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## How Sweet the Sound!

### EXPLORING THE HEART OF THE B'NEI AVRAHAM COMMUNITY

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What happened to Amazing Grace? When you first hear about our Messiah Centered—Torah based approach to faith and community expression the word—legalism may spring to mind. In fact, it may appear that grace has been diminished in favor of this clarion call to righteous living and God's Torah. But such a reading would be a misperception. B'nei Avraham in fact is very grace-based. We believe anything added to grace or subtracted from grace is something other than grace. Why then the perception of legalism?

#### **Grace Alone**

Each member of the community of B'nei Avraham firmly believe in the finished, atoning work of Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>. Christ alone is the way to receive the free gift of God's righteousness and to be fully acquitted of sins. It's true that many people have perceived the Torah as a set of rules to be followed in order to gain salvation. But that is a sad misperception of Torah. No one can earn, merit or keep eternal salvation through following the Torah or any other set of rules. To attempt to do so would be legalism indeed. To teach the need to do so would be selling grace short. Instead, the community of B'nei Avraham fervently stands on and believes that people can be saved only by the unmerited grace of God—through personal faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

#### **New Creations**

To be saved is to be a new person. Before a person is born again he/she is in rebellion against God and His Torah (Romans 8:7). But, when a person becomes a believer in Jesus, God makes that person a new creation. Romans 6:1-6 says that the old human being actually dies on the cross with Jesus and the believer is made a brand new person by virtue of Messiah's life planted within. Romans 5:19 states that Messiah's life in us changes our inner constitutions. The believer's identity has been changed from sinner to saint. They have become living versions of Christ. Their deepest and most basic identity was changed the moment that they were born again and granted new life from God above.

#### **No Longer Sinners**

A sinner is someone defined by and enslaved by sin. Sin is Torahlessness (1 John 3:4). Every violation of Scripture is sin. This applies not only to the biggies, like murder and stealing, it applies to every jot and tittle, just like Jesus said in Matthew 5:17. Sin means "missing the mark." Torah is the mark for which we are to aim. Jesus never missed the mark. He was a human being, made like us in every way, yet He was without sin. Now that we are His, we are to walk in the same way that He did (Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 2:6; 1 John 3:5). Sin is not normal for us anymore! We used to be aiming at something else (sin, whether we knew it or not), now we aim for Torah (righteousness). We used to be sinners; now we are saints.

Please don't misunderstand. We're not saying believers never sin. Sin happens. No one is perfect yet. But the believer's relationship to sin has entirely changed. If sin means missing the mark, one might say that the sinner doesn't even know how to string the bow. Jesus transforms sinners (mark-missers) into master archers. Even a master archer will miss the bull's-eye sometimes, and a saint will sometimes sin. But he is no longer a slave to sin and sin no longer constitutes his identity. Instead, righteousness is now the true expression of his character. Christians have been given power over sin through Jesus' life in them. Sin is no longer our way of life. To choose sin is to behave like someone that we no longer are!

## **Our Responsibility**

Because we are no longer sinners we are no longer slaves to sin. Therefore, it is our responsibility to yield our bodies to Messiah, not to sin. How is this done? The standard has been set for us by the Torah, and the example has been given in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, Jesus Christ. He walked in perfect obedience to His Father's Torah and now lives in us to give us the power to do the same. A Torah-based lifestyle is a life of obedience to the Word. For believers in Jesus, Torah living is the fullest expression of our biblical faith. We have been freed from sin in order to pattern our lives after our new creation self.

## **Master, Jesus the Messiah!**

It is sometimes taught that no one can keep Torah because it is too difficult. The Bible says otherwise (Deuteronomy 30:11–14). To say that we cannot keep Torah diminishes both the truth and the potential of the new life planted within us. Christians have been given a job to do! Christians are to display His majesty, holiness, righteousness, mercy, and goodness. We are commanded to be holy, to be set apart for God. This means being faithful to His instructions on how to be holy. We can do it through faith in His Son, our Savior, and the life that He now lives in us.

## **Become a Pioneer!**

The community endeavors to model a high standard of holiness. That standard is Torah, both the Written and the Living Torah. Jesus is the Living Torah living within us. His life lived through us is our fullest potential in the Kingdom of God! If we truly appreciate the full extent of God's grace to us, we will be passionate about our relationship with Him and His Son. We will desire to live our lives to the fullest by being the best person we can be in God. Being a believer requires more than just a mental assent to Jesus, it requires a deliberate effort to ascend in relationship with Him. The community of B'nei Avraham is dedicated to that purpose, encouraging all believers everywhere to live out the grace that has been so freely bestowed upon us by rising to a new level of holy and godly living as defined by the Scriptures. That's what amazing grace does. It leads us to obedience. How sweet the sound! For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed<sup>2</sup>, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds<sup>3</sup>. Titus 2:11-14

## **Endnotes**

- 1 The vast majority of the people in the community of B'nei Avraham use the Hebrew rendition of the name of the Messiah—Yeshua. This places the Messiah back into His cultural context. This is an important interpretive principle when one begins to rediscover the roots of the faith.
- 2 *avnomi*, a *anomia* {an-om-ee'-ah} Meaning: 1) the condition of without law 1a) because ignorant of it 1b) because of violating it 2) contempt and violation of law, iniquity, wickedness.
- 3 "Good deeds" in the Hebrew mind is inseparably connected to the Hebrew word *Mitzvah*. A *mitzvah* is a commandment of Torah. Those commands train us and remind us to love God and one another. (Luke 24:27; Titus 2:14; 1 Jn 5:3)