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Messianic Perspectives®

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

HERE COMES *The* BRIDE



by Dr. Gary Hedrick

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation’” (Lev. 23:23-24).

People often refer to the seven feasts in Leviticus 23 as “the feasts of Israel.”

However, the Bible never says these feasts belong exclusively to Israel. Instead, it always calls them “the feasts of the LORD”:

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts’” (Lev. 23:2).

First and foremost, they are God’s feasts.

Yes, He gave them to Israel—and He expected her to keep them.

Nonetheless, there’s a wealth of teaching in these seven special observances that will inform and enrich all of us—Jew and gentile alike (1 Cor. 10:11).

If our prophetic interpretation of the feasts is correct, the Jewish New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) represents the beginning of the next series of events on God’s calendar.

Prophecy in the Feasts

The Feasts of the LORD aren't only about prophecy. In Mosaic times, in fact, their immediate historical setting corresponded to Israel's agricultural year.

The calendar was agrarian—like the calendars of virtually all cultures in ancient times. It told them when to plant crops, when to bring the first-fruits to the Temple, when to harvest, and how to be stewards of the increase (through a system of tithes and offerings).

Nonetheless, the biblical calendar (and its feasts) transcends its function as a year-to-year farming guide. It also has a typological significance. That is, the feasts are symbolic and prophetic, often pointing us to messianic truths and future events.

The summary of the feasts in Leviticus 23, especially, forms a chronological outline of God's prophetic plan (see chart below).

When viewed from a messianic perspective, the four spring feasts represent events associated with the Messiah's *first* coming some 2,000 years ago: namely, His death (Passover and Unleavened Bread), His resurrection (Firstfruits), and His sending of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost).

In a similar way, the three fall feasts point to the main events of our Lord's *second* coming: that is, His return (*Rosh Hashanah*, or *Yom Teruah*—the Day of Shofar Blowing), Israel's repentance and salvation (Day of Atonement), and the establishing of His earthly Kingdom (Tabernacles).



The Trump of God

The predominant feature of *Yom Teruah* is (as the name suggests) the blowing of the *shofar* and/or trumpet.¹

In ancient Israel, the horn-blast had a number of uses. During the wilderness wanderings, for example, these sounds could carry for miles and were used to coordinate the movements of the various camps of Israel (Num. 10:2). They were also used in military maneuvers (v. 9) and to call the people together for a meeting (v. 2).

Different patterns and intonations conveyed specific messages:

- **Tekiah**—One plain, deep bass sound with an abrupt ending (a call to attention; a call to gather together);
- **Teruah**—Nine short, quick blasts between two *tekiahs* (signifying danger or a signal to move); and
- **Shevarim**—Three connected short blasts (a wailing, broken sound announcing a sad or somber event).²

The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord's return would be signaled by a horn (trumpet/*shofar*) blast:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed** (1 Cor. 15:51-52; emphasis added).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first** (1 Thess. 4:16; emphasis added).

Could this mean that He will return on a future (and possibly not-too-distant) *Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah*?

If so, the horn blast Paul mentions may be something like a *tekiah*—a signal for God's people to assemble and meet Him in the air (v. 17).³

THE SEVEN FEASTS OF THE LORD | LEVITICUS 23

Spring Feasts

(already fulfilled)

- 1 Pesach (Passover)
- 2 HaMatzot (Feast of Unleavened Bread)
- 3 HaBikkurim (Feast of Firstfruits)
- 4 Shavu'ot (Feast of Weeks or Pentecost)

- 5 Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year, also called *Yom Teruah*, the Day of Shofar Blowing)
- 6 Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)
- 7 Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)

Fall Feasts

(future fulfillment)

Messianic Perspectives®

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A Bride Fit for a King

The LORD's kingship and rulership are recurring themes during the celebration of the Jewish New Year.

The focus in the Torah readings is on God's relationship with His people Israel. God is their King—and they come to Him through *teshuvah* (repentance).

This process of approaching God as a people begins on *Rosh Hashanah*, continues through the *Yamim Noraim* (Ten Days of Awe), and concludes on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).

Again, it's all about the relationship. God is Israel's King and they are His subjects.

Another analogy that's invoked (to describe the relationship) is that of a marriage; that is, Israel is God's "wife" (Isa. 54:1-8; see also Jer. 2:2, 3:20; Ezek. 16:8; Hosea 2:16).

In fact, a psalm that's often read on *Rosh Hashanah* is a royal wedding song (Psalm 45).⁴ This magnificent psalm celebrates an unnamed king's wedding. Verses 3 to 9 praise the royal groom and verses 10 to 16 extol the virtues of his bride.

The Lord Jesus is our King (Rev. 19:16). In an earthly sense, in fact, He is the last rightful king of the Davidic line in Israel.⁵

Our King, too, has a bride. Like I said, it's all about the relationship.

Seven Key Points of the Marriage Analogy

1. A wedding requires a bride and groom.

Not long ago, I heard an advertisement for a History Channel program. It asked, "Was Jesus of Nazareth married?" I don't know what their answer was, but mine is, "Not yet—but He will be."

In ancient times, "arranged marriages" were common. It was customary for the groom's father to choose a bride for his son (in fact, this is still the practice among many Middle Eastern clans). Abraham, for instance, sent his servant Eliezer to find a bride for his son Isaac (Gen. 24).⁶

Likewise, God the Father chose us before the foundations of the world to be His Son's bride (Eph. 1:4). The bride of Messiah (Heb., *Kalat haMashiach*) is the Church (the *kehila*, the messianic community of Jewish and gentile believers).

Over and over in Scripture, we are portrayed as being the bride of the Lord Jesus (*haAdon Yeshua*):

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

ROSH HASHANAH THE JEWISH NEW YEAR FACT BOX

- Literally means, "Head of the Year"
- Biblical name: *Yom Teruah* (Day of Trumpet Blowing)
- Observed on the 1st day of *Tishri*
- Followed by "ten days of awe" and *Yom Kippur* (24-hour fast) on *Tishri* 10
- Also known as *Yom haZikkaron* (the "Day of Remembrance," Lev. 23:24)
- Traditional greeting: *L'Shanah Tovah Tikatevu!* (May you be inscribed [in the Book of Life] for a good year!)
- Emphasis: *Aseret Yemai Teshuvah* (self-examination and repentance)
- *Minhagim* (customs) of *Rosh Hashanah* include candle lighting and *Kiddush*, dipping apples (or *challah*) in honey, and *Tashlikh* (symbolically "casting" sins into a body of flowing water)
- An entire tractate of the *Mishnah* (the law code portion of the Talmud) is devoted to *Rosh Hashanah*
- According to a rabbinic tradition, Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden on *Rosh Hashanah* in the year 3760 BCE

Adapted from the Hebrew for Christians website (www.hebrew4christians.com)

English Translation of An Orthodox *Ketubah* (Marriage Contract)

On the _____ day of the week, the _____ day of the month _____ in the year five thousand seven hundred and _____ since the creation of the world, the era according to which we reckon here in the city of _____ that _____ son of _____ said to this (virgin) _____ daughter of _____: "Be my wife according to the practice of Moses and Israel, and I will cherish, honor, support and maintain you in accordance with the custom of Jewish husbands who cherish, honor, support and maintain their wives faithfully. And I here present you with the marriage gift of (for virgins), (two hundred) silver zuzim, which belongs to you, according to the law of Moses and Israel; and I will also give you your food, clothing and necessities, and live with you as husband and wife according to universal custom." And Miss _____, this (virgin), consented and became his wife. The trousseau that she brought to him from her (father's) house in silver, gold, valuables, clothing, furniture and bedclothes, all this _____, the said bridegroom accepted in the sum of (one hundred) silver pieces, and _____, the bridegroom, consented to increase this amount from his own property with the sum of (one hundred) silver pieces, making in all (two hundred) silver pieces. And thus said _____, the bridegroom: "The responsibility of this marriage contract, of this trousseau, and of this additional sum, I take upon myself and my heirs after me, so that they shall be paid from the best part of my property and possession that I have beneath the whole heaven, that which I now possess or may hereafter acquire. All my property, real and personal, even the shirt from my back, shall be mortgaged to secure the payment of this marriage contract, of the trousseau, and of the addition made to it, during my lifetime and after my death, from the present day and forever." _____, the bridegroom, has taken upon himself the responsibility of this marriage contract . . .

Attested to _____ Witness

Attested to _____ Witness

The Apostle Paul also told the Corinthian believers, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2).

The Apostle John, in the last book of the Bible, encounters an angel who says, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9; see also 19:7). This is the first time the bride of Messiah is referred to as His "wife." Betrothal is now over (in this future prophecy) and the relationship is being consummated.

The Lamb in this passage, of course, is Yeshua, whom John had called "the Lamb of God" many years earlier (John 1:29, 36). Today, the Lamb's relationship to His bride continues in the betrothal stage (see point 3). Someday, the relationship will be consummated—and we will be married to our Messiah. We'll talk about this later.

2. A wedding requires a covenant.

When a Jewish couple got married in ancient times, they entered into a covenant known in Hebrew as the *ketubah* (see sidebar).

The *ketubah* was primarily for the bride's protection. It specified the price paid by the groom. It also spelled out his responsibilities toward her. One commentator explains, "Under the law of coverture, the newly-married bride was 'covered' by her husband's stature and actions."⁷

As recently as the 18th century, a similar law of coverture applied to married women in the United Kingdom. It meant that a husband and wife were, in the eyes of the law, one person. For example, the wife could not sue anyone (or be sued) without her husband also being a party. Everything he owned was hers—and vice versa. The husband also became responsible for all of his bride's debts (if she had any) and actions—even those from before the marriage.⁸

Under the New Covenant (*Berit haChadashah*), Jewish and gentile believers have become one with the Messiah. Note that He mentioned both horizontal and vertical unity in His high priestly prayer:⁹

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:20-23).

Furthermore, our sin-debt (past, present, and future) has been forgiven by virtue of our union with the Lord Jesus and the fact that His righteousness has been imputed to us by faith (Rom. 4:5-8). He is our covering (Ruth 2:12) and our sins have been removed from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).¹⁰

3. A wedding requires a protocol.¹¹

My wife, Marcia, planned our wedding in 1977. Friends and family members helped, of course, but she knew exactly what she wanted and arranged every detail with meticulous care. A few days beforehand, she handed me a schedule with the date and time of the rehearsal, as well as the program for the following afternoon's ceremony. I knew exactly when to be at the church with my groomsmen.

This was no less true in ancient times. They followed a plan. Once the bride was chosen, and she accepted the proposal, there were three steps in making the young couple man and wife:

- **Betrothal:** This was the *kiddushin*, the engagement period (although it was more binding than a modern engagement). "Betrothal was a binding contract established between two families and sealed by the exchange of gifts. During this period the couple did not live together; sexual relations with each other at this stage was regarded as equivalent to adultery."¹² Joseph and Mary, Jesus' earthly parents, were in the betrothal period when she became pregnant through the miraculous working of God's Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18).
- **Preparation:** This period began with the signing of the marriage contract and payment of the bride-price (*mohar*—a sum paid by the groom to compensate the bride's family; e.g., Gen. 34:11-12), which sealed the contract, and a dowry (paid by the bride's father to the bride and/or groom; 1 Kings 9:16).¹³ The length of this period was indeterminate.¹⁴
- **Retrieval:** This finalized the arrangement with a marriage ceremony. The bridegroom went in a processional to the home of the bride and took her to their future home, followed by "a marriage supper and time of celebration."¹⁵ Most sources say this celebratory feast lasted for a week—and sometimes even longer.¹⁶

In His Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Lord compared His return to that of a bridegroom coming to fetch his betrothed bride (Matt. 25:1-13). This was the retrieval phase (see above). In this story, the Lord was making the point that no one knew precisely when the bridegroom and his party would come to retrieve the bride and her party.

People who don't believe in an imminent Rapture of the Church have a problem here—and they know it. That's why they go through all sorts

of logical (or illogical) contortions to explain away this parable's meaning. However, the meaning is clear: the bridal party didn't know the precise time of the bridegroom's coming. In the story, five "wise" bridesmaids were prepared when the moment finally came and five "foolish" ones weren't (see vv. 6-10).

Interestingly, this uncertainty about timing is also reflected in the ancient observance of *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year. They couldn't pinpoint the exact time until someone actually saw the new moon. (They didn't possess astronomical and communications technologies like we have today.) Yes, they knew the approximate time, but not the hour or sometimes even the day (depending on weather conditions).

What did weather conditions have to do with it? Well, in ancient Israel, they used a lunar calendar and the new year was calibrated to the arrival of the new moon. If the weather was overcast, it could be difficult to spot the moon in the hills of Judea; nonetheless, the Temple's complex system of prayers and sacrifices made it essential to know when it appeared. The Jerusalem Talmud explains how the Sanhedrin accepted testimony from witnesses who said they saw the new moon (IX. *Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah* 2:1).¹⁷ If the witnesses appeared to be credible, the authorities would declare the arrival of the new moon (and with it, the new year) so the festivities could begin.

This was not an issue for any other feast because *Rosh Hashanah* was the only one that occurred when the new moon appeared (i.e., on *Rosh Chodesh*, the beginning of a month).

The rabbis eventually extended the observance of *Rosh Hashanah* to two days (which they ruled was one "long" day) because they needed extra time to get word to outlying areas that the new moon had been observed and the first of *Tishri* had arrived. The extra day helped compensate for the uncertainty of the new moon.

This, in fact, may have been the backdrop for the Lord's statement, referring to His own coming, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only*" (Matt. 24:36).

Technically, the "last days" began in NT times (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2), and every generation of believers since the first century has had the "blessed hope" that they might see the Lord's return (Titus 2:13).

Nonetheless, simple logic dictates that eventually, the final generation will come on the scene. The Lord said that believers should always "watch" (Mark 13:37) and "discern" the signs of their times (Matt. 16:1-3); wouldn't that apply even more so to the terminal generation?

This is why many of us believe it's possible to know the *season* of the Lord's return, but not the precise date (cp. Acts 1:6-7).



4. A wedding requires a change of clothes.

In Psalm 45, the “royal daughter” (the king’s bride) is arrayed in a special, gold-laced wedding dress (v. 13; see also Ezek. 16:1-10).

The bride of Messiah also has a wedding dress:

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (Rev. 19:7-8).

Our wedding garments, at least for now, are not literal but spiritual. We come to our royal bridegroom arrayed in our “righteous acts.”

While it’s true that we’re saved by grace apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9), it’s also true that what we *do* is important. Saving faith in one’s heart will always manifest itself in the form of good works (James 2:17-26).

It’s not salvation *by* works, but a salvation *that* works.

5. A wedding requires a consummation.

Following the wedding ceremony, the couple withdrew into their own, private chamber for their first sexual union.¹⁸ With the completion of this act of love, the marital union was consummated. Virginity was highly prized in ancient Jewish culture; and it was customary to save the blood-stained bed sheet as a token of the bride’s purity (Deut. 22:13-21).¹⁹

Likewise, our Lord wants a pure bride. Yes, it’s true that *positionally*, we are already perfectly pure and righteous. However, He also wants us to be *practically* pure. The Bible says, “*And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure*” (1 John 3:3).

Jesus the Messiah once destroyed a fig tree because it wasn’t fruitful (Matt. 21:19). He was making a point. Productivity is our *raison d’être* as believers. We are here to glorify God and serve Him. If we claim to be saved but our lives show no practical evidence of it, we are only deceiving ourselves.

The King James Bible uses the word “know” to translate the Hebrew *yada* (יָדָע). Among its range of meanings is the most intimate of human relationships—intercourse between a husband and wife: “*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, I have acquired*

a man from the LORD” (Gen. 4:1; emphasis added).

God also wants us to know Him—not in a sexual way, of course, but spiritually and emotionally. Jesus said that a believer’s personal and intimate knowledge of God is what distinguishes him from the rest of the world: “*The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you*” (John 14:17).

The New Covenant makes it possible for us to know the LORD personally:

“No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34).

There is no greater privilege than knowing the God of the universe. The Apostle Paul echoed this sentiment when he said, “*That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*” (Phil. 3:10; emphasis added).

We’re talking here about really *knowing* God. That’s not the same as merely knowing *about* God—or even believing that there *is* a God (theism). Many people know *about* God; only a relative few really *know* Him personally.



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6. A wedding requires a change of address.

Every married couple needs a place where they can set up housekeeping.

Before he went to the bride's family home to retrieve his beloved, the bridegroom spent whatever time was necessary preparing a dwelling for his new family. Andreas Köstenberger comments:

"I will come again and take you with me, so that where I am, you will be as well" (cf. [John] 17:24). The reference is to the second coming. Similar terminology is found in Song 8:2a, where the bride says that she will bring her lover to her mother's house. Here Jesus, the messianic bridegroom (3:29), is said first to go to prepare a place for his own in his Father's house and then to come to take them home to be with him.²⁰

Before He left this world, the Lord Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for His bride:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

7. A wedding requires a change of identity.

We already saw that under the ancient legal principle of coverture, the newly married couple was no longer (in the eyes of the law) treated as two individuals. The two became "one" (see point 2).

When the Lord God performed the first wedding ceremony in the Garden of Eden, He said, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*" (Gen. 2:24).

When a marriage takes place, the man and woman become a couple. Each of them has assumed a new role—he is her husband and she is his wife. For both of them, this new relationship takes precedence over all others.

In most Western cultures, the woman takes her husband's surname. Now she has a new name—and she has to make that change on her driver's license, passport, and other important documents.

Under the New Covenant, we, too, assume a new identity. The Apostle Paul said, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*" (2 Cor. 5:17).

New beginnings and a fresh start—this is one of the themes of the Jewish New Year.



Rosh Hashanah: Starting Anew

At the moment of salvation, a sinner becomes a saint. He's indwelt by the Holy Spirit. His sins are forgiven. Fear gives way to confidence. Hate turns to love.

The believer even gets a new name: "And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev. 2:17).

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The Feast of Trumpets: Rosh Hashanah

by Violette Berger



Following the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and before the observance of the fifth feast of Israel is the Feast of Trumpets. God commanded: “*When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God*” (Lev. 23:22).

God commanded this four-month interim period as a hiatus, a time when any poor Jewish person or wayfaring stranger (gentile) was allowed to go into the fields and take anything needed for sustenance. Because God provided the Israelites with a plentiful harvest, they were to be generous when they reaped it. Immediately following this interval, the last three feasts of Israel move in rapid succession—all falling in a 30-day period. Their fulfillment, likewise, also proceeds rapidly. The first of these is the Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah* or Jewish New Year) in the month of *Tishri* on the lunar calendar, equivalent to our September.

The memorial God spoke of in Leviticus 23:23-25 was to remind Israel of God’s goodness, and to ask God to continue remembering the covenant demonstrated through Abraham. God commanded the blowing of the trumpet (the ram’s horn or *shofar* as described in Numbers 10) as a call to assemble, an alarm preparing the Israelites for battle, or to memorialize God’s grace to Abraham when He substituted a ram to be sacrificed instead of Abraham’s son, Isaac (Gen. 22).

The manner in which this holy convocation is celebrated in Judaism today differs from that of biblical Judaism. Israel’s biblical new year was designated (Ex. 12:1-2) as the first day of the first month of *Nisan* (March). But the ancient rabbis believed that the Lord created the world in the first week of the seventh month of *Tishri* (September). Hence, the beginning of creation and the start of a new year became the first day of the seventh month.

Sadly, the same ritualistic celebration of *Rosh Hashanah*, observed for two days, is repeated by the Jewish people year after year. “All over the world, wherever it is possible, Jewish

people will go to their synagogue, recite long prayers, confess their sins of omission and sins of commission (*ne fat chef*) and pray to God “that He should inscribe them [in the Book of Life] for the coming year” (Coulson Shepherd, *Jewish Holy Days*, p. 58). It is a call to repentance, and an opportunity to be reconciled with God on the Day of Atonement, which follows 10 days later.

In contrast, Jesus used the harvest period as an example for the Church when He spoke to His disciples. “*Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, ‘lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest’*” (John 4:35). Since God’s plan of redemption has been, and will continue to be, fulfilled through the seven feasts of Israel, the question remains, “Where are we today in God’s plan of redemption?”

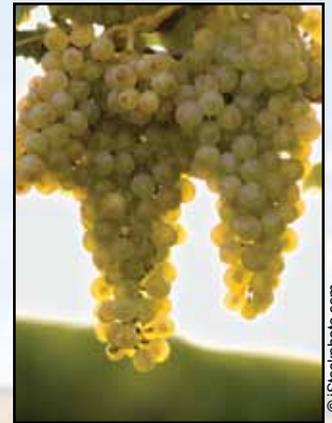
We’re not at Passover; Messiah Jesus has already fulfilled it by His death! And the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by Messiah’s sinless blood offering at His death. We’re not at Firstfruit; that feast has been fulfilled by the Lord’s resurrection! We’re not at Pentecost; the Holy Spirit has taken its abode in believers and given birth to the Church. We are now in the harvest period that God commanded in Leviticus 23:22. It is a time of harvesting, reaping, and gathering together—building a kingdom for both Jew and gentile alike, for anyone who thirsts or hungers.

The Feast of Trumpets is the blessed hope of all born-again believers; the coming of Yeshua in the clouds is the next event on God’s redemptive calendar (1 Thess. 4:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-52). Although the word “Rapture” is not specifically stated in Scripture, it is important to understand that it is a different event from the Second Coming. When Paul writes, “the trumpet will sound,” he is not writing about the “trump” of Revelation, as that book had not yet been written. Instead it is the long, last trumpet blast, the “T-CHAI-A-GADOLA,” differentiated from the previous three trumpet blasts sounded in the synagogues during *Rosh Hashanah*. All the Jewish people knew that this was “the last trumpet” Paul was writing about—to be fulfilled by none other than Yeshua in God’s appointed time.



by Violette Berger

Fruit from the Harvest



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A Small but Mighty Band

We rejoice with **Michelle Beadle, CJFM missionary (New Orleans)**, as she reports how God used her and two volunteers to hand out **5,500** tracts at nine Mardi Gras parades, share the Gospel with **15** people, and lead **two** people to the Lord. God provided an opportunity to witness to a 25-year-old man who had become disillusioned with the Church while studying for the priesthood and, as a result, had left seminary. He shared that even though he was pursuing a lucrative career in the computer industry, he still felt empty inside. Once God's grace was explained to him—that it's not by righteous works, but in accordance with His mercy that He saves us—this young man prayed to receive Jesus into his heart.

The second person to respond to the Gospel message was a woman who had traveled to New Orleans from a poor, rural area in Mississippi to attend Mardi Gras for the first time. Initially, she asked for prayer, as she was concerned about her brother who was hospitalized due to a grave illness. However, during the conversation, concern grew about *her* spiritual condition. She was very open to hearing the Word, and once the Gospel was shared with her, she gladly prayed to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. The small group then joined hands and prayed for her brother.

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

From Death to Life

Barry Berger, **CJFM director of missions emeritus (Phoenix)**, was asked to preside over the funeral of his friend, Parker. Barry never enjoys funerals, even though he had the assurance that Parker would be in Heaven with the Lord. But Parker's wife Joyce, a Jewish believer, said many Jewish and gentile unbelievers would be in attendance. So, Barry prepared a teaching that God placed on his heart, "What is Heaven Like?"

Following the funeral service, Barry clearly explained the Gospel message, and to the Lord's honor and glory, **23** individuals responded to his call for salvation. Although Joyce will miss her mate of 45 years, she was ecstatic and blessed at the response. We joined her in praising the Lord as we followed the

funeral procession to Parker's military burial at the Phoenix Veteran's Cemetery—his *earthly* resting place. Parker left *this* world, but **23** more souls now also have a home prepared for them *in Heaven*.

Spreading the Word

Michael Campo, CJFM missionary (Chicago), praises the Lord for those who spread the Word in unique ways. While speaking at a church in Illinois, he was blessed to hear the following testimony. A church member, who had purchased an audio copy of Mike's sermon from the previous year, gave it to an unbelieving friend. When that friend listened to the tape, God touched her heart, she repented, and prayed to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior—she even became a member of the church.

Michael writes, "Praise God that His word runs swiftly and will never return void!"

Baptismal Blessings

CJFM worker Yossi O., pastor of Kehilat Haderach (The Way)—a messianic congregation in Israel—rejoices that five believers, who completed the baptism course, were baptized. Since then, three more believers have requested to be baptized. One of the baptized members had emigrated from the former USSR 10 years ago; after hearing the Gospel message from a member, she prayed to receive Yeshua as her Lord and Savior. Pastor Yossi writes, "It is so heartwarming to see her eagerness and hunger to learn about God and His word."

CJFM worker Ruth N. recently celebrated 40 years in Israel. Although her husband, Albert, is home with the Lord, the work they began together still continues. Ruth was surprised recently when she received a phone call from a Russian Jewish girl living in Germany. Ruth last saw the girl 20 years ago when she attended lessons on baptism, but Ruth did not feel she was ready. She told Ruth that she had now received Yeshua as Lord of her life and wanted to be baptized.

Ruth is in the process of getting her in touch with Jewish believers in Germany. It not only blessed Ruth, but also the girl's parents, who have been attending Ruth's fellowship for 13 years.

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The Bible's offer of salvation is essentially a marriage proposal. God loves you and He's proposing marriage: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

In ancient times, the young man would come to the prospective bride's home to propose to her (Song of Solomon 5:2). If she wasn't interested, she

wouldn't answer the door when he knocked—and the poor fellow would go away dejected. But if she liked him, and she was ready to accept his proposal, she would open the door and invite him in for a meal she had prepared in advance.

Several commentators see a parallel here with Revelation 3:20, where the Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."²¹

Have you ever opened the door to your heart and accepted the King's marriage proposal? If not, there is no better time than during the Jewish New Year to say, "I do!"

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ENDNOTES

¹The usage of the two instruments—that is, the *shofar* (which is an animal horn) and trumpet (a manmade instrument fashioned from silver for use in the Tabernacle/Temple)—overlaps in Scripture. The *shofar* is mentioned only four times in the Torah—three times at Mount Sinai and once in Moses' instructions about *haYovel* (the Year of Jubilee; see Ex. 19:16, 19; 20:18; Lev. 25:9). The *shofar* was more prominent in the Book of Joshua (6:4-20). The rest of the time, silver trumpets were used (Num. 10:2). Traditional Jewish sources say that trumpets and *shofarot* were often used together in the Temple and there were also *shofarot* that were animal horns "inlaid with silver," making it difficult to classify them as one or the other (*The Babylonian Talmud*, translated by Jacob Neusner, Vol. 6, Tractate Rosh Hashanah, 3:3-5).

²There is some ambiguity in the Talmud regarding the nature and significance of the *teruah* and *shevarim* blasts. What we've presented here is a consensus derived from collating information from a number of traditional Jewish sources.

³However, it's impossible to know how closely modern interpretations resemble the actual horn-blasts of ancient times.

⁴*Mikra* (Elul/Rosh Hashanah), "Psalm 47" by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom (www.torah.org).

⁵A king in ancient Israel, like any other hereditary king, had to be able to document his lineage and thereby prove his right to ascendancy (see *Life of Josephus*, 1-6). As far as anyone knows, the royal records in Israel were destroyed with the Temple in AD 70, so the only ones that have survived are the messianic genealogies preserved in the NT (Matthew and Luke). See comments on "the books of the kings" by Roddy Braun at 1 Chronicles 9:1 in *The Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 14*, electronic ed. (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1986).

⁶Parents could also choose husbands for their daughters. We see this in Ruth 3:1-4, where Naomi sought out a husband for her widowed daughter-in-law, Ruth.

⁷Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000).

⁸*American Jurisprudence 2d*, Sections 1-9, "Husband and Wife" (New York: Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, 1995), accessed online at www.laborlawtalk.com.

⁹Horizontal unity is the unity we have among ourselves as believers in the Messiah—we are all one Body in Him. Vertical unity is the unity we have with God through His Son: "I in them, and You in Me."

¹⁰Note that east and west are the two infinite directions; that is, you can start out heading west (or east) and continue traveling indefinitely. It never ends. On the other hand, if you head south on the globe, you'll eventually find yourself on a northerly course. This is God's way of saying that, with regard to our position in the Messiah, our sins have been removed an infinite distance away from us.

¹¹Some messianic Bible teachers use the imagery of a Jewish wedding to "prove" the validity of their prophetic viewpoints (particularly those having to do with the order of end-time events and the timing

of the Rapture). In some cases, they make extravagant claims based on non-existent sources. One teacher (Greg Killian) has claimed, for instance, that Jesus' statement in John 14:2-4 ("If I go . . .") corresponds to a "speech" that Jewish grooms delivered to their brides in ancient times; however, there is no confirming documentation for it. As far as we can tell, someone just made it up. That's why we have made every effort in this study to limit ourselves to verifiable sources.

¹²Martin H. Manser, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 5654 ("Betrothal").

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Kevin D. Zuber, "The Meaning of *Apantesis* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17" (paper retrieved from www.pre-trib.org/articles), 17.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 16. See also Robert Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 45.

¹⁶"After the procession, a week-long feast took place at the bridegroom's house (Matt. 22:2), or in special cases, even at the bride's house (Gen. 29:27; Judges 14:10-12)" (Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, electronic ed. [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985]).

¹⁷"In ideal times, when the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, the day when the new month started was determined by witnesses who saw the new moon. A month in the Jewish (lunar) calendar contains 29 or 30 days. If witnesses arrived on the 30th day of the month and testified that they had seen the new moon, then that day became the 1st day of the next month and the previous month ended up with only 29 days. If no witnesses arrived on that day, then automatically the previous month had 30 days and the next month would start on the 31st day" (www.askmoses.com).

¹⁸"The consummation of Jesus with his saints at the parousia (second coming) is described as a wedding banquet between the Lamb of God, an epithet for Jesus, and his bride, the church (Rev. 19:6-9). Near its closing, Scripture anticipates the joyous celebration of union between an arrived groom and a ready bride: 'Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready' (Rev. 19:7)" (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman et al., *Ibid.*).

¹⁹"The sexual relationship was consummated on the first night (Gen. 29:23), in the 'tent' (Gen. 24:67) or some other bridal chamber . . . These blood-stained garments of the wedding bed were preserved by the bride's parents as evidence should the groom elect later to slander his wife as having 'played the harlot' prior to their marriage" (Achtemeier, *Ibid.*).

²⁰*John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, electronic ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004].

²¹"Christ is presently at the 'door' of each one's heart, announcing himself and knocking. The picture of Christ standing at the door and knocking may reflect Song 5:2, where the beloved says, 'Listen! My lover is knocking; "Open to me . . . my darling" ' " (Grant Osborne, *Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002], 212).

Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at garyh@cjfm.org, or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

(You may even see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.)

QUESTION: My mother-in-law is on the mailing list of [a preacher from Texas] who claims that there's a "satanic Jewish conspiracy" to control the world. This conspiracy, he says, is spearheaded by "elitist" groups like the Illuminati and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in concert with an internationalist Jewish cabal. For documentation, he cites *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and other sources that we consider dubious. Our concern is that Mom is buying into this man's conspiracy theories—and I mean that literally. She's bought just about everything he sells. She's elderly, lives on a fixed income, and cannot afford this. What should we do?

ANSWER: As long as your mother-in-law is mentally sound and can think for herself, the best approach is to pray for her while appealing to her own powers of logic and common sense.

Also, don't be too hard on her. These merchants of madness and purveyors of paranoia can be very convincing! Their newsletters are slick and they're adept at manipulating (even manufacturing) facts to "prove" their theories. A good start would be to point out that this preacher is making claims he can't prove. If she insists that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* constitute proof, get her a copy of Norman Cohn's book *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy* (London: Serif Publishers, 1967). This is the definitive work on *Protocols* and other conspiracy-related themes. It's been translated into nine languages since it first appeared in the 1960s.

If your mother-in-law says the Holocaust never happened (a typical claim), the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles (www.wiesenthal.com) is a good source. Or better yet, take her to visit one of the numerous Holocaust memorials in North America. There are dozens of them—we even have one right here in San Antonio—and a visit can be a life-changing experience.

Bottom line: The best way to combat deception and falsehood is with the truth.

A few years ago, I found myself seated at a broadcasters' banquet with one of these conspiracy guys. We spoke during the meal and I was surprised at how cordial and likable he was. I finally said, "Come on now, you don't really believe all of the crazy stuff that's in your books?" He chuckled and said, "Of course not. What can I say? It's a living."

He explained that there's a huge industry built on fear and suspicion. So the way this fellow looks at it, he's providing a fictional product some people crave—and they line up to give him their Visa and MasterCard numbers. So he's a businessman. If he doesn't take their money, somebody else will. That's his perspective.

However, anti-Semitism is no game. It's a serious matter. It can fester in a society and take root among certain ignorant and gullible (and sometimes sinister) individuals, often with disastrous consequences.

In Russia, for example, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, multitudes of Jewish people were murdered in the pogroms. These persecutions of Jewish people were fomented by the same lies and deceptions that are found in *Protocols*.

The Nazi propaganda machine made extensive use of *Protocols* during the infamous 1930s and '40s Holocaust in which six million Jewish people—including men, women, children, and the elderly—were systematically exterminated (search "the protocols of the elders of Zion" online at wikipedia.org).

Again, you should pray for your mother-in-law. Anti-Semitism isn't merely a function of the mind—there are also spiritual dynamics. Its origins are in hell itself. The forces of darkness despise the Jewish people and will stop at nothing to slander and destroy them (Eph. 6:12; see also Rev. 12).

It's important to understand the dangers associated with anti-Semitism: "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches Israel touches the apple of His eye'" (Zech. 2:8).

QUESTION: What, if anything, is the difference between the terms "Jew," "Israelite," "Hebrew," and "Israeli"? I suspect that there is some overlap in the definitions, but I find it all very confusing. Can you help?

ANSWER: Yes, we can help. One thing that makes the definitions confusing is that the way they're applied has changed over time.

A **Jew**, originally, was a member of the tribe of Judah or, more widely, the Southern Kingdom that was comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (2 Kings 16:6, 25:25; Esther 2:5, 3:4).

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The term **Israelite**, on the other hand, referred to a member of one of the ten northern tribes of Israel or Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom with its capital at Samaria (1 Kings 22:51).

Abra(ha)m was the first person to be known as a **Hebrew** (Gen. 14:13). Later, Joseph was also called a Hebrew (39:17), as were his Jewish kinsmen in Egypt (Ex. 1:15-19). Judging from the biblical usage, Hebrew was used by (1) non-Jewish outsiders for Abraham and his descendants (e.g., Gen. 39:14, 17), and (2) Jewish people when speaking about themselves to outsiders (e.g., 40:15).

The term itself comes from the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, where we find the name of Heber (v. 21), Shem's great grandson. Gesenius, in his *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (entry H5680), suggests that *heber* was an early term for the land beyond the Euphrates. If this is true, it identified Abram and his clan as having crossed over the great river.

As time passed, these first three terms became interchangeable (Jer. 32:12, 34:9, 38:19, 40:11, 43:9).

By the NT era, in fact, there was little distinction between them. The Apostle Paul, for instance, said he was a "Jew" (Acts 21:39, 22:3), a "Hebrew" (Phil. 3:5), and an "Israelite" (Rom. 11:1)—all rolled into one!

The fourth term, **Israeli**, is a modern word referring to anyone who's a citizen of the State of Israel, regardless of ethnicity. There are Arab Israelis, Jewish Israelis, and Israelis from other backgrounds, as well.



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