

A Light in the Darkness

[The following narrative is true in every detail to the best of my recollection.]

It was already dark when we arrived at the *Biblical Antiquities* shop. The shopkeeper, Uri, was taking us to meet with a very important Rabbi. "Surely," thought Uri, "the *Rav* will be able to give a little guidance to these confused *goyim*." Uri could not understand why the *goyim* had changed. *Goyim* had always come to Jerusalem during *Sukkot*, but ten years ago they only wanted to argue. Now they came asking questions, seeking answers, looking for guidance. It wasn't just an isolated few, either. Something was happening.

Uri called the *Rav* on his cell phone and spoke briefly to him in Hebrew, and soon the four of us were on our way. It had been a very hot and humid day but now it was pleasantly cool as Uri led us through the dark, narrow streets of one of the *Chassidic* neighborhoods of Jerusalem. I had accompanied Rick and Susan on this nighttime rendezvous to meet with the *Rav*. After a while we came to a small park.

While we stood and waited for the *Rav* to arrive, I surveyed the area. The park was illuminated only by a distant street light whose dim rays filtered through the trees. There was a paved walk going right through the middle of this park, and in the middle, next to the walkway, was a single small bench. The *Rav* lived nearby and he had agreed to meet with us here.

We did not have to wait long. Soon we saw a shadowy figure silhouetted by that solitary, distant street light. He wore a hat and a long overcoat that gave him the appearance of a gangster from the roaring twenties. As he came closer, however, we were able to see his long grizzled beard and his *pe'os*. The *Rav* sat down on the park bench and Rick sat down beside him. Susan sat down next to Rick while Uri and I stood across from them. In that moment, together in the darkness, we could not have known the illumination we would receive.

Rick began by asking the *Rav*, "Where do we go to get answers on matters of halacha?"

The *Rav* looked at him and he said, "You are not Jewish, are you? Why do you seek my advice on halacha? You do not want to take this path, because if you do you will be obligated to keep the whole law. You should just be content to live by the seven Noahide laws."

Then Rick replied, "But if Christians are beginning to move closer to the Torah...."

"Let's not say 'if,'" interrupted the *Rav*, "We know it is happening."

"Yes," responded Rick, somewhat surprised by the *Rav's* awareness of this trend within Christianity, "but do you think this phenomenon could be the return of the lost ten tribes."

The *Rav* stroked his beard and said in his Yiddish accent, "Maybe yes, maybe no. We shall just have to wait and see."

Later, in Rick's room at the Mount Zion Hotel, we talked about our meeting in the park and what it had all meant. In that moment, when the *Rav* had tried to dissuade us from pursuing the Torah, Rick and I had both been struck with the same revelation. This Rabbi of Rabbi's, this *Rav*, this *Rebbe*, had spoken to us nearly the same words that Paul had written to the Galatians almost two thousand years ago. The final pieces of the puzzle were falling into place. It all made sense now.

The Gospels had been written for the *lost of Israel*, the exiles of the *lost ten tribes*; but Paul's letters had been written for the *goyim*. Paul was discouraging the *goyim* from converting because their only requirement, before God, was to obey the seven Noahide laws. It was only Israel that was required to take on the full yoke of Torah. Paul had told the Romans that sin could not be imputed where there was no

law. It was not until that moment in the park that we fully understood what Paul had been trying to say. Just as the sages had taught, a *goy* who kept the seven would reap a greater reward than an Israelite who did not keep the six hundred and thirteen. It was all becoming crystal clear.

As a leader in the emerging Messianic Israel movement, which was attempting to restore Christianity to its original path, my own path had been one of progressive revelation and redefinition; from my Baptist-Presbyterian beginnings to my current Orthodox Jewish lifestyle. Many within the greater Messianic movement, had come up with their own reconciliation of the New Testament text by redefining the writings of Paul to make them say what they wanted them to say. Others on the fringe of the movement just rejected Paul's writings altogether because they were in direct conflict with the Gospels. However, no one in the movement had dared to do the kind of research that Rick and I had been doing.

As soon as we arrived home, Rick began the writing of his landmark book, *Origins of Our Faith – The Hebrew Roots of Christianity*; and I started *B'nai El Chai Outreach* (www.bnai-el-chai.org). We have, since that time, maintained close ties with key members of the Jewish Sanhedrin and with other emerging leaders in the *Ephraimite* (House of Israel) movement. We have been labeled by others as heretics and radicals, but the movement continues to grow with a high level of support from our brothers in Jerusalem.

Glossary:

Goyim = plural for goy – a non-Jew.

Rav = Teacher

Sukkot = A Jewish Festival [called the *Feast of Tabernacles* in English]

Chassidic = The Chassidim are sometimes referred to as "ultra-orthodox"

Pe'os = sidelocks

Halacha = Jewish Law – practical application of Torah (from the Hebrew word for "walk").