

OUR PLACE IN THE CAMP

A Devotional Meditation on Nasso (Elevate)

Numbers 4:21-7:89; Judges 13:2-25; Ezekiel 47:21-23;
Romans 11:16-27; Galatians 3:26-29; Hebrews 5:7-6:12; Revelation 7:9-10, 21:9-27

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Salvation in Christ is the foundation of our spiritual existence. It's the first lesson we learn, and it's supposed to be the launching point for maturing into deeper knowledge and understanding. Instead of maturing, though, we tend to get stuck at this elementary level. That's why the author of Hebrews writes about Yeshua's followers remaining immature and unable to digest the meat of God's Word because we have not progressed beyond basic knowledge of salvation. There is more, and we should reach for it, as Hebrews exhorts us:



Boys camping. Uploaded by Richard May 12, 2015, [via Flickr](#).

Therefore leaving the basic teaching of the Messiah, let us move on toward maturity—not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of trust in God, of teaching about immersions, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Hebrews 6:1-2 TLV

This is what God has urged His people to do since the beginning. He did not create us to remain toddlers throughout eternity. His intent is to grow us into mature, independent, thinking agents of His continuing process of creation. That process won't be complete until the selfish toddler in us grows up. That's why a milestone in our journey of spiritual maturity is understanding our identity in Messiah and our citizenship in His Kingdom.

This is the purpose of the Torah Awakening among Christians. We keep Shabbat and the Feasts of the Lord because we recognize that the Prophets and Apostles are serious when they write about multitudes from the nations becoming part of the Commonwealth of Israel. That's what Paul means when he writes that we from the nations are grafted into the olive tree of Israel, and asserts that, "if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's seed—heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Since we are joined with the Jewish root of Israel, then we are wise to study the whole Bible, and to consult the Jews to find out what they have learned through millennia of wrestling with God's revelation.

We can start with what it means to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Israel. If our Messiah is the Son of David, and if He is to reign over David's Kingdom, then that means He is King of Israel, and our pledge of allegiance to Him makes us Israelites. That doesn't mean

we're Jewish, nor that we can petition the government of Israel to immigrate, but it does mean that we share the spiritual heritage poured out on our Jewish kin, and that we should support them in securing their full inheritance. That's how we will find out what our inheritance is.

A consistent theme in scripture is that Judah must go up first. That's what Paul means when he writes that the good news of the restoration of God's Kingdom is for the Jew first, and then for all the rest of us. If God came through for them by returning the Jewish people to the Promised Land and resurrecting the nation of Israel in 1948, then we can take heart that He will accomplish all His promises.

There's another precedent that helps us understand this process: God redeemed Israel out of Egypt in a state of chaos, and took them to the wilderness to clean them up and establish order. It wasn't only the native-born Hebrews who were redeemed, but a multitude of foreigners who joined them because they saw the power of Israel's God and wanted to take part in His salvation. Those foreigners were absorbed into Israel's tribes as the tribes were organized around the Tabernacle.

How did the foreigners know which tribe to choose? Ezekiel prophesies that, when Israel is completely restored and the tribal territories established again, foreign-born residents will receive inheritance in the tribal territory where they are living. I take that to mean they will have a choice of where to live, and which tribe to join. That is probably what happened at Sinai, when the chaotic, disorganized mob of refugees from Egypt became the Covenant people of God in the camp of Israel.

Once the tribes were organized, then the business of sanctifying the Tabernacle could begin, and after that, the process of sanctifying the people. That's a necessary step if Israel is to be a nation of priests. When that was done, the tribes could present their inaugural offerings to God and initiate the daily transactions between the Creator and His holy people on His altar.

It took twelve days to complete the tribal offerings. As always, Judah went up first:

Bringing his offering on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah. His offering was one silver plate weighing 130 shekels, one silver basin weighing 70 shekels by the shekel of the Sanctuary, both of them filled with fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, one ladle of 10 shekels of gold filled with incense, one young bull from the herd, one ram, one male lamb a year old as a burnt offering, one male goat as a sin offering, and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs one year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

Numbers 7:12-17 TLV

This formula repeats over the next eleven days as each tribe presents identical offerings. Identical, that is, in the components, but unique in presentation. Every tribal leader presents offerings according to each type of sacrifice (burnt offering, sin offering, and fellowship or thanks offering). Each also presents a silver plate and silver basin filled with fine flour, and a gold ladle filled with incense. I imagine tribal artisans crafted their silver and gold articles to reflect the unique attributes of their tribe, probably engraving the name of the tribe and the leader who presented the offering. I imagine also that the

twelve presentations involved processions of musicians, dancers, worshipers, warriors, and children, all wearing the distinctive dress of the tribe, and performing compositions written and orchestrated by tribal music masters.

This is what I imagine we will see at the end of this age, when a great multitude from every tribe and tongue and nation stands before our Creator and sings:

Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!

Revelation 7:10 TLV

That multitude, in all its unified diversity, enters New Jerusalem through its twelve gates, named for the tribes of Israel. We may have imagined this to be a multitude of individuals, but it's more organized than that. As with ancient Israel, God saved us out of chaos. We have wandered many generations in this wilderness of the peoples, learning how to behave as followers of our King. Now He is beginning to organize us into tribes and camps.

We're early in the process, and we don't yet see the way ahead very clearly, but we know our destination, and we're getting to know travel companions. We may be surprised at how we can be companions even though we have different opinions and practices, but love for our King and for His people reveals our identity and keeps us together. That's why I'm not concerned about which gate to enter when we arrive. As with our ancient ancestors, the key is finding our place in the camp. That's how they knew which tribe to choose, and how we'll know which gate to enter.