

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

Ezra Expounds the Law

Nehemiah 8:1-3

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

Standing in a pulpit of wood in the street before the Water Gate (Aquarius) Ezra read to the people from the Book of the Law of Moses. Two classes of disciples are mentioned in the above verses: the masses who could understand only the exoteric law (the congregation, both men and women) and those that could hear with understanding (those who knew the inner meaning of the words they heard).

This public instruction led to the deeply esoteric Rite of the Dedication of the Walls soon to take place. But Ezra also instructed the people in the holy nature of the seasonal feasts, particularly the one they were then to celebrate: the Feast of Booths, sacred to the Autumn Equinox. The exoteric group reveled in pageantry and ceremonial, while the esoteric group, "those who could hear with understanding," witnessed and took part in the true Mysteries, of which the other was but a shadow.

In this convocation of Ezra's Bible scholars we see the origin of the synagogue (assembly). The Great Assembly of Hebrew kabbalistic tradition also relates to this event. However, its prototype is to be found in Schools of the Prophets. The Great Assembly of the kabbalists is, in fact, comparable to the Great White Lodge of the Theosophists, the Order of the Rose Cross of the Rosicrucians, the House of the Holy Grail of the Templars — the Invisible Church (Ecclesia) of Catholicism.

The Autumn Feast

Nehemiah 8:14,15

And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the

mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.

The exoteric purpose of the autumnal feast was to give thanks unto God for the fruit of the vine. There was dancing, music, feasting and brilliant illumination of the entire city of Jerusalem. The Mishna states that pious and distinguished men danced before the people with lighted flambeaux in their hands. In a procession celebrants carried golden pitchers filled with water from the mystic pool of Siloam. When they reached the Water Gate, three long blasts were blown on a trumpet; the priest then ascended the altar whereon were two silver basins, one to the west for water and one to the east for wine. Every morning during the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles, a priest drew three quarts of water from the fountain of Siloh in a golden vessel. This water was carried with joyous solemnity through the Water Gate to the Temple and poured out to the southwest of the altar. Exotericists interpret this to be a symbol of rain or an offering to a rain god; but esotericists know it was a symbol of the Holy Ghost. We recognize in the Water Gate the constellation Aquarius, whose celestial hieroglyph is a man pouring water from an urn. Aquarius, like Capricorn, is ruled by the planet Saturn (figuratively represented in the patriarch Abraham), to whom the Day of

Saturn (Saturday) was sacred. The Hebrews set this day aside as their Sabbath, their "day of rest for the soul."

A ceremony similar to the above is described by Cicero in connection with the Feast of Bacchus. Every morning of the Feast period a priest drew water in the same manner, mingled it with wine and, amid songs of rejoicing, poured it on the altar as a libation to Dionysus. The mingling of wine with water, or the changing of water into wine, occurs in all Mystery rituals having as their object purification of the emotions through the practice of beauty so a neophyte may later qualify for Initiation into inner-plane Mysteries.

It was also customary in ancient Israel to build a synagogue beside a stream of water. This custom was rooted in Sumarian antiquity, for the Moon God was the ruler of oceans and streams — being, in truth, the Voice of Many Waters. When we read of a god's "riding on a cloud," "speaking in the thunder," "wielding the lightning as a sword," it is evident that the Moon God is meant, as the ancients recognized there was a connection between the Moon and Water phenomena. In Initiation by Water, that pertains to overcoming the lower emotional nature, Angel (Hierarchy of the Moon) attend upon an aspirant during his trials; their voices are heard in a chorus of rejoicing when a successful candidate emerges from the Waters into the Light and Fire of the Spiritual Sun.

The Feast of Tabernacles is an initiatory festival of the Autumn Equinox. It is not, however, the supreme event of that Season. Ezekiel accords highest honors to the Feast of Atonement, calculated according to the time of the New Moon relative to the Fall Equinox. So long as an ego is imprisoned by earth-plane consciousness his cycles will be governed by life-tides of the earth. But in Solar Initiations the Initiate learns to place himself within the orb of the Sun, as it were, and from that level of consciousness all earthly places and times are alike to him. It is for this reason that Ezekiel exalted the Feast of Atonement above the Feast of Tabernacles.

Nature is ever an analogue of man; in her wondrous workings he may discover his own spiritual being. Hence, the Masonic admonition, "Study nature, brother, for she bears the stamp of divinity."

The Autumn Equinox marks the harvest celebration, when earth is heavy with the fragrant fruitage of the year. Then man also reaps his soul's harvest from the year's activities weighed in the balance of Libra's Scales. Saturn, the great disciplinarian, is exalted in Libra. At this season a disciple who aspires to take another step on the Path of Initiation is specially assisted by cosmic powers, for he comes under the beneficent ray of Venus, ruler of Libra. Beyond the gloom of our objective world at this holy time, Temple gates

swing wide; the peal of bells and strains of heavenly music. summon all "who are awake" to enter and take joy in the ceremonial of the Mystic Marriage. (Libra is the seventh sign of the Zodiac, corresponding to the Seventh House, the House of Marriage.)

In the Greater Mysteries of Eleusis, celebrated at the Autumn Equinox, neophytes carried lighted torches in remembrance of the search made by the Goddess of Grain, Demeter, for her daughter, Persephone — part of a purification ritual preparatory to the Sacred Occurrence. These Mysteries culminated in the revelation of a reaped corn stalk, symbol of the sacred marriage. Amid a blaze of torches, the fair young God Bacchus was borne along the sacred way to the Temple of Eleusis for the midnight ceremonial. At the Spring Equinox, Persephone's return through the young corn from the darkness of the underworld was similarly celebrated in a processional of light and rejoicing.

After an aspirant had garnered his harvest he brought it to the Temple door for weighing. If "the revealing of the cornstalk" so indicated, the magic portals of the Temple opened that he might partake of the feast of the sacred marriage solemnized that holy autumn night. The cornstalk of the Greek Mysteries is paralleled in Hebrew esotericism by the Rod of Aaron and the blossoming staff of Joseph. It

was suggested in the Egyptian harvest festival when the Pharaoh, impersonating the Sun God Horus, walked before the sacred white bull and reaped the first sheaves of barley to insure peace and plenty for his people in the year ahead.

The Feast of Tabernacles was at one time the culminating spectacle of the autumnal Mysteries, at which time celebrants dwelt for seven days in specially constructed booths built of wood, such as the olive, cedar or palm, that had been blessed. All this had a religious significance. In Babylonian rituals similar booths were referred to as sacred marriage houses; it is significant that they were supposed to be used as cells for meditation upon spiritual matters.

It is therefore seen that the Mystic Marriage, central Mystery of the Gnostics, was of Hebrew as well as of Greek and Babylonian extraction, its biblical parallel being the Feast of Tabernacles, sacred to the sign Libra.

Also under Libran influence were the marriage laws instituted by Ezra. The Hebrews were a mixed people whose destiny called for intensive inbreeding. By harsh and restrictive laws, Ezra sought to create a pure race wherein the Master Jesus might find a body suited to His rebirth. Upon inner heavens his Star was already shining above Palestine at that remote time, and great Seers of the Restoration lived and labored under its rays. The descent of

that Star was not far off, so stern measures were necessary if a proper race-body was to be ready for His coming.

Ezra's marriage reforms evolved the people who bodied forth the Christ. It was the destiny of this people to disperse and amalgamate with the Gentiles after Christ's Advent, when the matrix from which the jewel has been taken was no more needed. But they became entangled in nationalism and racism; they resisted the divine decree, and thus brought down upon themselves great and unnecessary suffering.

— ***Corinne Heline***