

FM #13
Israel's Intractable Hope
May 6, 2008

Vermont's Jewish Community celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of Israel's rebirth as a nation this past weekend and, I schlepped along even though I'm not Jewish.

I've gone through admiring other races and their social and cultural creeds, but these were mere fads next to the faith and hope and love of Zion, my final cult and creed.

God is re-gathering them and us there on Zion's hill for a great and eternal future. Meanwhile, He is always protecting, correcting, and guiding his particular people. One day, in the end, the faithful of all the nations, who have been blessed by Abraham, by Israel (Gn. 12,3d), will also reign and rule from there with Israel.

I've been blessed by them because their God is now my God. Their word is now my word. Thanks for sharing Israel. Thanks for letting me schlep along.

Part of the Sabbath celebration of this anniversary was a fellowship meal after a program lead by an Israeli Diplomat, a Shabbat service rich in the word and song. I had been welcomed to this point so I figured why stop now.

I was blessed to sit across the table from a venerable Hasidic Rabbi "Avrom" from Chabad Jewish Community Center which, among others, serve the University of Vermont. And he was full of joy on this occasion, even as he was trying to politely place me amidst the three local synagogues that made up most of the crowd.

So after the game was up, I just blurted out that I was Christian Zionist who loved the Jews. And as Israel has always been keen to spot a friend, he didn't judge me, and let me stay.

I told him I had learned a lot about God from the Jews, especially in the last seven years. That I admired their intractable hope, the hope of Abraham leaving Haran for Canaan as God told him and led him, the hope of Moses and the people, weak but faithful who left the slavery and the oppression of Pharaoh. The hope of Israel re-founding fathers and mothers who believed that a nation could be born again in a day, which it was sixty years ago.

No, not four thousand years of persecution and satanically inspired hatred, nor a Vermont winter, has not robbed them of this hope, which is intractable. Intractable- pegged to God, pegged to the promises to Abraham and thus his people.

I told him also that I've been blessed by the dignity with which they have suffered. At the hands of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, then the Romans who destroyed their Temple in 70 AD and their country in 134 AD, then at the hands of non Jewish Empire Christians who made Jesus a gentile and then ignored all the parts of scripture that said God wasn't finished with Israel.

But the thing about suffering is, short of God's final judgment, it doesn't end for Israel, or us Christians, so we all might as well learn more about this part of Israel's blessing that teaches us to suffer with dignity and never to bow to pagans.

There's always more suffering to come for Israel! And more to come for us Christians who have been adopted into the family! That's the thing about families- they share everything, even their legion of enemies who are always both antichrist and anti Semitic. If we Christians and Jews aren't forever linked by our blessings and suffering, how come we always seem to have the same enemies?

If there's more to come, then there's more to learn about how to suffer from them, with faith, with joy amidst the trial, and with the unbowed dignity with which the Jews have suffered.

There are four brief passages in the book of Isaiah that refer to a "suffering servant," and we followers of Yashua Ha Mashiach, see these passages as clear prophecies of our crucified and risen "Christ", which is a word of Greek origin. But, most Jews see these as clear prophecies about their nation, about themselves and what they have experienced.

Can you blame them? No! This is not surprising- all the other, vastly more numerous, passages about their savior and messiah, were about his triumph and reign- suffering was about what they had known, not what their messiah would know. Paul breezed over this in Romans 11 because only a remnant, at that time, had the grace to understand that our messiah who is first their messiah was to be so much like them, suffering servant, blessing for all.

Israel has seen itself as the suffering servant, and in this they have served the world well, me and you included. Have you ever lost what you hold most dear? Your temple, your synagogue, your land, your cult, your priesthood, your property, your brothers and sisters, your name, your good name, your wealth, your profession? Well many Jews have lost these things, again and again throughout history.

And they get right back up, hoping, again and again, intractable hoppers. Suffering servants. They teach us so much about the God-man we follow. Isn't it interesting that we Christians learn how to follow our suffering servant, how to suffer, not just by knowing him, but by their example, that is often much more hopeful than ours? In them, we are all blessed. That was God's promise. That's the way God works.

So All God's Blessings on you Israel, I'll celebrate your rebirth every 10 years. I'll recall the miracles of your people and your God. My hope rests not in any "New" Israel, not in any church or any Johnny come lately nation. It rests in you Zion, the strength of Israel, in you Abraham, who are blessing us all. Yes, as I told Rabbi Avrom, I'm counting on the final rebirth of all the faithful, of all the ever hopeful, of all those who love Zion, which is going to take place on their turf, onto which they will welcome us wandering gentiles.