

PROGRAM 20 TEASER

Let me say it straight. Many of today's so-called heroes are bums. The guy who can hit a baseball 400 feet but then is arrested for hitting his wife. The Tour de France winner who juiced his system with steroids. The Hollywood beauty—on her fourth, fifth or sixth marriage. Are there any real heroes who think right—choose right—live right? Sure there are! Like the ones I'm about to brag about. There's no way they can let me down. They already lived and died—real heroes! We're about to meet some of them. And you'll find that they are **MORE THAN TALK.**

PROGRAM 20 INTRO

I don't want to follow the herd. I may have to go it alone. Any example I can follow? Hey I know my life is messed up. But I want to change from a liar, luster and deceiver to the man I ought to be. Hey, who once walked where I walk but turned his life around? I'm being pulled in all directions to make the wrong choices. Anybody out there I can look to as the right kind of example? People, people everywhere. Fighting personal battles—even demons. Looking for examples—real heroes, not phonies. You're about to meet some real heroes. The kind that won't let you down.

PROGRAM 20 PAGE 1

Why Most of My Heroes Are Jewish!

Page 1 The answer to Mark Twain's Question

Mark Twain made no claim to godliness or biblical expertise. Nevertheless, the Jewish people fascinated him like none other. More than that, they left him mind-boggled. In 1899, Mark Twain penned an essay that is all the more remarkable considering the fact that there would be no Balfour Declaration for nearly twenty years nor an Israel for almost fifty years. Twain said in his 1899 essay:

“If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.

“The Egyptian, the Babylonian and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?”

Mr. Twain's incredulity is understandable. Egyptians? Babylonians? Persians? Greeks? Romans? All these great empires versus the lowly Jew? With only the Jew surviving? That's like taking a midget, locking him in a room, and forcing him to fight the greatest heavyweight boxing champions of all time. After opening the door and seeing John L. Sullivan, Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, and Mike Tyson sprawled on the floor and the midget grinning broadly, we, too, would

shake our heads in disbelief. We would also look for reasons—beyond the midget—for such a weird but wonderful triumph.

But looking for reasons for the 4,000 year survival of the Jews comes hard to those who disregard the Bible or refuse to take its pages seriously. To attribute such longevity (in the face of counter-forces attempting for 4,000 years to erase the Jews) to Jewish ingenuity, adaptation, or bull-dog tenacity, is to believe in miracles far beyond those recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The answer to Mark Twain's question is uncomplicated—emblazoned across the pages of Scripture. The God who gave birth to Israel through its progenitor, Abraham, also guaranteed its preservation and destiny. Prior to Abraham, there was no promised land or chosen people—just self-destructing pagans whose collective heart was “only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5)

It is a demonic paradox that the very behavior the nations (“goyim” in Hebrew) carried as brand marks of evil were later projected onto the Jews as being the source of such sins as duplicity, covetousness, stubbornness and the like. Yet, those were “nations” sins that God buried under a cataclysmic deluge in Noah's time, before calling Abraham the Hebrew and his progeny to renounce such evil and to be examples of righteous living.

Who are these people who so baffled Mark Twain? How did covenants God made with the Jews shape their character and destiny? Perhaps a brief look into the lives of the original “Hebrew” and three of his immediate followers will best demonstrate God's priority purpose in choosing the Jews to be primary reflector of His light to the world. And why most of my heroes are Jewish!

PROGRAM 20 PAGE 2

WHY MOST OF MY HEROS ARE JEWISH!

Page 2 Our Father Abraham

First comes Abraham (or Abram as he was originally called). Abraham was a Semite, a descendent of Noah's son Shem (Genesis 11:10-32). He was the first person in the Scriptures to be referred to as a "Hebrew"—perhaps as one "called out" by God who crossed the Eber in summons to covenant (see Genesis 14:13).

And what a man's man this Abraham was. His daddy was an idol worshipper, but Abraham listened to a new drum—the voice of God. He left familiar country, loveable kin and a comfortable home to walk an unknown path—led on by an invisible God. "I don't know where I'm going, but I'm sure God will get me there" is what Abraham may have told incredulous family members and neighbors when he said goodbye. And Sarah his wife dared to walk right along with him.

His was an unselfish heart in a world that was already calloused with greed. The thirteenth chapter of Genesis tells how Abraham and his nephew, Lot, become so prosperous that they filled the land. This provoked bitter arguments between their employees. Abraham was not about to bicker over material stuff and told Lot to take his choice of the land. Abraham would take what was left.

Lot lifted up his beady, greedy little eyes and chose the lush, green, well watered pastures that would be known as Sodom and Gomorrah. After he made his choice and left, God came down to have a word with Abram. He told Abram that it was his turn now to lift up his eyes—to look north, south, east and west. And that's when God boggled the mind of unselfish Abraham when he said; "For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever." (Genesis 13:15). Lot had made his choice for the world's stuff in the here-and-now. Abraham's choice was spiritual—opting for God's will that would not be subject to inflation, pick-pockets, rust or moths. Those two choices are still being made by us today.

Abraham, the Hebrew, was also an example in forgiveness. In Genesis chapter fourteen, there was a battle between some kings. Lot was taken captive, and it would have been easy for Abram to say; "The old boy got what he deserved. Good riddance to the covetous cheap skate. He's reaping what he's sown in grabbing the best land for himself".

However, Abraham was too pure to be bottled up with the acid of bitterness. He armed 318 of his loyal servants and went after the enemy. And he didn't come back without Lot who, seeing Abraham's willingness to forgive people in "unforgivable" situations, may have experienced a character change in himself because the New Testament later speaks of Lot as "just" and "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (2 Peter 2:7,8).

Something else that I admire about the patriarch is that he wasn't afraid to discipline his kids. It was probably just as easy in those days to raise a bunch of spoiled brats as it is today. But God said these magnificent words about Abraham; "For I know him, that he will keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment..." (Genesis 18:19). Abraham didn't just suggest that his kids follow the right ways of God—he commanded it.

One final thought about Abraham. His was a total obedience that withheld absolutely nothing from God. In Genesis chapter 22 God tested Abraham by asking him to make an offering of his son Isaac. Abraham didn't flinch. When God saw that Abraham would trust Him even when he couldn't trace Him, He first provided an animal for sacrifice and then almost bragged about this special man when He said; "By myself, have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:16-18).

The stage was set. While Abraham's older son, Ishmael, would become the father of the Arab people and elicit powerful promises from God, Isaac would become the inheritor of the covenant and the link through which God would work in offering His message of love to the nations (see Genesis 17:18-21).

WHY MOST OF MY HEROS ARE JEWISH!

Page 3 Isaac and Jesus: Profound Similarities

His name is famous. Even today, Jews call themselves the people of the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Who was Isaac? He was one of two famous sons of Abraham. The other was called Ishmael, whom we know today as the Father of the Arab peoples.

Unlike Abraham, Isaac did not have to break with idolatry and journey to a strange but promised land. He does not appear to be a traveler like Abraham, nor a fighter. He never had to offer one of his own sons as a sacrifice nor begin from nothing as did Abraham once he left his kin and homeland.

He was also very different from his son, Jacob. Isaac never deceived his father, never cheated another out of his birthright and never had to run to keep from being murdered by a brother. Unlike Jacob, he did not work years to procure a wife only to be tricked by a crafty father-in-law who would dump the wrong woman off on Jacob.

Also, unlike Jacob, Isaac would not have to use a stone for a pillow nor have a dream of a ladder reaching down from heaven. He never wrestled with an angel like Jacob would later do, and yet his similarities with Jesus, who would come some two thousand years later, are remarkable.

Isaac’s and Jesus’ births were similar. Both were sons of promise and both were persecuted during their infancy. Isaac was mocked by older brother Ishmael, and Jesus had to be carried as a displaced person by his parents into Egypt in order to escape the wrath of Herod (see Genesis 21:8,9; Matthew 2:13).

Both were greatly honored when yet babies—Abraham throwing a great party for the newly weaned Isaac, and the baby Jesus being honored by wise men with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Isaac and Jesus were also honored by their fathers above all others, although Abraham did struggle with God before realizing that eldest son Ishmael was not to be the promised heir (though Ishmael would indeed be a blessed child). In Jesus’

case, God would speak from heaven: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (see Matthew 3:17).

There are more similarities. Both Isaac and Jesus inherited their “father’s riches, yet neither fully possessed on this earth what they had been promised. Isaac was a pilgrim until he died, and Jesus had “not where to lay his head” and was finally buried in a borrowed tomb (see Luke 9:58; Matthew 27:57-60).

Both were offered as sacrifices. Abraham trudged to Mount Moriah with perhaps a million questions racing through his mind. He had been told to offer up the son of his old age. There is no doubt that he believed God would either spare Isaac’s life or else resurrect his son, because Abraham tells his anxious servants, “I and the lad will go...and come again to you.” He fully intended to return with Isaac, as the New Testament attests, when it says of Abraham’s willingness to slay his son: “Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (see Genesis 22:5; Hebrews 11:19).

And what incredible confidence Isaac had in his father when he allowed himself to be tied and prepared for the knife. Being young and strong, he could have fought his aged father in order to escape. But there was an unbreakable bond of love between Abraham and Isaac. Here was a lad that fully trusted his father. He had watched the integrity of Abraham over the years and had found his father fully trustworthy in life. He would now trust him even if it meant death.

When Abraham prepared to plunge the knife into Isaac’s chest, God stopped him. He had passed the test—there was nothing he would withhold from the Lord and nothing that God would withhold from Abraham. From him would come the Jewish people whom God would choose to offer spiritual riches to the world. And later, much later, Jesus would also be offered as a sacrifice by His loving Father. This time there would be no one to stay the hand of God as He would behold His only begotten Son die on a lonely cross at a place called Calvary.

A final two comparisons. Both Isaac and Jesus were promised followers that would be as innumerable as the stars of heaven and the sand on the world’s seashores. And both were promised a bride, each depending on his father to secure such. Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, was sent to a distant land and returned with Rebecca. And a heavenly Father would later send the Holy Spirit to prepare a bride for His Son. Jesus.

How Abraham and Isaac challenge me! Like Abraham, I so want to live that my physical child and spiritual children can trust my integrity completely. And like Isaac, I want to so trust my heavenly Father that, without reservation I will offer myself each day as a living sacrifice or, if need be, a dead one.

WHY MOST OF MY HEROS ARE JEWISH!

Page 4 Jacob: From a deceiver to a prince

His name was Jacob, and the name itself meant “supplanter” or “deceiver.” He was one of twin sons born to parents Isaac and Rebekkah. His brother Esau was first to come forth and if there was any doubt that these two brothers would not get on well, that was answered even at birth. Jacob followed Esau out of Rebekkah’s womb with his tiny hand already grasping Esau’s heel.

Under Jewish law, the oldest son was given the birthright, which spelled major privileges and the inheritance bequeathed by the father. In this case much more was at stake, because only one of these would carry the promise that had first been given to Abraham and then confirmed to Isaac to be a blessing to the whole earth. That, of course, is why God chose the Jews—not as “favorites” but certainly as intimates who would respond to him in love and ultimately be used as a light to the nations.

Scripture says that Esau’s stomach was more important to him than the birthright. He lived for the physical rather than the spiritual and he sold out the possibility of enormous blessing for some bread and lentil stew always figuring that man can live by bread alone. Sort of the “I want all I can get now and I’ll take my chances on eternity” concept.

So men still break God’s rules in the game of life. If it feels good, do it. Just like Esau. “I like my alcohol. So what if I get drunk! That’s my business.” But when he contracts cirrhosis of the liver the first thing said is: “If there’s a God, why did He let this happen to me?” We do the same thing as we pack our lungs with nicotine, our veins with narcotics and our minds and bodies with all forms of sexual license. However, in spite of inflation the wages of sin remain the same, and God’s bottom line still points to the law of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7,8).

Esau set himself up to come out second. And Jacob was glad to oblige him. He obtained Esau’s birthright with the help of a cunning mother. All Esau could do was weep. God had already seen that he held little value for either God or spiritual riches and God also obviously knew that behind Jacob’s sneaky heart was a desire to know and love God more than anything in life.

Later, Scripture records a wrestling match between Jacob and an angel where Jacob would not let go until he received a blessing. Jacob's thigh was left out of joint, but his heart and mind were transformed. His name was changed from Jacob (deceiver) to Israel—a prince with God (Genesis 32:24-28).

What a lesson from Jacob the Jew. God is still wrestling with men—speaking through conviction within or circumstances and catastrophes without—trying to get our attention. He knows that each of us is a “Jacob”—a deceiver—at heart, and He longs to make us “Israels”—princes. So He gives us a free will and asks us to make up our minds. Do we sell Him out for the world's crusts of bread and lentil stew—as Esau did. Or like Jacob, do we find Him worth wrestling over and cry out from our hearts: “Lord, I won't let you go until you bless me. Change my heart and transform my character deficiencies. I want to be your man more than anything in all the world”?

As a gentile, that's another precious lesson I've learned from the Jews. I started out as an Esau and then a Jacob, but by God's grace, I plan to end up an “Israel.”—a prince of my Lord.

PROGRAM 20 PAGE 5

WHY MOST OF MY HEROS ARE JEWISH!

Page 5 Joseph: The man without a price tag

Joseph would not have bought the “If it feels good, do it!” philosophy of our modern world. Nor would he have allowed us to blame a collective society for our individual sins. For example, if gangs tear a city apart, we say it’s because of a lack of jobs, lack of recreational facilities, or something else. If someone robs, rapes or murders, we say it’s not really his fault—he’s only a product of his environment. There used to be a time when a man was responsible for his own destiny—including mistakes or sins. But “progress” now lets people blame everyone for their problems except the guy in the mirror.

That’s why I appreciate one of my favorite Jewish characters. Joseph was a young man who had a couple of amazing dreams that left no doubt he would rise to prominence over his brethren (see Genesis 37:5-9). He would have flunked a course in diplomacy because he probably would have been better off not to share those dreams.

However, God allowed it and Joseph’s brethren grew insanely jealous. Rather than kill him, they sold him to some passing Midianite merchants who took Joseph into Egypt and sold him as a slave. He was bought by an Egyptian officer named Potiphar who, upon taking Joseph home, found himself and his house highly blessed.

Scripture puts it simply and succinctly: “Joseph found grace in his sight and he served him: and he (Potiphar) made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand; and he knew not ought he had save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person and well favored” (see Genesis 39:4-6).

However, Potiphar had a problem. He had a very lusty wife who not only thought Joseph was very handsome but desired him sexually. I have a feeling she was probably a beautiful woman and enjoyed a conquest. She made plans to seduce

Joseph and wheedled and needled him to have relations with her. In fact, she left Joseph no room for doubt when she said: “Lie with me” (Genesis 39:7).

What would happen to the average man today? Would we walk into the trap figuring “Everyone’s doing it anyway, so why not me?” Or would we have enough reverence and fear of God to know that the Creator who made sex for marriage had also thundered from Sinai: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14)? Joseph’s answer was as direct as the offer: “There is none greater in this house than I; neither has he (Potiphar) kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9).

Maybe this woman had already played it loose with other men and gotten her way. Joseph became her obsession for conquest. Day after day she seductively repeated her offer to meet Joseph in bed. Finally, there would be no more offers, no more games—she would make herself wanted irresistibly. What she could not get Joseph to desire with his eyes she would tempt him to take with his hands. So she boldly “caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me...” (Genesis 39:12).

She had attempted to seduce the wrong man. Joseph the Jew had no price tag and wouldn’t sell out even under what must have been a normal temptation for a virile young man. The Scripture says he left his garment in her hand and ran out of the house.

The rest of the story is history. A jilted woman framed an honest young man who was thrown into prison by a husband who would obviously find it easier and more desirable to believe his wife than Joseph. After all, who wants to believe his wife is virtually a rapist? Joseph was thrown into the pokey along with other prisoners. However, he had passed God’s test. Scripture says “But the Lord was with Joseph...” (Genesis 39:21). Those last six words make all the difference. How God must have loved this man who wouldn’t sell his soul for a few moments of passing pleasure! Joseph the Jew—and my example of a man without a price tag! Now do you see why most of my heroes are Jewish?!