



Each fall Festival season, I try to add something to the site of our home Sukkah which will enhance that year's celebration and continue to do so for years to come. This Sukkoth, I determined to use up some old bricks for this addition which have been laying around for a long time, waiting for their turn to be used to some great purpose. My friend and student, Christi, offered to help this year with my project. It is my belief that even the smallest physical work we do has an underlying spiritual meaning. As we worked, I reflected upon the task and how it might have some spiritual significance, and we spoke about it.

Bricks are common things that most people consider to be simple and take for granted, except home builders and bricklayers. Yet, while bricks are common, they are not simple. There are many types, and each has its own specific purpose and must be handled a bit differently. Believers in the scriptures and followers of Messiah are similar to bricks in that way. Most people consider them to be simple and take them for granted, except for the Master Bricklayer. He knows each type and made them all for a specific purpose. He knows exactly the best way to handle each one in order to bring about His desired result.



One of the hardest things to do with bricks is to take used old ones of mismatched types and assemble them into a well-fit and beautiful structure. New bricks all of the same type are easy to work with. While they lack seasoning and some breakage or other loss is to be expected, they usually go together swiftly and without issue. An assortment of old bricks often just does not seem to want to get along, and they resist going together quickly or perfectly. But bricks are expensive and those who use them know that even the old ones have value. It is a shame to waste them when they can be reclaimed, and often the old ones prove to be even more valuable and costly than the new. A structure made of old used and different types of bricks, despite their flaws, is usually incredibly beautiful in its variety and diversity. Likewise, new believers, such as the untaught and young children, tend to be easy to teach and fit into their places. Yet, they lack seasoning and are untried, prone to easily crack or break. Older or more mature believers resist a change of state and rarely get along with one another well or easily, yet they are seasoned and faithful despite any stress put upon them. The Master Bricklayer knows their flaws, but also sees their intrinsic potential beauty and value. With these things in mind, Christi and I chose the bricks for our project and got to work.



CLEANING THE BRICKS

Of course, the first thing one must do to make an old brick useful is clean it up. Old mortar has to be removed, possibly some of its edges must be smoothed, and its surface cleaned. This is done with a tool called a brick hammer. Using a brick hammer correctly takes a bit of practice and skill. In the hands of a novice, it will break more bricks than it will save. Just the right angle and amount of pressure must be applied with it in order to clean the bricks thoroughly and completely without damaging or destroying them. This takes a lot of time and patience, and thankfully Christi and I lost only a few of them. There were 66 bricks in this project, and it took an average of about a minute to clean each brick, with some taking more time and some less, depending upon how badly they were marred. The Master Bricklayer goes through a much more laborious process to personally cleanse each of us from our own impurities and imperfections, taking years or our entire lifetime rather than just a few minutes for each of us. He uses the Ruach Haqodesh and trials as His tools, rather than a brick hammer - though sometimes it can probably feel like one to us. With His skill and patience, His mercy, grace and longsuffering, not one of those who are truly His are ever lost. He always knows the exact amount of angle and pressure to use in our learning and trials in order to bring us to perfection without breaking us.

Some of His people are more badly marred by life and sin than others, so He must take more time and make more effort to get them right than He does with others. This He does without complaint or special regard for any one person, such is His love for us all. There are 66 books in the Scriptures, and I wonder how much of a coincidence that is with the 66 bricks in the project.



Once the bricks are ready, the ground must be selected and prepared for their use. Contrary to popular belief, the bricks do not get to decide that. The bricklayer decides where they will go, as well as when and how they will get there. For our purposes, we used a tool called a brick tong to transport the bricks to the intended location of the project. Lined up in a row of ten, it picks them all up together handily to be carried and set down together as a group in a convenient place to await their use. Once Christi and I got all the bricks where we wanted them, we carefully marked out and prepared the ground for their assembly. The Master Bricklayer knows where His people need most to be assembled and can best be used. Each of His sons and daughters should listen for His voice and trust Him to send them to the place they are most needed, and then go to wherever that is. As the Prophet says, "If you hear His Voice, do not harden your hearts." Again, the tool for that placement is the Ruach Haqodesh, and it will carry them together in harmony and community to a place

where they can live and learn while they await their placement in His final build site. YHWH has already decided and told us where His final place of rest will be - in Yerushalayim. He is preparing the ground there for us even now. He has also promised to gather us from the four corners of the earth when That Day comes, and He has said nothing in heaven or on earth can prevent this from happening. He has told us to form obedient and loving communities of believers and to not forsake the assembling together with one another as we await His coming.



The first brick to be laid for any structure is called the lead brick, or cornerstone. It is the most important one in the structure, and its perfect placement is critical for all that come after it. If the lead brick is off by a fraction of an inch, the rest of the structure will eventually become exponentially out of plumb and alignment, ruining the build. Christi and I mixed our mortar to a nice, buttery consistency, then carefully laid that first crucial brick. Once it was satisfactorily in place and left alone in place to harden somewhat, we began laying its brother and sister bricks down around it. Before laying each one, a small amount of mortar was applied to each brick to join it firmly to the one previously laid. This was done with a quick swipe of the trowel and is called "buttering the brick." Sometimes this work goes quickly, and sometimes it slows slightly, but it cannot

stop until all the available mixed mortar is used, or it will harden and be lost. We did our build with two batches of mortar and so had a pause in between them overnight for the festivities of Sukkoth. The Master Bricklayer in His wisdom and perfection, and in the fullness of time, chose Yehoshua our Messiah to be the lead brick in our assembly. It is written of him in the Prophets: "Therefore thus said the Master יהוה, 'See, I am laying in Tziyon a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation,'" and "So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the set-apart ones and members of the household of Elohim, having been built upon the foundation of the emissaries and prophets, Yehoshua Messiah Himself being chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, being joined together, grows into a set-apart Dwelling Place for YHWH, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of Elohim in the Spirit."

This perfectly laid cornerstone was the firstfruits of our salvation and, if we follow his lead, walking as he walked, will lead us plumb and aligned together into the final Assembly which YHWH has planned for us. The mortar of our joining is brotherly love and excellent works done for one another in his name. He is waiting for us in That Place for us to join him even now, interceding without pause before the Father on our behalf.



Once the final brick was laid and the finished structure cleaned and readied, it was time to make use of it for its intended purpose: a blazing fire, light, warmth, a gathering - and a big pot of chili! All of these different bricks that came from who knows where, and which had been used once before for some unknown purpose, now served us together as one in honor of the Master Bricklayer and to provide for our needs. Old bricks, redeemed and reclaimed, can become a lovely thing when assembled with care and obedience together for a single purpose which serves the Master.

But listen, my friends! A single brick or stone, whether new or old, cleaned and set-apart by itself is of no use or value. No matter how pretty it might be, it is not made perfect until it is joined with other pretty bricks or stones into a structure that has a real use and serves its master. It is true, we must all work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, but once that is done, we are not meant to be a finished work on our own.

We must all join with one another, in peace, forbearance and love, becoming that unified House that YHWH desires and instructs we should be. That is why He selected you. That is why He lovingly and patiently cleaned you up, allowed His own son's blood to be spilled on your behalf, and has now brought you to that place where you can be joined together with others to serve Him as He always intended you should. He did not save you to dwell alone, apart from your brothers and sisters in faith. See:

"Blessed be the Elohim and Father of our Master Yehoshua Messiah, who according to His great compassion has caused us to be born from above to a living hope through the resurrection of Yehoshua Messiah from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, having been kept in the heavens for you, who are protected by the power of Elohim through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last age, in which you exult, even though for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by manifold trials, in order that the proving of your faith - much more precious than gold that perishes, and proven by fire - might be found to result in praise and respect and esteem at the revelation of Yehoshua Messiah, whom having not seen, you love; in whom you exult with unspeakable and esteemed joy, yet not seeing, but believing, obtaining the goal of your faith: a deliverance of lives."

"Now that you have cleansed your lives in obeying the truth through the Spirit to unfeigned brotherly love, love one another fervently with a clean heart, having been born from above- not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible - through the living Word of Elohim, which remains forever, because, 'All flesh is as grass, and all the esteem of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the Word of Elohim remains forever.' And this is the Word, announced as Glad Tidings to you: "Having put aside, then, all evil, and all deceit, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and all evil words, as newborn babes, desire the unadulterated milk of the Word, in order that you grow by it, if indeed you have tasted that the Master is excellent. Drawing near to Him, a living Stone - rejected indeed by men, but chosen by Elohim and precious - you also, as living stones, are being built up, a spiritual house, a set-apart priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Elohim through Yehoshua Messiah. Because it is contained in the Scripture, 'See, I lay in Tziyon a chief corner-stone, chosen, precious, and he who believes on Him shall by no means be put to shame.' This preciousness, then, is for you who believe; but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner-stone,' and, 'A stone of stumbling and a rock that makes for falling,' who stumble because they are disobedient to the Word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a set-apart nation, a people for a possession, that you should proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, who once were not a people, but are now the people of Elohim; who had not obtained compassion, but now have obtained compassion."

If you are one of these stones or bricks that are built into the very House of the Most-High, you will indeed be joined with others who are also forming communities of faith and love in obedience to His Word until He comes for you all in His esteem at the end of the age. We who truly walk in The Way do not walk it alone, my friends, and love from afar is a poor love indeed. "By this shall all know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Let that love be a vibrant, public and daily one for all to see.

YHWH im'ka, Ovadyah ben Yisrael

