



# The Smiling Maven

Grace for Grace (John 1:16)

חסד על חסד (יוחנן א'טו)



## This Relentless, Magnificent, Grace Insistent Part III<sup>1</sup>

Recently I heard the following statement “God insists on grace.” He insists that we treat others (even ourselves) with grace. We ought to be living as grace creatures, as vessels of grace, as grace dispensers. Why we emphasize anything else is quite amazing. All that we possess (physically and spiritually) is because of His grace. The opening of our understanding to that reality may be a life long process. I will be sharing some of my journey in the experiencing of this relentless, magnificent, grace.

There has been a deep valley in my life. In nature, valleys usually start gradually, and end gradually. They do not often start or end with a cliff. This has been true in my life. There have been many aspects to the deep valley in my life, it did not start all at once, nor has it ended all at once. As I look back over that valley, I can see at least three facets to the valley: physical, spiritual, emotional. There has been difficult non-life-threatening, yet painful, and uncomfortable physical struggles, a terrible church/ denominational type split, and the emotional crater of my wife’s death along with single-parenting two young children. Also included in that mix, has been the emotional friction with my natural family exacerbated by my faith, and my marrying a non-Jew. It is a mix that I would not want to wish upon anyone. In-

credibly, I find myself on the other side of the valley, not wanting to trade this experience for anything. The simple reason for this: grace. It was in the very depth and darkest part of the valley that I had the most needed and most valuable lesson in grace.

The second and third year after Sandy’s death were the hardest and darkest years of my life. I was still spiritually worn by the church issues, emotionally beaten by my wife’s death, struggling to raise two young children, and feeling physically miserable. My attitude was not pretty. Much of the time, my attitude, my mumblings, did not look very “Christian” (or Messianic Jewish). I cannot completely explain that atmosphere and attitude with words. It was hard; my inside was just yucky. One night, after a particularly hard day, wrought with physical pain, earthly responsibility, and “unchristian” like disposition, I reached my dead end. I was finished on this road of mine. I had had enough. I had had enough of trying to be a Christian, trying to be a pastor. I was finished with being a Christian, really, honestly, forthrightly. I expressed this to the Lord, and expressed it in many less-nice words. I was not thinking; oh, I will feel differently in the morning; I will ask the Lord’s forgiveness in the morning. I was throwing in the towel of my Christian life.

I was hanging it up. I was finished with this Christian thing. It was in this state and disposition that I went to sleep.

I had come to a dead end. My faith had brought me to a dead end. I mean that very sincerely, and without maliciousness. It is not the end of the story though.

The next morning, early, before I was fully awake, in that half-way state between awake and asleep, something incredible happened. No, I did not have a great vision. No, a lightning bolt did not come down and fry me (like I deserved, and deserve every day of my life). No, I was not instantly healed. In that not fully conscious state, without any willful decision on my part, I was singing. I was singing a simple song over and over again. I was singing: “Jesus loves me this I know, for  
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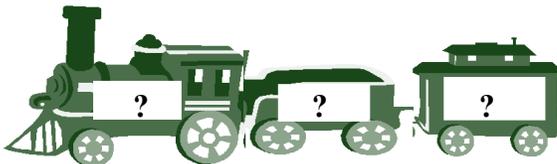
### The Smiling Maven

The Smiling Maven is a bi-monthly Jewish flavored newsletter sharing God’s incredible grace. There is a desire to communicate God’s incredible grace with Jews and Gentiles. There is coming a spiritual atomic bomb of that incredible grace. It is an imminent spiritual explosion soon to happen in Israel that will have a wonderfully awesome affect in Israel and in all the world.

Maven is a Yiddish word that means a person with special knowledge or experience. Evidence of God’s grace should be characterized by an ability to smile. The Smiling Maven newsletter is an encouragement for all of us to be smiling mavens, smiling people with special knowledge of God’s amazing grace.

Comments are always welcome. Contact us at [smilingmaven@yahoo.com](mailto:smilingmaven@yahoo.com) or 2820 Eshcol Avenue, Zion IL 60099.

### What Generates the Power in a Believer’s Life?



The following words belong in this train: **Feeling, Fact, Faith.** Which one belongs in each of the cars? One belongs in the locomotive, one belongs in the coal car, and one in the caboose. Try answering before reading Apologetics Column on page 2.

the Bible tells me so". After singing it a number of times, "Jesus loves me this I know, the Bible tells me so", I became conscious – awake, and flabbergasted. I remembered the attitude and condition in which I had gone to sleep. Since falling asleep, I had had no intention, no willful decision to repent, no remorse over my attitude, no change of heart. Yet, my spirit was singing, "Jesus loves me this I know.....". As I considered this, I only had one explanation, Jesus was in my life to stay, and it was not dependent on me. 2 Timothy 2:13, "If we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself". Philippians 1:6 says "that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". The Almighty was faithful, even if I was not. My relationship to the Messiah was not dependent on my faith, it was dependent upon Him. He was completely faithful, regardless of my whimpering, complaining, and even regardless of my giving up. Wow!

This was a paramount turning point in my life. That is not only in regards to my suffering and tsouris<sup>2</sup>. It was in regards to my entire spiritual-life orientation. Grace was really grace, a gift, something we do not make happen. It is free. It is not dependent on us. True Christianity is a relationship with Jesus. Relationship means at least two beings. The solidness of this relationship is built on the solidness of Messiah, not the maybe,

sometimes, solidness or mushiness of our faith. He had started something in my life, He was going to finish it, even if everything (including me) seemed contrary to that. True faith is not faith in ourselves, or faith in our own faith. It is faith in, and the faith of, the Faithful One.

This was so liberating. True grace is liberating. No, everything did not go fantastically that day or that week. Everything does not go fantastically now. A change has happened though. Jesus loves me. I know Jesus loves me. And it has nothing to do with anything that I do. I can live in that certainty all the time. When I am doing well, and when I am doing terribly. No spiritual activity on my part: positive, negative, or neutral, increases, maintains, or diminishes that love. That love is always. Oh that is basic scripture and basic theology, yet how many of us live as though we really believe it for ourselves. How much of my life had I only stated it, yet not fully believed it. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye sees thee" (Job 42:5). I had heard of grace, but now I had seen the wonder of Y'shua's<sup>3</sup> relentless grace in my own life. I now turn away from my self-righteous, self-trying efforts to impress, convince, or help God to love me more. I simply rest my life in the certain reality: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so". This relentless, magnificent, grace!!



### Apologetics<sup>4</sup>

The train example is from the book Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell.<sup>5</sup> If you placed the wrong word in the wrong train, you are not alone. It is a common mistake. Yet it is a crucial one. The Engine is Fact. The Coal Car is Faith. The Caboose is Feeling.

Fact comes first. A poorly built, non-working locomotive, would not move at all, no matter how much coal is used. No amount of faith will change the reality of Messiah's resurrection (either he did or did not rise from the dead). If all the world believed that Jesus did not rise from the dead, that would not change the reality that Jesus of Nazareth did rise from the dead. If everyone in the world believed that drinking gasoline was healthy for you, that falsely placed belief would not change the poisonous quality of gasoline. The gospel accounts, Jesus' love for us, and the resurrection, are all truthful, accurate reports. Luke begins his gospel by stating that his information comes from eyewitnesses. He is writing a news report, not a novel. He says: "That thou might know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:4). The apostles and the gospel writers are sharing historical events from first hand experience.

Faith is the fuel that enables the facts to impact one's life. When an individual believes (has faith in) the truthful accounts of scripture they experience the reality of God's forgiveness and the certainty of an eternal home with Messiah.

Feelings come last. Feelings can be subjective. Our feelings may or may not be consistent with the facts. Feelings may not be consistent with our faith. The train (our walk with Jesus) can operate successfully with or without the caboose (with or without positive feelings).



**The Home Front:** The "Home Front" section will return in the March 2006 issue. It will normally appear every other issue.



### Theology Section

#### Eschatology (Study of End Time Events)

Jesus is Coming Soon! Jesus is Coming Soon!  
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Revelation 1:1, 1:3 22:6, 22:7, 22:10, 22:12, 22:20

Notes:

1. I am sharing three major turning points in my experience with grace. They are being shared in reverse chronological order.
2. Tsouris (Yiddish)—Trouble.
3. Y'shua - יֵשׁוּעַ (Hebrew) Jesus
4. Apologetics—The Study of the Defense and Proof of Christianity
5. Josh McDowell, Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Here's Life Publishers, Inc. 1979) P.386

Editor's Note: Jesus is Coming Soon!

