christian friends prognosticating the arrival of Armageddon. Many believed Iraq would attack Israel ushering in a final global conflagration. The Coalition’s convincing battlefield success brought a short lull in the barrage of doomsday emails. However, the claims of divine insight into the exact unfolding of future events were quick to return.

Make no mistake, prophecy is real. Living in Jerusalem, evidence of its fulfillment is on every corner, both ancient and modern. It isn’t even so much that some prophecies of war have been wrong, but that we have been left unprepared for opportunities of peace, and indeed, some prophecies of peace have slipped us by. Somehow, despite living in an era of war and destruction, Isaiah was able to write about Israel conducting peaceful relations with her age old enemies Egypt and Assyria (19:18-25). Whether war or peace, there should remain one constant – like ancient Israel, it is never too early for us to reach out with God’s love, peace and message of reconciliation.

I couldn’t help but think of Isaiah while Rani was trying to convince the receptionist at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad to write “Israeli” under “nationality” when registering for a room. He muttered repeatedly, “I’ve never done this before,” his hand visibly shaking. Rani gently coached this Iraqi receptionist through what would have cost him his life just weeks earlier.

Just outside the window of our hotel room was the famous square where Saddam Husein’s statue was toppled and crushed. Gazing at the sight, we were overcome by a familiar mischievous spirit and decided to vandalize the pillar on which the statue once stood. We hurried to buy some spray paint before sundown and curfew, and while I was still debating with what words to we should further deface this monument, Rani, it turns out, had already beat me to it by spraying, “*Shalom, Salaam, Peace.*”



Danny Kopp in Baghdad



“*Shalom!*” by Danny Kopp

Being greeted in Hebrew was the last thing we expected at passport control on the Iraq-Jordan border. Considering that Rani was the first Israeli in history to use his Israeli passport to enter Iraq – previously Israel’s most bitter enemy – we had prepared ourselves for any outcome. One border guard took a look at Rani’s documents, and not being able to read the English very well exclaimed, “Welcome, India!” At each of a series of checkpoints, the greeting was slightly different. Another asked as to our nationalities and simply laughed out loud, thinking we were joking when we told him, American and Israeli.

Rani, a Muslim Palestinian Israeli citizen and I, a Jerusalem-born son of an American Pastor, have been unlikely friends since kindergarten. Our strongest commonality growing up was being able to talk in Hebrew behind the backs of the largely international body of students who couldn’t understand the language. As adolescents we also shared mutual messed-up identities along with having an overdeveloped taste for adventure.

The war in Iraq is officially over, yet countless Iraqis and a soldier a day are dying in this noble effort to win the peace. We found the overwhelming majority of Baghdadis relieved and thankful that their oppressor Saddam Husein was now gone, but equally perplexed that a military as decisive and efficient as that of the US should flounder over mere problems of looting and electricity shortages. The Coalition Forces finally seem to be aware of the grave importance of developing a plan for



JCF:

“*Cast your bread on many waters, for you will find it after many days.*” Eccl. 11:1

“Charles! This is Sa’ad Othman calling you from Mosul!” I nearly fell over when I heard the voice of my old Palestinian friend Sa’ad calling from Iraq. He called to tell me that he is now serving as the linguist and cultural/political advisor for Brig. Gen. Frank Helmick who is second-in-command of the Army’s 101st Airborne Division responsible for the security and reconstruction of the northern sector of Iraq. With their headquarters in Mosul, the 101st Airborne, known as the “Screaming Eagles,” has 16,000 to 20,000 personnel in Iraq.

In our conversation, he shared with me that in just a few short months he has been able to witness the U.S. military building residences, opening schools, renovating hospitals and clinics, constructing sewage disposal centers, repairing phone lines, setting up athletic programs for youth and providing logistical support and security for the World Food Program’s distributions.

Sa’ad grew up in a Muslim Palestinian home, but having lost his father at an early age he found much of his guidance in a Mennonite boarding school. It was here on the basketball court at Hope School in Beit Jala that we first met in 1972. Although Sa’ad was only 16, he was already over 6 feet tall and making some pretty mean slam dunks, so it didn’t take long for him to pass me in height and in moves. Nevertheless he was always like a younger brother to me and it was as a brother that I had the privilege to lead him to the waters of baptism. Little did I know how God’s hand was on Sa’ad’s life in preparing him to be a bridge between the worlds that meet today in Mosul.

As we go on to affect the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ we need to remember that, “*One should never despise the day of small beginnings.*”

Zech. 4:10

Charles Kopp

Dr. Randall Butth will be visiting these cities in the U.S. during the Fall. For more specific locations and times in an area near you, please contact BSI@jerusalemcornerstone.org

Sept. 26-Oct. 18 – Michigan, Indiana, Illinois
 Oct. 19-Nov. 1 – California
 Nov. 2-9 – Tulsa, Oklahoma
 Nov. 10-13 – New Mexico
 Nov. 19-25 – Atlanta, Georgia
 Nov. 26-Dec. 2 – Florida

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Are We Being Rooted Or Uprooted?

by Jim Gerrish

Over the last few decades there has been a growing emphasis placed on the so-called “Jewish roots” of our Christian faith. This is generally a valid endeavor, and through it many followers of Jesus have been blessed and strengthened. They have rediscovered the passage in Romans 11:17-21, which says that Christianity does not stand on its own, but has been “grafted” into the Jewish olive tree. The Church is nourished by the sap of its Jewish root flowing through the tree and into its branches. Therefore one cannot ignore Christianity’s extremely close connection with both Judaism and Israel.

As always, with any new revelation from the God’s Word, there are abuses of the truth and even heresies. Heresy is quite often just a truth taken to extreme without being balanced by other biblical truths. Some sum up heresy like this: “If the devil can’t stop us, he will take us too far.” (See Ecclesiastes 7:14, “The man of God avoids all extremes.” NIV). While it is commendable and biblical to pursue our Hebrew connections, we must not look to Israel alone for our roots.

Messiah Is The Root

The Roots Movement, as some have called it, may be an erroneous designation anyway. In all four instances of the word “root” in Romans 11, the noun is used in the singular. In addition, the use of “root” in Romans 15:12 is also in the singular and speaks of the Messiah. Thus the movement could more properly be called the Root Movement, because there is only one root, the Messiah.

Scripture makes it plain in other places that Messiah alone is the root of the tree. In Revelation 22:16, the risen Lord sends this urgent message to His people: “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I AM THE ROOT and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” [emphasis mine]. In Isaiah 11:10 we read, “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”

We should notice in this last passage that “...the Gentiles shall seek Him.” Isaiah portrays the Messiah of Israel as having two distinct jobs. In the Servant Passages Isaiah 41-

61, the work of the Servant is clearly spelled out. In Isaiah 49:6, God says: “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.” This is an astounding passage. It makes clear that the Messiah of Israel not only re-gathers and restores the people of Israel, but He brings light and salvation to the Gentiles as well.

Thus, the Messiah of Israel is in charge of the whole restoration program. He is the life of the land of Israel. He is its resurrection. He is the one restoring the land of Israel (Is. 49:8). The whole land is referred to as “Immanuel’s land” (Is. 8:8). He is busy planting trees, building cities and making the desert bloom (Is. 49:8-9). He is re-gathering Israel from all the nations and bringing them back to their land. Also as a part of His job, He is giving light to the Gentiles. It is unfortunate but true that the Church has not understood the work of the Servant Messiah. We have managed to hinder His work for many centuries.

All this makes it plain to us Gentiles that the Messiah is the one we are to seek. We must not let our relationship with Israel distract us from our relationship with Messiah, our Root. In Acts 28:20, Paul makes it clear that the Messiah is the hope of Israel. We should not quickly cast away this hope.

Abusing The Tree

While it is praiseworthy for Christians to better understand their Hebrew heritage, it is important that this foundation not be abused. Already there are numerous Gentile believers who are rushing to become Jews, or rather pseudo-Jews. Some Gentile Christians may be on the verge of idolatry concerning this. There are some who are leaving the Christian walk and adopting Judaism in matters of worship, food, attire, to name a few. These traditions have become an end, even a god to them.

Knowledge of the Jewish people is certainly important. We encourage Christians everywhere to love and appreciate the Jewish people, but when Gentile Christians attempt to become Jews, they lose their identity in Christ and turn loose of the Head; they hinder the final outworking of God’s plan

(Eph. 2:15-16). Paul puts it bluntly in Galatians 5:4: “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

Since we are once more facing some of the difficult problems of relationships that were dealt with in the first-century Church, it might be good for us to re-read the book of Galatians. In this book there are clear principles laid down that will guide us in our relationships with Judaism. We certainly need to balance these newly discovered doctrines with other teachings in the Bible.

We might ask ourselves the question, “Are we talking more about Israel than we are about God?” People tend to talk about their gods. Some are on the verge of idolatry concerning modern day Israel. We must remember that the Lord is a “jealous God” (Ex. 20:5). He will not tolerate a divided loyalty, even if that division has resulted because of His Land or His people.

Holding On To The Root

Although the Bible may never specifically compare Jesus to the olive tree, it is nevertheless implied in the text that He is the root. We know from John 15:5 Jesus is pictured as the vine. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” In this same passage, John warns about letting go of the vine.

The Apostle Paul gives us Christians sound advice in Colossians 2:6-10: “As you have therefore received Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ROOTED and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Messiah. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” [emphasis mine]

Good News from the Middle East:

Nobody Asked Why? By Christine Sakakibara

On the evening of 19 August, Jerusalem was struck again. A suicide bomber boarded a bus, crowded with Jewish families returning from prayer at the Western Wall. 20 were killed. 110 were injured. 40 of those injured were children.

I was at the swimming pool that night with my two younger children. We heard the loud explosion. A feeling of dread instantly came over me. I knew that something awful had happened. We later learned that the blast had ripped through a double-length bus, just as it was turning into the ultra-orthodox neighborhood of Beit Shmuel. Pieces of metal and body parts were blown all over the streets. Bloodied children were carried one after another to waiting ambulances. Never have there been so many children or so many religious Jews injured in a terror attack.

The next day the papers were filled with the faces and stories of the victims who lost their lives. Each person was honored. Yet, one thing stood out this time: no calls for revenge or hatred, no condemnation against the government came from the ultra-orthodox community. The front page of one of the Hebrew newspapers read, “We need to search our souls... After such a terrible tragedy, we need to examine ourselves, not the Prime Minister, or the Arabs. We need to come together in prayer.”

I have made it a practice to visit the sight of every suicide bombing in Jerusalem to pray, to light a candle and pay my respects. When my son and I arrived at the makeshift memorial, one religious Jew handed us a prayer book and welcomed us to join the throngs of yeshiva students in reading from the book of Psalms. All the while we were praying, Arab taxis raced by on the adjoining road and Arab workers carefully crossed to the other side for fear of being stoned. Yet these religious Jews, in the depth of their pain, never raised their voices in anger or even looked in their direction.

A secular man who watched the families of victims coming to identify their loved ones at the morgue was amazed at their silent restraint and said he felt like screaming at them “Why aren’t you angry?”

Rabbi Moshe Grilik, a spokesman for the community, said the following, when asked how can they internalize the grief: “No tragic event will ever cause a true believer to abandon his faith... We spend our whole lives preparing for such tests of faith and character... A man who truly follows God will be tested. This test we are suffering now will only make our faith stronger.”

I, too, want to be able to display this kind of faith when the Lord chooses to test me. “The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.”

Psalms 9:9-10