A MORE EXCELLENT WAY:
UNDERSTANDING LOVE AND THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS
by Craig Peters

... “But earnestly desire the greater gifts, and yet I show to you a more excellent way.”
1Corinthians 12:31

Those who teach 1Corinthians 13 does away with spiritual gifts have placed themselves in a quagmire of man-made teachings which simply amount to casting off the Word of יהוה. And many have been led astray because of their fallacious methods of Scripture interpretation:

How can 1Corinthians 13, or as it is sometimes called, “The Love Chapter,” be construed as doing away with spiritual gifts when the subject matter of its surrounding chapters (12 and 14) both conveySha‘ul’s instructions concerning those very things?

Since both 1Corinthians 12 and 1Corinthians 14 were written to teach us of spiritual gifts, we assert 1Corinthians 13 is part of the very same context. In the study which now follows, we believe it will become most evident that love is the key for having the greatest, fullest move of the Spirit, so that spiritual gifts may operate without hindrance, as יהוה alone is magnified among His people through the Messiah and His life-giving Spirit.

Were the Gifts Abolished?

Nothing in the New Covenant Writings indicates the gifts of the Spirit would ever be abolished. Of course, there are those who will mistakenly cite the words of Sha‘ul to advocate this unsubstantiated opinion:

... but whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away.
1Corinthians 13:8-10

The claim here is that the phrase, “when the perfect comes,” is supposedly a reference to the present time, the time when we would have the written Scriptures—what many people call the Old and New Testaments. So, there are many fundamentalists who purport “the perfect” is a reference to the written Word of יהוה. But this view does not stand for a moment, even under the least amount of scrutiny. Just by pondering the immediate context, alone, one can deduce the error in such an interpretation; a few lines later, Sha‘ul wrote still more about the time when “the perfect” would come.

For now we see through a mirror, obscurely, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully, as also I am known.
1Corinthians 13:12

“Face to face” is a reference to that magnificent time when the faithful will see their Messiah¹ and undergo the greatest transformation a human being can ever experience;² only then will we “know fully.” And we obviously have not reached this epoch-making point in man’s history. So until that time, the Spirit of יהוה will continue to give gifts to edify the Body, to prepare and equip each believer for service in the coming Kingdom.

The Backdrop For 1Corinthians 13

So what did Sha‘ul ha’shaliach³ have in mind when he was writing 1Corinthians 13? If one understands a simple truth revealed in the Torah, it becomes evident that the emissary was cognizant of a certain, true-life story as he wrote these special, now world-famous words on the

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¹ 1Peter 1:8, 1John 3:2-3, Revelation 22:4
² 1Corinthians 15:51-53
³ (the sent one; the emissary)
nature of love. Let us ponder that particular incident. Recall the point at which Mosheh became overwhelmed and appealed to יִתְנֶה for help, stating that he could no longer bear the people without assistance from others:

I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.

Bemidbar/Numbers 11:14

So the Spirit of יִתְנֶה was sent forth and came upon the 70 elders who had been chosen to assist in serving the needs of the people:

16 And יִתְנֶה said to Mosheh, Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Yisrael, whom you know to be the elders of the people, and their officers; and take them to the Tent of Meeting, and they shall stand there with you. 17 And I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take of the Spirit which is upon you, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, and you will not bear it alone.

Bemidbar/Numbers 11:16-17

Yet, according to the account, amongst the seventy, upon whom did the Spirit work and move the most mightily?

25 And יִתְנֶה came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more. 26 But there remained two men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the Spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but had not gone out unto the Tent; and they prophesied in the camp. 27 And there ran a young man, and told Mosheh, and said, “Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.” 28 And Yahoshua the son of Nun, the minister of Mosheh, one of his chosen men, answered and said, “My master Mosheh, forbid them.” 29 And Mosheh said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of יִתְנֶה were prophets, that יִתְנֶה would put His Spirit upon them!”

Bemidbar/Numbers 11:26-29

Eldad and Medad remind me of David, who was not even on the scene when his other brothers were brought before Samuel in his quest to anoint the chosen one of יִתְנֶה. 4 But the One who looks on the heart knew where David was, 5 and He also knew where to find Eldad and Medad! One cannot help but notice that Yahoshua, son of Nun, was jealous for Mosheh’s sake! Yet this was one of the very things which Sha’ul addressed in the context of 1Corinthians 13 and spiritual gifts! Do you recall those famous and oft-quoted words?

“Love is not jealous.”

1Corinthians 13:4

And how much has the Spirit of יִתְנֶה been hindered and quenched among His people by jealous men who want the preeminence and who refuse to recognize the work of the Spirit in the lives of others? Such jealousies do not make for unity; and worse, Ya’acob (James) wrote how such works of the flesh foster great disunity:

For where jealousy and rivalry exist, there will be confusion and every foul deed.

James 3:16 6

יִתְנֶה does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, 7 and failure to recognize His work in the lives of others is proud, diametrical opposition to Him, His Spirit, His Kingdom, and His purposes.

Returing to the account of the 70 elders, there is still more evidence which shows Sha’ul had this very incident in mind as he wrote 1Corinthians 13: In Hebrew, the names of El-dad and Me-dad both relate to לְבָנָה...

לְבָנָה = El-dad = El has loved

לְבָנָה = Me-dad = loving, affectionate

So when Sha’ul wrote 1Corinthians 13, he was relating the truth of this great story! This minister of the Good News was clearly teaching the supremacy of love for the working of the Spirit and for the proper, most beneficial use of the gifts of the Spirit among the believers! The account of Eldad and Medad teaches us the Spirit of יִתְנֶה

4 1Samuel 16:1-10

5 1Samuel 16:11-13

6 Also see James 3:14.

7 Daniel 4:35
moves most upon, and continually remains/abides upon, those who are walking in the love of Elohim. We believe this is why Sha’ul’s introduction to his discourse on love was prefaced by the sentence:

But earnestly desire the greater gifts, and yet I show you a more excellent way.
1Corinthians 12:31

That “more excellent way” was walking in love! And this is what the life of Eldad and Medad teach us: Because רוח is love,8 His Spirit will abide the most fully upon those who walk in the spirit of love and unity. Thus, we have 1Corinthians 13—a segment of Scripture which sets forth the love of Eldad and Medad, but chiefly the love of רוח which His Spirit had worked within them. We see that the discourse on love was an essential, parenthetical insertion by Sha’ul to show the believers how to make their lives really count for the Kingdom because, working apart from love, even the greatest gifts will leave us without a lasting reward.9

Spiritual Gifts and Their Purpose: The Urim and Thummim

If anyone has gifts of the Spirit, the purpose of such blessings is largely to teach and edify the Assembly: רוח intends for those gifts to be used for adorning His Tabernacle, that is to say, for fostering the fullness of the Spirit within all of His people:

... 21 in whom all the building, being joined together, grows into a set-apart Dwelling Place in רוח; 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of Elohim in the Spirit.
Ephesians 2:21-22

It is to this end that all true shepherds will labor and strive. For those who have a heart which is in accordance with the heart of רוח, also know that dwelling among His people is His ultimate goal/desire:

3 And I heard a great voice out of the Throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of Elohim is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall

be His people, and Elohim Himself shall be with them, and be their Elohim: 4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.
Revelation 21:3-4

Thus, spiritual gifts should be used to bring honor to His Name and to cause His people to stand in greater love and awe before Him. As a result, רוח, through His Spirit, will dwell more greatly among us. And as a nation of priests, all New Covenant believers should use their spiritual gifts to help others and to lovingly bring them into a place of greater love and service by sharing the few fish and loaves the Messiah has provided us. And we must continually acknowledge that He is the only One who can bless and multiply our feeble efforts.10

We see that the spiritual gifts in the Melchizedek Priesthood answer to the Urim and Thummim – the lights and perfections – which were before the high priest in the Levitical Priesthood in the days of old. Said differently, the urim and thummim were prophetic types of the spiritual gifts. In Hebrew, the two words look like this:

← ← ←
ערימ = Urim = Lights
← ← ←
תומים = Thummim = Perfections

Because the Messiah is now the Great Priest over Yisrael, He is the One who is ultimately spoken of as possessing the Urim and Thummim:

And of Levi he said, “Your Thummim and your Urim are for your Chasid,"11 whom you tested at Massah; you contended with Him at the waters of Meribah.”
Deuteronomy 33:812

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8 1John 4:7-12
9 1Corinthians 13:1-3
11 (i.e., Kind One, in this case, the Messiah!)
12 This is one of a few significant Scriptures which show the Levitical Priesthood is secondary to, and subject to, the Melchi-tzedek Priesthood. The Melchi-tzedek Priesthood preceded the Levitical Priesthood; so the Urim and Thummim which the Levites had were only a type and shadow of what the Ultimate High Priest (after the order of Melchi-tzedek, Psalm 110:4) now possesses. Other texts also show the primacy of the Melchi-tzedek Priesthood:
We see the Chasid spoken of in this text as being the Messiah—the One now exalted to the Right Hand of Elohim as the High Priest after the order of Melchi-tzedek. But while Elohim, the High Priest, possesses the Urim and Thummim, the Messiah also indicated the Spirit would take from what is His and give to His followers:

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all the truth: for He will not speak from Himself; but whatever He hears, He will speak: and He will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will magnify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and will declare it to you. 15 All things whatsoever the Father has are Mine: therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will declare it to you. John 16:13-15

And New Covenant Writings even show us how the gifts from above are lights and perfections:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of turning.

James 1:17

So we see the Father of lights bestows upon us every good and perfect gift in the Spirit: These spiritual gifts bear the hallmarks of His light and His perfection! They manifest His Name and His greatness! The words of Sha’ul also reveal gifts of the Spirit to be the lights and perfections:

8 Wherefore He says, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. 9 (Now this, “He ascended,” what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 for the perfecting of the set-apart ones, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of the Messiah: 13 until we all attain to the

_Unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of Elohim, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Messiah._ Ephesians 4:8-13

Gifts of the Spirit emanate with the light and the perfection of Elohim and those gifts impart that light and perfection unto His people in through the Spirit of Elohim. In His light, we see light:

_For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light._ Psalms 36:9, ISRV

As a result, our minds are continually transformed to think, feel, and do what Elohim thinks, feels, and does: Elohim is formed within us as we grow to have the mindset of the Messiah.

The Gift-Giver

In regard to spiritual gifts, we should not make the mistake of comparing ourselves with others. The Gift-Giver is the Father of Lights (Urim), and with Him is no unrighteousness. The focus should be in loving others: We should not, on the one hand, allow ourselves to feel less-than-useful; yet neither should we be wrongly exultant if the Spirit has been able to work great things through our lives. No one can boast in regard to something which has been given to them. And this brings us back to 1Corinthians 13 and gifts of the Spirit:

... love does not boast, is not puffed up ...

1Corinthians 13:4, ISRV

Such arrogance is seen when, as Sha’ul wrote, the hand says to the eye, “I have no need of you:”

And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you:” or again, the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

1Corinthians 12:21

At the same time, we need never apologize if the Most High has bestowed some spiritual gift, or gifts, upon us. The important thing for each one of us is to function as the Spirit has directed us to

Hebrews 7:1-10 (shows even the Levites paid tithes to Melchi-tzedek), Hebrews 13:10 (indicates unconverted Levites have no right to partake of the Bread and Cup ordained by the Ruling Melchi-tzedek Priest, the Messiah, within the Melchi-tzedek Priesthood). 13 (urim)
function, and to use these gifts to build up the Body and to magnify the greatness of יהוה. And it must be realized that it is also pride for any members of the Body to think less of themselves because of their function; for this seemingly lowly, but still inappropriate mindset, also fails to give יהוה the honor for setting each one in the Body as it has pleased Him:

15 If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” does it, therefore, not belong to the body? 16 And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” does it, therefore, not belong to the body? 17 If all the body was an eye, where would be the hearing? If all was hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now Elohim has set the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He pleased. 19 And if they all had been one member, where would be the body? 1Corinthians 12:15-19

Recall the temptation for the believer with only one talent: Even that which he had, he failed to use, apparently out of resentment toward his Master. If we use our gift(s) faithfully, even in this life, we will be given more. Whatever we do, our goal is to give/bring honor to יהוה, and this would certainly include gratefully accepting and faithfully using whatever gifts He has given us for serving others.

Tehillah 133 in the Letter to the Corinthians

Although it is one of the shortest, Psalm 133 is packed with things of profundity which certainly transcend our ability to comprehend. Here is the text of the entire psalm:

Tehillah 133
A Song of Ascents; of David.
1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together even in unity!
2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that came down upon the skirt of his garments.
3 Like the dew of Hermon, that comes down upon the mountains of Tziyon:

For there יהוה commanded the blessing, even life to the age.

Given that the wisdom of יהוה is beyond searching out, there is certainly more to this song than we can fathom. Even so, there are some things the Spirit reveals, and one of these is the following: Like a golden thread, the Spirit of יהוה has woven the truth of Psalm 133 into the words of Sha’ul as he wrote the letter which we now call “First Corinthians.” While Tehillah 133 speaks of brothers dwelling together in unity, there was clearly a problem at Corinth with disunity:

- They were puffed up in favor of one man against another: They were boasting in men, preferring one emissary over another.
- They were actually exultant with pride when a man had taken his father’s wife in an illegitimate union.
- There appears to have been a divisive case where at least one believer was taking a fellow believer to a court of law before unbelievers.
- They assembled during times of worship with unsettled divisions.
- With all the division, Sha’ul saw it necessary to address the assembly at Corinth, using the human body as an analogy, so that they would see why “there should be no schism in the body, but the members should have the same care for one another.”
- Their actions, both during and outside of the worship setting, failed to show love.

Which brings us to 1Corinthians 14: Here Sha’ul tells them more about how to be in true unity during the worship service. As it immediately follows 1Corinthians 13 (and all other instruction which had led to that critical turning point), we know the unity which Sha’ul advocates in chapter 14 is based on true love:

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18 Matthew 25:24-29
19 Matthew 25:19-23
20 1Corinthians 10:31
21 1Corinthians 1:10-13, 3:3-7, 4:6
22 1Corinthians 5:1-2
23 1Corinthians 6:1-7
24 1Corinthians 11:17-22
25 1Corinthians 12:14-27
26 1Corinthians 13:1-13
• They were exhorted to follow after love, but to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially those gifts that were classified as “greater.”27

• One who prophesies speaks unto men edification, exhortation, and consolation.28 Spoken in love,29 these are the things that edify the Body.30

• One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the assembly.31 The solution? Do not speak in a tongue unless the Spirit gives an interpretation.32

• So what would be the result of the believers gathering together in love to edify one another? Sha’ul tells them, in advance, of the amazing result—and it was the same result seen in Psalm 133: When brothers dwell together in love and unity, then comes the blessing which only can command.

24 But if all prophesy, and there comes in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reproved by all, he is judged by all; and so he will fall down on his face and worship Elohim, declaring that Elohim is among you indeed! 26 What is it then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. 1Corinthians 14:24-2633

Just as we read in Tehillah 133, when brothers dwell together in unity, commands the blessing of life forevermore: Those congregations who dwell together in love and unity, will also become houses of deliverance, and they will, quite often, be used of to bring salvation to unbelievers who come into their midst. Because they are walking in love and unity, will command His blessing among them: Those prophesying will reveal His greatness and those hearing will often come to the knowledge of the truth:

And this is age-abiding life, that they may know You, the only true Elohim, and the Messiah, whom You have sent.
John 17:3

Thus, whenever the Adversary can work disunity, everyone loses.

They Shall No More Teach Every Man His Brother

While on the topic of spiritual gifts, we would be amiss if failing to address a common misconception which enjoys some popularity, even among those who rightly understand the Torah was never abolished by the Messiah. The text which has led to an improper, perhaps, even arrogant, mindset is seen in the Word of through the prophet Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) when speaking of the New Covenant:

31 Behold, the days come, says, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Yisrael, and with the house of Yahudah: 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, says. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house after those days, says: I will put My Torah in their inward parts, and in their heart I will write it; and I will be their Elohim, and they will be My people: 34 and they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know,” for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. Jeremiah 31:31-34

27 1Corinthians 14:1
28 1Corinthians 14:3
29 Ephesians 4:15-16
30 Romans 14:19
31 1Corinthians 14:4
32 1Corinthians 14:13,27-28
33 We also note the order seen here clearly rebukes the usual “one-man-show” so characteristic of most modern-day worship services. Shepherds who do not allow other brothers to edify the assembly are outright rejecting the Word of in this regard. When prophets speak in two or three (1Corinthians 14:29), there is always a fuller revelation than can be given through any one man. Nothing in all of Scripture ever indicates gifts of the Spirit would only be given to those who could hold forth their seminary degree with “Doctor of Divinity” credentials. Actually, we typically see quite the opposite: It is our relationship with the Most High (Psalm 119:98-100), and the impartation of His Spirit (Job 32:4-9), that determines who can truly speak His Word and feed His sheep. Acts 4:13, 1Corithians 1:26-31 (There are rare exceptions in which one man may largely “have the floor.” Acts 20:7-11)
There are those who mistakenly interpret this text to mean that they have absolutely no reason to heed anything that any other man teaches regarding the Scriptures. But if that were the case, why did \(\text{יהי} \) ordain there to be a multiplicity of offices and spiritual gifts whereby His already converted people were to be taught and equipped, so they would increasingly become a habitation for \(\text{יהי} \) to indwell them in the Spirit? How can one answer this seeming contradiction? The context of the New Covenant prophecy, given through Jeremiah, shows that \(\text{יהי} \) was simply speaking of the initial knowledge that believers are given when they profess faith in the Elohim of Yisrael and His Messiah:

... and they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know \(\text{יהי} \);” for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says \(\text{יהי} \): for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. Jeremiah 31:34

It is at the beginning of a vibrant relationship with the Messiah that one deals with the life of past sins, renouncing the kingdom of darkness and being translated in the Kingdom of light by faith in the shed blood of the Savior. This text speaks of that beginning knowledge. And Yochanan (John) was referring to this very same Scripture when he wrote:

26 These things I have written to you concerning those who would lead you astray. 27 And as for you, the anointing which you received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, you abide in Him. 1John 2:26-27

In this case, the believers to whom Yochanan wrote were being harassed/afflicted by men who were attempting to lead them astray; evidently, these men were claiming to seduce the believers by claiming to have the exclusive, “inside scoop” on all that was truth. (And do we not see the same thing so often in our days?) So, as any true shepherd would do, Yochanan was directing the believers to look to \(\text{יהי} \) alone. And the emissary cited Jeremiah 31:34 as his authority!

However, we must not overlook the simple fact that, in this very same letter, Yochanan was himself teaching the believers so many things! So this misunderstood text – which was/is a great prophecy regarding the anointing all believers are to have in the New Covenant – is not teaching us to completely ignore or shun anything and everything other men teach!

From a scriptural-commonsense point of view, how can we fulfill the Messiah’s directive to make disciples of all the nations – teaching them to observe all He has commanded us – unless we are actively teaching others who are not only willing to learn, but who will eventually carry forth the light of truth and themselves teach others, thus, continuing the process until the Messiah returns?

Provided the Spirit endorses the words, \(\text{יהי} \) makes it abundantly clear from His Word that He intends we all learn from those through whom the Messiah speaks and that we all partake in building up one another. For this to happen in the way He has always intended, love is the key.

C.P. Northridge, CA
The 9th month, the 6th day of the month
11/23/2009

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34 Ephesians 4:7-16, 1Corinthians 12:8-11, 28-31  
35 Acts 26:18, 1Peter 2:9  
36 Jeremiah 31:34  
37 Isaiah 51:1, Jeremiah 17:5-8  
38 (i.e., Jeremiah 31:34)  
39 Numbers 11:29, Matthew 5:1,11,12, Acts 2:17, 1Corinthians 14:24,31  
40 Ephesians 4:7-16, 1Corinthians 12:8-11, 28-31. See also: 1Corinthians 4:17, 14:19, 1Timothy 1:3, 3:2, 4:11, 6:2-3, 2Timothy 2:24-26, Titus 2:3-5  
41 Matthew 28:18-20  
42 2Timothy 2:2, Hebrews 5:12
of True Worship by robbing and oppressing the poor. Zechariah 7:10 Many have turned reverence and the worship of God into a means of great, personal gain. Micah 3:11, 1Timothy 6:5-10, 1Peter 5:2 We assert such things were never meant to be, Isaiah 55:1,2, Mark 11:15-17. Hence, our copyright is intended to allow for free distribution of the word of God with the following, minimal limitations:

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