

# IN THE *He Created* LIKENESS *Them Male* OF G-D: *and Female*



“Does it bother anyone else that a woman can be the *Director of Children’s Ministries* but cannot be the *Pastor to Children* as a man in the same position would be titled? Is it disconcerting to anyone else that a woman with the spiritual gift of teaching and exhortation is permitted by some to teach only in an all-woman setting, or only to our children? Are our children merely second-class citizens, too? Is this what the Bible *really teaches?*”

– Rev. Dale A. Witherington, M.Div., Consultant to Growing, Healthy, Strategic Churches

## A Study of Religious Anti-Feminism

*A Theological Position Paper by Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman  
Seed of Abraham Messianic Congregation*

## DEDICATION

To my loving wife, Alberta, who supported me in this special project and has believed in me when no one else did. May you be honored by the truths that bring liberation to the women of G-d who read this article. May you be honored for your loving service to G-d, our family, and all the many believers you have ministered to over our 25 years in Messianic ministry. You are a gift and a blessing from G-d to my life. I love you.

## ENDORSEMENTS

Does it bother anyone else that a woman can be the *Director of Children's Ministries* but cannot be the *Pastor to Children* as a man in the same position would be titled? Is it disconcerting to anyone else that a woman with the spiritual gift of teaching and exhortation is permitted by some to teach only in an all-woman setting, or only to our children? Are our children merely second-class citizens, too? Is this what the Bible *really teaches*? Our Messianic brother, Rabbi Ed Rothman, offers us a fascinating, scholarly and intensely practical exposé on the way G-d has used and continues to use women as *spiritual leaders* to grow His Kingdom on earth. It is my hope and prayer that the eyes, ears, hearts and minds of the Christian community will be open to hearing and applying the message Rabbi Rothman so delicately dissects; to the ultimate praise of G-d our King, and to the edification of His Body on earth, the Church of our L-RD Jesus the Messiah, both men *and* women.

– Rev. Dale A. Witherington, M.Div., Consultant to Growing, Healthy, Strategic Churches

During more than sixty years in active Christian ministry, the hard struggle endured by devout women of faith that sensed a divine call from G-d, has moved my heart. Consequently, I have put many hours of biblical research in a serious attempt to open doors of opportunity for them to follow their divine call into various types of service to G-d, since such service is thoroughly biblical.

Imagine my delight when a biblical study on women in ministry, developed by Rabbi Rothman, arrived from his office! Though I have done considerable work on this theme, and have read good works by other bible scholars, I find this up-to-date and thoroughly contemporary study on women in ministry to be one of the most sensible, and practical scriptural efforts that has ever come across my study desk! It is as complete and biblical as anything that I have ever read on the subject, it is based on common sense and biblical revelation and is a very essential message of spiritual truth, setting women of G-d free in this important juncture of spiritual history. Ed is to be congratulated on his excellent presentation and study of this galling question. I can think of no other biblical subject that has suffered more negative and unscholarly treatment from pulpits and seminaries than this one. I thank G-d for a man like Rabbi Rothman, who has ignored the influence of negative thinking and teaching on the matter and has intellectually and spiritually developed a liberating concept that accepts equality of godly women with godly men as divinely commissioned servants of the Living G-d.

– Dr. M. G. McLuhan, D.D., President, International Ministerial Fellowship

# IN THE LIKENESS OF G-D: *Male and Female He Created Them*

A Theological Position Paper by Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

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**T**HE SECOND PARAGRAPH of the Declaration of Independence begins with these inspiring words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” These soul-stirring statements were meant to establish a new kind of republic where all human beings were to be given equal rights. Yet we have seen that women have just recently begun to enjoy a semblance of equality in government as well as in business, entertainment, and sports. In the religious world things are moving at a much slower pace. I believe this is the result of antiquated theology and gender-biased thinking that has permeated society since the dawn of human history.

As a Messianic Rabbi I have been asked a question many times over the course of many years that unfortunately has been difficult to answer. The question is, “Can women be elders?” Sadly, this question is not unwarranted since the New Covenant seems to prohibit women from speaking and does not specifically endorse women as elders. Contrary to this, I have always felt strongly in my heart that G-d<sup>1</sup> can, will, and does use women powerfully in His Kingdom.

If we search the scriptures, we will find many examples of godly women who were used to bring about divinely initiated change. They were able to bring their unique and significant gifts into difficult situations to fulfill G-d’s Kingdom purposes for that critical moment in Israel’s history. In Genesis 21:12, G-d exhorts Abraham to harken to Sarah’s counsel concerning Ishmael, going against his overwhelming, strong paternal feelings for his firstborn. Imagine the *tsuris* (trouble) if Abraham had disregarded her difficult directive and made Ishmael his heir instead of Isaac? Oy vey, let’s not go there.

When I first began to study and do the research for this paper, I thought that the only issue was simply to demonstrate that G-d could use women in offices of ministry today. But a much larger purpose has emerged as I have been exposed to a small portion of the kind of inhumane,

ungodly attitudes and behavior that women have been forced to endure. It is not unlike the abominable treatment that many minority groups have been made to suffer because of the color of their skin or the station of their birth. In this case, both Judaism and Christianity taught that to be born of the female gender marked you as a lesser being in the eyes of G-d and man. This isn’t scriptural; it is the ignorant, uninformed tradition of men, myself included! Thus, this position paper on anti-feminism has taken on a much larger objective. May G-d be pleased to use it for His larger Kingdom purposes. May it open more than a few minds and soften many more hearts. May these words reach men who are willing to consider certain insights that have been overlooked. These age-old issues have blighted the landscape of faith in Messiah for far too long. May we honestly honor the revelation of Galatians 3:28, “...**there is neither slave nor free, male nor female**, for all are one in Messiah Y’shua.” We’ve abolished slavery, isn’t it time to release the women of G-d who make up what amounts to the other half of His army?

One of the most common arguments against women having authority over men is that as a gender, they are generally more emotional and moved more deeply by their feelings. Some believe women tend to be irrational, less logical, and less able to make difficult, objective decisions required by those in pastoral responsibility. Although that may be true of some women, it is also true of some men. Just as there are men who possess the gifts that leadership requires, there are also women who are equally capable of handling authority. One need not look very hard to find numerous examples of women who’ve served as Prime Ministers and Presidents of nations; as Governors, Senators, Congresswomen and State Representatives; as Mayors, City Supervisors, Superintendents of School Districts and as heads of multi-national Fortune 500 corporations. I believe this in itself, should be adequate to convince us that we may have overlooked some things in the way we, as the people of G-d have approached the subject of women in important

1. The “o” is missing from G-d and L-RD as sign of respect for the third commandment, “Thou shall not take the name of the L-RD thy G-d in vain.” Because this document is not Holy Scripture it may be discarded and therefore G-d’s name is not typed out as a gesture of respect.

leadership roles both secular and spiritual.

## **HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS ANTI-FEMINISM**

Before we begin to study the passages that deal with the age-old questions about women in ministry, we must understand that the prevailing mindset of the ancient world toward women was not a favorable one. Women were seen as subservient property, capable only of childbearing and domestic responsibilities, unable to comprehend or expound on anything intellectual or spiritual. I would like to quote excerpts from *In the Spirit We're Equal* by Susan C. Hyatt. Some of the leading minds and authoritative writings of the ancient world laid the foundation for the misogynistic (hatred of women) thought of that era. In Y'shua's day, women were regarded with little or no esteem, unless they were wealthy or married to a man of position or power. The Talmud (The Oral Law) taught in Sotah 3:4, "Let the words of the Torah be burned rather than committed to women...if a man teaches his daughter Torah, it is as though he taught her lewdness." In Apion 2:210 it is written, "The woman is in all things inferior to man. Let her accordingly be submissive." Menahot 43b states, "...Praised be G-d who has not created me a woman," and in Niddah 31b it says, "...when a girl comes into the world all are sad, when a girl comes into the world nothing has come into the world,...even the most virtuous woman is a witch."

The Greco-Roman thinking was no improvement for the plight of women in the ancient world. Socrates declared, "being born a woman is divine punishment since a woman is half-way between a man and an animal." He formalized Aristotle's idea that women are inferior to men and to be treated as such. Aristotle thought that a man should be at least twice his wife's age so he could easily dominate her. Clement, Bishop of Alexandria, believed that every woman should blush with embarrassment at being born a woman and feel shame if she even reflected on her nature. Tertullain, father of Latin theology, called women *the Devil's gateway*. Origen, the father of systematic theology, who castrated himself, believed that, "G-d does not stoop to look upon what is feminine." Augustine, considered the father of orthodox Western theology, taught that "Women were not created in the image of G-d and that the female state is a deformity." He promoted the concept that women and sex were both evil. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria believed that women were inferior and should not teach men.

John Chrysostom, patriarch of Constantinople said,

"Woman taught once and ruined all and to ask them for advice would be like talking to irrational animals of a lower kind." Jerome, considered the ablest scholar of the Western church said, "Woman is a temple built over a sewer." He described women in leadership as miserable, sin-ridden wenches. Thomas Aquinas, a prominent Dominican Monk wrote, "Woman is defective and misbegotten." He systematized Roman Theology using Aristotelian philosophy and thus institutionalized the male superiority/female inferiority, male dominance/female subjugation, male proclamation/female silence concepts which became the root system of Orthodox theology.

Odo of Cluny wrote, "To embrace a woman is to embrace a sack of manure." Saint Bonaventura said, "Woman is an embarrassment to man, ...a continual worry, a never-ending trouble, a daily annoyance, ...the undoing of a virtuous man, an oppressive burden, ...man's property and possession." Friar Cherubino's 15th century Rule of Marriage said, "Scold her sharply, bully, and terrify her. And if that doesn't work, take up a stick and beat her soundly." These statements are just a sampling of the overwhelming current of teaching that created such distrust and prejudice against women as a gender, let alone to consider allowing them to have any place of authority or input into the growth of G-d's Kingdom here on earth. Once I realized the bigoted mindset that the translators had toward women, it made perfect sense as to how they, in good conscience, were able to choose renderings in their translations that seem to disregard women as viable partners and capable leaders in the ministry of the Church. This perspective was effectively argued by Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen in their article, "Does Male Dominance Tarnish our Translations?"

## **GREAT WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE COURSE OF BIBLICAL HISTORY**

Remember Jochabed, Moses' mother, and the Hebrew midwives who saved the life of Moses and a multitude of Jewish baby boys in direct disobedience to a command of Pharaoh (Exodus 1:15-2:2). That is no small act of heroism. Miriam the older sister of Moses and Aaron was a prophetess, who along with them led the Israelites out of Egypt and led the women in a dancing celebration of praise (Micah 6:4, Exodus 15:20-21). Rahab, a woman of questionable reputation, risked her life to save the two Israelite spies (Joshua 2:1-6) and became a forebear of King David and King Messiah, as well as being included in the faith's hall of fame in Hebrews chapter 11. Deborah served as a judge, a prophetess and military leader. She brought deliverance to

the children of Israel when Barak was afraid to act. Jael finished the job by slaying General Sisera, commander of the Canaanite army with a tent peg, while he was sleeping in her tent.

Ruth, a Moabitess, forbidden to ever come into the congregation of the L-RD unto the 10th generation, faithfully served Naomi and was G-d's chosen vessel to bring redemption to her family by marrying Boaz. She became the great grandmother of King David and another Gentile in the lineage of King Messiah. Our sovereign G-d will choose people who seem to us to be inadequate or inappropriate for the task they are entrusted with. Yet it is for our greatest benefit and it fulfills His ultimate and highest Kingdom purposes (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

During the reign of King Josiah, Huldah, the prophetess gave words of warning and comfort at a crucial moment in Israel's history (2 Kings 22:14-20). Although she was a stranger in a strange land, Esther obeyed her older cousin Mordecai, facing the possibility of spending her life confined in a King's harem, to become Queen of the Medes and Persians. She then risked her life to go before King Ahasuerus uninvited to plead for the lives of her people, the Jews. Miryam (Mary) was a courageous teenager who accepted the most daring, life-threatening mission that a young maiden could at the matrix of history, to become the mother of G-d's only begotten Son, the promised Messiah (Isaiah 7:14).

## DOES G-D STILL USE WOMEN TODAY AS HE DID IN THE PAST?

This list of extraordinary women of the Bible is incomplete, at best. Yet it is adequate to remind us of how effectively G-d has used women to bring about His will in history. How can we look at these women of valor and virtue, who displayed such exceptional character in the face of overwhelming and sometimes insurmountable odds, and suggest that they are just an exception to the rule or the product of a bygone era? Can we honestly believe that G-d no longer uses women to powerfully effect change in His Kingdom today as He has for thousands of years? I suggest it is possible that we have misinterpreted or misunderstood the scripture passages in the New Covenant, which seem to prohibit women serving in the offices of ministry. I further suggest that we abuse and misuse the Scriptures when we try to limit all of G-d's knowledge and divine strategy for all eternity to only what is written within the confines of its sacred text and our incomplete and imperfect understanding of it.

Please don't misunderstand me when I say this. I do believe that the Holy Bible is the final authority in all matters pertaining to life and faith. But G-d did not include every life challenge, temptation and decision ever to be experienced by all of humanity forever, within the pages of the Bible. The Bible has nothing specific to say about the overabundance of modern conveniences that most of us use without question. If you look at the examples of polygamy, slavery, and stoning you can see that what G-d permitted during the writing of the Scriptures was not intended to be perpetuated for all time. For reasons we may never fully understand or be able to accept, G-d has allowed certain behaviors to occur during differing dispensations. But these behaviors have changed with the passing of time, the increase of human knowledge, and the impact of the revelation of His Kingdom throughout human history.

## A PROPHETIC PICTURE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

To clarify this position we will look at Scriptures which clearly indicate that G-d has always been and continues to be in favor of women having equal part and portion in all the aspects of extending His heart and fulfilling the purposes of His Kingdom. First, let us consider the prophetic declarations that the Holy Spirit made centuries ago which predicted that multitudes of women would be mightily used by G-d. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, He never changes. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit (Joel 2:28-29)."

In Acts 1:13-14, we see Miryam the mother of Y'shua accompanied by a number of unnamed women which were among the 120 talmideem (disciples) that waited in the Upper Room for 10 days until Shavuot (Pentecost). They were still together in one accord, in one place when HaRuach HaKodesh, (the Holy Spirit) came as a mighty manifestation of tongues of fire. G-d was mindful of including these women in one of the most prominent spiritual moments in history. In Acts 2:17-18, Peter quotes Joel's prophecy, declaring that what has just taken place is the beginning of the fulfillment of that prophetic word from G-d. The days of G-d pouring out His Spirit upon His anointed women servants is upon us.

Psalm 68:11 "The L-RD gave the Word: great was the company who published it." The word for the phrase "who

published” is *me-va-se-rot*, from the root *ba-sar*<sup>1</sup>. A word for multiple messengers, all specifically female. The Amplified Bible renders this verse as follows: “The L-RD gives the word [of power]: the women who bear and publish [the news] are a great host.” They may be messengers, servants or soldiers, but they are all women! Not so hard to imagine in Israel today, since they have had women in the military since their inception as a modern nation. I believe this verse indicates that G-d always intended to mightily use women in the spiritual battle for the hearts and minds of humanity. Take a look around most congregations and ministries today and you can see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Haven’t women outnumbered men in most spiritual endeavors in the history of modern western civilization? With women’s spiritual vision, passion for the lost and care for the needs of the congregation, G-d’s work has survived despite of the lack of support and participation that has plagued the masculine gender concerning their spirituality for many generations.

## NEW COVENANT EXAMPLES OF WOMEN IN THE OFFICES OF MINISTRY

Now let’s review the scripture passages that show women functioning in offices of ministry, and their corresponding spiritual gifts. Some of these offices have been presumed to be forbidden to them. There is the example of Anna, a **prophetess**, in Luke 2:36-38. She spent most of her life in the Temple *ministering* to G-d both day and night *in fasting and prayer*. *She spoke of Y’shua to all who looked for redemption of Jerusalem.* Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary (the mother of James) and other women who were with them were the first **evangelists** to *declare the good news of Y’shua’s resurrection to the apostles* (Luke 24:10). In Acts 16:13-15, we find Lydia, a believing business woman (**administration**) who heard Paul minister and began to *serve and support him (gift of serving)* and his ministry by inviting him to set up his ministry in her home (*gift of hospitality*).

In Acts 18:24-28, Priscilla & Aquilla heard Apollos speak eloquently in the synagogue about Y’shua, discerning that he knew only the immersion of Yochanon (John). So they took him aside and *expounded to him (teaching)* the way of G-d more perfectly. In Romans 16:1-2, Paul commends Phoebe and calls her a **deacon**, recognizing her *ministry to the saints*. *Dee-a-konos*<sup>2</sup> - a servant minister. In Romans 16:3-5, Priscilla & Aquilla are mentioned as Paul’s **helpers** in Messiah Y’shua. Helpers are *soon-er-gos*<sup>3</sup> - co-laborers, coadjutors (assistants together), fellow-workers. The office/

position of Helpers differs from the gift of helps, *an-til-ep-sis*<sup>4</sup> - to give relief, to help. Paul credits them with *laying down their lives on his behalf and expresses gratitude not only from himself, but also from all the churches of the Gentiles*. This is no small compliment, and gives the impression that they were also functioning in an **apostolic** office. They also have a *church in their house*, which indicates that they may have functioned as **pastors**.

In Rom. 16:7, Paul refers to Andronicus and Junia as *his kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles*. To be of note, *ep-is-ay-mos*<sup>5</sup> - remarkable, eminent, notable among the apostles. Take a moment to examine the strong endorsement Paul is giving by calling them kinsmen (relatives, countrymen). This may be possible, but the most likely meaning is that they were so close that they were like family to him. By using the term fellow-prisoners (women would not be in the same prison cell as the men) he is talking about a depth of connection to him, his vision, and the suffering that he endured for Messiah. Finally declaring that Andronicus and Junia were both eminent (prominent, superior in rank) among the **apostles**. The cumulative effect of all of Paul’s descriptive terminology about them makes it sound like they were both apostles, too. Euodias and Syntyche were mentioned in Philippians 4:2-3 as *laboring with Paul and his other fellow-laborers in the work of the gospel*. Labor, *kop-ee-ah-o*<sup>6</sup> - to feel fatigue, to work hard, toil, be wearied. It doesn’t sound like they were in a ladies sewing circle or having bake sales, but were full partners with the apostle in the gospel ministry.

## RE-EXAMINING FIRST COVENANT PASSAGES ON WOMEN

I have tried to carefully lay the foundation for G-d’s use of women throughout Biblical history. I have also considered the possibility that the misogynistic theology of the Church fathers possibly tainted the translation of the passages concerning women in the Holy Scriptures. Now I will look at the key passages that have been used to forbid or at least question the place of women in public ministry and the offices of authority in the Church, and suggest alternative renderings that can clear up these historic misunderstandings.

Genesis 1:26-27 records G-d’s decision to create man in His own image and likeness. The full and complete expression of G-d’s image includes both the male & female genders. This statement is repeated in Genesis 5:1-2. These scriptures clearly disprove the lie that woman was not

1. *Ba-sar*: Strong’s Hebrew #1319 • 2. *Dee-a-konos*: Strong’s Greek #1249 • 3. *Soon-er-gos*: Strong’s Greek #4904 • 4. *An-til-ep-sis*: Strong’s Greek #484 • 5. *Ep-is-ay-mos*: Strong’s Greek #1978 • 6. *Kop-ee-ah-o*: Strong’s Greek #2872

created in G-d's image. In 1 Peter 3:7, we are reminded that husbands must dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving them honor as a more sensitive vessel and as heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered. This underscores G-d's value of women as equally important in His sight and provides ample warning of the punitive consequences should we choose to ignore it.

In Genesis 2:18 we read, "And the L-RD G-d said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.'" After all of his creation acts, G-d saw that what He had done was *good*. Only after creating Adam and seeing that he was alone did He declare that something was *not good*! He then said, "I will make him an help meet (fit) for him." The word help, *eh-zer*<sup>1</sup> – help which comes from *aw-zar*<sup>2</sup> – to surround, protect, aid or succour. According to a study done by Loren Cunningham, the Hebrew word, *ehzer*, was always used for one who is greater and stronger (usually G-d) helping a lesser and weaker person. G-d is telling us in Genesis 2:18 that Adam was going to receive someone to help him that was stronger in ways that would benefit him, not only to serve as a childbearing, domestic servant.

Genesis 3:16 is another passage where there is the possibility of prejudice as well as misinterpretation. We must remember the bias that the ancient translators brought to this text in choosing the rendering of key words.

Katherine Bushnell notes that the Hebrew manuscripts did not include vowels. The rendering of words was discerned by the scribes studying their context and could be influenced by their personal theological bias while translating the text. This bias was not held by only a few scribes, but by the vast majority of the Rabbinic community of that time.

The traditional translation is, "To the woman He (G-d) said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you." Katherine Bushnell suggests the following, alternate rendering: "A lyer-in-wait (or snare) has increased your sorrow and sighing; in pain you shall bring forth children. You will turn toward your husband and he will rule over you." Here G-d describes the results of Eve listening to the lyer-in-wait (serpent); namely her fall from innocence into sin. Even if this is considered *a curse*, aren't we redeemed from the curse through the vicarious suffering and death of Y'shua for all humanity? Why are men the only recipients of the full redemption that belongs to all believers in Y'shua? Are we not all new creations in Messiah? Old things are passed away, behold all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We saw in Genesis how the equality of genders in

relationship to G-d was disrupted in the fall. Woman is seen turning from G-d toward her husband. His response is to rule over her and the consequence is for the social norm of fallen humanity to tend towards patriarchy, which is a social authority model that accepts male leadership as the dominant pattern. Y'shua demonstrated a model of living advocating equality for all people. He treated women as they are to be treated; as equal creations of G-d, who are just as capable of greatness and goodness as men are and just as susceptible to temptation and poor choices as well.

Sin is not a gender issue, but an individualized, personal issue. Each of us must struggle with it in our own personal relationship with our Creator. This is possible through the efficacy of Messiah's vicarious atonement and His resurrection. We must come to grips with the reality that the atoning work of Y'shua was equally and fully efficacious for both men and women. If not, then we are forced to believe that it is somehow flawed and unable to lift the yoke of oppression from women, causing them to be fatally flawed and unworthy until the day of redemption finally arrives. If this were the unfortunate truth for women, what would prevent it from being the sad reality for men also? When will we, as men, be able to view life in general and scripture in particular without being male chauvinists (devoted to men /opposed to women)?

## RE-EXAMINING NEW COVENANT PASSAGES ON WOMEN & MINISTRY

When we forget to consider the cultural context of the scriptures and try to duplicate every doctrine in the context of modern western civilization, we will cause undue harm and heartache to those who trust us to carefully and accurately interpret scripture in attempting to feed the flock of G-d. Paul recognized in, 1 Corinthians 11:16, that he had been dealing with the unique issues of that church and that these instructions should not be considered as unilateral or universal in their impact. We should be sensitive to that possibility in dealing with this last passage which has prevented multitudes of godly women from being fully used of G-d. I suggest we keep this in mind as we examine this last passage which has historically been the last and highest hurdle to women serving in offices of authority within the congregation of the Redeemed.

If we are ever to interpret scripture with any hope for accuracy and faithfulness to the intentions of the Holy Spirit, we must keep in mind the foundational revelations that previous Scripture passages have already laid on any given issue. In the New Covenant, we see Y'shua accepting

1. *Eh-zer*: Strong's Hebrew #5827 • 2. *Aw-zar*: Strong's Hebrew #5826

and treating women as equals to men. There is no hint of male chauvinism or gender bias in the behavior toward women or His teachings dealing with them. On the contrary, He and Paul elevate women to equality before G-d when their teachings are properly understood through careful examination with a humble and contrite heart. In the Book of Acts, we see that the Holy Spirit was no respecter of persons; be they Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female (Galatians 3:28). In Messiah Jesus, all are equally valued by G-d and are given equal opportunity to be born again and to receive the Holy Spirit, His anointing, and His gifts.

One of the fundamental concepts that has influenced how women are viewed throughout history and how scripture was translated and interpreted, is found in 1 Corinthians 11:3. "But I would have you know that **the head** of every man is Messiah; and **the head** of the woman is the man; and **the head** of Messiah is G-d." Berkeley & Alvera Mickelsen, in their article entitled *What Does Kephale Mean In The New Testament?* reveal an alternate view of translating the word **head**, kefal-lay<sup>1</sup> – literally or figuratively – the head. The Mickelsens' did an extensive study of the Greek words used in the Septuagint for head, and the word archon – ruler, commander, leader was used ten times as often as kephale. They suggest that kephale is better interpreted as *the source*, rather than *the authority*. Consider the alternative rendering. "But I would have you know that the source of every man is Messiah; and the source of the woman is man; and the source of Messiah is G-d." This is more consistent with the orthodox understanding of the G-dhead. The Son is equal to the Father but chooses voluntary humility and submission to fulfill His mission to die for our sins and He is honored and exalted by His Father (Philippians 2:5-9).

I would now like to consider the two passages that are most misunderstood and misinterpreted and seem to cause most of the trouble for women in the Church today. They are found in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Let us take a closer look at 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. (34) "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. (35) And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in church."

The first key to properly understanding this passage is the word **women**, goo-nay<sup>2</sup> – *Wife* or woman. In the Greek language of Biblical times, the word for wife is the same as woman/women. You would have to look at the context to find the correct translation in each instance the word goo-nay was used. In this context, I believe it is easy to see that

Paul is not speaking to all women in general, but to wives in particular. A single woman could not go home and question her husband. Paul is dealing with wives causing a disturbance in the service because of their frequent questioning of what was being taught. If the women sat separately from the men (which was common in first century culture) this would be an even greater disruption in the fruitfulness of each service. But if the women would patiently and reverently wait till they got home, there would be peace in the church and in the home as well.

The second key that reveals why Paul could not be instructing all women to be silent is that he instructed women how to pray and prophesy in 1 Corinthians 11:5. Why would Paul instruct women how to pray and prophesy in chapter 11 and then tell them to be silent in chapter 14? That would be more than an apparent contradiction, and would cause real confusion. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 11:33, that G-d is not the author of confusion! But that is what women in the Church have had to live with for too many years.

Let us now study the passage from 1 Timothy 2:11-15. (11) "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. (12) But I suffer not a woman to teach, not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. (13) For Adam was first formed, then Eve. (14) And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (15) Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."

We have already seen how the Greek word for woman/women and wife/wives is the same. This passage seen in its context is clearly speaking of the marriage relationship. The unique difference in this passage is that the command to be silent does not prohibit a wife from asking questions about the sermon. Instead, it refers to the spin that she is applying in talking to her husband about the teaching. The Greek word for usurp and authority are the same, aw-then-teh-o<sup>3</sup> – meaning to act of oneself, to dominate, usurp authority over. This word is used only once in the entire New Covenant. The word regularly used for authority was ex-oo-see-ah<sup>4</sup> – delegated influence and jurisdiction.

Dr. Howard Morgan writes in his teaching article *Women in Ministry: Anointed for service, Robbed of Opportunity*, "This rare verb has coarse sexual overtones." Different scholars have translated this word to mean sexual license, seductive sensuality, violent inappropriate behavior, and murder. Dr. Morgan mentions that in Revelation 2:20-21, Y'shua is rebuking the Church in Thyatira and admonishes them for listening to the teaching of Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, and taught and seduced them to

1. Kefal-lay: Strong's Greek #2776 • 2. Goo-nay: Strong's Greek #1135 Strong's • 3. Aw-then-teh-o: Strong's Greek #831 • 4. Ex-oo-see-ah: Strong's Greek #1849

commit fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I believe this is a clear picture of what Paul was warning against. It is of interest to note that Y'shua did not rebuke them for allowing a woman to call herself a prophetess or teacher. It is obvious that she was violating the Acts 15 Council of Jerusalem that expressly forbid all Messianic Gentiles from eating food offered to idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood. This was meant to prevent just such false teachers from bringing the people of G-d back into the worship of demons and to keep the door open for Jewish/Gentile fellowship at Biblical feast celebrations.

It seems as though Paul was forbidding wives to use their sexual relationship with their husbands to coerce them into false, possibly Gnostic teaching. This would explain his reference to Adam & Eve, deception and transgression. Yet this passage clearly does not forbid women from teaching as has been taught to the detriment of not only women, but the entire Body of Messiah for almost 2000 years.

In the book, *In the Spirit We're Equal* by Susan Hyatt, she quotes Richard and Catherine Kroeger from their book, *I Suffer Not a Woman; Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in the Light of Ancient Evidence*. "In ancient Ephesus there was a Gnostic cult of the goddess Artemis, which was promoting the idea that in creation Eve had been the source of Adam. Artemis was a fertility goddess who was believed to be able to reproduce without male intervention. Considering this background information, some scholars suggest other possible renderings of 1 Timothy 2:12-13. 'I do not allow a woman/wife to teach or proclaim herself the author/source of man' or 'I do not permit a woman/wife to teach or represent herself as the originator of man...for Adam was created first, then Eve.'"

If we consider the larger context of this passage, just a few verses later (1 Timothy 4:1-3), Paul is warning Timothy that in the latter times seducing spirits and doctrines of demons will forbid marriage. Then Paul alerts Timothy to instruct the young widows (1 Timothy 5:11-15) to avoid temptation and a bad testimony by re-marrying and bearing children. Could this be the same reason why he says in 2:15,... "she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity, holiness, and sobriety"? It seems as though Paul is addressing the cultural challenges that Timothy is facing by encouraging young women/widows to avoid the Gnostic cults and the temptations of the single life by refocusing on marriage and domestic responsibility. This does not mean that women are forbidden to do anything else or incapable of such, but these were the recommendations of a spirited apostle in resolving troublesome community issues of the ancient world.

## THE LAST HURDLE – CAN WOMEN BE ELDERS & DEACONS?

The last hurdle we face are the passages in 1 Timothy which give the qualifications for overseers (elders) and deacons. A cursory reading of this passage seems to declare that only men can be elders and deacons because of the recurring phrase, "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:1 & 12). I would suggest that these verses are meant to be used more as guidelines than stringent qualifications. A careful study of these qualities would leave the vast majority of spiritual leaders out of the running, including the apostle who penned them and the disciple to whom they were written. Let us take a moment to consider this.

Paul, serving as an apostle, was required to function as a rabbi/pastor/elder as he would give birth to and raise up the various local churches that he fathered during his missionary journeys. He was not married; therefore could not be the husband of one wife. He could not rule his own house well or have his children in subjection since he did not have a family. Since he could not be observed ruling his own house well, how could he be considered as one who could take care of the church of G-d? Another important quality of an elder is not to be contentious. Yet, in Acts 15:39, it reveals that the contention between Paul and his good friend Barnabas was so sharp that they parted ways, permanently! With an unwavering application of 1 Timothy 3, he probably should have disqualified himself from spiritual leadership. The last quality Paul would be lacking was that he must have a good reputation with those who are outside the congregation. Then in Timothy's case, you must deal with his youth, which Paul wrote to exhort others not to despise (1 Timothy 4:12), because the term Elder literally means someone who is older, who has gained wisdom and understanding through the accumulation of years of life experiences.

These guidelines are not given as legalistic hurdles to keep good people from serving G-d's people, but as a high standard of behavior which every servant of G-d should seek to attain through devotion to G-d and continued spiritual growth. These guidelines would encourage us to get to know those who would seek to serve in the offices of ministry and find out if their personal life is a testimony of G-d's presence in their home when they are away from the church. Do they exemplify godly qualities, seeking to learn, continuing to grow spiritually, and demonstrating an accountable lifestyle that is open to counsel and input from other leaders?

Although the passage in 1 Timothy 3 seems to indicate that men are the only candidates being considered for

serving as elders and deacons, we should remember that there are clear examples in the New Covenant of women serving in these capacities. Priscilla served as a teacher, apostle and pastor, offices of ministry that would be the equivalent of an elder in any congregation. Phoebe was recognized as a deacon, worthy of apostolic commendation. And Junia was mentioned as being of note, remarkable, and eminent among the apostles. Dr. Gary S. Greig points out in his essay on women in ministry advancing G-d's kingdom, "In 2 John the apostle addresses "the elect lady" as a gatekeeper over her household and her children—most likely the house church that met in her home. She is responsible for discerning false teachings...and for keeping false teachers out of her home...from influencing her children." These few examples are a sampling of the prophetic picture of an army of women publishing the gospel by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in Psalm 68 and Joel 2.

I would suggest that if G-d ever used a woman to serve in any of the offices of ministry, He can and will continue to do so. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He never changes and is not a respecter of persons. He doesn't judge us by our outward appearance, but looks upon our hearts. And that, my dear brothers and sisters, will always be *the heart* of the matter. He doesn't disqualify half of the body from leadership because of the earthsuit He chose for them. I pray that this teaching has softened your heart and opened your mind enough to allow G-d to be G-d and to choose whomsoever He will to serve Him in whatsoever way that He may determine in His omnipotent and omniscient sovereignty. May we cease standing in the place that G-d alone should have and approach any doctrine as the Berean's, *with readiness of mind, searching the scriptures daily, whether those things were so* (Acts 17:11).

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