

## Introduction

A flurry of silver tinsel held on a circular bow flashes in front of my face. A group of men dancing in a circle. Children being blessed under a blanket. People rejoicing, clapping their hands and cheering. Soulful music being sung in worship. All of these things were part of my experiences over the past two days. I visited Rosh Pinah, a Messianic Jewish Congregation, and Calvary Baptist Church, which has a congregation made up of mostly African Americans. Both of my experiences were fulfilling, and taught me a lot about the different ways to worship the Lord. My experiences at both services can be best explained by what I saw, what I heard, and what I felt during my time there.

## What I saw

My experience at Rosh Pinah was a very visual experience. The service was very colorful. While the congregation was singing many people would get up and begin to dance. The dancers were children as well as grown men and women. One woman held a round bow that was covered with silver tinsel which she waved in the air. Many of the men in the congregation wore long white blanket type sashes over their shoulders that had blue stripes across the ends. At one point in the service the rabbi asked all of the children to come forward, and a white blanket was placed over their heads. The blanket was large and had tassels on the ends, and the rabbi explained that the way the tassels were ~~held~~ held special significance. Then a blessing was said over the children. The service was very colorful, and I enjoyed it a lot.

My experience at the Calvary Baptist Church was not quite as visually stimulating as at Rosh Pinah. Obviously, my skin color was different than the majority of the

congregation, but I did not really seem to notice that during the service. One thing that really struck me was how physical the service was. When praying for an older gentlemen many members of the congregation moved over to him and placed their hands on him. During the singing of hymns, everyone would raise their hands towards heaven or sway along with the music. I smiled to myself during the singing of one of the songs to imagine what someone looking into the congregation might see. I imagined that as they looked out into the crowd myself and the other two people that I went with must have stuck out. Someone looking out would see all the black faces swaying and clapping, and then the three white people in the congregation very stiff and standing tall.

### What I Heard

The Rosh Pinah service was full of sounds that I had never heard before. The Rabbi spoke in Hebrew through much of the service. He would encourage the congregation to repeat many of the Hebrew words that he said, and then explain the significance of the words. Words like “Yeshua” and “mashiach” were introduced to me. Also during the service, a man blew a shofar which looked like a long wooden horn.

During the service at Calvary Baptist Church, my ears were filled with beautiful soulful music. The normal band for the church was away at a revival the day that we visited, but a drummer and guitar player were there. The singing was beautiful, and obviously filled with a lot of heart. It was obvious that the people there were very moved by the music that they were singing.

### What I Felt

I felt my face blush as I entered Rosh Pinah. I felt instantly out of place, and uncomfortable with the fact that I did not know what format the service would follow. A

woman stopped us as we entered and asked our names and I told her mine, and she must have assumed that the person I was with was my husband because she put his last name on my name tag. I did not want to tell her that that was not my last name so I just held the name tag in my hand. Then I was approached by man who asked where my name tag was, and I showed him that it was in my hand. He coaxed me into putting it on, and I got the impression that he had thought that I was not wearing it because I thought the idea of name tags was stupid, which was not the case. I did not feel embraced by the group. I felt like the small congregation knew that I was an outsider.

The Calvary Baptist Church was quite different from my experience at Rosh Pinah. We arrived a bit early to the service, and we sat near the back. We were quickly embraced by the people around us. Several members of the church came up to us and introduced themselves while hugging us and shaking our hands. They seemed genuinely pleased to have us as guests at their service, and readily accepted us.

### Conclusion

I learned a lot about both of my experiences. What I saw touched me at both services and opened my eyes to the different ways that people serve the Lord. Whether it is dancing in a circle and waving colorful bows through the air, or swaying and lifting your hands towards heaven both of the services were very energetic and moving. What I heard challenged me at the Rosh Pinah service to understand an ancient language. The soulful sounds of the Calvary Baptist Church were very moving. Both the groups of people left me with very different feelings. I learned so much during the limited time that I spent at the services, and I was glad that I had the chance to take a look into two different worlds.