

A MESSIANIC JEWISH QUARTERLY SUMMER/1978 VOL. 62 NO. 4

The Shepherd of Israel



I was raised in San Francisco in a military home. My parents both came from Orthodox backgrounds, but my older sister and I were brought up in Reform Judaism. We went to temple services and attended Sunday school, but this kind of religious environment seemed negative and phony. I remember attending High Holy Day services, realizing that many people were coming in late just to "show off" their newest clothes. My associations with religion were at best impersonal.

By the time I reached my mid-teens, I began searching. I asked many of the "big" questions of life but no one seemed to be able to answer these questions with any real depth or sincerity. The typical response I would hear was—"that's just the way life is; working, eating, sleeping, so just accept it."

When I graduated from high school I decided that I would be happier on my own. I moved in with two other girls and got a job in San Francisco's financial district. I was so sure that I could find a different more meaningful life outside of the confines of my parents' lifestyle.

I had a rude awakening. Most people, I discovered, cheat and lie. The walls closed in on me as I suffered the pain and anguish of trusting the untrustworthy and being hurt repeatedly. I asked myself again and again, "Is this really what life is all about?"

Discouragement followed this unhappy revelation and I decided to look elsewhere for happiness. Having relatives in Oregon I decided to go there. But gradually I realized that I couldn't run away from the emptiness and misery because it was inside me. I hoped for happiness and fulfillment but I found the same problems and questions with no solutions and no answers.

After a miserable six month stay in Oregon, I flew home to San Francisco. My parents invited me to vacation with them in Hawaii. During that month in the islands I made the decision to go to college and study for a career in psychology.

I have always had a concern for other people and I truly felt that through psychology I could help others. As I was reaching out, I hoped that others would be reaching out to



A
Purpose
for Living
by CYNTHIA LESCH

“... the trees, the sky and all of God’s creations . . . was my first awakening to the reality of . . . His love, His gentleness, His beauty and His patience with mankind.”

me. Together I felt that we could search for the answers to all the unanswered questions of life.

During my first semester of college, I ran into someone I had known years before. She had a friend who was a believer in Jesus but who had drifted away from his faith.

Despite the fact, as I later realized, that he was not where he should have been with God, he did share his belief in God with us. He demonstrated this belief using the trees, the sky and all of God’s creations visible on our campus. This was my first awakening to the reality of God, to His love, His gentleness, His beauty and His patience with mankind.

My friend and I began to read the Bible. We searched the Scriptures. The more we read, the more excited we became. We began to realize that all the answers to life’s problems and life’s questions were contained in this one Book.

I began to pray according to the way the Scriptures taught. I asked God to reveal Himself to me, to show me if He really has a Son as Psalm 2 indicates, and to deal with my heart and make my life different.

God answered my prayers. He revealed that His Son was the Messiah Yeshua. I asked Yeshua (Jesus) to become my Lord and Savior, to be my atonement for sin, on May 3, 1971. He changed my life and gave me the right answers to the questions I had always asked. I knew that I had found what I had been looking for.

But my story doesn’t end there.

I became involved in a small independent church and everything seemed fine for a while. Slowly, however, something began to bother me. I wasn’t growing in my spiritual life. I was the only Jewish believer and I felt that I was being forced to give up my Jewishness. No one seemed to understand or appreciate the fact that what I now believed was a fulfillment of my Jewish heritage. I felt alienated from my family and my Jewish people and began to feel that I was not being allowed to worship God as a Jew even though God had revealed Himself to and through my people.

Doubt started to set in. I was no



“The heavens declare the glory of God . . .” Psalm 19:2

longer sure of what I was. Could I as a Jew accept Jesus and still remain a Jew? I know now that the Evil One used my fears to separate me from the Lord for a time.

In the summer of 1972, I was sent by a temporary supply agency to work for a Jewish doctor. A secretarial position became available in his office. I told God that if He would only allow me to have this job I would share my faith with the doctor and others with whom I would come in contact.

God allowed me to get that position, but the situation was not as I anticipated. Slowly but surely I fell into the ways of those around me.

Then began the subtle process. I slipped further and further away from

God and into the ways of the world, which I hated. Doubt of Who God was and of His Son’s existence became so prevalent in my thoughts that I was brought closer and closer to the destruction of my soul. A battle raged within me.

Looking back I realize that God always allowed me the freedom to choose the direction in which I wanted my life to go. But He generously called me back to Himself because He knew that ultimately my desire was to follow and serve Him.

I had not been taught to know God’s Word. I had not been shown how to be truly close to Him. Consequently, I had been drawn away from

God by other things. I know now that if someone had stressed the necessity of spending time in prayer and reading the Bible I would have been better able to deal with the problems I faced.

But God was gracious to me. He kept dealing with me as He promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5).

This time I just had to be sure that I was making my own decision, as a Jew. I didn't want to be influenced by any other person. I knew that my life was contrary to what God wanted; I began to pray again and shed many tears in repentance as I turned back to God.

I asked God to help me and show me where I should be and He again honored my prayer. I ran into an old friend a few days after my decision to get right with God. Within a short time this friend had introduced me to a group of young Jewish believers in Messiah Jesus.

Immediately I was welcomed into their fellowship. There I received teaching and began to study the Bible on my own. Some months later I began to attend Bible studies and fellowship meetings with another group of Jewish believers from Beth Sar Shalom (which was nearer my home). I was taught to understand my faith from a Jewish perspective, and to know the Bible as a Jewish book.

Recently I became involved with a group of young Messianic Jews in San Francisco. I am now active, with them, in an outreach to Jewish people (and others) centered in a coffee house and book store. This outreach is actually supported by the congregation of the church I am now involved in.

Through these changes and growing periods in my life God has taught me to depend upon Him for all my needs. I have learned to constantly and prayerfully bring all things to Him. He has shown me that He is my only true source of strength. As He promises, I CAN do all things through Him (Phil. 4:13).

There are so many things I have to be thankful for. But one of the things I have learned is to praise and thank Him no matter what problems or difficulties I am going through. Ultimately, He works everything out according to His will and always for our benefit. I am so thankful today that I worship and serve the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Who loves me and sent His Only Son to die in my behalf. I have found the only real purpose in life!

WHAT GOD IS YOURS?

by ALTHEA MILLER

"As a general rule, cynics are joyless. The pursuit of attempting to disprove truth, deny ideals, often culminates in self-pity . . . the god of cynicism leads victims down a dead end road where escape is only possible by a miracle."

It is my studied conviction that the idealist on God's side has far more going for him than the cynic who scorns faith and rejects God's presence in his life. From the purely pragmatic stance, it appears that the idealist is often happier, better adjusted, more productive than the cynic. This in spite of frustrations almost inherent to demonstrating the validity of certain idealisms.

The productive idealist is not lazy. He doesn't sit in some vine-covered cottage dreaming up a rosy colored future which his thinking will bring into the world of reality. This realist must tie together his ideals with objectivity, honesty of fact and much hard work.

This thesis is based on the fact that the creative idealist must walk with God if his idealism is to bear lasting dividends. If he closes his eyes, crosses his fingers while making certain stellar wishes, he becomes an unrealistic romanticist. Then, when his world falls apart, nobody is less prepared to cope or more surprised at the mess. His god has turned out to be of his own making, hence is not any more competent than its creator.

You don't have to look very far before discovering that cynicism wastes time, energies, even personalities. As a general rule, cynics are joyless. The pursuit of attempting to disprove truth, deny ideals, often culminates in self-pity, makes of cynicism an enervating master. The god of cynicism leads victims down a

dead-end road where escape is possible only by a miracle. What kind of miracle?

God—the God of universal and particular beginnings. The Creator of man, Who knows the end from the beginning; Who understands all of man and loves him unto death and life; Who stands at dead-end corners offering the only way out from the deadly entrapment of sinful cynicism.

Why don't you stop playing games with your life concerning its here and hereafter? You are devoted to some god now. We have discussed two. There are many more. You may be bowing at the altar of your own intellectualism, all the while wondering why the nagging of uncertainty dog your heels.

Perhaps you give obeisance to the god of beauty, then in quiet fury, curse when it changes face. The god of power traps some and breaks them when it comes to its inevitable demise.

By now you surely know there are gods of nearly any make and hue.

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WHAT WOULD YOUR RABBI SAY?

Have you ever wondered if it is true that the Jews are God's Chosen People? Maybe you have asked yourself why God chose us and for what purpose.

Your rabbi might agree that God did choose the Jewish people. He might tell you that we were chosen to suffer for the sins of the world (but how can we pay for the sins of mankind if we have to pay for our own sins?). Or, if your rabbi is Reform, he will probably say that Jews invented the idea of being "chosen" as did other "primitive peoples."

The Torah, God's Holy Word, declares: "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be His own treasure

out of all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people—for ye were the fewest of all peoples—but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore unto your fathers. . . ."

(Deut. 7:7-8)

The entire Tenach explains God's purposes in choosing the Jewish people. If you would like to know more about God's plan for the Jewish people, write to:

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Why not face up to the fact of THE ONE GOD Who is not an ideal but a living Reality Who offers life without dead ends. His purpose? To restore you to fellowship with Himself, the only place where productive idealism is of lasting value because it is godly realism.

His method? So simple you've stumbled over it far too long because you have attempted to mold God into your image rather than allowing Him to make you over into His. Since your way has not produced results to your complete satisfaction, be honest. Let Messiah work in you that which will be profitable for time and eternity.

"Be not conformed to this world (its cynicisms, platitudes, twisted thinking) but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind (through Jesus, the Messiah) that you might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

"Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

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