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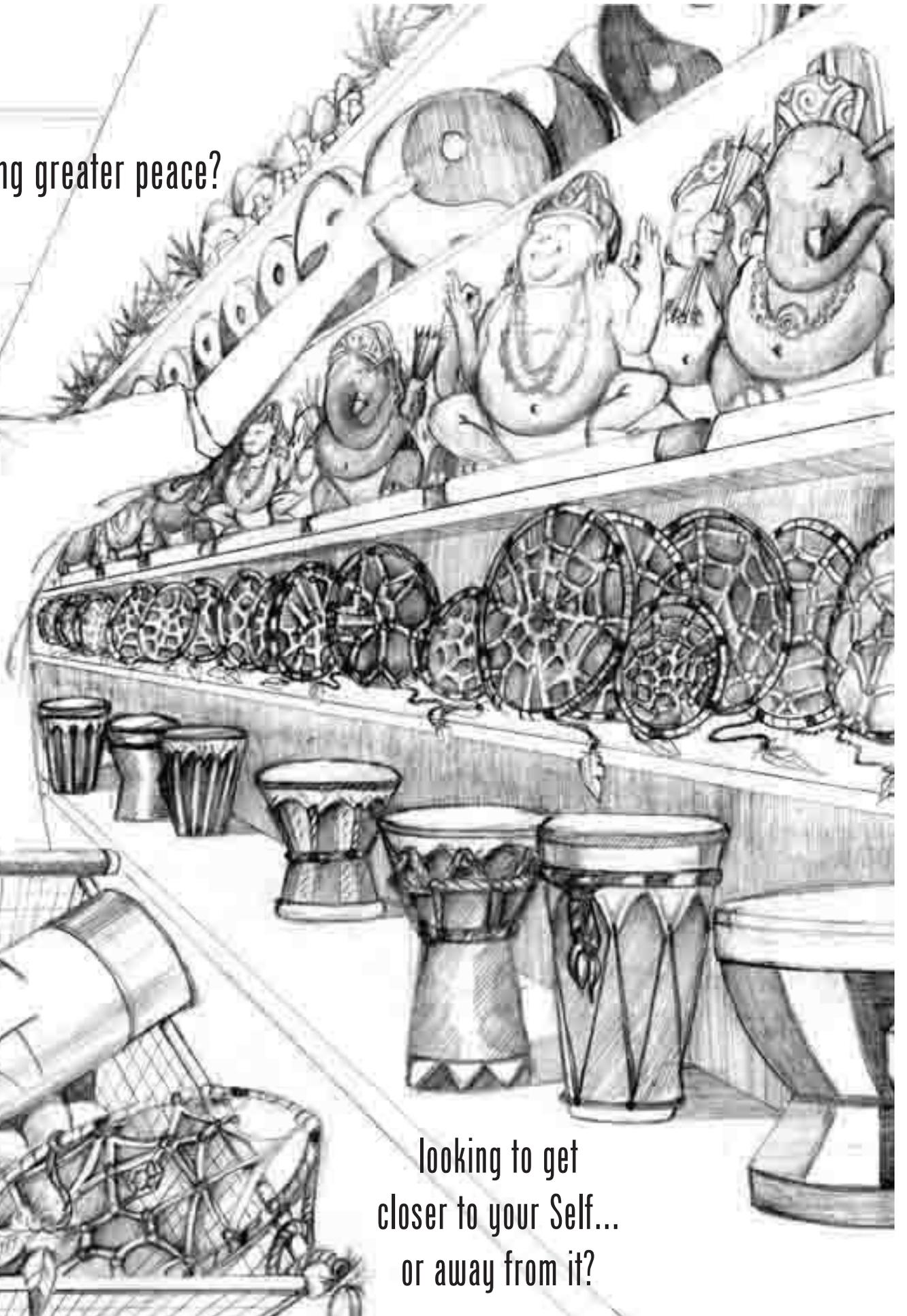


got enlightenment?

browsing the shelves
for a spiritual path?



needing greater peace?



looking to get
closer to your Self...
or away from it?

got enlightenment?

We interviewed several people and asked them this most appropriate question...

GE: "How do you know whether someone has found enlightenment?"

Mark: "Well, it's a hard thing. If you say you've got it, then you're self-righteous, and then of course that would mean that you don't have it."

Chris: "Ah, man, don't ask me that question."

Amber: "Enlightenment means you go with the flow. If you can fit in with the natives without being too America, and can fit in with the Americans without being too native, that's enlightenment."

Taylor: "There certainly have been those who've attained. If I could just spend a day with one of them, to see how they live their life, I'd get it."

Amber: "If you're around the Phish kids, act like a Phish kid. If you're around the lesbians, act like a lesbian. Don't judge, man! Fit in. That's an enlightened person."

GE: "But aren't you concerned that your mind is so porous that you can't hold a conviction?"

Amber: "Huh?"

Rahja: "Man, none of you understand. Enlightenment is freedom from self-consciousness, man, like merging with the godhead. Yeah, that's it! There's like no "you" left. Only energy fields of ever-unraveling patterns within patterns, constantly flowing forth from the center, man!"

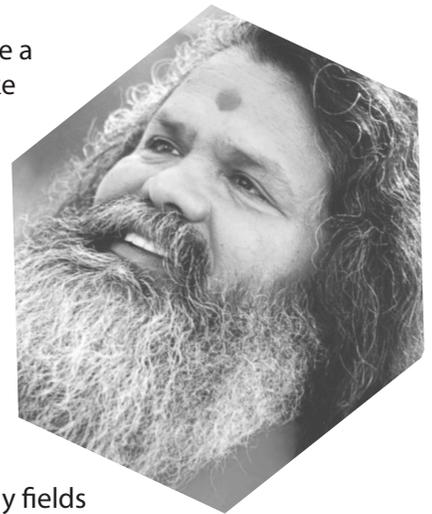
GE: "So how would you know someone's enlightened, then?"

Rahja: "You wouldn't, man. He'd just, like, disappear. There's some dudes in India that are there, man, but if you took your eyes off of them, they'd just vanish, man, like outa sight!"

Sophia: "I guess it's all about gleaning truth from whatever source you can find it."

GE: "I see."

Chris: "You do?"



Is the Indian guru the way to true enlightenment, sitting on a little blanket surrounded by starry-eyed devotees, all hoping to disappear into selflessness?

When a star implodes, it becomes a black hole, sucking in light rather than giving it out. It draws everything around it into a deadly, ever-deepening darkness.

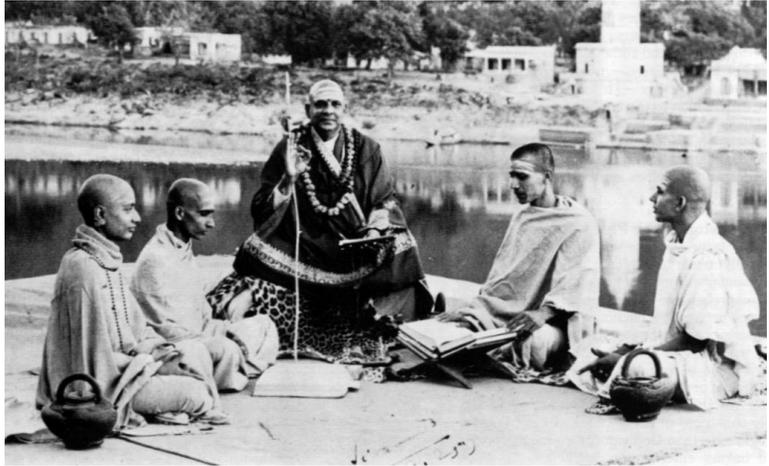
So what of a man who turns within? Where's his love? Where's his light? Light has to shine, and love has to love. There just can't be any other way. If he's truly found the source of light, his entire life would be meeting the needs of others.

When you turn on a light bulb, the light doesn't stay in the bulb. It shines out, lighting up everything in the room. It can't be contained. The light enlightens the surroundings.

It is enlightening to realize that in the same way, if someone has got enlightenment, it wouldn't just stay in his brain and give him lots of serene and surreal feelings, but it would make a difference in the way he lives his life.

Enlightenment isn't a matter of having the right equipment. Don't be fooled. Neither little golden crosses around the neck nor a mass of tangled dreads in a tam means very much these days – you can get both pretty easily if you want them. You can find Christians and Rastas and Buddhists in the same health food store, all with contradictory beliefs, and any one of them might cut you off in the parking lot.

The search for enlightenment these



days is like shopping at Wal-Mart, perusing the religions of the global market. All are available with the help of *Google*. What makes a person enlightened is how well he shops and what brands he chooses, what returns the greatest spiritual aura for the amount invested. Invest too much and you're a fanatic, or an extremist. Best to try a little of each – a little Buddhism, a little Wicca, give them both a boost with a little LSD, and throw in a pinch of Jesus to give it an air of acceptability. Or "roll your own" if that doesn't work for you.

But is that enlightenment? Or could there possibly be something more than what lines the shelves of the religion market?

Isn't there a connection between the spiritual and the physical realm?

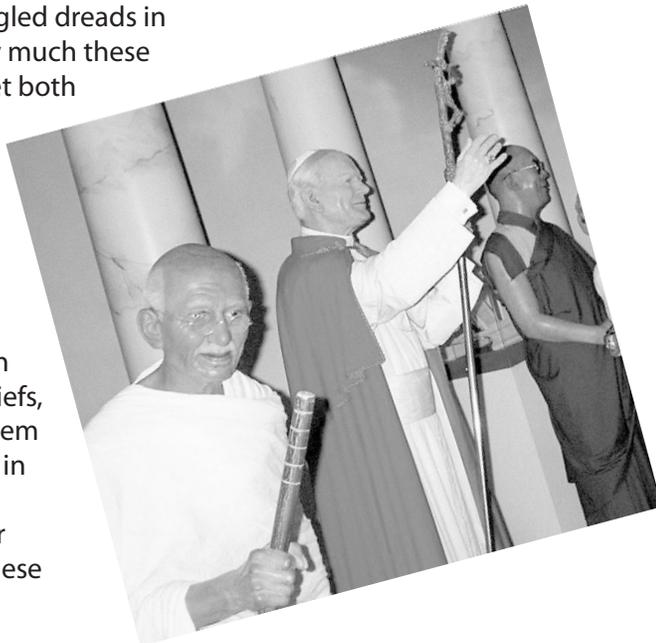
If someone has found enlightenment, wouldn't you expect his life to be different – full of love and wisdom? Wouldn't you expect something more than just lofty words and the same dark life?

Would a truly enlightened person be selfish, or self-absorbed?

Would a truly enlightened person be selfish, or self-absorbed? Or would he have the power to love, even to love the unlovable? Could he overcome his dark, hidden, selfish desires before he hurt others? Or would he leave a trail of wounded hearts, ruined relationships, and broken promises behind him?

Why settle for something less than true light, the true light that ought to enlighten every man? If someone had it, you'd better believe he wouldn't be alone – there'd be others around him, sharing in the same light, walking in the same light and displaying the inevitable effect of true enlightenment – LOVE.

This paper is dedicated to the seekers of true enlightenment, who are not satisfied with the status quo, whether mainstream or alternative. Please read on. ☉



YAHSHUA

the Vision and the Foundation

It's easy to see problems; it's harder to see solutions. Yahshua was strong, yet was known for his forbearance with the weak. He was a man with great vision, which he loved to enlighten people with.

He would extend himself to the needy all day long and then stay up all night, if necessary, to find the grace from God that he needed. Even the one who claimed to be his friend, but proved treacherous, he continued to love until the end, hoping to win him and lead him to repentance.

His great vision was the hope he had for mankind. Yahshua* could see past the troublesome faults in people and see their true worth and value. He loved to listen to people, because people were lovely to him. Even when people hurt him, he would find the grace not to take it personally but to love them in return.

Yahshua was great because of his commitment and faithfulness. It's easy to get inspired by a vision, but what makes someone great is to remain faithful even when it's hard. Yahshua was steadfast. He was a great warrior in the spiritual realm, always able to love. Because of his faithfulness, he became the foundation for the Kingdom of God that will one day fill the earth.

Yahshua would not allow himself to be selfish, but would stir up his spirit to seek the glory of God rather than his own glory. And guess what? He had joy! He had sorrows, too, over the condition of mankind, but he had great joy in his inner man. That is the result of walking on the path of life. Yahshua is the foundation for true spiritual life.

Being on that foundation isn't just admiring him or believing in him in your mind. A mere mental concept will not help you to experience true life. A foundation is something to build on. Yahshua is the foundation that is specifically designed for God's house to be built upon. Apart from Yahshua you can't build according to the plans because the building will crumble. And apart from God's plans, you can't build on the foundation. We have to build on the foundation and build according to the plans.

Everything Yahshua did was to qualify him

for his ultimate achievement: to pay for our sins in death so that we could become reconciled to God — become his friends. Because he succeeded in his purpose, paying the wages our sins deserved, God raised him from the dead. After his resurrection, he spent forty days with his followers, teaching them about the foundation and how to build on it. Then he ascended into heaven right before their very eyes. He had to go to his Father so that he could send his Spirit to empower his followers to build what he had taught and commissioned them to build.

When his followers finish this spiritual building as a foretaste of what is to come, then he will return to remove all evil from the earth and set up his Kingdom throughout the entire earth. What an amazing thing this will be — even better than we can imagine!

Another wonderful thing about Yahshua was that he wasn't mystical at all. What he taught was what he did, and what he did was love people and heal them. That was the foundation he laid, and he taught his followers to build on that foundation: establishing communities of love and healing through which this new culture could emerge. The first communities are described in the Bible, in the first few chapters of the Book of Acts, and they were amazing. It was a truly common life with the fire of love illuminating them.

Things have veered off course over the past 2000 years, but Yahshua himself hasn't changed, which means the foundation hasn't changed either. All that is needed now is for people to start building again on this foundation. It requires the total surrender of our lives — all our heart, soul, and strength, just like Yahshua did. Then we can be immersed into his life and become like him. It's like a rebirth into a new creation in which he is the foundation.

In Yahshua is life, and the life enlightens mankind. ☉

**To learn more about Yahshua, read "What's In A Name?" at the end of this paper.*

He knew that no man had ever made it through the ordeal. Like an obstacle course through a desert, each hurdle, each almost insurmountable obstacle tested whether he would win the prize that held his heart spellbound. Each day that the sun came up and each night that it set brought him closer. Nothing could hold him back — neither fire, nor water, nor test upon test upon test. Like a man in the twilight working feverishly to finish before nightfall, he raced on, drawn by his love for something more precious than life itself.

What was it? Wealth? Fame? Power? Pleasure? Were these what claimed his heart's energy? Or was it something deeper, longer-lasting, something living and eternal? It had to be. For he knew, as men have always known, that once this brief life on earth is over, we face an age so long that no one, not even the wisest among us, can grasp more than a tiny piece of it. Here we live our few short years that make all the difference as to where we will spend eternity. If he could complete the ordeal, if he could run the course, then he would not be alone. Others would follow — those who desired to be like him.

On the last day, he faced his final obstacle. Death itself had come to test him. Like a scapegoat¹ thronged about by those eager to cast their sin upon it, he passed through a gauntlet of his own people, a crowd lining the streets, hurling abuse and scorn and curses. Beyond that came a second, more dreadful torture. All his spiritual enemies had gathered round and formed a gauntlet, too: like two long rows of savage beasts armed with long rods, swinging at his back as he passed between them — to break his spirit, to cause him to give up, to drive him to his knees, and into the ground, and down into death.

Like the scapegoat wandering around in the wilderness until thirst or hunger or wild animals killed it, he took the sins of the whole world far away into the fiery darkness in the core of the earth. In that wild landscape he finished the agonizing ordeal. In a tossing sea of volcanic sulfur and molten stone, he received the storm of Heaven's full wrath against sin. Like a helpless victim drowning in the flood, he passed through a suffering too great for us to understand. A universe of hurt and shame, of unpayable injuries and ruined lives, of corruption and perversity was paid for, one crime at a time, in that brief three-day eternity. Finally it ended!



Like a Scapegoat

What had given him the strength to go on and on? Love, for certain. Only love grants such strength to endure. But wasn't there something more? Something else that had captured his heart and was the center of all his attention? What could have fascinated him so?² Who was it?

It could only have been those who would follow him, and be like a bride married to him. They were the reason why he felt compelled to die. He wanted to save them from the horrible agony of unending death. He knew that once they understood what he had done for them, they would respond to his love with the same fascination he felt toward them. They would willingly give up everything for his sake — family, career, wealth, ambitions, dreams, comforts, even their very own life and interests.³ This sacrifice, on their part, would come from their genuine response to his sacrifice and would bring about a new nation of twelve tribes. Though his ordeal is over, hers is yet to come. Through all the labor that will take place, she won't lose heart, for he is her fascination. ◉

¹"Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness." (Leviticus 16:21-22)

²"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:44-46)

³"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33)

The Pursuit of Happiness

Self-Seeking vs. the Teachings of Yahshua
Which way delivers the goods?

Self: *If it's not fun, why do it?*

This basic moral problem of seeking for pleasure at the expense of righteousness is as old as the sun. It offers the hope of immediate fulfillment, but has many bad side effects. For instance, a sexual relationship out of wedlock offers immediate pleasure, followed by unwanted children, sexually transmitted diseases, the feeling of being used, and the effects of a bad conscience. It's so shallow to hate the hardship that love requires.

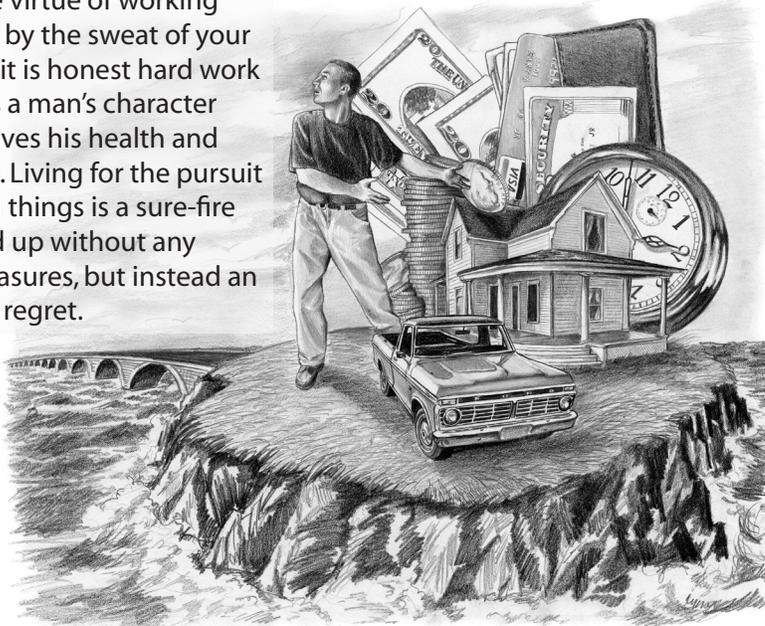


Yahshua: *Love one another. No greater love has a man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends. Unless a seed goes in the ground and dies, it remains by itself.*

Yahshua abandoned himself to love, not concerning himself with the cost. Self-centeredness is an empty trap. Love, however, builds something lasting. Love requires the suffering that builds character, but it produces wanted children who know they are loved, lasting and meaningful friendships, inner worth, joy, satisfaction, and a good conscience.

Self: *Whoever dies with the most toys wins.*

This humorous slogan actually expresses a common value in modern society. An abundance of material possessions and comfort is what most people seem to esteem these days. Aren't we trained to think this way? Don't most schools and universities highly esteem financial success and belittle the virtue of working for a living by the sweat of your brow? But it is honest hard work that builds a man's character and preserves his health and well-being. Living for the pursuit of material things is a sure-fire way to end up without any eternal treasures, but instead an eternity of regret.



Yahshua: *Don't store up treasures here on earth where moth can eat, rust can destroy or thieves can break in and steal, but rather store up treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

When we give up our possessions and our pursuit of pleasure in order to love like Yahshua did, we find ourselves building the community that he desires to establish as a light. There is no way to love your brother if you have the world's goods and see your brother in need and close your heart to him. We only live a short time and then we must give an account for what we did with our life. When we die, it's only what we've built between each other and towards God that will remain with us, whether good or bad. In other words, we will have to answer for our deeds when our life is over. It is wise to consider carefully what we are living for.

**Self: Do your own thing.
Look out for #1.**

"Do your own thing" sounds appealing and has captured the desire of many. However, it leaves you empty and alienated from your fellow man, forever striving after the vanity of self-gratification. To waste your creativity on ourselves shows our alienation from our Creator.



Yahshua: Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother. My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Yahshua was consumed with doing God's will, not his own, and he was full of life. Even his enemies envied him because of his joy and peace. It was said of him that he had more joy than anyone else because he loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Following Yahshua brings enlightenment and inner worth.

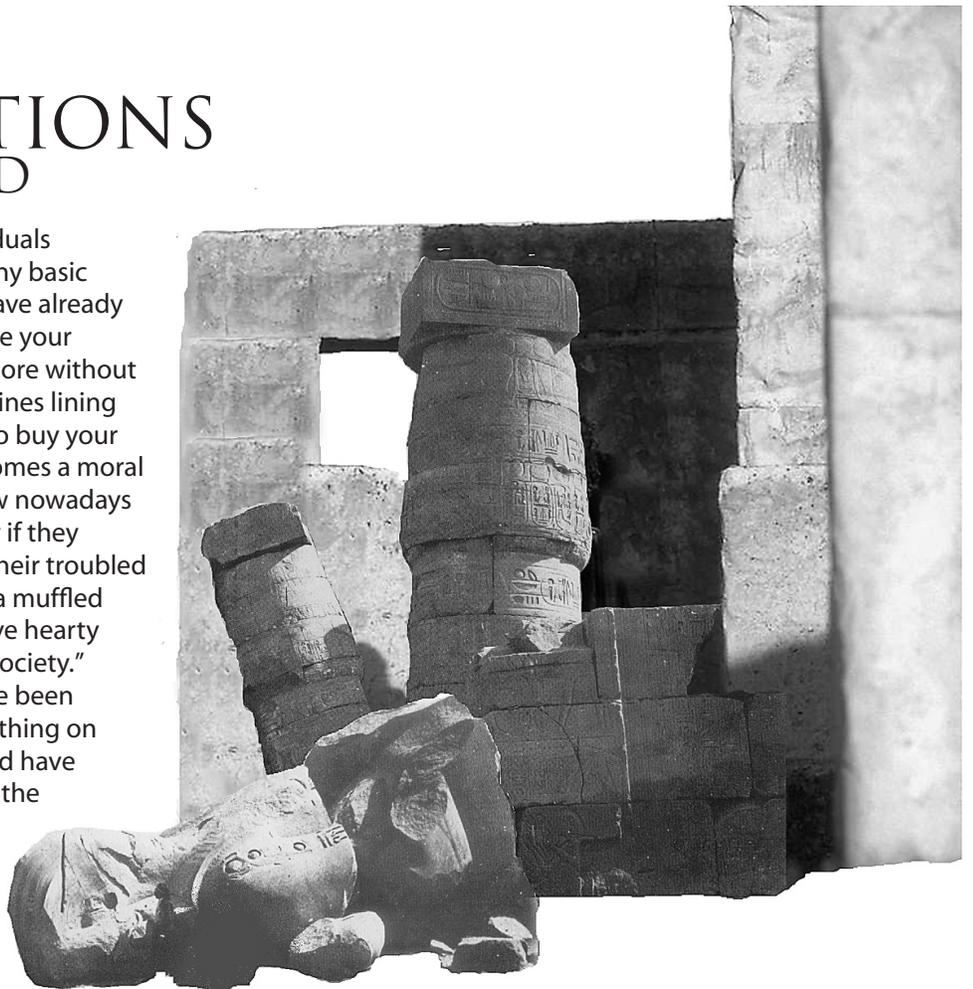
Conclusion: Proverbs 14:12 – *There is a way which seems right to man, but its end is the way of death.*

The way that leads to life is narrow and few find it, but anyone who wants to can find it. Enlightenment is the revelation of the treasure that is in Yahshua. ◉

WHEN THE FOUNDATIONS ARE DESTROYED

Society breaks down as individuals ignore their conscience. Today, many basic foundations of a healthy society have already been destroyed. You can't even take your children to the grocery store anymore without exposing them to indecent magazines lining the checkout counter. Just trying to buy your food there with your children becomes a moral dilemma for the conscientious. Few nowadays will speak up to the store manager if they disapprove. Some passively keep their troubled thoughts inside, or perhaps make a muffled comment about it, while others give hearty approval to this "advancement of society."

Not long ago it would not have been allowed to show a woman with nothing on but her underwear. The town would have boycotted such a store or perhaps the police would have even put a stop to it. When, where, and how did the change come in? Certainly it did not happen overnight. Little



("Foundations" continues on p.10)

WHEN THE FOUNDATIONS ARE DESTROYED (CONTINUED)

by little, the limits were pushed. If it happened too quickly the conscientious would have stopped it. But one step at a time, many were dulled to a point of silent toleration, leading to eventual acceptance, and culminating in approval. First a low-cut dress. Then a shorter skirt. Then a mini-skirt. After the mini-skirt controversy became old, the clothing on the models started becoming a little more see-through, until eventually there it was – a woman with nothing on but her underwear, right there in front of everyone.

So following the heels of this breakdown, can you call the increase in teenage pregnancies, broken marriages, abortion, AIDS, and single parents just a coincidence? Does not the unrestrained nudity and sexual enticement that children grow up with lead to adultery and fornication? While many organizations, government agencies, and individuals are searching for explanations for the problems of social diseases and pregnancy among the youth, the roots of these disasters are in plain view.

Sexual immorality, among other things, degrades the marriage covenant that God established in the very beginning as one of the pillars of human society. A man and a woman are to remain virgins until they are married to the one they saved themselves for. These two would then vow their love and loyalty to each other for life, regardless of the hardships that would come. Their faithfulness to each other would build a deep bond of love and trust. In this environment of love, it is possible to raise healthy, secure children who become the builders of a healthy society. When this environment is broken down, what is the effect on society?

Divorce, for one thing. I can only say that something deep in my heart felt like it turned to stone when, at age twelve, my sister's boyfriend came into the TV room and said, "You know, your daddy's packing his bags and leaving." I can't explain what happened that caused me to turn from little league sports and mowing lawns to being arrested for grand auto theft within a month. I surely was not cognitive of what was happening to my soul. Of course, my story is mild compared to many.

Obviously, when the foundations of marriage and the family break down, then children grow up frustrated and rebel against their parents. Then the very foundations of society are broken down completely.

Many children grow up with only one parent or perhaps only know one of their parents. Though the parents may go on with their lives, the children are deeply affected by the pain and insecurity of having parents who don't love each other enough to stay married. This foundational breakdown makes it hard for children to believe that they will grow up and marry someone who won't leave them.

Sexual immorality, however, is not the only element destroying the family in society today. Children also suffer from not having their mother at home to nurture them and create a secure home for them. So many mothers are out working now, and the children are left under the care of others, or perhaps even left alone. On the outside things might seem okay. But what is happening in the unseen parts of the children, in the formation of their character? It used to be that the role of homemaker was deeply respected in society, but now fewer and fewer women choose it.

My friend grew up in a small town in Maine, and her grandmother had a big wood-fired oven in the middle of her kitchen. Every day, she would wake up early, put on her apron, and start her work. She was so faithful for so many years that her kitchen became the center of town. Many would gather there throughout the day, knowing that this place of hospitality and friendship would always be there. When she finally died, people all over town felt disoriented, and years later they were still feeling the loss in their everyday lives.

This is simply an illustration of how much security the homemaker brings to society and especially to her children. But the woman's liberation movement caused many women to turn away from the wonderful labor of brooding over their precious children to seek after other things.

God told the woman in the Garden after she fell that she was to bear increased pain in childbirth, desire her husband, and let him rule over her. What did God want to happen through this? He desired that the family would be protected and that our hearts would stay tender, sensing our need for Him. So, in spite of all the good reasons one may think of to go beyond the boundaries of this basic foundation, the fruit is reaped in the children. Yes, some women may feel liberated, but it comes at the expense of their children who must bear the loss in their soul.

Have you ever considered the pain a woman bears in childbirth to be one of the foundations of society? The loss of the brooding instinct in women has much to do with the modern treatment of childbirth as a surgical procedure requiring hospitalization and anesthetics. Yet the pain a woman experiences in childbirth is meant to deeply bond her to her child. The husband likewise is deeply bonded to his wife by seeing what she suffers to give birth to his child. This naturally helps the man to uphold the respect the children are to have for their mother. And surely it also causes something to happen between the woman and God as she willingly receives this pain and prays for the strength to endure it.

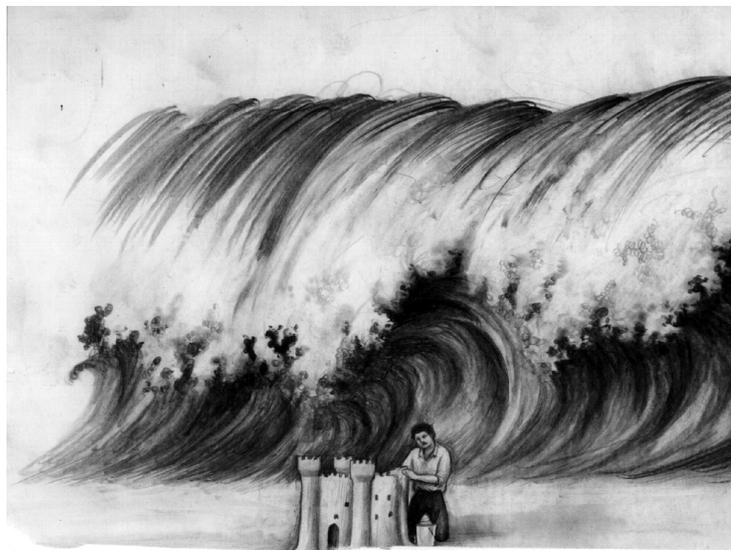
No, the so-called "great minds" of today don't often look to these simple foundations for answers. Rather, they look for answers that won't require a change of lifestyle or loss of comfort. So the solutions to these sociological dilemmas appear as great mysteries. Complicated reasoning has replaced wisdom, and selfishness grows like weeds.

How easy it is to turn from social responsibility to pleasure, considering what children are taught to value in school. How many children are required to pass a course on the sanctity of the marriage covenant, or on the value of working hard for a living? Yet the survival of the human race, and even the planet itself, depends on these age-old foundations. To the degree that someone avoids living by his own sweat, someone else must sweat for him. Even if you have enough money to live in careless ease, there is a poor worker somewhere on this planet who provided for you by his sweat. Is his life really worth so much less than yours? The deep responsibilities of justice aren't being formed in our schools, so children are praised and rewarded for attaining to jobs where they don't have to sweat for a living.

Nor do the great universities that groom the future leaders of our civilization promote the foundation of social responsibility over personal achievement. Most who go there are looking for ways to earn the most by the least labor, leaving the suffering for the poor of society. Yet God established after the Fall that man should work by the sweat of his brow to support himself and his family. This foundation helps the man stay conscientious. It helps him remember his need for his Creator and his responsibility to judge the evil tendencies that work in him. When this foundation breaks down, a man's priorities shift from his responsibilities as a man to the gratification of his selfishness.

The polluted consciences of such men promote polluting the environment. Who is responsible for all the pollution and endangered species? Who is responsible for the breakdown of the ozone layer? We will be called to account some day by our Creator who gave us this earth to care for.

If each man were simply working hard by the sweat of his brow to provide for the needs of his family, while being mindful of his poorer neighbors, then we wouldn't need



expensive government programs. We also wouldn't have the pollution that the relentless pursuit of labor-saving technology produces, or the life of careless ease that inevitably leads to moral breakdown. The rise in sexual immorality and violence among our youth is simply the culmination of forsaking the basic foundations established by our Creator.

Who isn't asking deep questions about the senseless killings going on in the schools? When there is a rise in evil behavior, shouldn't we question what has changed to allow this behavior to exist?

What happens to murderers these days? Twelve states plus the District of Columbia no longer have the death penalty, and most states rarely sentence even first-degree murderers to death. Yet the execution of murderers is another basic foundation established by our Creator during a time in human history when violence had almost destroyed mankind. God said to Noah after the flood that He would require an account for human life. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image." (Genesis 9:6) So what are the consequences for going against this basic foundation of human society?

Innocent blood pollutes the earth. The most horrible pollution is to murder another man who is created in the image of God. This is the ultimate rebellion against our Creator. The almighty God who governs the universe commanded that such a one be put to death by the human government ruling the land, so that society would be cleansed from the innocent blood and the proper fear would go into anyone who might consider such an act. So what kind of person would take lightly the violence shown on television and in the movies and cartoons that the little children are set in front of?

When the basic foundations in the individual break down, then comes the snowball effect of these foundations breaking down within the fabric of society.

Individuals turn from what they know is right, silence their conscience, and eventually exchange the truth of God for a lie. They become darkened in their minds to these basic truths that man has known about for millennia, resulting in foolish speculations and philosophies about what the truth is. Such people are inventors of evil, and, in their own hearts, elevate themselves against the truth of God's commands. They also give hearty approval to the breakdown of God's foundations for human society.

Rightly did the psalmist ask, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3) Everyone in the world, whether good or bad, is still part of the same society. Therefore, if the foundations crumble, everyone is destroyed together. In other words, everyone is on the same boat and that boat is sinking. But there is another boat. ☉

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

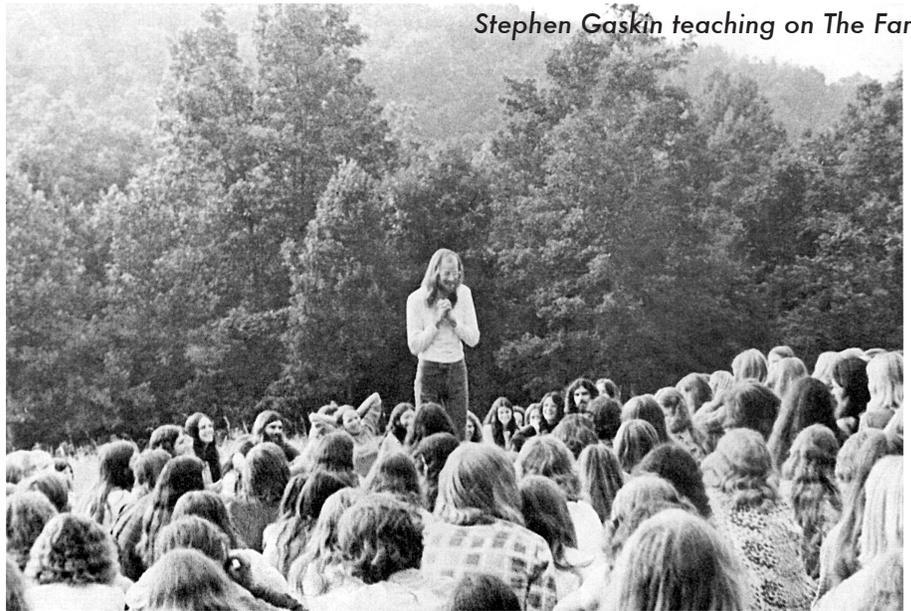
I was 15 years old when Walmart moved into my town. They leveled a popular sledding hill, complete with a cozy pine grove at the top, and put in a sprawling parking lot — one more thing to add to my list of things that are wrong with the world. There was something so unsettling about that kind of change, especially for someone as spiritually volatile as I was. I felt I could lose my grip at any moment. I disengaged myself from others. I spent a lot of time alone. I was euphoric, and then depressed. I got involved in things... high things and low things, things I wouldn't tell my teachers about. I walked in the woods around my town, in the park, by myself for hours, wondering why I was alive. What difference could my life make? At night I would cry in my bed, trembling, shaking, and desperate. I was filled with anxiety, plagued with a bad conscience. I was too proud to go to my parents for help. I hid the bad things from them, pretending to be all right.

Too many people on the planet, I thought. I'll be the first to go.

I used to fantasize about suicide. I never actually thought I'd carry it out, but I sure pondered on it a lot. My favorite scenario was drowning. There was something appealing about being immersed in water, enveloped by cool suffocation, hidden from sight. I wanted to disappear. I couldn't face people. I felt sick in my spirit, and I didn't want anyone to see my true condition.

At the same time, I wanted to do something radical, something amazing with my life, something that would be an example to others. Perhaps they would follow in my footsteps.

Wait a minute! Hadn't I heard a story like this somewhere? Yes, there



Stephen Gaskin teaching on The Farm

was a man who died for all. He never asked, "What's in it for me?" My mother had told me about Jesus when I was growing up. She had a picture of him by the side of her bed. She told me that he was the kindest, the sweetest, and the most tender-hearted man there ever was. She told me that he loved people, and that he saved people. She also told me that he wasn't to be found in Christianity, where they talked about him but didn't love like he did.

Life on the Farm

My mother had been raised a Baptist in a small town in Maine. She turned away from it in her twenties and became a hippie in her thirties. I was born in one of the biggest hippie communities in the United States, called Gaskin's Farm. When things went downhill on the Farm and it obviously wasn't working, my parents left, not knowing what they were going to offer me or my brothers. They had thought the ideal of community was going to last forever.

I had grown up with early memories of people living a common life together, where sharing was the norm, and helping one another was just what folks did. I remember my mother asking when I was a child, "Who will take this pound of sugar to the neighbor?" I responded with excitement, "I WILL!" It was so much fun to love people. This was what life was all about, I was sure.

Something great had happened, but it hadn't lasted. Certainly, nothing in the mainstream could satisfy me after that. I yearned for a life with purpose and meaning — people living together, not divided up into little boxes all across the towns and cities, with their own separate finances, their own cars, their own families, their own separate lives. I knew there was something greater. There had to be. What had happened to the movement I was born in? My parents were nostalgic about their experience in community. I was cynical.



It's not hard to believe that if a person gives up his life to God, that God will benefit. It is far more difficult to trust that life will also go better for you.

If you stop and think about God for a moment, realizing that he created the universe in all its majesty and order, then you could surely come to the conclusion that your life would go better if lived according to his intended purpose for you.

Things really clicked for me when I was able to lay my eyes on a demonstration of God's life. I met people who were living their lives in obedience to the commandments of Yahshua, the Messiah, the Son of God, loving one another as he would. Among them, I was loved. They reached out to me and were hospitable. They invited me to visit anytime and to stay as long as I liked. They were always warm and friendly. If it weren't for this contact with real human beings, manifesting God's Spirit and love, I would never have believed.

The first time I met the Twelve Tribes in one of their communities, I was startled by their clean, simple life together. Modest dress, wholesome, carefully prepared food, and simple fellowship with wonderful music and dancing imprinted my first visit with them into my memory forever.

It was obvious that they loved one another. When someone knocked over a cup of water, another would grab a mop and clean up the spill without even being asked. When one spoke, others listened, interested in hearing what she had to say. I was drawn to their warmth for one another. It could not be contained; it overflowed to me. Then they would share from the Scriptures. They would open the Bible and read. I couldn't figure it out. What did this book that I had ignored all my life have to do with the wonderful life I saw before me? Why were they even reading at all? I was so fed up with books at the time I met them that I imagined the ideal society to be non-literate.

How do I find enlightenment?

Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:17)

I guess anyone who wants to know the truth must ask himself whether he is willing to hear it from another. If you only want your own understanding, you don't really want the truth. I have learned that true enlightenment is the standard of love shining brightly into my life, exposing all of my selfish motives and harmful thoughts, yet at the same time communicating to the depths of my heart hope to change. A person is truly enlightened only to the extent that he is honestly facing his own needy, fallen condition. The people of the Twelve Tribes Communities loved me so much that I finally let down my defenses and acknowledged the truth about myself, knowing that I would not be rejected. We're all full of the same junk — made in the image of God, but fallen, full of tendencies to sin.

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come

into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who practices evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

(John 3:19-21)

Love is good fruit from a good vine.

They loved me so much that I couldn't stand being away from them. My visits became more and more frequent. I asked many questions and tried to lower the cost of having the life that they shared.

The fruit looked sweet, but I had to count the cost. *If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)*

Months went by and the cost never changed. The gospel is always the same.

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26-33)

Then two things happened at once, while I was sitting in their Friday night gathering, enjoying the music and watching young and old alike dance in a circle together. I realized that it was going to be completely okay to trust their God, to give up everything to him, without reserve and without condition. And at the same time, it dawned in my heart that if I did not utterly forsake my life in exchange for his life, then I was a total coward.

How could I turn away from love? I could not go back to ignorance. The terms of peace did not change. I changed. Isn't that what enlightenment is all about?

Now things are so much better. I have learned not to ask, "What's in it for me?" For in love, there is abundant



life for everyone. I have finally found the way to be enlightened. It comes from being forgiven and walking in the light. I'm so happy to be on the path of life. □

~ Shemuel

WHAT'S IN A NAME



Some time ago when I was in college, I was searching for something meaningful in life. I wasn't finding it in school. I had been primed all my life to go to college and then on to "life"; whatever that meant. Somehow, being one more cog in the machine didn't appeal to me. I wanted true friends and I wanted to do something with my life that really made a difference. I was experiencing neither.

A few years earlier in high school, I was at a Grateful Dead concert in much of the same state of mind as I would be several years later — lonely and searching for something.

When I left the concert someone must have handed me a little paper. It was from some people who lived in a community. This was very interesting to me since I was looking for something like this. However, in the busyness of my life, I put it into my closet and forgot about it.

As the years went by, I would see them at many of the events that I went to. They were beginning to capture my interest. One day a friend and I happened to park right behind their big maroon-and-cream-colored bus. On the back it read, "We Know the Way, We'll Bring You Home." I thought to myself, "That's what I want, a real home." As we were sitting there, I asked my friend if he knew anything about them.

He answered, "Yeah, they are some community that follows God."

When he said this, my heart leapt inside. That was what I was looking for — a community where people loved the God of the Bible. So I asked him, "Do they believe in Jesus?"

"No way," was his reply, "they follow some guru called 'Yahshua.'"

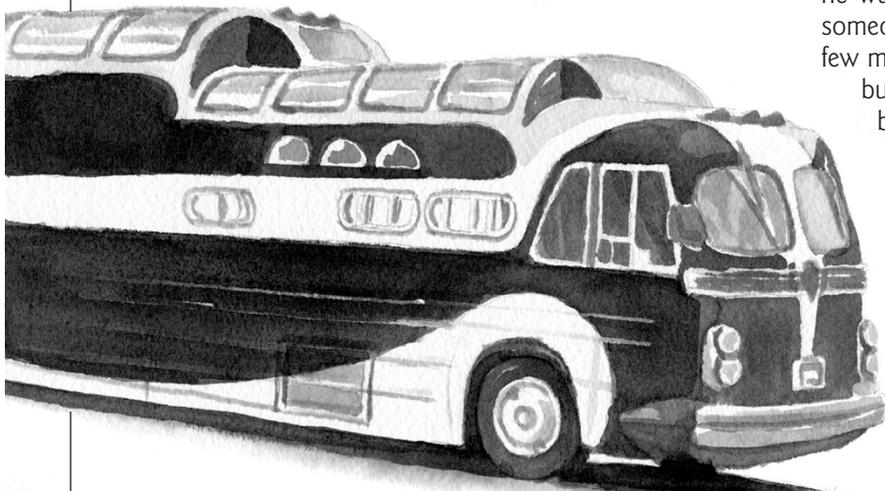
"Yahshua," I thought to myself, "who is that?" I was disappointed, to say the least. These people seemed so nice, but if they didn't follow the Son of God then I didn't want to have anything to do with them. If there was one thing I didn't need to get involved with, it was some strange religion. So I decided to steer clear of them.

Eventually, there I was in college, still very lonely and still searching. Some friends, Deadheads like myself, had invited me to several Dead shows that would be happening that summer. I decided to go with them. At one of the first shows, I saw that same bus and I was instantly intrigued again. Something about these people seemed so special, but, I had to remind myself, they didn't follow the Son of God. It had been a couple of years since I had first come in contact with them. I had gone my way, searching for something real, but had found nothing.

At one of those shows, I was walking through the parking lot and saw a good friend of mine. Oddly enough, he was sitting very near that bus. He was talking with someone and I sat down to join the conversation. After a few minutes, I asked him if he knew anything about that bus. He told me that I should talk to the other man, because he was part of the community that was traveling on the bus.

I was excited, since I had never actually talked to anyone from the bus; I had just heard things about them. The things I had heard about them following "Yahshua" had kept me away for almost two years. But I was full of questions about the community and what they believed. My first question was, of course, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

To my surprise, the man said, "Of course we do. Our entire life revolves around Him and His teachings!"



I could hardly believe it!

He went on to explain to me that while most people call the Son of God Jesus, they preferred His original Hebrew name, Yahshua. He told me that it actually meant “God’s Salvation.”

The more he talked the more everything began to make sense to me. I had grown up in a society that had caused me to question everything, but somehow I never questioned what had been handed down to me at church. I thought that because these people didn’t say *Jesus*, although they were full of love and kindness, they must be bad. But what I found out was that *Jesus* wasn’t even the Savior’s name!

So now, as you have guessed, I am a part of this people who follow the Son of God, and I would like to share with you the amazing things I have learned about His name.

In the days of John the Baptist and the Son of God, the preserved language of the devout Jews was Hebrew. So, when the angel Gabriel brought the good news to the Hebrew virgin, Miriam (or *Mary* in English), that she would give birth to the Savior of the world, and told her what His name would be, what language do you suppose he spoke? Hebrew, of course! And certainly Miriam and Yoceph (or *Joseph* in English) named the child just as the angel had commanded them — *Yahshua*.

In Matthew 1:21, your Bible probably reads, “...and you shall call His name *Jesus*, for He will save His people from their sins.” But the name *Jesus* is a modern English adaptation of the Greek name, *Iesous*, which is itself a corruption of the original Hebrew name *Yahshua*. The name *Jesus* or *Iesous* has no meaning of its own,¹ but the Hebrew name *Yahshua* literally means *Yahweh’s Salvation*,² which makes sense out of what the angel said in Matthew 1:21, “...you shall call His name *Yahshua* [Yahweh’s Salvation], for He shall save His people from their sins.”

If you look in an old King James Bible, you will find the name *Jesus* in these two passages:

*Which also our fathers that came after brought in with **Jesus** into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David...* (Acts 7:45, KJV)

*For if **Jesus** had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.* (Hebrews 4:8, KJV)

However, if you look in any modern Bible, including more recently printed King James Bibles, you will find that in place of the name *Jesus* they use the name *Joshua*, for in the context it is clear that it is speaking there of Moses’ successor and not the Son of God. But in the Greek manuscript the name in both of these verses is *Iesous*.

You see, *Joshua* is the popular English transliteration of the Hebrew name *Yahshua*. Joshua of the Old Testament had the same name as the One called *Jesus* in the New Testament, for Joshua was the prophetic forerunner of the Son of God, bringing Israel into the Promised Land and

leading them to victory over their enemies. But since the translators obviously know this fact, why do they only translate *Iesous* as *Joshua* in these two verses, and as *Jesus* everywhere else?

The fact is, the name of God’s Son was not even pronounced as “Jesus” in English until the 16th century, simply because there was no “J” sound or letter in English until then.³ The modern letter “J” developed from the letter “I” which began to be written with a “tail” when it appeared as the first letter in a word. So in old English the name now written as *Jesus* was actually written and pronounced much like the original Greek *Iesous*. Eventually the hard “J” sound crept into the English language to accompany the different way of writing the initial “I” in the name.

You may also find it interesting that in Acts 26:14-15, it says that the apostle Paul heard the name of the Son of God pronounced “in the Hebrew tongue” by the Son of God Himself, so he certainly didn’t hear the Greek name *Iesous* or the English name *Jesus*, but rather the Hebrew name, the name above all names, *Yahshua*.⁴

I’d much rather call the Son of God, my Savior, by His true name — the name His own mother, Miriam, and foster father, Yoceph, and all of His Jewish friends called Him. Not only have I found out what His true name is, but His true Body on earth as well. I am so thankful to have finally found true rest with the true Savior. Please take the time to read the other articles in this paper. You are always welcome to come visit us in any of our communities. Our addresses are on the back of this paper. ❁

Michael



Endnotes

¹ Some authorities say that *Iesous* is derived from an earlier form meaning “healing Zeus,” the supreme god of ancient Greek mythology.

² *Yah* is the personal name of God, and *shua* is from a Hebrew root word that means “to save.” God identified Himself to Moses as *YAH* (meaning “I AM”) in Exodus 3:14, as in Psalm 68:4 (“whose name is Yah”), and as most familiar in the word *Halleluyah* (“Praise Yah”). And in John 5:43 and 17:11, *Yahshua* says that He came in His Father’s name, “the name which You have given Me” (NASB), so it is not surprising that the Father’s name would be incorporated into the Son’s name, *Yahshua*.

³ *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 1496,1507.

⁴ Philippians 2:9; Acts 4:12

Who We Are

We are a people who are being gathered together from just about every conceivable background to serve our Master Yahshua, the Son of God. In him is enlightenment, and in him we are being gathered. What I mean is, upon meeting this people that we are now a part of, and hearing the words of truth, each of us began to see more clearly the love that our Creator has for us.

We saw the worth of the Son of God because of what he did for us, dying in our place. When we understood in our hearts how much he loved us and what he went through to rescue us from death, we couldn't help but respond by living the rest of our lives entirely devoted to him.

One thing he spoke much about when he walked the earth was his desire for his followers to love one another. He said that he wanted their love for one another to be hot, not just lukewarm. So we spend our days expressing and cultivating this love towards one another in practical ways. Because he forgave us (and continues to do so) for all of our hurtful ways, we want to do the same for one another. This is what enables us to continue this very close life with one another day after day.

What else can we do? Where else could we go? We've found the truth and we're being set free! We are a brand new culture ~ something that hasn't been seen on the earth for a long, long time. Why don't you come and see for yourself? You won't regret that you did.

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