

**ISRAELITE MENTALITY--
ALIVE AND WELL**

By Keith Greer

Have you ever considered the "thinking" of the children of Israel towards God? Could we say that there has never been a people that have forgotten God so quickly, or were so ungrateful to God? Was the stubbornness of the children of Israel understandable or justified? Let's examine some evidence, from the divine record.

The children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 1:7-14), and they cried to the Lord for help (Exodus 2:23,24). Moses was sent to deliver them and bring them out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 3:28-30) When Moses first came to them, they believed (Exodus 4:31).

Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go and made their tasks even more burdensome. Then God brought the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, and many mighty works were done that they (and the Egyptians) would know that this was the hand of God. The land of Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelled, was even spared the plagues that virtually destroyed the land of Egypt. (Exodus 8:22,23) And in the final plague--the death of the firstborn--God made a provision for His people to avoid the terrible results of this plague. In Exodus 12:1-30, the Passover was instituted as Israel's means of escaping the death of their firstborn. Every other firstborn, from Pharaoh's house to the captive in the dungeons, died during this final plague. (Exodus 12:29,30)

When Pharaoh relented, the children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians and left the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:50,51) Surely, now, their faith and trust would be in God. Right?

At the Red Sea, they saw the Egyptian army following them, and what did they say? "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore has thou dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word, that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." (Exodus 14:11,12) What were they thinking of? Could they have

forgotten so quickly? Who had called upon God for release from Egypt and their burdens?

Once again, God demonstrated His mighty power and love for them by allowing them to cross the Red Sea (on dry land) and defeating the Egyptian army in the midst of the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:13-30) The children of Israel saw their enemies dead on the seashore. They rejoiced and praised the power and glory of God, who had given them the great victory over the Egyptians. Now their faith in God was firmly grounded!! Or was it?

Yet, the people murmured, "What shall we drink?" (Exodus 15:24) Then, when they entered the wilderness of Sin and found no water, they not only wanted water but DEMANDED it! (Exodus 17:2) How could these people have forgotten so quickly? Could it be possible to be more ungrateful than this to our Almighty God?

But, before we point an accusing finger and judge them unworthy of the mercy and love of God, perhaps we should consider ourselves. Were the children of Israel the only people to demonstrate these attitudes towards God? Maybe just the first of many. Could one say the children of Israel were the most "stubborn, forgetful, thankless, people on the earth?" My brethren, don't judge them too harshly, you may also be among their number!

Today, in our busy lives, among all of the things we involve ourselves in, have we forgotten God? Oh, yes, when life becomes burdensome, we're in some jam, and our minds are filled with despair, then we think of God. Maybe after we have tried everything else, we'll give Him a call. But, what about when the times are good? When we have been richly blessed, both physically and spiritually, where is God in our lives then?

The Bible teaches us to offer praise and thanksgiving in our prayers. (Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17,18) When was the last time you went in prayer to the Father just to praise His name and thank Him for the rich blessings He has freely given you? For life,

health, spouse, children, and your brethren. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being;..." (Acts 17:28) Everything is made possible by Him!

What about our singing? Colossians 3:16,17 says to, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him."

Similarly, Ephesians 5:19,20 says we are to be, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." While there is nothing in any of these verses about having a "good voice" to sing, many Christians willfully choose not to participate, for a variety of personal reasons. How can we hope to be in heaven singing and praising God for an eternity, if we are not willing to praise Him and give thanks to Him during our preparation time on earth? We need not worry so much about how "bad we sound." But, when we sing with the "spirit and understanding", and with the attitude of thanking God, you will never sound "bad" to our Father in heaven!! (1 Corinthians 14:15)

James 5:13 says, "...Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Can it be that we are not happy being Christians? Are we to be walking around with a frown, when things do not go our way? Many in the Lord's church are ready to "throw in the towel" at the first sign of discomfort or hurt caused by another saint. Often I have to go see Christians who are out of duty, and they offer me a host of feeble excuses of what "others have done to them." My question is a simple one. "What did God do to you? And why are you treating Him in this manner?" Yet, I'm always given the assurance that they love God and would never be mad at him! Please read John 14:15. Let us not forget everything that has been done for us, and all that God continues to give us each day we live.

Many laugh and ridicule the children of Israel for being such an ungrateful and selfish people. Unfortunately, if we examine ourselves more closely, we will find that, too

often, we have the same attitude as God's people of old? How quickly we also tend to forget!

Do we remember the day that God took your sins away? You arose from the watery grave of baptism, cleansed from all sins, justified, and ready to begin your life as a child of God. Can you remember what a wonderful feeling that was? How eager you were to do all you could for the cause of Christ. God loved us enough to let His Son die on the cross in our place. Why? To free us from the bondage of sin which was enslaving us. We are all so unworthy of the love of God set before us, and yet, because of His grace we are saved. (Ephesians 2:8-10) [Now you're a Christian, added to the Lord's church. God is our spiritual Father, and Christ is our brother.]

Now, come back down to reality. What have you done in return? Are you as committed today, as that day you entered into the water? Did you forget so quickly? The price paid for your sins, the joys of heaven, and all spiritual blessings brought by being in Christ! Let me give you a short list of some "practices" that abound by our brethren today...

(1). We have those who now say that Jesus was not deity. He was a man, "no more or no less. A good moral person."

(2). Some say that Christ came the second time in A.D. 70. The resurrection of the dead and the judgment have already taken place.

(3). Others say that the "blood of Christ continues to cleanse us from all sins, with or without repentance." Sin is now by category.

(4). Another group which promotes "unity", tells us we need to put aside our "petty differences" and just come together in love and fellowship. By doing this, they believe God is well pleased.

(5). Many are now teaching "divorce for any cause." Just "repent and keep her," despite the plain teaching in the scripture concerning repentance.

(6). Last, but by no means least, we have a push today for a greater role of woman in the Lord's church. Elders, deacons, and preachers. We must "use their special gifts."

Now, do you still believe the Israelite nation were the most unthankful, ungrateful, and forgetful people in the world? What happened?

Many have been led away from the truth because they forgot some very plain teaching found in the word of God. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) "...Which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." (2 Peter 3:16)

How can someone who was once a faithful child of God stray so far from the truth? In discussions with some, their "reassurance" has been quite simple. They believe that they now have a "clearer understanding" and "more mature" application of the truth. Those things that they once believed have now been exchanged for something they feel shows growth and maturity in the knowledge of the word of God. How soon they forget! It did not work for Nadab and Abihu. It failed Moses, when he changed the command of God. Saul lost his kingdom and favor with God, so it failed him also. Wherever and whenever man gets to outthink God, misery and destruction are awaiting him.

Yes, my friends, the "Israelite Mentality" is alive and well in our time. Just as the early nation of Israel failed, time and again, to receive the benefit derived from staying true to God's word, so have many followed that same path today. Will it ever stop? The only way of stopping the problem is to "get down to basics." We must have love for the word of God, faith in Him, and total trust in His power and ability.

We all like to think that we would have been different had we lived during the time of Christ. We would not have reacted like the Jews. No, we would have never murdered the Prince of life. Do you really think so? So next time you want to point a finger at the nation of Israel, be careful. Three fingers may be pointing back at you!!