

Faith: The Better Way ~ Part 2b

Messianic Jews 11:4-7

Letter to the Messianic Jews

In my last post, we began a new mini-series on our topic of **Faith: The Better Way** by exploring the **Definition and Illustration of Trusting**. We started by defining **Trust** (Faith) in **Messianic Jews 11:1-3**. In this post, we start to explore what many call **The Hall of Faith** or as Stern might say **The Hall of Trust**. We begin in **Messianic Jews 11:4-7** to learn of the **Trust of the Early Patriarchs**.

"⁴ By trusting, Hevel [Able] offered a greater sacrifice than Kayin [Cain]; because of this, he was attested as righteous, with God giving him this testimony on the ground of his gifts. Through having trusted, he still continues to speak, even though he is dead. ⁵ By trusting, Hanokh [Enoch] was taken away from this life without seeing death — "He was not to be found, because God took him away" — for he has been attested as having been, prior to being taken away, well pleasing to God. ⁶ And without trusting, it is impossible to be well pleasing to God, because whoever approaches Him must trust that He does exist and that He becomes a Rewarder to those who seek Him out. ⁷ By trusting, Noach [Noah], after receiving divine warning about things as yet unseen, was filled with holy fear and built an ark to save his household. Through this trusting, he put the world under condemnation and received the righteousness that comes from trusting." ~ Messianic Jews 11:4-7 (CJB)

The author of the **Messianic Jews** begins his honor roll of trust with the name of **Hevel** whose story is in Genesis 4:1-15. **Kayin** tilled the ground and brought God an offering of the fruits of the earth; **Hevel** was a shepherd and brought God a blood offering from his flocks. God preferred the gift of **Hevel** to the gift of **Kayin** who moved to bitter jealousy, murdered his brother and became an outcast upon the earth. In the original, the meaning of the story is ambiguous. There is no indication why God preferred the gift of **Hevel** to the gift of **Kayin**. It may well be that the only offering which a man can properly bring to God is his most precious possession. This is life itself, and to the **Messianic Jews** blood always stood for life. We can well understand that because when the blood flows away, life ebbs away. On that principle, the only true sacrifice to God was a sacrifice of blood. **Hevel's** sacrifice was of a living creature, **Kayin's** was not; therefore **Hevel's** was the more acceptable.

***Whereas Kayin's** offering of field crops was rejected, **Hevel's** animal *sacrifice* was accepted, **God giving him this testimony** in Genesis 4:3-10, which says that the voice of his blood cries out from the ground. Through Scripture, which mentions this voice, **Hevel continues to speak**. **Hevel** is referred to in the New Testament at Matthew 23:35 and 1 Yochanan 3:12. In Jewish writings, the 6th-century **Tanchuma** (Balak 16) gives **Hevel** second place in a list of *"seven righteous men who built seven altars, from Adam to Moses."* ¹*

There are those who accuse God of being unfair to **Kayin**. How could Kayin have known what to offer? If he didn't know, why did God punish him for it? God's nature is such that He always gives those who sin an opportunity to repent. This is precisely what he did in Genesis 4:6-7. Unfortunately **Kayin**, instead of rising to the occasion, ***"Kayin had words with Hevel his brother; then one time, when they were in the field, Kayin turned on Hevel his brother and killed him."*** ~ Genesis 4:8 (CJB) It was for this deliberate murder that he was punished (Genesis 4:9-15), not for making the wrong offering.

Hanokh (Genesis 5:18, 21-24), like **Elijah**, is an object of rabbinic speculation, since both are reported to have been taken by God without dying. ***Was well pleasing to God***. This is the Septuagint's rendering; the Hebrew text says he ***"walked with God."***

For me, verse 6 is the most critical instruction in the passage. It continues the definition of **trusting** begun in v. 1. ***Whoever approaches** God **must trust that He does exist***. This rules out atheism and agnosticism. But God answers people who are not sure whether God is there and are praying to find out if He is.

¹ Jewish New Testament Commentary by David Stern.

Although God is who He is for eternity, **He becomes** something He is not for others ~ **a rewarder of those who seek him out**. This idea rules out deism, the belief that God started the universe but now it runs by itself without His involvement, and it underlies the concepts of judgment, heaven, and hell. The idea that it is more exalted to behave appropriately regardless of whether God will reward is prideful and anti-biblical; God does not require us to simulate a supposedly higher motive than He provides! In fact, such behavior is a form of self-righteousness.

Noach, after receiving divine warning about things as yet unseen, namely, of course, the Flood (Genesis 6:13-7:1). Like **Enoch, Noach** walked with God (Genesis 6:9). **Through this trusting, he put the world under condemnation**. Righteous behavior condemns sin (Romans 12:20-21). **The righteousness that comes from trusting** is explained in Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:17, 3:22, 4:13, 9:30.

As a side note, Barclay has some fascinating comments on this passage which I have included in a PDF document you can access [here](#).

In my next post, we will continue on our topic of the **Definition and Illustration of Trusting** by beginning to examine the **Trust of the Avraham and His Children** in **Messianic Jews 11:8-22**.