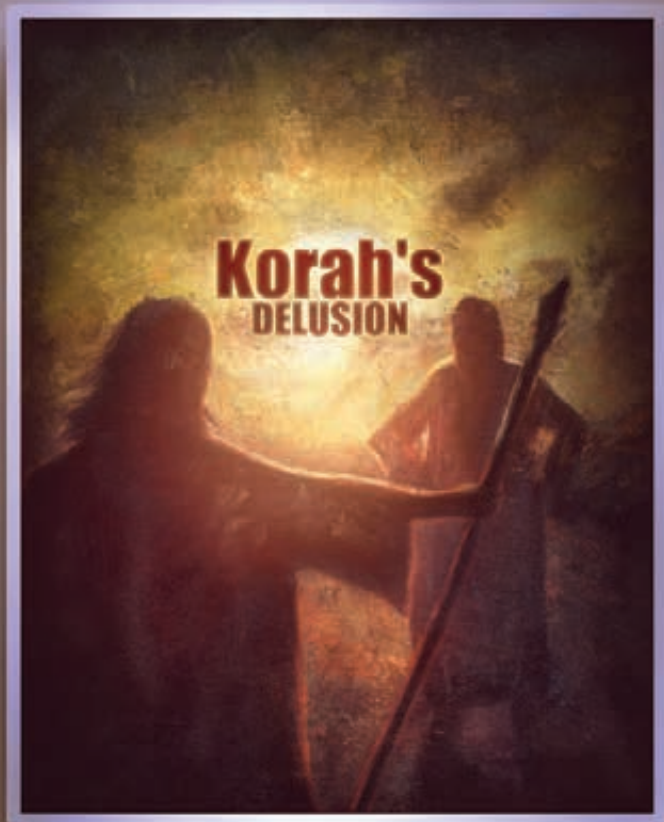


אריאל

Fall 2017 / Volume 1 / Number 24



ARIEL  
MINISTRIES



Plus:

The  
Early History  
of Anti-Semitism  
in the Church

Why Most  
Messianic Believers  
Do Not Wear  
Crosses

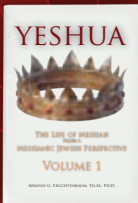
Building a  
Sephardic Museum  
in Costa Rica

Testimony: The  
Gleaming White Hand



# YESHUA: THE LIFE OF MESSIAH FROM A MESSIANIC JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

During His ministry to the Jewish people, Yeshua (Jesus) journeyed throughout the land promised to the Jewish patriarchs, presenting Himself to the Jews as their Messiah. He was a Jew living in a Jewish land among the Jewish people, yet, much of the knowledge of this society, its culture, and traditions has grown dim with the passage of time. In this four-volume commentary from the Gospels, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum shines a bright light on the life of Yeshua and the land of Israel from a Messianic Jewish perspective.



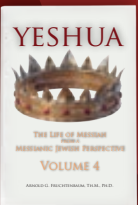
Volume 1 provides detailed background information on the Second Temple period and covers the birth, childhood, and adolescence of Yeshua up to the point when He begins His public ministry.



Volume 2 begins with Yeshua's public ministry and examines the role His miracles were to play as signs to Israel—to bring the Jewish people to the point of decision about His Messianic claims and proclamations.



Volume 3 delves into the last six-month period of the life of Messiah, from the Feast of Tabernacles to the agony of Gethsemane.



Volume 4 of this series analyzes Messiah's final days, from His arrest to His ascension.



Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum holds a B.A. degree from Cedarville University in Hebrew and Hellenistics, a Th.M. degree in Hebrew and Old Testament Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary, and received his Ph.D. from New York University with the completion of his dissertation, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. He is the founding director of Ariel Ministries headquartered in San Antonio, Texas.

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## Cover Story:

Any New Year's resolution to read through the Bible in twelve months gets seriously challenged by the book of Numbers. The many census lists and genealogies simply do not make for good reading. However, in the heart of the book are two chapters that describe some of the most severely rebellious actions the children of Israel took against their God. Jacques Isaac Gabizon analyzes what led to the insurgencies, concentrating his attention primarily on Korah's delusion in Numbers 16 and 17. By doing so, he uncovers important truths and vital lessons for every believer.

## 06 Feature:

Eye on Israel

First Peter 3:15 encourages us to always defend our faith, regardless of the circumstances. Lilian Granovsky is living proof that this includes sharing the good news while sitting in a dental chair.

## 14 Feature:

Literature considers the charge that the Jews killed the Messiah as the chief theological basis for anti-Judaism. In this article, Dr. Rita Nagy makes the case for a different view, claiming that amillennial theology is the core reason behind the development of anti-Semitism in early church history.

## 20 Feature:

Why do most Messianic believers refuse to wear crosses around their necks? Mottel Baleston answers this question by looking at the history of the Jewish people.

## 23 Feature:

Costa Rica may well be Israel's best friend among the states of the world, unswerving in its friendship since 1948 and the only state to maintain its embassy in Jerusalem. Interestingly, the country has a long history of Sephardic Jewish immigration. Nanette Keao summarizes this history and explains how the story of one man learning of his Jewish roots led to the building of a Sephardic museum in this Central American country.

## 26 Testimony:

When Jay Perskie asked God to give him a sign if he should look into the possibility of Yeshua being his Jewish Messiah, the Lord answered in a unique way.



06



14

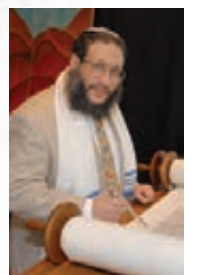


## Anti-Semitism



23

20



Mottel Baleston



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## Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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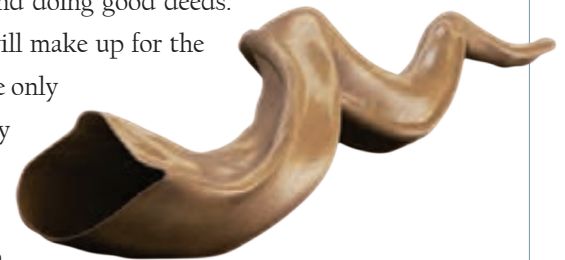
## Sharing Yeshua during the High Holy Days



The Jewish High Holy Day season begins during Elul, the sixth month of the Jewish calendar. This year, Elul corresponds to the timespan of August 23 to September 20 on the Gregorian calendar. During this month, the *shofar* is sounded every weekday morning encouraging the Jewish people to return to their God in advance of the sacred days that lay ahead. The High Holy Days then begin with the Feast of Trumpets, called *Rosh Hashanah*,<sup>1</sup> which falls on the first day of Tishri, the month following Elul. Leviticus 23 calls the feast *Zikhron Teruah*, “a memorial of the

blowing of trumpets” (v. 24). Numbers 29:1 uses the designation *Yom Teruah*, “day of the blowing of trumpets.” The Torah does not clarify why the nation is to sound the shofar, but according to Jewish tradition, it is a means of calling the Jewish people to repentance: “All things are judged on Rosh Hashanah, and their fate is sealed on Yom Kippur” (*t. Rosh Hashanah* 1.13). From the Talmud, we also know that the rabbis associated the holiday with creation, saying, “The world was created in Tishrei” (*b. Rosh Hashanah* 10b). The rabbinic conclusion is that on Rosh Hashanah God remembers, visits, and observes the Jewish people while they remember His creation. Ten days later, the High Holy Days culminate in Yom Kippur, the solemn Day of Atonement. The biblical observance of Yom Kippur centered around sacrificial worship in the Temple and the Aaronic priesthood. Without the Temple, this protocol could no longer be followed. It was replaced by fasting, prayers, and doing good deeds.

However, no amount of prayer or good deeds will make up for the sin that separates a person from God. And so, the only atonement available today was achieved by Messiah Yeshua on the cross. Therefore, the High Holy Days provide the perfect opportunity to share the gospel with the Jewish people in our lives because they point us toward the beginning and end of all things: Yeshua the Messiah. Let us pray that God would give us ample opportunities to share the good news with those around us!



In His service,

*Christiane Jurik*  
Christiane Jurik

[editorarielministries@gmail.com](mailto:editorarielministries@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> The name *Rosh Hashanah* means “head of the year.” While it is the day when Jewish people celebrate the civil new year, it is not a name mentioned in the Torah. Furthermore, in Exodus 12:2, God declares Nisan to be the beginning of the new year.



# Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives



## ARIEL BRANCHES



### Ariel Australia Chris & Lisa Savage

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Chris and Lisa Savage represent Ariel Ministries in Australia. Based in Victoria, they teach the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective in weekly and bi-monthly classes and day seminars.



### Ariel Canada Jacques and Sharon Gabizon

Website: [www.arielcanada.com](http://www.arielcanada.com)

Email: [info@arielcanada.com](mailto:info@arielcanada.com)

Jacques and Sharon Gabizon represent Ariel Ministries in Canada. Their projects include door-to-door evangelism of Jewish homes in Montreal and translating Ariel's manuscripts into French. Ariel Canada established a messianic congregation in Montreal called Beth Ariel.



### Ariel India Bakul N. Christian

Email: [bakulchristian@yahoo.co.in](mailto:bakulchristian@yahoo.co.in)

Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife and daughter in Ahmedabad. After a chance meeting with a former New Zealand representative, Bakul became interested in the Jewish perspective of God's Word. Today, Bakul daily seeks the Lord's direction concerning his outreach ministry in India.



### Ariel Israel Sasha G. & Lilian Granovsky

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Sasha and Lilian Granovsky represent Ariel Ministries in Israel. The husband and wife team have been representing Ariel Ministries in Israel since October 2009. They are responsible for coordinating the translation of our manuscripts and books into Hebrew and Russian.



### Ariel China

For safety issues, we must protect the identity of this branch. Please keep them in your prayers.



### Ariel Germany

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Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife, Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, turned it into a full branch. Today, this branch is led by a team of brothers and sisters.



### Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

Email: [hungary@ariel.org](mailto:hungary@ariel.org)

Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband and wife team have developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They also host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish and Gentile believers and unbelievers in Hungary.



### Ariel New Zealand Johan Jansen van Vuuren

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This branch is led by Johan van Vuuren, Jason Santiago, and John Cavanagh and headquartered in Auckland, New Zealand.

## ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



### Michael & Hannah Gabizon – Students (Hamilton)

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Michael and Hannah Gabizon are missionaries representing Ariel Ministries in Canada. The young couple has actively been involved in teaching and discipling people through God's Word. Their goal is to identify other young people within their sphere of influence who may be interested in becoming involved with Ariel.



### John Metzger – Field Representative (Pennsylvania)

Website: [www.promisestoisrael.org](http://www.promisestoisrael.org)

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John Metzger is a missionary who represents Ariel Ministries in Pennsylvania. He is a teacher and speaker who actively travels throughout the central and eastern part of the U.S., speaking at various churches and conferences. John is also the author of *Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God* published by Ariel Ministries.



### Gary & Missy Demers – Camp Representatives (New York)

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Gary and his wife Missy are the managers and camp facilitators of the Shoshanah campus in Upstate New York. Every summer they help host Ariel's Program of Messianic Jewish Studies. For more information about this program, please visit [www.ariel.org](http://www.ariel.org).



### Roberto Anchondo – Field Representative (El Paso, Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico)

Roberto Anchondo represents Ariel Ministries in parts of the Southwest regions of the U.S. and some cities in Mexico. Upon studying Dr. Fruchtenbaum's work, he recognized the missing link and became interested in teaching the Jewish interpretation of God's Word. He is currently discipling groups of men in the Jewish perspective. He also works with numerous churches in Mexico, teaching the importance of standing by Israel.



## Germany

According to the most recent government census, a little over 60 percent of Germans identify as Christians. The Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church, Germany's two state churches, share these people equally among themselves.

The disadvantages of binding a certain religious institution to the state are easy to see: The German government collects a church tax of roughly nine percent of a person's total income tax and sends it into the coffers of the respective churches. By collecting this tax, the government endorses the two churches, effectively putting all other Christian denominations on the level of cults. However, there are also advantages of having a state religion. In Germany, even children of Muslim families are off from school on every church holiday, such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Furthermore, religious instruction is a mandatory class, from elementary school through middle school, and the church bells are rung loudly through the cities, towns, and villages every hour of the day. Hence, even those who want nothing to do with Yeshua are forced to at least engage in the superficial aspects of Christendom.

Unfortunately, the two churches in Germany do not take advantage of their position of authority and influence. On the contrary, they are prime examples of the apostate church, with the Lutheran Church (or Evangelische Kirche Deutschland, EKD) leading the procession down a slippery, liberal course. In 1999, the church published a statement in which it officially renounced its mission to the Jewish people. In November of last year,



## Hungary

In the second half of this year, we picked up the teaching of the book of Revelation based on Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum's *Footsteps of Messiah*. The first semester was very successful. We were able to record the sessions and upload these recordings to the Internet, where people followed us. Our small Messianic fellowship continues its biweekly meetings. We were blessed to hear that one of the attendees, a Jewish believer, considers our fellowship more authentic than other Bible studies or even church meetings.

biblical motivations for following God, understanding Bible verses in context, etc.

One of the best fruits of Ivan's ministry is a Roma believer who was one of the leaders of a charismatic gypsy church. Ivan has taught him continuously over the course of the last three years. The brother changed his mind on many doctrinal issues and has become a mature disciple. Eventually, when the leadership of his church asked his position on some theological questions, he was able to defend the truth in a worthy manner. Recently, he started his own fellowship and Bible study. Ivan helps him whenever he needs it.



We continue to read the Tanakh and also the Talmud with our Jewish friends. There are many possibilities to share our faith. Our Jewish friend who owns the apartment we use for our Bible studies and the fellowship began to read the Tanakh with his Jewish friends. We think it is very important for Jews to read the Scriptures, and we think that our Bible reading influenced his opinion concerning the Word of God.

Please continue to pray for us! We are fulfilling God's calling as tentmakers. However, the goal is to one day be financially independent so that we can concentrate on the ministry full time.



Rita continues to teach the Come and See program for women, while Ivan continues sharing diverse teachings on our homepage and on Facebook. Topics are the security of the believer, biblical and un-



the EKD's synod unanimously approved a final resolution to stop all efforts to share the good news with any Jew.

The decision to renounce Jewish missions is based on German history. The EKD's mission to the Jews began with the church's founding father, Martin Luther, who encouraged his followers to share the good news of Yeshua with anyone who would hear. But Luther's legacy as an evangelist is tarnished by his hateful rhetoric towards the Jewish people. In a pamphlet titled "On the Jews and their Lies," Luther called for his followers to force Jews from their homes, burn down the synagogues, and confiscate their prayer books. Centuries later, the church largely abandoned its Jewish missions, taking seriously its responsibility in and failures during the Holocaust. As Lutherans around the world prepare for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation on October 31, 2017, the EKD is renewing its attempts to officially renounce Luther's anti-Semitism, which they view as a source for theological and ecclesial anti-Judaism, as well as for political anti-Semitism. The news of the church's policy to discourage their members from carrying the gospel message to the Jewish people was received well by the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

How are ministries whose raison d'être is to bring God's message of salvation to the Jews first supposed to respond to such a development? Well, Ariel Germany is undeterred to reach the chosen people, thus distancing itself strongly from the position of the

state churches. With roughly 300,000 Russian and Israeli Jews living in Germany today, there is enough work. The majority of these Jews decided to settle in Berlin. While in the past Arnold would mainly teach in the southwest of the country, he is now "targeting" cities and towns in East Germany, such as Berlin, Potsdam, and Dresden. Please keep him and the team in your prayers! The field seems to be ready to release some of its fruit!



## Australia

What's happening in Australia? We are beginning to see some exciting fruit!

The fruit is coming from our discipleship classes that we run weekly. Tonight, at the end of Life of Messiah, we heard a story from one of our members who spent time telling Ethiopian Muslims about their Savior Yeshua. From there, she went to see some Russian Jews and told them the same truth about their Messiah. One

has come to faith! But the sister was not done. She went on to spend some time with Indian Jews, telling them about Yeshua Ha'Mashiach. Another member of our Bible study decided to host some Israeli travelers in order to share with them about Yeshua. And then there is someone from another class who wants to be baptized, so this is coming up shortly. My wife Lisa had some divine encounters at the local laundromat where several people wanted to know more about Yeshua. She has also brought along a new acquaintance from another laundromat encounter to our Come and See class. All these stories are now coming up on a weekly basis. The discipleship classes have been encouraging and strengthening the believers to go and make other disciples. I have been doing some street evangelism in the Jewish Eruv. Furthermore, I had the privilege to host two Passover demonstrations, and another one is coming up shortly. I am also being asked to teach in Adelaide, South Australia, for Manna International Ministries. It has taken a while, but I feel as though the Lord is allowing us to get some traction in the ministry. All praise be to Him!





# ARIEL CHINA



It was reported that there are more than 60 million people worldwide who believe in Messiah Yeshua as their savior. So far, not many of them have been from China. However, this seems to be changing, as the Lord is doing an amazing work in China. Chinese churches have launched a mission movement in which they are planning to send out 20,000 missionaries before 2030. In order to train these believers, they are either sent abroad or to one of the underground seminaries in China. At this point, as far as I can tell, there are about 500 seminarians studying in North America and Southeast Asia. They will be the main force of Chinese Christian education and study. How can we, who have gotten solid teaching from Ariel Ministries, help the Chinese churches in their endeavor?

We know that the Lord allowed us to receive Ariel's sound teaching not to hide it among ourselves, but to

share it with others. His principle is "to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more," and so we have taken upon ourselves the responsibility to share Ariel's teaching with our fellow Chinese speaking brothers and sisters.

Today, we live in a social media and internet world. We have different Chinese phone apps, such as Wechat, QQ, and so on. The best is Wechat. It looks like Facebook, but is even more powerful than the famous social media platform. We are using it to impact Chinese believers. At this time, we are in the process of trying to make our Wechat site more professional, attractive, and effective. We are also in the process of developing our Ariel China website to reach Chinese churches all around the world. May He grant us wisdom and strength to do it well!

In summary, the main projects we are working on are the following:

- ✧ Editing essays for Wechat and Facebook
- ✧ Setting up a website of Ariel China
- ✧ Translating more teaching materials
- ✧ Preparing LOM course and other courses online

Our prayer is that the Lord may add more volunteers to join us and provide all that we need. If you would like to join us, you could

- ✧ Pray for wisdom and strength for us and ask the Lord to send more workers into the field.
- ✧ Support us by funding the team work. At this point, we are trying to raise \$10,000 as the initial fund to start the work.

**You are welcome to join us in God's great work in China!**

## Eye on Israel

### A Beacon of Steadfastness in a Relativistic World

By Lilian Granovsky

For the past 15 years, our family has been going to the same dentist. Only recently, God opened the door to share with him the good news of our Messiah.

The dentist, Eli, is a Jewish immigrant from Brazil and an atheist to his core. He initiated the conversation by asking Lilian whether she believes in some sort of god.

### “Thank you for asking!”

Lilian thought, and though it is not convenient to talk when your mouth is being worked on, she accepted the challenge and started to share. Eli was completely shocked by what he heard.

It was perfect, divine timing for that sharing of the gospel, as a month later, our first-born son was diagnosed with leukemia, and Eli witnessed our journey with God through the storm.

A year later, Eli again initiated the conversation about faith. Lilian asked him if he, as a physician, had heard anything about stem-cell treatment for all kinds of diseases, and in particular for autism (our daughter Liel is autistic). He said he had not. Then he asked: “Have you become . . . What do you call it?”

Lilian calmly helped him out; “A Messianic Jew? The answer is, yes.”





"Did this all start when you learned about Liel suffering from autism? Was it a desperate need that pushed you to become Christians?" His frustration about the fact that such "an intelligent family" can believe this nonsense grew by the minute.

Lilian gently answered, "No, it was not Liel's autism, but the fact that all other religions are dead. They are based on works. Our faith is alive. It is only because of God's grace that we are saved."

He exploded, "You want to tell me that Judaism is a dead religion, but Catholicism is not?"

Lilian replied, "The Catholic religion is as dead as Judaism. I am not a Catholic. I am a Jew who believes that Yeshua is my Messiah. Because of what He has done for me and you and all sinners, I am saved and have an eternal relationship with God."

Eli asked, "How can you believe that God exists? I believe in nature, beauty . . . I do not need a father figure sitting somewhere in heaven!"

Lilian answered, "Well, I do need someone who is bigger than me, who can save me, who can help me out, who can do things I cannot. If you worship nature and enjoy her beauty and wisdom, why would you not want to accept and worship her creator?"

Forgetting his claims to be an atheist, Eli retorted, "Nonsense! Buddhists say that we are all gods!"

Lilian said, "If we are gods, why can we not create things? The god Buddhists claim to find within themselves cannot save. He can be understood and changed to become a better god. What god is it, then?"

Eli answered, "I grew up in a small Jewish community in Brazil. I always felt that I am not like others. I was one of the 'Chosen People.' I did not want to be different and special. I immigrated to Israel mostly because of that. I wanted to feel like I was part of a majority. If God were real, I would be angry with Him! Why would He choose us to be His nation and let us suffer continuously through all the ages? My family fled to Brazil from Russia because of pogroms, and the Holocaust has wiped out a majority of my relatives. What kind of father would allow this suffering? Nature is more merciful, more protective than He is. There is more logic in nature, and nature can be understood. He, on the other hand . . ." Eli was so angry he could not breathe!

While listening to his monologue, Lilian prayed. She felt his pain and anger, and she asked God to be there with her for him. She understood that his heart was aching, not his mind, and so any theological answer would not have reached him.

As an answer to her prayer, Eli finally asked: "If you believe that He is such a wonderful father, how do you explain your daughter's autism and your son's leukemia? Are you not angry at Him for allowing these afflictions?"

Lilian answered, "No. When I believed, He did not promise me that my life would be easy. He did promise, though, that during my trials, He would be my ground, my wings, my strength, my shoulder, my everything. And that promise He has never ever broken. Eli, I cannot convince you. I cannot prove God's existence. I can only share with you my experiences with God. Even in the midst of disappointment, surprise, and mystery, He is very reliable and trustworthy. We all need that in this day of relativism. It is the Lord who has preserved truth in His Word. Puzzling as the process may be to us, He stays with His plan. There is no need for us to know all the reasons, and He certainly does not need to explain Himself. If we are going to let God be God, then we are forced to say He has the right to take us through whatever process He chooses."

Other patients were waiting, and our time was running out. Eli acknowledged that he was lacking what Lilian had: faith. Please pray for him. And pray for Moshe and Orly, with whom we have had similar conversations. Pray for the work God is doing in their hearts, that it may be accomplished by our witness or by God's other workers in this field.



## Korah's Delusion

By Jacques Isaac Gabizon

The book of Numbers is often the least considered and least quoted of the many books of Scripture. Its title and its opening chapters, speaking of censuses and genealogies, give it an appearance of boredom; after all, who wants to read name after name along with all the tribal populations and

positional order they needed to respect in their desert marches? And who would want to scrutinize all the measurements and details of the Tabernacle? Yet, this first impression is quickly dispelled once we enter the book and discover that Numbers is truly a blessing in disguise, a timeless and

inspired document. It is the story of a people who have been redeemed and who are now on their way to a promised land, to a place of rest. Throughout this long journey, God was with them, through His unfailing provision and protection. Despite their unfaithfulness, His love never dimin-





ished. What is touching in this book is that we find Him suffering with His people; we see Him reaching out to them through all possible means. Sadly, despite all this effort, instead of getting closer to Him, the people slowly got so used to His daily miracles, they got so used to Him, they began to forget Him.

This is when the story becomes familiar. The Israelites' long journey is at times so much like our own. While the book of Exodus gives the law and Leviticus teaches Israel concerning the fear of the Lord, Numbers is a training manual in how they were to apply the doctrines to their lives. Overall, the book of Numbers turns out to be a most practical and contemporary book of the Torah, emphasizing our journey of sanctification.

## Rebellion

In the heart of the book of Numbers, there are two chapters that describe some of the most severe rebellious acts the children of Israel took against their God. These events are found in Numbers 16 and 17. The text reveals two things: That the heart of man, in the words of Jeremiah, is *desperately wicked*; *Who can know it?* (Jer. 17:8). But praise God, He *knows it*, and, armed with a divine patience, He averts another flood, another Sodom and Gomorrah, and saves the nation, one more time. These themes—the true condition of man's heart and God's tremendous patience—are covered in these two chapters, and at the end, they bring the believer to a greater appreciation of the gift of salvation.

Three times in these chapters, out of desperation and in deep prayer of intercession, Moses *falls on his face* (Num. 16:4, 22, 45b). Each time, he succeeds to avert divine judgment; yet in the end, he cannot stop it

completely. Twice God asks Moses to move away because He is about to wipe out all the congregation (Num. 16:21, 45). However, like a great mediator, Moses stands his ground and prays.

The Israelites understood their leader could not avert the judgment for long. They saw that there would be consequences to their actions. In the conclusion of this account, they say, *Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD must die. Shall we all utterly die?* (Num. 17:12b-13). Who was going to save them? Who can change the heart of man? Moses could not. He was at the end of his resources as a mediator. Still, the answer to the question “Shall we all utterly die?” is no! The Israelites would not die, nor shall we, for our God is too wonderful, too loving to allow such a thing!

Salvation itself is not far from this section. Yeshua is not far. It is all building up to a meeting with Him in chapter 21, the mighty chapter with the section on the bronze serpent. However, the ground has not been completely laid yet; these coming chapters bring out the unique biblical concept of salvation by faith only, and nothing added.

There is a practical aspect to be found in Numbers 16 and 17 as well, one that pertains to all believers. We see how sin, pride, and error can invade even a bright mind and make it believe some irrational things. In the account, Korah the Levite came to the faulty conclusion that everything changed. He thought the law had changed, he saw a new era of progress taking over, and he believed that Moses had become nothing but an opportunist. Worst of all, however, Korah assumed that God was on his side. Looking back, his faulty understanding of God's Word is laughable and utterly sad—and so familiar as well.

And how could Dathan and Abiram believe Korah and follow him to their death? On this part, Numbers is very contemporary, for there are many today who likewise improvise. Priests, teachers, and theologians form their own groups or congregations. This is what Jude 1:11 calls *the rebellion of Korah*. Believers today need to recognize the rebellion around them, and in themselves as well, for they are not immune to this sin if they are not in the Word.

Let us see now how the Spirit inspired Moses to bring these deep truths to us today. Let us read the first three verses of Numbers 16:

*<sup>1</sup> Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; <sup>2</sup> and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. <sup>3</sup> They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"*

The original Hebrew text begins differently, and in so doing, it immediately reveals the main problem of the section. It starts with the word *took*. *Took Korah, the son of Izhar . . .* The logical question is: What did

<sup>1</sup> Schocken Bible: The Five Books of Moses (Everett Fox, 1995), Num. 16:1.



Korah take? One Jewish translation, the Schocken Bible,<sup>1</sup> is more to the point and says, *Now there betook himself Korah*. To “betake” is to cause oneself to go. It has to do with the self, the “I.”

Korah “betook” himself a lot of things: He took upon himself to challenge Moses and thus God’s established authority. He took upon himself pride and arrogance; and he was sure of himself, haughty, high and mighty, like a cult leader.

In the Hebrew, the word for “took” is *leqah*. It has more than one meaning and is therefore at times also translated as “to acquire by force” and “to teach.” In several passages, such as Job 11:4, it means “doctrine.” This last connotation, doctrine, is fitting for Korah and brings the problem to the forefront: Korah was teaching a foreign doctrine in the midst of Israel. This is why the Targum Neofiti translates the verse as “and they took counsel and divided.”<sup>2</sup> That is the root of this rebellion.

New instructions and  
precepts which went  
against the Word of God  
were being spread, and  
this is one thing which  
practically every letter of  
the New Testament warns  
us against, for it is  
destructive.

The first word of this chapter sets the mood. There is a proud man who wants to

change things for his own glory, and so he divides. Sin is often the result of a long road of preparation. Verse 1 tells us that Korah came from the tribe of Levi, while Dathan, Abiram, and On came from the tribe of Reuben. These were neighboring tribes, and it seems they were dissatisfied neighbors. For those of the tribe of Reuben, it is easy to speculate what may have caused the frustration. Perhaps these men could not come to grips with the fact that they had lost their first place; after all, Reuben was the eldest. Hence, these men should have been right at the entrance of the Tabernacle, right where Judah was. Is this what we are seeing here, an unresolved wound in the heart of some men? As for the sons of Korah, they should have been priests and not merely Levites. According to the genealogical records, Korah was the first cousin of Moses and Aaron. Why, then, is he only a Levite and not a priest? Furthermore, Moses appointed Elizaphan the son of Uzziel, another first cousin, as head of the Kohathites. This must have displeased Korah. Why didn’t Moses choose him?

Korah and the others could find all kinds of reasons to rebel, and it seems that for years, Korah allowed these resentments to fester in him. Anyone can find a multitude of reasons to feel victimized. Unresolved wounds lead to resentment, which diminishes and devours the self. It is negative, and at the end, it will convince you that you have been robbed of what is yours. Therefore, it is vital to pour ourselves out to God every single day, so that these feelings do not take over our minds and dampen our faith.

According to Numbers 16, the problem must have been in the making for a while. Korah and the others had the time to convince 250 men to join their ranks. Verse

2 calls them *men of renown*, literally *men with a name*, important ones. I don’t know if this is ironic or if Korah really succeeded in gathering important figures.

Verse 3 reveals an example of false theology and what I believe is Korah’s delusion. It says: *for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them*. Moses responds in verse 5, saying: *The Lord will show who is His, and who is holy*. In verse 7, he adds, *the man whom the Lord chooses shall be the one who is holy*. How did Korah come to conclude that the whole congregation of Israel is holy? What made him think that suddenly the people were godly and that peace and harmony had arrived? Many people believe this today, and many theological systems teach it: We are now holy, and we are going to change this world. That is *Korah’s delusion*.

We do not have to look far for an answer to these questions. Part of the answer may be found in chapter 15, which ends with the commandments of the *tzitzit*. There, God said that these tassels were to be worn in order that the people *may remember* and keep all of His commandments and *be holy* for Him (Num. 15:40). There is a possibility that Korah and his men assumed that because all of Israel wore the *tzitzit*, they were all holy.

Don’t we have this tendency to associate holiness with garments and objects—these things the prophets denounced over and over, for true faith is found in the heart and nowhere else? The Targum of Jonathan<sup>3</sup> brings out this truth in a very comical way. It says that when Korah and all the 250 men came to argue against Moses, they wore a *tallit*, or a mantle, entirely purple. This was the color which covered the Ark of the Covenant, the color of holiness. If the

<sup>2</sup> Martin McNamara, et al., trans., *The Aramaic Bible*, Vol. 4, Targum Neofiti 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), Num. 16:1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.





Targumic rendering is correct, it seems Korah and his men were saying, "See how thoroughly holy we are?" The Targum goes on to explain that all these men did was to argue against Moses about the color of the fringes.

Korah's belief must have been in the making for a long time. Perhaps he remembered what God had said to the Israelites in Exodus 19:6: *And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* Over thirty times between Exodus and Deuteronomy, God repeated His commandment that Israel be holy. Now that the tassels were given as a pledge of holiness, Korah might have thought that a new era had begun and that all the congregation was holy. His faulty understanding of Scripture led him to make another mistake: He believed that he could bypass God's established order. Moses recognized that this group of men had reached a high level of rebellion. He also recognized the potential danger Israel was in because of this development. But instead of arguing with Korah, *he fell on his face* (Num. 16:4). This is an expression of despair and of prayer.

What comes next is very captivating. Between verses 4 and 5, there seems to have been a conversation between Moses and God and a test was given to this group of men. It was a grace-filled test, one that purposed to bring Korah and the others to their senses. The verses read:

*<sup>5</sup> and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.*

*<sup>6</sup> "Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; <sup>7</sup> "put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD*

*tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the LORD chooses is the holy one."*

The first words to Korah are *tomorrow morning*. Why does God not deal with Korah right away? The issues were pressing, the whole congregation was there observing. Why wait? This is where we see God's patience. Even after the obvious, He still gives a chance. Patience is a divine quality. Korah and the others received some time to repent.

What would happen tomorrow concerning Korah and his company? God would reveal who He is and who is holy in His eyes. As it was with Haman, Korah mistakenly assumed it would be him. He would be the one the Lord declared holy. Sin and pride clouded his understanding.

Furthermore, God would give a test, one that uses what in modern terms is called reverse psychology.

By definition, reverse psychology describes the attempt to motivate individuals to action by telling them to do the opposite of what is actually desired.

We see this technic used in the Scriptures. In Judges 10, when the people of Israel were

deeply involved in idolatry, God told them: *I will deliver you no more . . . Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen. Let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation* (Judg. 10:13-14). God challenged the Israelites to be consistent in what they believed and ask their idols for help.



With Korah and his followers, He said, "You claim to be priests. So, act as one. Take a censer and put fire on it."

Korah and his men should have known that this was a dangerous proposition. Only the priests were allowed to put fire on a censer. As previously mentioned, Korah was just a Levite, not a priest. He should have remembered that those who offered improper fire to the Lord died by the fire of the Lord. Two of Aaron's sons did just that, and they recently were reminded of this event in Numbers 3:4: *But Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord when they offered strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai.* What happened to Aaron's sons would happen to Korah and the others.

It seems that one of them understood and ran away. In verse 1, *On the son of Peleth* was mentioned. In the subsequent verses, we do not hear of him anymore. It seems that he left the group of insurgents. The rabbis



have a nice story concerning him in the Midrash Rabbah, an ancient commentary on the Torah. It indicates that On was saved through the device of his wife:

*What did she do? She gave him wine to drink and made him drunk, and put him to bed. Then she sat down at the entrance, along with her daughter, and dishevelled her hair, so that any one who came for On her husband on seeing her turned back.<sup>4</sup>*

The rabbis gave credit to On's wife, who, like Zeresh and Abigail, gave good advice to their husbands and took matters into their own hands. We do not know if this Midrash (commentary on On) is true, but the fact is, the Bible does not mention On anymore, and it is surely because he understood. Perhaps the test was for his salvation.

And what about Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the other men? They were convinced they were right. The second part of verse 7, *You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi*, really belongs to the next verse. It seems that Moses uttered these words after he saw that the men were not moved at all by this test, and that they were about to take it. It is then that Moses tries to reason with them. In verses 9-10, he addresses the leader, Korah:

<sup>9</sup> *"Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them;*  
<sup>10</sup> *"and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren,*

*the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also?*

Moses tried to reason with Korah by reminding him of all the blessings of God in his life. He bade him to count his blessings instead of counting things he might have had. After all, Korah had the great privilege to serve in the very Tabernacle of God, something the greater majority of Israel did not have. But he wanted the priesthood; he wanted more. This is typical of pride and echoes the fall of Satan.

Verse 12 tells us how Dathan and Abiram responded to Moses: *And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, 'We will not come up!'* These words were spoken in defiance of Moses' authority, and the men repeated them in verse 14. Dathan and Abiram "played smart," using Moses' words to Israel: *go up* to the land of milk and honey. They used the same expression as if to say, "Who do you think you are, Moses, that we should go up to you?"

They should have realized that God elected Moses as leader and that they were, in fact, going against God when they said, *Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us?* (Num. 16:13). This sounds similar to the attack of Joseph's brothers, who said to him, *Shall you indeed reign over us?* (Gen. 37:8). Incidentally, Dathan and Abiram's forefather, Reuben, was then leading the brothers. More importantly, the Jewish Messiah would one day be rejected with the same words: *But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'* (Lk. 19:14). Both Joseph and Moses were a type of the Messiah. What happened to them would also happen to the Messiah. Korah did not know he was

prophesying against his will and against himself.

What we see happening in Israel here in Numbers 16 is something that is often repeated in the church when one or more people begin to challenge the set authorities. To those, the words of Paul that sum up what happened under Korah should be a warning:

*For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (Rom. 13:1-2)*

This is the story of Korah and of all those who believe they are sent to challenge everyone and every teaching. The Spirit went out of His way to mention the names of many so that we may know them and be warned by their examples. In III John 9, we have Diotrephes, of whom it is said that he loved *to have the preeminence among them* and refused to have John come to his congregation. Another example is Alexander the coppersmith in II Timothy 4:14 who worked against Paul, like Korah against Moses. These men are a type of the antichrist, of whom it is said that he will oppose and exalt himself *above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God* (II Thess. 2:4). Samuel was right when he said that *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft* (I Sam. 15:23), for it accomplishes the devil's schemes. It destroys and divides.

Moses saw that no argument would change these people whose conscience was *seared with a hot iron* (I Tim. 4:2). Then Moses was very

<sup>4</sup> Numbers Rabbah 18:20, Davka Corp, 1991-1997.





angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them." (Num. 16:15). Like David later, in the Psalms, Moses was angry on behalf of God. He was hurt for his God, and he asked that the Lord would not respect their offering. The Schocken Bible has an interesting rendering: *Do not turn your face toward their grain-gift*. This is more to the point, for the word "offering" here is *minha*, which in the book of Numbers is almost always translated as *grain offering*. The *minha* was offered to confirm a fellowship, a communion with God, and here Moses, seeing the heart of these people, asked God not to come close to them, as if he wanted to protect Him. Of course, God needs no protection, but we see the deep love Moses had for God.

Even in his anger, Moses was still very gentle. Notice that in verse 17 he told Korah and his men to *each take his censer and put incense in it*. He did not tell them to put fire in the censers, for he knew that this would seal their fate. Nevertheless, in verse 18, *every man took his censer, put fire in it*.

What follows is a difficult section, but at the same time it is a text filled with grace; here we are going to see the need of a savior, a divine one, like our Lord and Savior Yeshua. As Korah and the others defiantly put fire in their censers, they brought a judgment on the whole nation. God told Moses and Aaron, *Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment* (Num. 16:21). However, Moses and Aaron stayed on the same spot and prayed. They refused to separate themselves, and I am sure this pleased God, for their action was in the spirit of love and of dedication. It was a messiah-like action.

Their argumentation is seen in the next verse: *O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congrega-*

*tion?* (Num. 16:22). The only other time the expression "the God of the spirits of all flesh" is used is in Numbers 27:16. One could paraphrase the term this way: "God, you know all people. You knew everyone even before the creation of this universe. Are you going to wipe out the whole people of Israel because a few rebelled against you?" This is the same argument Abraham brought to God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, or more precisely on behalf of one man, his nephew Lot (Gen. 18:23).

*<sup>23</sup> So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>24</sup> "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'"*

*<sup>25</sup> Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. <sup>26</sup> And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins." (Num. 16:23-26)*

It is at this point that Moses went to the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and asked the people to separate themselves from such rebels.

The question, then, is whether the fate of a whole people can be in the hands of just a few. Of course, the answer is no, and God agreed to punish only those who overtly sinned.

The word *tents* in the Hebrew is singular. It is one tent, one dwelling, one teaching, one rebellion for all of them. Notice how Moses asks the rest of Israel to stay away from them: *Get away from their tents. Depart now from the tents of these wicked men. Touch nothing of theirs*. Korah was mistaken. Holiness is not contagious, but evil is. It will incite the worst in man, and so the Israelites were told, over and over again, to move away from it, to be sanctified, for this is the beginning of holiness.

The same advice is given in the New Testament: *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him* (II Jn. 10). The Apostle John does not speak about unbelievers here, but about those who come very close to God and refuse to submit to Him and are now trying to drag others with them.

As we have gotten to know Korah and his band and have seen how they proceeded to convince themselves and others to rebel, Moses' advice to each one of us is this: Keep away from what is evil, what is rebellious, from what causes murmuring and defiles. In his great letter to the Ephesians, Paul explains how we can accomplish this:

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. <sup>9</sup> The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Eph. 4:8-9)*



# Theology and Anti-Semitism:

## The Early History of Anti-Semitism in the Church<sup>1</sup>

By Rita Nagy

*I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them. (Jer. 24:9)*

*I ask, then, has God rejected his people? . . . But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of*

*the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. (Rom. 11:1, 17-18)*

Jeremiah's prophecy became reality in the lives of the Jewish people throughout the history of Christian (Catholic) Europe. Contrary to this is Paul's theological point

in Romans that God did not reject His people. European Gentile Christianity, historically dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, did not consider this warning. As a wild olive tree, the church boasted against Israel and despised the Jews, disregarded them, accused them of demon possession, cast them out of Christian society, dispelled them, hated them, and mocked them. Archaic prejudice patterns became alive in the European societies influenced by Christianity, and on this framework, modern anti-Semitic prejudices were built. In societies that claimed to know the Jews hatred and indifference formed through the centuries. The sentiments became the basis for the anti-Semites of the twentieth century to put into effect their satanic plan, annihilating six million Jews without any resistance. Their distorted Christian theology produced a distorted worldview. Through the ages, contradictory statements connected to the basis of this worldview and the picture about the Jews became dissociated from all social, economic, and cultural experiences.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to the traditionally accepted theology in Christianity, a Christian philo-Semitic trend always existed because of the true biblical theology concerning the Jewish nation.

Literature considers the charge that the Jews killed the Messiah as the chief theological basis for anti-Judaism. I claim that underlying the persistent anti-Semitism of Christianity, deep in Christian theological views, there is a complex interpretation of the Scriptures: the complicated Jew-image of the millennium theory,<sup>3</sup> of which one branch is amillennial theology. According to this theology, the church has replaced Israel, while Israel is rejected by

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a chapter of Rita Nagy's doctoral thesis, which is currently being translated into English. The original translation is published here with minor edits.

<sup>2</sup> Zygmunt Baumann, *A modernitás és a holokauszt* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2001), 66.

<sup>3</sup> Millennialism, or, more popular, millenarism, is a faith in a coming Messianic millennium. According to the interpretation of millennialism, the main churches of Christianity can be divided in three major groups: pre-millennialists, post-millennialists, and amillennialists. The following definitions of these groups are based on Frank L. Cross, Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: University Press, 1974), 914.

According to pre-millennialists, the Messianic kingdom follows the second advent of Messiah, and they believe that Israel remains God's people forever.

According to post-millennialists, the present age ends with the whole world becoming believers before the Messiah returns.

The third, most common, view in the church, represented mostly by Catholics and Protestants, is the amillennial approach, which denies the physical reign of Messiah here on earth. The idea is that in this present age, God reigns in the hearts of the believers, who are the people of God, the church, the spiritual Israel; God has completely rejected the physical Israel, and thus, Israel has lost her salvation as well.





God and has no future. This view started to spread throughout Europe in the third and fourth centuries, and along with the establishment of Christianity as the state religion, it became a fundamental philosophy in the history of Christianity.

I claim that amillennial theology has influenced the Christian church's negative attitude concerning Jews. Amillennialism first appears most elaborately in the theology of Augustine, and Augustine's view regarding Jews has greatly defined the anti-Judaist theology of the church. Anti-Semitic thinking is not merely putting together accusations, but is a constructed worldview, an ideology.<sup>4</sup> Categories of prototypical prejudices create this ideological mindset, first recognized in Christian theology. In this article, which is part of my book *Theology and Antisemitism*, I examine the elements of Christian theology which enabled and triggered anti-Semitism. In my book, I study in detail the influence and development of Christian amillennialism and how this dogma influenced anti-Semitism in the church. I show that the old Christian concept of the millennium influenced the modern thoughts and ideas of anti-Semitism in the church.

### Formation of Christian Anti-Judaism and Amillennialism from the Jewish Church to the Gentile-Christian Church<sup>5</sup>

During the early stages of the church, Christianity was as a sect of Judaism. Gentiles joining the church were proselytes to Judaism and they submitted themselves to circumcision and the Mosaic Law. Jewish believers in Messiah Yeshua began to

proclaim the gospel to Gentiles after Peter's special revelation and the saving of Cornelius.<sup>6</sup>

The effective ministry of Paul among Gentiles created a crisis in the still Jewish church. What status should be given to Gentile believers? Should they follow the Mosaic Law? There were two opinions in the church: One stated that Gentiles could convert, and the other stated that they needed to become proselytes in order to be saved (to convert first to Judaism, submitting themselves to the Mosaic Law). The conflict led to the Council of Jerusalem, and the decision was that the two groups (Jewish and Gentile believers) were to be dealt with differently, but that they were allies.<sup>7</sup> According to Acts, Gentile believers did not have to circumcise their sons or to keep any other Mosaic commandments, except the moral and some of the dietary laws; i.e., prohibiting eating meat sacrificed to idols or blood. Concerning salvation, there was no difference between Jewish and Gentile believers; they differed only in conduct or customs. Paul considered the church as a community where the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles was broken and everybody took part in God's grace, His eternal covenants, and the promises to Israel.<sup>8</sup> Jewish believers lived in their own Jewish nation, attended the Temple in Jerusalem and the synagogues, and practiced Jewish religious rites. At the same time, the Jewish religious leaders were against these Jewish or Messianic believers.<sup>9</sup>

When the Roman army besieged Jerusalem, Jewish believers, remembering Yeshua's words about this event, escaped to Pella in Transjordan.<sup>10</sup> The Jews in Jerusalem fought

against the Roman army, but they lost the war, and in A.D. 70, the Temple and the city were destroyed. The destruction of the Temple and then the dispersion of the Jewish people endangered biblical Judaism. How could they practice the sacrificial requirements of their faith without the Temple and so far from the Promised Land? The solution was to replace biblical Judaism with rabbinical Judaism, and the center of the religious life became the synagogues instead of the Temple.<sup>11</sup>

In the second century, Christianity was still considered a Jewish sect. At that time, many Jewish believers in Yeshua kept the Jewish religious customs. The separation between traditional Jews and Messianic Jews was progressive, triggered by events such as the destruction of the Temple or that in A.D. 90, a 19<sup>th</sup> benediction was added to the 18 Benedictions, the *Shmoneh Esreh*, a prayer that was recited daily in the Jewish religious practice. The 19<sup>th</sup> benediction was really a curse against the Jewish believers in Yeshua and forced them to stop participating in the synagogue services anymore.<sup>12</sup>

The short period between A.D. 132-135 finally changed the whole history between the Jewish community and the Messianic Jews. In those years, the second Jewish revolt broke out against Rome, led by Bar-Kochba. Jewish believers fought with their compatriots until Bar-Kochba was declared the messiah. Since this was unacceptable for the Messianic Jews, they could no longer participate in the fighting. Their relations with the Jewish community were severed, and the Jewish believers were irrevocably forced out of the community. As all the Jews were expelled from

<sup>4</sup> Klaus Holz, „Ideológia-e az antiszemitizmus? – Az antiszemita önkép és társadalomkép szerkezetéhez”, in *A modern antiszemitizmus* (ed. A. Kovacs: Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999), 513.

<sup>5</sup> The term “Gentile-Christian” refers to those who belong to the church but are not Jewish. Gentiles compose those nations who are not Jews. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History, and Philosophy* (Tustin: Ariel Ministries Press, 1995), 9-12.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 10, English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Acts 15:1-35, ESV

<sup>8</sup> Henry Chadwick, *A korai egyház* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 16–18.

<sup>9</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity*, 36-38.

<sup>10</sup> Yeshua's prophecy is in Luke 21:20-24. The escape is a tradition, historically not accurate.

<sup>11</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity*, 39-40.

<sup>12</sup> James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue. A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (London: Soncino, 1934), 77-78.



Jerusalem and the Land, only Gentile Christians could establish churches there.<sup>13</sup>

From A.D. 135, Gentile Christianity became independent from its Jewish roots. Messianic Jews, however, held uncompromisingly to the Jewish religious institutions, keeping the Sabbath, circumcising their sons, and celebrating the Jewish festivals. As evidenced by the early church writings, relations between Jews and Christians were not hostile,<sup>14</sup> and there seems to have been a lot of daily interaction between them, as the rules of the synods against such connections show.

According to the writings of Justin<sup>15</sup> (ca. A.D. 160), Messianic believers were accepted; but according to Irenaeus, they were considered as a heretic sect and not a form of Christianity. Justin did not credit the revelation of God only to the Hebrews; according to his teachings, Abraham and Socrates were all “Christians.” Irenaeus developed a Christian theology interpreting the Bible literally, rejecting an allegorical exegesis, and considering the coming millennium as an earthly reality.<sup>16</sup>

## Replacement Theory<sup>17</sup> and the Idea of the Triumphant Church

Many early church theologians used the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 as proof of God’s rejection of the Jews and His approval of the existence of the Christian church as the true Israel, stepping into the place of Israel.<sup>18</sup> However, Christian theology should answer the question of why the

Jews who received salvation still remained.<sup>19</sup> In his work *Dialogue with Trypho a Jew*, Justin elaborated that the disinheritation of Jews occurred with the destruction of the Temple and Christians replaced them as recipients of the heritage of Old Testament promises. He stated that Jews did not grasp the meaning of the Scriptures.<sup>20</sup> Ignatius of Antioch had similar views, which he published in his *Epistle to Philadelphians*. Ignatius warned the church of the heresy of Judaizers. The *Epistle of Barnabas*, written in the second century, testified about the complete break with the Jews. Jews were not worthy of the Old Testament; therefore, God instead made a covenant with the Christians. According to the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the Old Testament could not be interpreted literally, but only as a type of Messiah and the church. The epistle stated that Judaism died with the destruction of the Temple, and now the church was the true Israel.<sup>21</sup>

Justin also identified Christianity with Israel, declaring the Gentile church as the true heir who accepted the Messiah. He claimed the Jews were responsible for Yeshua’s crucifixion. This is the “teaching of contempt,” according to Jules Isaac.<sup>22</sup> From this time on, Christianity began to appropriate the name of Israel. Christians saw themselves as the heirs of all that Israel possessed. They thought that the church fulfilled and even exceeded Israel’s role. At that time, to accept Christianity meant to abandon one’s Jewish identity.

After canonizing the New Testament, heretical teachings emphasizing replace-

ment theology spread quickly.<sup>23</sup> Tertullian taught that it was hard to interpret the Bible, so unclear passages must be interpreted by simple texts.<sup>24</sup>

Origen, who had a great impact on Eastern and Western Christianity,<sup>25</sup> interpreted the Bible allegorically. He thought the Bible had at least two or three, maybe even four layers of meanings. He taught that God would never restore Israel and the Jews, and he claimed that the Talmud was full of writings that mocked Yeshua and His followers.<sup>26</sup>

During the time of Tertullian and Origen, the church became more and more Hellenistic and broke with Israel and the Jewish traditions. Tertullian systematically denied Judaism, using theological reasons. He claimed that Gentiles had acquired the heritage of true Israel, because Jews disabled themselves to serve God. For Israel, the only possibility of salvation was through the church.<sup>27</sup>

The anti-Judaism of early Christianity was thus based on exegetical traditions. The identification of Israel with the church was based on allegorical Bible interpretation, which can be detected in writings ranging from the *Epistle of Barnabas* and Justin to those of Augustine. According to the church fathers, only the church had the true knowledge of the Bible.<sup>28</sup> These ideas were proven hermeneutically in Christian exegesis, and it was said that in the Old Testament there were two nations. While all bad and negative prophecies pertained to the Jewish people, all positive prophe-

<sup>13</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 94.

<sup>15</sup> Jusztinósz, „Párbeszéd a zsidó Trüphónnal”, in *A II. századi görög apologeták* (ed. L. Vanyo: Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1984), 147-170.

<sup>16</sup> Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 70-76.

<sup>17</sup> According to replacement theory, the church replaced Israel because Israel rejected the Messiah.

<sup>18</sup> György Gábor, *Szinaj és Jabne. Zsidó emlékezet a történelmen „innen és túl”* (Budapest: Jósóveg Műhely, 2005), 98-99; György Gábor, *A Diadalívén innen és túl. Pogány, zsidó és keresztény narratívák – a „hetvenes” háború emlékezte* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2009), 212-217.

<sup>19</sup> György Gábor, *A bárka és utasai* (Budapest: Orpheusz, 1996), 231-290. 235.

<sup>20</sup> Jusztinósz, „Párbeszéd a zsidó Trüphónnal.”

<sup>21</sup> Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews. Twenty-three Centuries of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Macmillan 1965), 84.

<sup>22</sup> Jules Isaac, *The Christian Roots of Antisemitism* (London: Parkes Library, 1960), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Like gnosticism, teachings of Marcion.

<sup>24</sup> Chadwick, *A korai egyház*, 41.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>26</sup> Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews*, 37-38.

<sup>27</sup> Marcel Simon, *Versus Israel* (London: The Library of Jewish Civilization, 1964 and 1996), 78.

<sup>28</sup> Rosemary R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide. The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 64.





cies demonstrating faith and obedience belonged to the church, which, thus, became perfect. The heroes of the Old Testament became prefigures of the church, while the Jews were those who always refused the prophets. Thus, the Scriptures were used to support anti-Semitic teachings and to prove that the church was God's glorious and victorious vessel.<sup>29</sup> With the help of allegorical interpretation, the church fathers credited the origin of the church to ancient times, to the origin of the human race, and then Christians became the true Jews, the true Israelites.<sup>30</sup> In the patristic literature, there was an analogy between the Old and New Testament laws: The high priest became the bishop; the Levites became the presbyters and deacons. The church institutions began to resemble the Old Testament institutions, thus demonstrating the connection. In Christian theology, all Jewish rites were interpreted allegorically and found their counterparts in the church liturgy: Circumcision was viewed as equivalent to baptism, and the Pesach lamb turned into the Eucharist.<sup>31</sup> The basis of the analogy was the view that the Mosaic Law was invalid, and the church was the spiritual fulfillment of the law. Thus, the new priesthood, the church, was developed.<sup>32</sup>

Eusebius, the historian of the church, wrote that the history of Christians went back to Abraham and that the true Hebrews, the most ancient race, existed before the Jews.<sup>33</sup> He divided the persons of the Old Testament into two groups: the evil Jews and the good Hebrews. Hebrews were seen as the patriarchs and common Christians. The true Israel was generated from these Hebrews, while the Jews were seen as an

inferior people, therefore needing the Mosaic Law.<sup>34</sup> According to Eusebius, the history of the Jews was a complete caricature, a series of negligible events, because Israel continuously disappointed God and was always disobedient.<sup>35</sup>

Patristic writers denied Israel's priority in God's calling and in heritage. They also tried to prove that Christianity received the primary revelation in human history. Jews were apostates, as they had denied the Messiah.<sup>36</sup> According to these church writers, the Jews misinterpreted the spiritual meaning of the Mosaic Law, and they were blind to the true meaning of the Scriptures. Therefore, the Jews were carnal people, while the believers were spiritual people. One of the reasons for Jewish carnality was their insistence upon literal Bible interpretation.<sup>37</sup> The true covenant belonged to the church only, and only the church represented the appropriate Bible interpretation and understood the spiritual truths. These truths, in turn, had nothing to do with the Old Testament, but contained the new salvation truth from that time on. The church was the new Israel, planted by God, and all who were not planted by God would perish in the fire.<sup>38</sup> The church became the new nation, the *tertium genus* (third race, nation), and stood in contrast to the Jews and to all non-Christian Gentiles, who were called "heathens." By appropriating the biblical traditions, the church ensured its right to exist, and because of this absolutism, the role of Jews was only akin to that of Cain, whose role it was to bear witness to his own cruelty.<sup>39</sup> Just like Cain, the Jews were considered to be good for nothing and only served as bad examples and a deterrent.

According to early church teaching, the existence of the church as well as the exclusion of Jews from the covenant was predicted in the Old Testament by the prophets. So, there was only one covenant that God made with Abraham, and this covenant was fulfilled by the Messiah. It was promised by God originally to the Jews, but received by Christian believers. The Jews had already proven by their history that they were not God's elect people. Jewish election was temporary until the church took the role of the "true Israel." Believers only existed in the church, so the heroes of the Old Testament stood in the line of the church. Augustine said that Jews had to recognize that the church was the true Israel; therefore, they could find salvation only as Christians. The dispersion of the Jewish nation was the church's proof of God's final and irrevocable rejection of the Jews. Forgiveness was possible only until the death of the Messiah, but not after it.<sup>40</sup>

The Old Testament predicts that God will save Israel and that the whole world will see her as the light to the nations. However, where the original text refers to Israel, the church fathers replaced Israel with the church and then used the prophecies to prove that God had chosen a nation for Himself among the Gentiles instead of the Jews. In this context, the Jews became the enemies.<sup>41</sup> The apostate Israel disbelieved, rejected the Messiah, and killed Him as they had killed the prophets. The church became convinced that if the Jews killed the prophets and Messiah, then they would also persecute the church. Augustine said that the responsibility of Jews killing Yeshua was perpetual.<sup>42</sup> The church

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>33</sup> They were Jews according to the Mosaic Law.

<sup>34</sup> Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 162.

<sup>36</sup> Simon, *Versus Israel*, 84-86.

<sup>37</sup> Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 160-161.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 75-79.

<sup>39</sup> Simon, *Versus Israel*, 91-92.

<sup>40</sup> Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 137-148.

<sup>41</sup> The verses used were Isaiah 53 and some of the Psalms.

<sup>42</sup> According to historical researches, the Romans were responsible for the crucifixion of Messiah. See Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 85-91.



fathers explained that the Jewish apostasy, which manifested itself in the denial of Messiah, was the clear consequence of the history of this infidel, wicked people. They continued to claim that the Jews had always been apostate prophet-killers, idol-worshippers, and law-breakers; therefore, they were guilty in every sense. Their transgression was contrasted to the righteous actions of the Gentiles. Jews lived in the flesh and sacrificed their children to demons. In contrast to them were the Christian ascetics. By listing these sins, the church fathers' aim was to prove that the Jewish heritage culminated in the final apostasy of killing Yeshua.<sup>43</sup>

After the second century, the church consisted of mostly Gentile Christians, and they debated with the Jews about the Messiahship of Yeshua. The argument of the Christian writers was that if Yeshua was the Messiah, then the person for whom the Jews were waiting could only be the anti-Christ. The other argument was that if God promised the Messiah to Israel, then the church itself was the genuine Israel. In the early church, the Mosaic Law and the prophets were not respected despite the fact that Paul considered the law holy. The image of the heretic Jew can be found in the apocryphal gospels. "They cursed Moses because he proclaimed Christ, they hated David because he sang to Christ, and they loved Judas because he betrayed Him." (Pseudo-Cyprian)<sup>44</sup>

In patristic literature, it is rare to find the Pauline doctrine of the Jewish remnant as the natural olive tree with the Gentiles as the wild olive branch grafted in (Rom. 11:13-24).

The church fathers simply explained that the unbelieving Jews were cut off and replaced by the Gentiles.

When Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, anti-Jewish rhetoric also became political. In the Christian state, the accusation of Christ's killing became the assassination of the Lord of the universe, and the emperor became the earthly governor for the Messiah. The universalism of the Gentile nations in the church was equated with the Christian Roman peace. The ecumenical Christian empire was identified with the millennial kingdom: Every nation assembled in the messianic kingdom except the Jews, who were the enemy without salvation. Satan was bound, and Messiah reigned on the earth. Every man and woman became one in the universal Christian religion, the animosity stopped, peace endured. The universalistic ideology of the empire mixed with the universalistic messianic ideology of the church. With the political strengthening of Christianity, the picture of the victorious church became more obvious, and after the period of persecution, the universal reign brought messianic glory for itself. The church considered its political victory a blessing, while the persecution of Jews expressed the wrath of God.<sup>45</sup>

### The Rising Anti-Jewishness in the Fourth Century

Already in the fourth century, Christianity had forsaken its simple confession; the teachings of the Greek and Latin philosophy schools influenced the Christology of the church. Christianity soon became the religion of the Gentiles. The church not only became a recognized religion, but it grabbed the executive power of the empire. At this time, the church used disputes as a weapon. However, in the eyes of the church fathers, the Jews were not human beings at all; they were cunning monsters who were rarely charged with everyday human crimes.<sup>46</sup>

John Chrysostom wrote his opinion about the Jews in a compilation of homilies called *Golden Mouth* (354-407). These texts had great influence on the church and added significantly to the spread of anti-Semitism.<sup>47</sup> In his interpretation, Jews were not the people living with him in Antioch, but a theological necessity, a concept. He did not even mention real cases in his homilies. He wrote *Homilies Against Jews* in 387, where he hatefully accused Jews of all sorts of things by using Old and New Testament quotations. Referring to Psalm 106, he stated: "They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to demons. Jews are worse than the wild beasts, slew their own children with their own hands to pay honor to the avenging demons." Later, perhaps at the objection of the Jews in Antioch, he modified this accusation: "Even if they no longer murder their own children, they have murdered Christ, which is worse. Jews do not worship God, but devils, so that all their feasts are unclean. For a Christian to attend the Jewish Passover is to insult Christ."<sup>48</sup> "God hates them because they murdered Christ, and since God hates them, and always hated them, Christians should confess: I hate the Jews. It is a duty of Christians to hate them too." "They committed the crime of crimes slaying Christ. They are carnal, covetous, plunderers, hardened executioners, destroyers, possessed by the devil, their synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it also is a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts, that place becomes the dwelling of demons."<sup>49</sup> After such writings and homilies, unfortunately, any kind of anti-Jewish act could be viewed as godly inspiration.

According to Basil the Great (330-379), Jews were far from God, and when they raised their hands to God, they were like murderers who stretched their hands defiled by the blood of the child to the

<sup>43</sup> Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 124-128.

<sup>44</sup> Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 99-105.

<sup>45</sup> Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 139-142.

<sup>46</sup> Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 155-158.

<sup>47</sup> Leopold Lucas, *The Conflict between Christianity and Judaism, 4th Century* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1993), 8.

<sup>48</sup> Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 164-165.

<sup>49</sup> Lucas, *The Conflict between Christianity and Judaism*, 47.



father. They were princes of Sodom whose hands were blemished by the blood of Messiah. Basil intended to ban the Jews from the army, but at that time the exclusion was not legal.<sup>50</sup>

Jerome (342-420) hated the synagogue in particular, whose poverty stood in stark contrast to the growing wealth of the church. He called the synagogue Satan's fortress and a brothel. He did not allow Jews to be judges or theologians; however, his own theology teachers were Jews. When he translated the Bible into Latin, one of his goals was to help Christians in their argumentation against Jews. He considered Jews the enemy of all people, accusing them of condemning Christians in their synagogues.<sup>51</sup>

According to Gregory of Nyssa (330-395), Jews were murderers of the Lord, assassins of the prophets, haters, and enemies of God and grace, advocates of the devil, a race of vipers, slanderers, calumniators, the Sanhedrin of demons, sinners, wicked men, stoners, haters of righteousness.<sup>52</sup>

The anti-Judaic literature focused on the Messiahship of Yeshua, on the Mosaic Law, and on the election of the church.

According to these opinions the church was the church of the Gentiles (*Ecclesia ex gentibus*), the new nation, everlasting Israel.<sup>53</sup>

The role of Jewish Christianity in the church and all Jewish connections to the church ceased. However, there were still examples of scholars who interpreted the Bible literally. These men still believed in the millennial restoration of Israel, and one such person was Papias. The replacement theology of Gentile Christianity paved the way for Christian anti-Semitism. According to the theology of the church fathers reviewed above, Israel was appropriated, every inheritance reckoned to the church, and there was no future role for Israel. Because of these teachings, Jews were considered rejected by God as wicked, unworthy members of the Christian society. Amillennialism became more and more dominant in theology. As the connection between church and state developed, the ideology of the church influenced the legislation too. The laws, regulations, and customs of the Christian states reflected the Christian theological image of Jews. Jews could not be equal members of the Christian society; they were enemies. Therefore, measures needed to be introduced against them. The

church, on the other hand, was ruling and proved its glory and victory by its participation in the political and governmental sphere. This was how amillennialism painted the Jewish people as enemies, while claiming the right for the political power of Christendom.

Amillennial theology not only influenced the anti-Jewish politics in the middle ages, but also the modern-time anti-Semitic prejudices and political measures.

Unfortunately, Christianity turned far away from one of its original commissions to present the Jewish Messiah to the Jewish nation and because of its anti-Semitism throughout the ages made the Jews hate the name of the Messiah.



The burning of Jews during the Black Death (France, 1300).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 35.



## WHY DON'T MOST JEWISH BELIEVERS WEAR CROSSES? An actual response to a friend who asked

Hello Robert,

In responding to your question about the lack of display of the cross image among most Jewish believers and in Messianic circles, my answer needs to be carefully understood within this context: I am deeply aware and very grateful that my salvation was purchased by Messiah Yeshua as He shed His blood on the cross. What He accomplished on that Roman torture stake alone has made possible my entry by faith into the family of God. There is no other way of atonement, no other means of salvation for my Jewish people or for anyone else.

At the same time, I am very aware that there is a vast difference between the perfect work of Messiah Yeshua on the cross and what it evokes versus the graphic image of the cross and the widely varying thoughts it evokes in the minds of many.

Let me give a fictitious example: You live in a community that has a variety of people of different races, and everyone gets along well. However, there are a number of people who wear a distinctive red jacket, and every time one of the red jacket people sees someone from your extended family, they jump on you and brutally hit, kick, and beat you. Over the years, it has always been that way, and last year the violence was especially bad, with a number of men from your family having been pulled from their homes and hacked to death with swords and axes, their wives and daughters brutally raped and then killed while the authorities turned a blind eye to it. It is easy to understand that upon seeing any of the "red jackets," people from your family have a visceral reaction to them. They are filled with terror. They start to shake uncontrollably and expect to be slaughtered.

Now, let me go from fiction to fact: In February 1919, the people of the Jewish village of Felshtin, my grandmother's village, were just trying to keep warm in the midst of a cold winter. They had spent years trying to stay out of the way of the non-Jews who ran the town, but occasionally, racial hatred against the Jewish people spilled out of that large Eastern Orthodox church topped with an enormous cross symbol. On February 18, men of a Ukrainian Nationalist militia wearing crosses around their necks rampaged through my grandmother's village, and in a two day storm tore through the homes of Jewish people, dragging entire families into the streets; using axes and shovels, they hacked them to death in front of each other. This is a literal and exact account of what happened. I have copies of the eyewitness accounts of dozens of survivors and several horrific photos. The accounts of rape and dismemberment are gruesome beyond words.





The names of the four members of my grandmother's family who were slaughtered are:

*Sora Ita Segal (wife of Yaakov Segal)*  
*Mutti Segal*  
*Meir Segal, son of Chaim Sholom*  
*a young son of Yosel Segal*

Together with my relatives, six hundred other Jewish neighbors—yes, six hundred more—were hacked to death, almost half of whom were children.

Now, whether you are from the fictional village and cowered when the “red jackets” appeared or you are from a traditional Jewish background and cowered whenever someone wearing a cross appeared, you have an understandable and justified fear. The simple and indisputable fact is that for most of the last thousand years, the symbol of the cross has been used, i.e. misused, by those who went to church on Sunday and beat Jews on Monday. The events in my grandmother's village are just one instance. Similar horrific murders and rampages occurred in waves across “Christian Europe.” I understand very well that those who killed my relatives were not genuine Christians no matter how many crosses appeared on their buildings and around their necks. Their loyalty was to a church institution. But the indisputable current reality is that in the minds of most of my Jewish people the symbol of the cross, the graphic representation of the cross, is linked to a thousand years of violent persecution.

Just as that is indisputably true, I believe it is also indisputably true that the only hope for Jews or Gentiles is the finished work of Messiah Yeshua on the cross as He made atonement. I embrace the Messiah and His finished work as Scripture commands it. However, nowhere in Holy Scripture am I instructed to embrace the graphic symbol of a cross as a necessary representation. There is a difference between the graphic cross symbol and the reality of what Messiah accomplished. Do you understand the difference? Do you understand that a person can cling to the person and work of Messiah without utilizing this symbol? In fact, throughout history there have been groups of Christian believers from various backgrounds who did not utilize the symbol of the cross.

At the same time, I understand that for some believers, wearing the cross may be very appropriate and helpful, and in the spirit of the freedom spelled out in Romans 14, I support their right to do so. For some believers, that symbol represents a tangible and cherished connection to their faith, and I am glad they have that reminder that means so much to them. Additionally, if a believer lives in an area where there is nothing negative associated with the graphical symbol of the cross, its use may provide opportunities to share one's faith.





Just as quickly as I have said that, a look at the popular media today reveals that many entertainment personalities are often seen wearing crosses, probably for most as a "good luck charm." At the same time, their immoral, decadent lifestyles are making the news. My Jewish people see all that and roll their eyes, understandably so.

What should settle the question is God's Word: To the Jews I became as a Jew that I might win the Jews (I Cor. 9:20). All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable or edify (I Cor. 10:23). So, do you have the "right" to wear a cross? Yes, you do. However, the more important question to ask is: What's more important, my rights or the ability of someone to truly hear the gospel? Upon examination, you may find that your wearing of a cross symbol in your sphere of influence is a positive thing, and if that's true, I would say, "Wear it and be well!" However, in the world God has called me to reach, that graphic symbol does not say the same thing that it does in yours.

I trust that God will always find us willing to surrender our rights in any matter so that we might be used as yielded and effective tools in his hand.

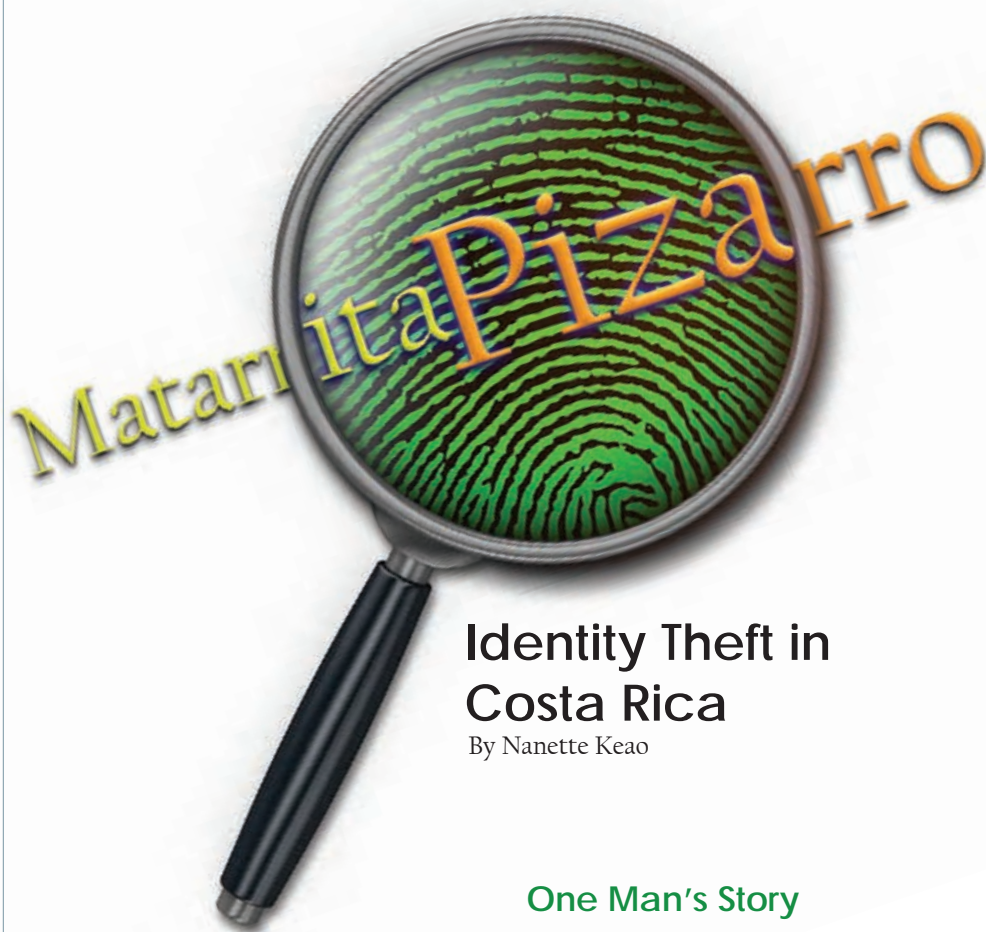
Your brother in Messiah,

Mottel Baleston

Isa. 62:1



**Author's Postscript:** This was a difficult letter for me to write, and no doubt, an uncomfortable letter for some of you to read. One way to react is like people often do when in an argument with another: Instead of listening to the other person's heart, your ears are closed and you're only formulating an angry response. I hope you have listened to my heart in this, because I have seen Gentiles who truly put aside their own preferences go on to be mightily used by God to reach Jewish people. I was led to Messiah Yeshua by Vincent Morgan, a Christian man who put aside his own culture and decorated his home with the Jewish Star of David and Israeli art. He showed me both hospitality and the Scriptures and has led dozens of Jewish people to saving faith. May God find each of us as yielded, usable tools in His hand!



## Identity Theft in Costa Rica

By Nanette Keao

### One Man's Story

The jagged spires of the neo-gothic structure of the San Isidro of Coronado Church overshadow the surrounding neighborhood in a quiet suburb of San Jose, Costa Rica. In a country so dominated by Catholicism, this church speaks of the country's religious history, which began in the 1500s when the Spanish Jesuits first arrived. Throughout Costa Rica, children are taught that history with one significant piece missing in the lessons: that of the influence of Catholicism on Jewish immigrants, most of whom came to Costa Rica by way of the Caribbean islands. Indeed, an indeterminate number of Costa Ricans today are unaware of their Jewish ancestry. Some, though, like Henry Matarrita, evangelist and founder of World Mission Outreach (WMO), stumble upon a family tree whose Jewish origins emerge beneath the shadow of the Catholic Church, suggesting a greater presence than one might imagine.

Henry was born in Santa Cruz, Costa Rica, the first son to Vidal and Ruth Matarrita. At 15, he was born again in San Jose, Costa Rica. Jerusalem has been home to Henry and his wife Darlene for over 12 years. The couple travels worldwide for much of the year, teaching the Bible from a Jewish perspective and sharing the gospel with Jews and Gentiles, in accordance with Romans 1:16.

In 2012, while working on his doctoral dissertation on the Holocaust at the Hebrew University and Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust museum, Henry began a journey of discovering his family's Jewish roots. Delving into the Spanish Inquisition of the 1400s, Henry came upon Mordechai Arbelle's book, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean: The Spanish-Portuguese Jewish Settlements in the Caribbean and the Guianas*, published in 2002. Arbelle, a renowned scholar on the

subject of Sephardic history, formerly served as the Israeli ambassador to the Caribbean region and devoted much of his life to documenting the story of the Jews in the southern part of the New World. On page 7, Henry found a reference to the name Pizarro—the name he knew belonged in his family through his father's lineage. Up to this point, Henry knew of his Mestizo origins with roots in Spain, but never questioned any family connection to the Jewish people. Henry's curiosity was piqued, and he contacted Arbelle, who urged him to research his family history. They met several times before Arbelle's death in 2016. Finding much encouragement and direction in Arbelle's research, Henry began visiting family gravesites in Costa Rica and the archives of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. He interviewed several researchers and met with rabbis in St. Thomas, Costa Rica, and Israel. All confirmed Henry's Jewish ancestry through specific family members traced back through St. Thomas, Denmark, France, and ultimately to Spain.

### The Spanish Inquisition Comes to the New World

In 1492, when Columbus set sail for the New World, making landfall in the Americas, the infamous Spanish Inquisition—a period rivaling the Holocaust of WWII—had reached new heights of terror for Jews in Spain. Many fled Europe, finding passage to the New World via the Caribbean on sailing vessels such as those Columbus commandeered. Jews from other countries and Marranos (Iberian Jews who converted willingly or not to Catholicism) escaped persecution by fleeing first to England, France, and Amsterdam until the heat was on to take passage to the New World via the Caribbean. Many Spanish and Portuguese Jews fled to South America, while some migrated upward into Central America, Mexico, and North America. Others debarked in Caribbean islands,





finding business opportunities and acceptance in the mixed populations of freed African slaves, island natives, and European traders and merchants. References to Jewish merchants in the Iberian Peninsula, Tarshish,<sup>1</sup> date back to the early biblical times of King Solomon, but most Jewish family records were destroyed during the Inquisition.<sup>2</sup> Henry discovered Pizarro connections working backward from Costa Rica to St. Thomas of the Virgin Islands, once a Dutch colony, to France and to Spain. He discovered that his ancestors had eventually assimilated into the predominantly Catholic culture of Costa Rica, as did most families of Jewish descent. Few such families have awakened to their true identity.

## From Saint Thomas of the Virgin Islands to Costa Rica

In 1544, Spanish Jesuits built the first Roman Catholic Church in Costa Rica, initiating the conversion of the indigenous Costa Ricans and casting a shadow of anti-Semitism across the land for the Jews who would arrive from the Caribbean islands centuries later. In his book, *The Other 1492 – Jewish Settlement in the New World*, Norman H. Finkelstein notes that the Sephardic Jews who settled in Holland in the late 1500s and prospered greatly contributed to the development of the New World. Although Jewish settlements in the New World were vulnerable to the various competing European presences in the Caribbean and the Americas, “vibrant Jewish communities existed in Barbados, Surnam, and Curacao.”<sup>3</sup> Prior to WWII, the Jewish population in Costa Rica was primarily Sephardic from the Caribbean islands of Curacao and St. Thomas, and in St. Thomas Henry discovered his origins.

## Divine Connections

Henry had never known why his surname changed from Pizarro to Matarrita. One family version of the story is that Henry’s father, Vidal, had a godfather who attended his Catholic baptism and, in a drunken state, provided his own last name of Matarrita for the baptismal records. While no one knows for certain whether the story is true, it is clear that at the time Vidal was born, there were negative sentiments toward Jews in Costa Rica. It is therefore likely that the change in surname was a protective measure against anti-Semitism.

When Henry was born again, he soon felt the calling to take the gospel throughout the world. He denounced his Catholic faith, and two years later, while visiting his maternal grandparents, he led his grandfather to the Lord, baptizing him in the Rio Diria—the river where he played as a child. On this same river, Henry experienced his second revelation: He would be a witness to the Jews throughout the world. To date, all of Henry’s siblings, as well as his parents, are born again, and all but one of his siblings have reclaimed the Pizarro name.

Since meeting Mordechai Arbell, Henry has done much to track his family origins. Two letters written in 2015 help to summarize his findings, one by Rabbi Ronie R. Herstik of The Hebrew Congregation of Saint Thomas and another by Mordechai Arbell himself. In Rabbi Herstik’s letter, he states, “I am able to testify that the Pizarro family is Jewish, according to the genealogical records of Saint Thomas. This is further to verify that the Pizarro family members moved from St. Thomas to Costa Rica, beginning in the 1840’s.” A letter from Arbell clarifies important points concerning the Pizarro Jewish roots; i.e., that “the

family Pizarro (Pissarro) in the Danish Virgin Islands is Sephardic Jewish. They arrived to the islands via France.” He also attests that Costa Rican documents exist verifying that “the Jews of the Danish Virgin Islands changed their citizenship from Danish to Costa Rican,” as accounted for in the Costa Rican national archives. Henry’s discovery opened the eyes of his family and raised many questions concerning their history.

One evening, while revisiting family history with Henry’s father in San Jose, Darlene asked Vidal, “How do you feel, knowing that your true identity was stolen from you?” Vidal expressed sorrow and newly aroused sympathy for the plight of the Jews historically, as well as excitement and desire to learn more of his heritage and God’s plans for Israel in the future. Henry, who led his father to the Lord years before, found confirmation in his desire to memorialize the journey of the Sephardim to Costa Rica by building a Sephardic museum on family land outside of Santa Cruz.

## The Journey Ahead

Henry and Darlene regularly visit family in Costa Rica, often bringing WMO teams for evangelistic outreach and teaching seminars. In late January this year, the WMO team arrived in Costa Rica with a threefold purpose:

1. An evangelical, multi-church, two-day outreach and conference
2. A trip to meet the Jewish community in the town of Santa Teresa
3. Meetings with local pastors in preparation for a Jewish outreach targeting Costa Ricans and Israeli tourists

<sup>1</sup> Modern-day Spain’s west coast.

<sup>2</sup> See: [www.thejerusalemconnection.us](http://www.thejerusalemconnection.us).

<sup>3</sup> Norman H. Finkelstein, *The Other 1492 – Jewish Settlement in the New World* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 1989), p. 71.



In between meetings and outreach, the team visited the proposed site for the Sephardic museum, and I accompanied Henry for interviews with older family members who shared memories of Juana Pizarro, the original matriarch of the Pizarro lineage in Costa Rica. We met with Juana Gutierrez Pizarro, 97, and Cecilia, 91; both are granddaughters of Juana Pizarro and sisters of Argentina Pizarro. We also met with two great-granddaughters to Juana: Aida and Aina. Although their mother and Henry's grandmother, Argentina Pizarro, is buried in the general section

of the cemetery near Santa Cruz, the orthodox rabbi of Chabad verifies her Sephardic origins. He also encouraged Henry to build a Sephardic museum, chronicling the journey of the Sephardim in Costa Rica with the Pizarro pictures, documents, and artifacts Henry has gathered in the last five years. Henry's vision for the museum includes several stages: The first is to build the museum, and the second is to build a guesthouse and recreation center to attract the many adventurous Israeli tourists. By sharing his family story of faith and identity, Henry believes that many more

Sephardim of Costa Rica will discover their true identity and come to know Yeshua as the true Messiah.

*And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls. (Joel 2:32)*



Henry and Darlene Matarrita have been good friends of Ariel Ministries for years. After studying at Camp Shoshanah, they are now using Ariel material to equip the church and to share the good news with the Jewish people. Please pray for the building of the museum in Costa Rica, that the gospel message may be presented to those visiting from Israel and all over the world. Pray also that the Lord would provide safety for all involved and the funds necessary to complete the construction.



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## The Gleaming White Hand

By Jay Perskie

My name is Jay Perskie. I was born, and have lived all my life, in Baltimore, Maryland. I was the youngest and have two older sisters. My family belonged to a large Orthodox synagogue, but we were not very observant. On Friday nights, my mom would light the Shabbos candles and say a short, rote prayer in Hebrew and English. We would have a Passover Seder and go to synagogue for the high holidays. In third grade, I started going to Hebrew school three times a week and learned to read the language very well, but never was taught to translate it.

As my bar mitzvah neared, I studied extra hours to learn my haftarah part. One day, I was surprised to be called into the rabbi's study, and he said, "I am going to ask you ten questions to see if you are worthy of bar mitzvah." I had never talked to this man in my years there, nor had anyone ever given me a test to see if I was "worthy" of anything.

I was a big kid, bigger than most my age, and the good doctor was a very small man with a beard and a gruff voice, horn-rimmed glasses, and a perpetual scowl on his face. I never liked school. However, I was a better-than-average Hebrew school student, even making the honor roll occasionally because my best friend Arnold was an excellent student, and I was not going to let him get that far ahead of me. The rabbi's first question was not something about which I thought, "Now, what is the answer to that?" No, instead it was something I had never heard of, so I had no answer. The rabbi asked me a second question, and again I had never even heard of it and had no answer again. By the third question, I could see his face getting red and heard his voice getting louder, and again whatever the question was, I had never heard of it. By the



fourth question, he was very red-faced, and he was hollering the questions. I am not sure I heard that or any other questions anymore, as I was wide eyed and silent. So, I was "unworthy" at 0 for 10!

Saturday, the service time arrived with my having a larger than normal part, and I hit it out of the park. Then, on the bema, the rabbi came reaching up to put his hand on my shoulder and began saying what a fine job I had done, smiling for all, saying how proud of me they were, and, "Here is a gift from the Synagogue Brotherhood for you." I am not sure that I knew what a hypocrite was at the time, but I knew there was something wrong with this "picture." (You see, I am a retired, third-generation professional photographer. My grandfather started the family business in 1889 when you had to make your film from scratch. Over the three generations, we have served as the "official photographers" to five US presidents.) After all, how much more "unworthy" could you be than 0 for 10, and now, in front of all these people, he was telling me how wonderful I was. I believe this was the beginning of my exit from Judaism.

I was part of the emerging hippie generation of the early sixties. At age twenty, in 1965, I started wondering, What is life about? Who am I? Why am I here? Those questions started coming more frequently, and

eventually, all I could think was, "Why?" I came home one weekend and went to pieces, which I had never done before. Over and over again, I asked, "Why?" "Why?" "Why?" I believe it was my older sister Bea who said to my mom and dad as I broke down in tears that they ought to have me go to a psychiatrist, to which they agreed.

Days later, I walked into the psychiatrist's office. He was sitting behind his large desk with books lining the walls. He was right out of Hollywood Central casting, with a German accent, horn-rimmed glasses, a V-necked oxford plaid sweater, and a tweed jacket. He started asking questions. After 15 minutes or so, he said, "Young man, get out of my office. You are wasting my time if you think I can give you the answers to life." I don't know if he was the smartest psychiatrist that ever lived or if he had just given an impulsive answer on dumb luck, because as I left that office, I was cured! Now I knew I wasn't crazy, and many others had these same questions.

Two years later, I began work in the photography industry and became an active member of the hippie generation with all the trappings that sadly go with that. I had everything the world said you were supposed to have. I had a good job and was making good money. On top of it, I had lots of free time and very few other responsibili-



ties. I was having a great time! Nevertheless, I felt that something was missing. Life became an experiment, and I even dared to consider the occult while visiting other relevant hippie groups here and there that were all looking for answers and fun. At one point, I even thought that being poor might be an answer worthy trying, but quickly found that to be a BIG NO! Once, while having a rare meaningful conversation with my oldest sister Bea, I asked her what was going on in her life. She said, to my great surprise, how she and her husband had begun getting involved with the local temple. I asked her why of all things she would do that, knowing she was not at all a person of religion. I was stunned when she answered that something was missing in their lives. This was very surprising, as they were the prototypical successful Jewish family with four under-control kids and a very successful dental practice with even some Capitol Hill clients. In short, they were respected in their community and by the family.

A few years later, I was renting a house. One of my two housemates, Laura, was a Christian. She rarely talked about her faith, but I would see her at times reach out to people who were total strangers in a way that caught my attention, being the selfish person I was. One night, a friend of hers was visiting. He and I stayed up late into the night and talked. I spoke a lot about my philosophies of life, going on and on, when finally, I asked him about his viewpoints. I do not remember specifically what he said to me, but a few things he mentioned about God hit right between the eyes. It was a little like meeting someone for the first time, say a girl, and you know she is going to be special in your life. I knew there was something true in what he said.

The next day, I was traveling to work on the beltway and thinking about the things said. The last time I prayed was when I was three or four years old, and it was a "Now I lay me down to sleep" type of prayer. Now, decades later, I did something very spontaneously

that surprised me: I prayed out loud! It was quite a cloudy day. There was no one in the car I could see, but I said,

**"God, if you  
wouldn't mind,  
please  
give me a  
sign  
if I should look  
into this  
Jesus  
thing."**

Obviously, I did not know I Corinthians 1:22-23, which says: *For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.* He knows each of us so well, Jew and Gentile alike, that He accommodates our different make-ups. Nor did I know Isaiah 1:18: *Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.* I believe my request was a form of reasoning with God. God knows each of us individually and better than we know ourselves and gives us exactly what we need if we are willing to ask and listen.

At that instant, my right hand, which was on the steering wheel, turn gleaming white. I turned gleaming scared! I was very frightened. This gleaming white of my hand was not the kind of white that is produced when the sun comes through the clouds. No, this was not that kind of light. I did not know the story about Moses putting his hand in his coat and having the hand come

out as gleaming white with leprosy, and I did not know the story of Jacob wrestling with God. Nevertheless, for the next four months, I wrestled with God. I tried many times to "explain away" what had happened. It was the sun, a reflection — anything but God making this happen! However, I was an eyewitness. I also knew, in my wrestling, that if God had answered my prayer, He knew me. I also knew that if He knew me as I knew myself, I was in deep trouble.

The struggle continued for about four months, until I went to a bookstore and bought a Bible. When I began reading it, I would see things that I knew were true as God spoke to me (of course, I did not know that He was speaking to me then). I also saw many things that contradicted what I had witnessed and heard as a photographer of hundreds of weddings in just about every denomination and religion you could imagine. After five or six months of reading the Bible, I began praying as well. Finally (it was now eight months after the event in the car, August 1978), I found myself on my knees one night, next to my bed, as that is how I was comfortable praying, and I cried out to God. I prayed, with tears falling, "God, I know I am a sinner, and I want Jesus to come and live in my heart."

A day or two later, I started hearing a voice within me saying, "You are a Jew; you are a Jew; you are a Jew..." I was not a person who would go around hearing voices, so this was very troubling. It went on for almost two weeks. Finally, I went to my housemate Laura, who knew I had been reading the Bible, and told her about what was happening. She suggested I ought to go to a meeting of Jews for Jesus. I said, "Jews for what?" I had never heard such a thing! All Laura knew was that Jews for Jesus was somewhat of an underground organization that had just started in 1974. I was very unhappy. It was like a doctor telling you, "Well, we have some good news, and we have some bad news. You have a potentially terminal illness. The good news is we do





have a cure for it, but the bad news is we just ran out of it." That is exactly how I felt.

The next night, I was visiting my friend Arnold and his wife Debbie. I was their son's godfather, and they had invited me to a rare dinner. We were on different life paths, with him being a working husband and father and me being a working hippie. As we were eating dinner, I asked Debbie what was happening in her life. She told me how she had started going to these meetings for "Jewish Christians." I almost fell off the chair. Only 24 hours before, I had never heard terms such as "Jews for Jesus" or "Jewish Christians," and now my best friend's wife was telling me where this group met! The following Friday, I attended my first meeting. It was not that many weeks later when I met Dan and Arlene Rigney. They had just started working full time with Ariel Ministries, after finishing Moody Bible Institute. Dan and Arlene were terrific for me and many others whom they disciplined. I love them very much and miss Dan, who died a few years ago, and Arlene, who is now living in southern Pennsylvania. That first year was good.

It was now July of 1979. I was attending an ingathering of Messianic Jews at Messiah College in southern Pennsylvania. I saw people being baptized in the stream and felt a very strong urge to be baptized as well, but I had not come prepared. These people all came with either robes or had other alternative clothing with them, and I was there in my jeans and shirt and sandals (of course). After a while, the former pastor of a Messianic congregation that I had first attended came out of the crowd, got into the stream in his jeans, and started baptizing people. I said to myself, "If Marvin can get in there to baptize people in his jeans, then I can get in there in my jeans and be baptized too."

A few weeks later, I was at work and was feeling very discombobulated and not getting anything done. Frustrated, I turned to my co-worker Phyllis and said, "I am not

getting anywhere. My head is just a spinning." Her answer was that maybe I needed a vacation. I said, "That's a great idea. I think I am going to take a three-week vacation!" Over the years, and being in business and single, I had not taken a vacation for any longer than three or four days. Phyllis asked, "When do you think you will be going?" I looked at a calendar and arbitrarily pointed and said, "I think I'll go the last week in July and the first two weeks in August." Phyllis asked where I would go. I said, "That's a good question. Two minutes ago, I wasn't going anywhere." I paused and said, "Maybe I'll go to upstate New York, through Canada a bit, and look around." A few days later, I was at the Bible study with Dan, and at the end, he asked if any of us were interested in going to Bible camp. My Jewish idea of a Bible camp was something where you drove an hour and you spent the weekend, so I asked when was the camp. He said, "The last week of July and the first two weeks of August." I shook my head and said, "I think I know the answer to the next question. Where is the camp?" He answered, "In upstate New York."

I lowered my head toward my knees and said to sign me up for a week. After my first day at Ariel's Camp Shoshanah, I signed up for a second week, and by Wednesday, I signed up for the last week as well. The next year, I came back, but this time I signed up for all three weeks. The first day there, I set my eyes on who would turn out to be my wife—Beth Mitchell. My mother had always said, "Jay, I only ask one thing. Marry a 'normal girl!'" You know what she, a Jewish mother, meant by that. Well, I did exactly as she asked. You see, my wife is from "Normal," Illinois, a good Gentile Midwesterner. Not exactly what my mom had in mind, but over time, she came to dearly love her daughter-in-law.

Beth was finishing her master's degree at Wheaton College in journalism and had come to the camp to learn more about the Bible from a Jewish perspective so she

could witness to a college professor she loved who was Jewish. We hung out together every day and on the weekends, so we got to fellowship a lot.

On the next to the last night of camp, we were about to drive into town to get some pizza after classes with Dan and Arlene. As I helped Beth into my Blazer, I responded to a comment she made with, "Oh Beth, don't worry about that. That'll all be taken care of then we get married." And she said, "Was that a proposal?" I hesitated and said, "Yes." And she hesitated longer just to keep me in suspense and said, "I'd be honored." A year later, we were married in Baltimore. To show you a little about her, she gave up a large wedding in her home town, for she sensed that it would be hard for my family to walk into a church and see their only son married. We had a Messianic ceremony and may actually have one of the few pictures on earth of Arnold Fruchtenbaum as an adult in a tie, since we flew him up from Texas to perform the marriage ceremony.

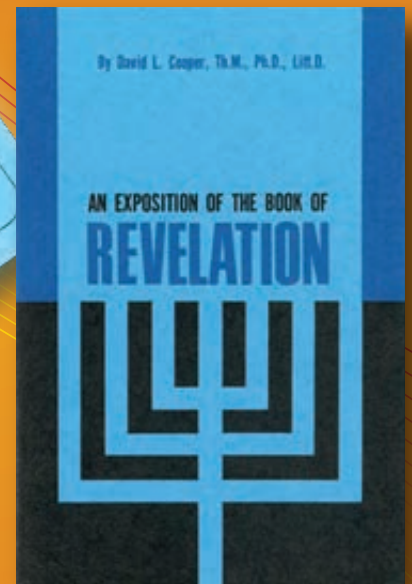
Beth and I have three wonderful daughters, Lauren, Julia, and Hannah, who are all believers. They are all married to men who love the Lord. We have three grandchildren, and there is another one on the way. God has been very good and very gracious to us beyond any outcomes that I could have possibly imagined. There have been so many times where His handprints and footprints have appeared all over and around our lives. We tell family stories again and again of His goodness and of His mercies that endure forever, of His grace that is so very abundant, and of His wonderful lovingkindness that surrounds us even in our many, many family trials while always bringing us through.

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