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אריאל



ARIEL
MINISTRIES



When God Speaks of Himself as “Us”

נעשה

Plus:

**The
Messianic
Implications
of
Purim**

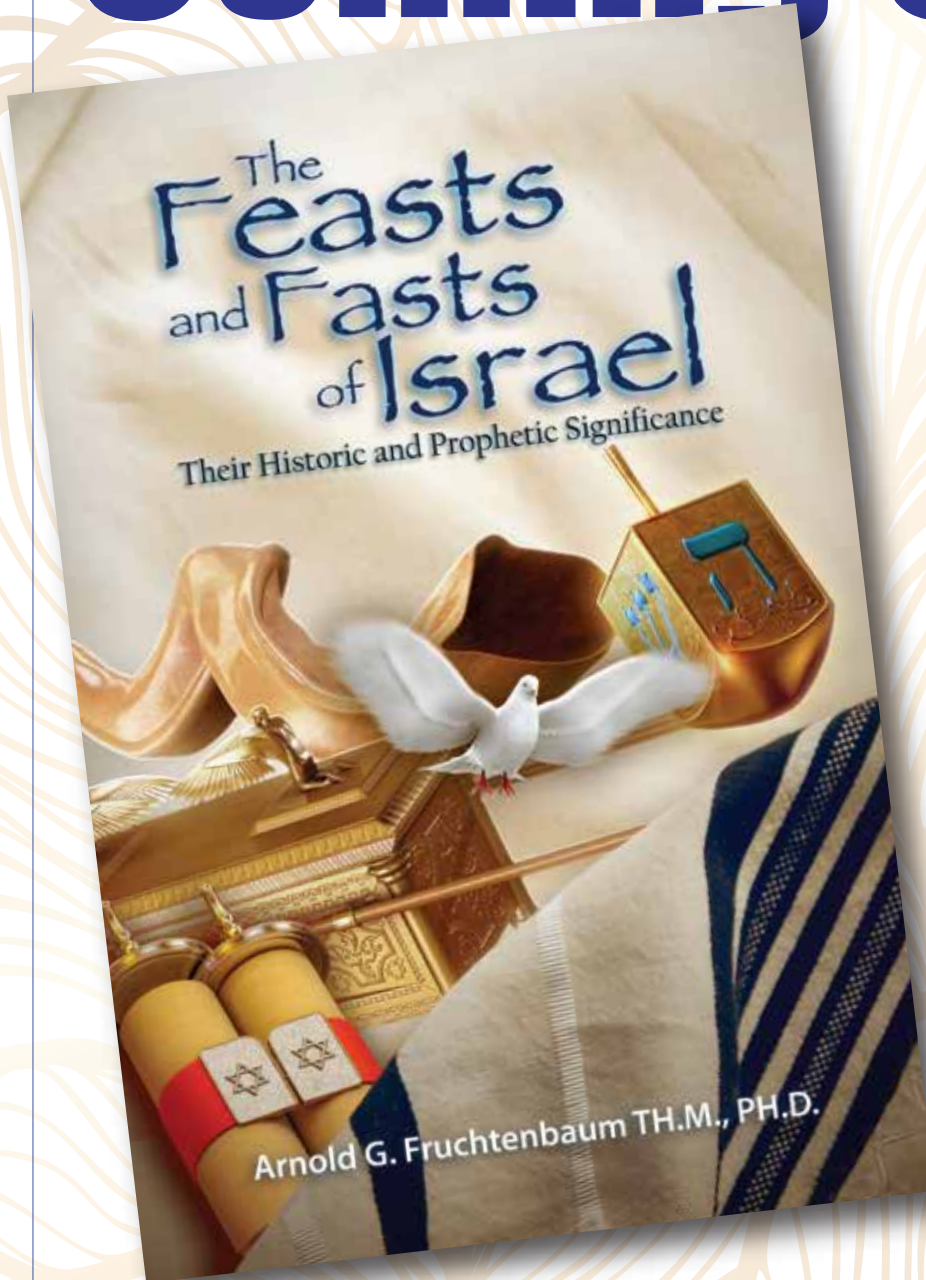
**The
Massacre
at the
Pittsburgh
Synagogue**

**Answering
Charges
by
Anti-
Missionaries**

**The
Crucifixion
and
God's
Signs**

**The
History
and Legacy
of the
Dohany
Synagogue**

Coming Soon!



This work is devoted to those Jewish feasts and fasts that are observed on a yearly basis.

The book explores the historical background, function, and order of the Jewish calendar.



Dr. 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 and a much-respected biblical authority in evangelical and messianic circles.

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Cover Story:

The concept of the triune nature of God has traditionally been the hardest thing for Jewish people to believe and accept. Any attempt to explain the mystery to a Jewish person must be based on the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the points that may be made pertains to the plural pronouns God chose to use in reference to Himself. This article by John B. Metzger sheds light on these pronouns.

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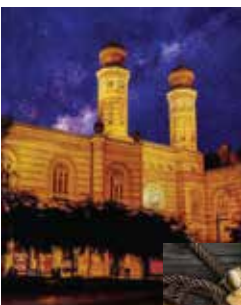
According to Romans 1:16, it is our duty to share the good news of Messiah Yeshua with the Jews first. However, the Jewish people have been hurt by what has been done to them in the name of "Christianity" and the cross. In their hearts, there is a wall against the gospel. Many do not even think God exists, or if they do believe in God, they think that He has left them behind. So, how can we fulfill our calling and defend our faith with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15)? Tim Velasco gives an answer.

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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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The Irony of History

The one thing that attracted me most to God was that He promised absolute truth. Absolutism feels refreshingly safe when standing on the slippery slopes of relativism.

One absolute truth God spoke of in His Word pertains to the permanency of Israel: Unless the fixed order of the sun, moon, and stars departs and the heavens above can be measured, God will not cast off His people (Jer. 31:35-37). Several nations have tried to “test” this promise. With the Feast of Purim approaching, I am mainly thinking of the Persians—and the Germans! During the Nazi regime, all Purim observances in Germany and Poland were forbidden. In fact, even the book of Esther was banned!

On page 312 of his newest work, *The Feasts and Fasts of Israel: Their Historic and Prophetic Significance*, which will be released in April of this year, Dr. Fruchtenbaum wrote:

In 1939, Julius Streicher, the founder and publisher of the virulently anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*, explained: “Just as the Jews butchered seventy-five thousand Persians in one night, the same fate would have befallen the German people had the Jews succeeded in inciting a war against Germany; the Jews would have instituted a new Purim festival in Germany.” Then, on January 30, 1944, Adolf Hitler gave a speech primarily addressing his British enemies. Because he made projections as to what Germany’s defeat would mean for the future of the United States, the speech was translated into English and published by the *New York Times* in full the next day. An excerpt reads as follows: “If Germany does not win, the fate of the states in North, Central, and South America will be decided within a few months . . . [and] the devastating Jewish Ahasuerus could celebrate the destruction of Europe in a second triumphant Purim festival.” In other words, if the Nazis went down to defeat, the Jews would celebrate a second Purim.

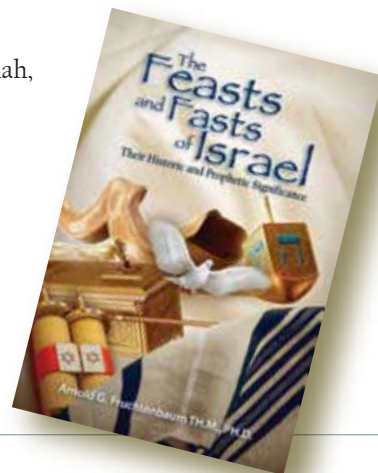
How right Hitler was! On October 16, 1946, ten Nazis were hung in Nuremberg, suffering the same “fate” as the ten sons of Haman. One of them was Julius Streicher, who said, as he was hung, “Purim Feast, 1946.”

Hitler and his henchmen certainly did not realize that Purim celebrates not the hanging of their predecessor Haman, but the saving of the Jewish people. God’s promises to His nation Israel are absolute! They cannot be shaken.

From this solid ground, we send you greetings in Messiah,

Christiane Jurik

Editor-in-Chief
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MEET THE TEAM



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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.



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J. I. 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.



Jackie Fierman

Jackie Fierman has been with Ariel Canada since January of 2005, traveling and sharing about the ministry and teaching Ariel material in Canada and the U.S.A.



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Sasha and Lilian Granovsky represent Ariel Ministries in Israel. The husband and wife team has 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.



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



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Thanks to Manfred K nstler 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**

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Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband and wife team has 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

Web: <http://ariel.org.nz/>

This branch is led by Johan Jansen van Vuuren, Nigel Christensen, Matthew Lord, and John Cavanagh. For information about the many activities of this branch, please contact info@ariel.co.nz.



Ariel Ministries Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

This branch is devoted to teaching the Word of God from a biblical Jewish perspective in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. We also travel throughout the United States. If you are interested in hosting a teaching session, symposium, or seminar contact us at dfwariel@gmail.com.

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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.



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Missionary and author John Metzger 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.



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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.



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Roberto Anchondo represents Ariel Ministries in parts of the Southwest regions of the U.S. and some cities in Mexico. 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.



Jack Nakashima (New York)

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Jack Nakashima and his wife represent Ariel Ministries in Brooklyn, NY.



Sharing Yeshua with Fellow Soldiers

As a soldier, one spends a lot of time, sometimes weeks, away from home in an unbelieving community, living with a group of people and sharing everything with them. Our fellow soldiers see how different genuine believers are, and this gives rise to many questions about faith and the way we live. A few of the initial questions are:

“Why don’t you curse?”

“Why don’t you have dating relationships with nonbelievers?”

“Why not have sex before marriage?”





At first, the soldiers try to understand what we believe and in what ways are we different from religious Jews or nominal Christians. Gradually, they start asking deeper questions.

In Israel, there are a few good programs that help young believers prepare for army service. Among the subjects we learn are apologetics and how to share the gospel. This is a wonderful preparation in knowing how to respond to different questions and the frequent arguments raised.

Some of the deeper questions go like this:

“Are you a believer because of your parents? Were you born a believer?”

We would always explain how every believer has a personal relationship with God and that faith is not something one is born with or inherits from one's parents. We explain how understanding that the Old and New Testament are the inspired Word of God leads to a personal decision to follow Yeshua and accept Him as one's Lord and Savior. We may think or say that we are believers because we grew up in believing families, but if it's not something we truly believe in our hearts, then it's not worth anything. We stress that it is all about

personal faith as distinct from a religion of “good works.”

“Don't the Old and the New Testament clash?”

We tell them the opposite is true because the New Testament contains evidence of the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies. Opening one's Bible or quoting the prophecies about Yeshua always helps and gets them thinking.

“So, basically you are Jews that believe in Christianity?”

In responding to this question, it is important to point out that although true believers all over the world are called “Christians,” here in Israel we call ourselves “Messianic” to differentiate between our personal faith and mere nominal Christianity, because over the centuries nominal Christianity has often been a source of persecution for the Jewish people. We explain that “Messianic” simply means the believer is a follower of the Messiah and every person who followed Yeshua and accepted Him as his personal Messiah, beginning from the time He came to earth, can be called “Messianic.” We explain that we are simply like the first Jewish disciples: followers of Yeshua with a personal faith in Him, rather than part of an organized religion.

When we share the gospel, we encounter two types of people: those who believe in God and those who don't (secular). With the secular person, the main subject we discuss is the existence of God. Many say that all the pain and evil in the world points to there being no God. We immediately make it clear that God, in His nature, is good and has revealed His amazing goodness to us in sending His Son. Though there is much we still cannot understand, through His Son He has revealed He wants the best for each of us, that He loves every

one of us. Then we explain that God often allows things to happen in order to teach us lessons and draw us closer to Him. We also share that in His sovereign goodness, God has a perfect plan for us, but because each of us has a free choice, we can decide to follow His will or not. We explain that much of evil in the world comes from the sinful nature of man himself.

With those who believe in God, the main subject is usually the Messiahship of Yeshua. A few of the arguments put forward are:

“How can Yeshua be the Messiah if he wasn't a Jew?”

This is a common misconception in Israel and among Jews generally, so it is extremely important to show them Yeshua's genealogy, proving clearly that He was a Jew.

“If Yeshua was the Messiah, why did the Jews reject Him?”

We reply that it was prophesied that the Messiah would be despised and rejected by His own people, and we point to the verses in Isaiah 53:3-5. The best way to answer these questions is always to open the Word of God.

The Lord works in amazing ways as so many young Jewish believers are now living out their faith before their comrades in the military, and their lives are opening many doors to testimony, each one relying on the Holy Spirit to help give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Pet. 3:15).

About the authors: Ariel is the son of Lilian and Sasha Granovsky, the leaders of Ariel Israel. He currently serves in the IDF. Tehila Khoury was born in Haifa into a Messianic home. As the youngest of four siblings, she served in the IDF as an Operational Sergeant and as a commander in a Command Training School in an Air Force base in Ovad, near Eilat, from 2016 to 2018. Currently, Tehila is a private English teacher in Haifa.



Ministry News

Jack Nakashima
Field Representative



Although I may be a new name and face to most of you, I've been part of the Ariel family for many years and quietly on staff since 2015. Back in 1998, I

came across a copy of David Stern's *Jewish New Testament* at a flea market in San Diego, and that was my introduction to the Messianic movement. Over the next few years, I kept hearing the name Arnold Fruchtenbaum and eventually made the trip across the country to Camp Shoshanah. My theology and my life changed there. I was baptized by Arnold and Mottel and slowly grew in my understanding of the Bible from a Messianic Jewish perspective. Over time, my heart for the Jewish people also grew, and I became more focused on ministry to the Jews.

In February 2016, my wife Angi, our two sons, and I moved to Israel in hopes of gaining citizenship. Angi's grandfather was Jewish, and her lineage includes pastors and Messianic believers going back into the 1800s. Unfortunately, the Office of Immigration told us to leave Israel, and even though we had adequate proof and took our case to the Supreme Court, we were not able to stay.

While there, we served in a congregation in Karmiel, which is in Galilee. I was able to teach, Angi led the children's ministry and co-led the ladies' ministry, and our boys helped with setup and audio/visual. We also had outreach and personal witnessing opportunities.

We believe God is now calling us to continue ministry in Brooklyn, New York. One in four Brooklynites are Jewish. That's over half a million unbelieving Jewish people. Our hope is to move there this summer. The ministry remains basically the same: sharing the gospel with unbelievers and discipling believers in the Word.



The Messianic Implications of Purim (The Feast of Lots)

By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum¹

This year, Purim falls on March 20/21. The feast was inaugurated in the *Megillat Esther*, the scroll of Esther. The events of this book cover the years 483 to 473 B.C., a ten-year stretch during the reign of the Persian King Xerxes I. In Hebrew, the king became known as Ahasuerus. He ruled over Persia from 486-465 B.C.

The story of Purim involves a plot by Haman, the wicked vizier of King Ahasuerus, against the Jewish people living in Persia. It also involves Haman's eventual defeat through the efforts of Mordecai the Jew and his cousin Esther.

On the 13th day of the month of *Adar*², the day that was originally set for their slaughter, the Jewish people living in the provinces victoriously defended themselves against their enemies, killing thousands of them. The next day, they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness (Esth. 9:16-17, 19). Those Jews who lived in Shushan³ assembled together on the 13th day of Adar, and on the 14th, they killed three hundred enemies. Then, they made the 15th day of Adar a day of rest and a day of feasting and gladness (Est. 9:15, 18).

According to Esther 9:19, the 14th of Adar was described in four ways:

1. It was a day of gladness rather than of sorrow.
2. It was a day of feasting, in contrast to fasting.
3. It was a good day, in contrast to a day of mourning.
4. It was a day of sending portions one to another, in contrast to having things taken away from them.

According to Esther 9:20, Mordecai recorded everything concerning the observance of Purim and sent letters to all the Jews who were living in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus, both near and far.

In Esther 9:21, he obliged his fellow Jews to keep both the 14th and the 15th day of Adar. Furthermore, he determined that the victory over Haman was to be celebrated annually.

The reason is given in Esther 9:22a: The feast was to be celebrated this way because the Jews had rest from their enemies on these days. They had rest from fear and war. Hence, the month was turned for them from sorrow to gladness and from mourning into a good day.

Finally, Mordecai spelled out the manner of observance in Esther 9:22b, which included three things: First, the Jewish people should make these days of feasting and gladness, not fasting and sorrow; second, they should send portions one to another, in place of having their possessions taken away; and



third, they should send gifts to the poor.

Esther 9:23 records the obedience of the Jews who undertook to do as they had begun, as the first observance was a spontaneous one. But now they committed themselves to continue this observance on a yearly basis, as Mordecai had written to them.

The next two verses summarize the historical background of Purim, beginning with the plot of Haman in verse 24 and its failure in verse 25, as Haman and his wicked sons were hanged.

Because of what happened in Esther 9:24, the Jewish people called these days “Purim,” which is the plural form of a word that means “lot.” Since Haman cast the lot to determine on what day the Jews should be destroyed, and since that day came down upon his own head and upon the heads of the enemies, the name chosen for this feast was the Feast of Purim, or the Feast of Lots.

Esther 9:26b gives the background as signaled by the word “therefore”: that is, because of all the words of the letter of Mordecai (of Esth. 9:2022) and because of that which they had seen concerning this matter (the deliverance of the Jews from Haman and his followers) and because of that which had come unto them (the threat of destruction)—because of all that came the commitment of the next verse.

In Esther 9:27, the Jews obligated themselves to keep Purim. This commitment involved three people groups: the *them*, meaning the generation that was delivered from the hand of Haman; *their seed*, meaning the Jewish descendants of that generation; and *all such as joined themselves unto them*, meaning Gentile converts to Judaism. The purpose was that the feast should not fail to be observed. The content of the commitment was that they would keep these two days according to Mordecai’s letter and according to the appointed time thereof, meaning on the 14th day and the 15th day of the month of Adar. Furthermore, Purim was to be observed on a yearly basis.

Esther 9:28 emphasizes the perpetuity: Purim should be remembered by every Jewish family everywhere.

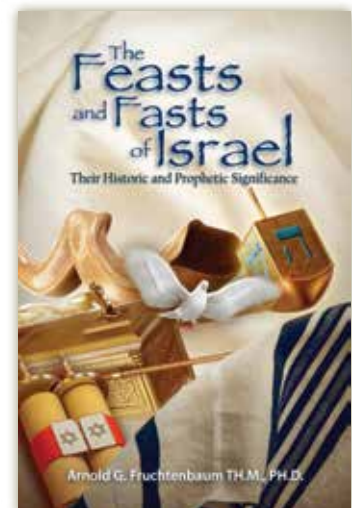
The Messianic Implications

The Feast of Purim does not contain any direct reference to the Messianic person or the Messianic program. It does, however, have something to teach about the Messianic people, the Jews. The book of Esther is a good example of a principle found in the Abrahamic covenant: *him that curses you will I curse* (Gen. 12:3). This principle teaches that those who curse the Jews will be cursed by God. Furthermore, it contains a promise of Jewish survival throughout the times of the Gentiles.

Both the Law and the Prophets emphasize the fact that the Jews will survive, regardless of how bad it may get for them during the times of the Gentiles—that is a biblical guarantee—and the book of Esther is an example of God’s use of providence to secure the survival of Israel in the dispersion.

Interestingly, God’s name is not mentioned at all in Esther. However, He is seen working on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, especially on the one principle: *him that curses you will I curse* (Gen. 12:3). Since throughout most of human history, God chooses to work providentially rather than by means of direct intervention, this book is a great example of how that system works. It shows God’s use of providence to secure the survival of Israel during the period of the dispersion. While great segments of Jewry may be killed, as it was with the Holocaust, God has guaranteed that the Jews as a people and as a nation will survive. And so it will be until Israel’s national salvation and the return of the Messiah.

¹This article is based on a chapter of Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s new book *The Feasts and Fasts of Israel: Their Historic and Prophetic Significance*, available through Ariel Ministries in April 2019.



²The Jewish month of Adar coincides with February/March of the Gregorian calendar.

³*Shushan* is the Hebrew name of the city of Susa, one of the main capitals of the Persian Empire. It was located roughly 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf and served the kings as a winter residence.



08

COVER STORY

When God Speaks of Himself as “Us”

By John B. Metzger



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When God Speaks of Himself as “Us”

By John B. Metzger



The concept of the triune nature of the God of Israel has traditionally been the hardest thing for Jewish people to believe and accept. Any attempt to explain the mystery of the triune God to a Jewish person must be based on the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the points that may be made pertains to the plural pronouns God chose to use in reference to Himself. This article sheds light on these pronouns. It is based on a chapter of John B. Metzger's excellent book *Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God*.

God is One alone and yet a plurality, for He refers to Himself in the context of plurality by using plural pronouns. In the Hebrew Scriptures, there are four references to plural personal pronouns when God used them of Himself to indicate plurality. Of these four references, three are found in Genesis: in the creation account (Gen. 1:26), the fall of man (Gen. 3:22), and the confusing of the language at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:7). The remaining plural pronoun is found in Isaiah 6:8. The interesting thing is that in these verses, God's names are used in different combinations. In Genesis 1:26, it is *Elohim*, the plural name of God, who is speaking. In Genesis 3:22, we find *Yahweh Elohim*, the first name being singular and the second name being a plural term. In Genesis 11:7, only *Yahweh* is mentioned, and in Isaiah 6:8, it is *Adonai*, another plural name for God. The major names of God are all used with the personal plural pronoun "us," and so, the personal

plural pronouns as well as the names of God support the plural unity of God.

The greatest controversy regarding the plural pronouns swirls around Genesis 1:26. Often, authors refer to this verse when dealing with the other three passages on plural pronouns.

In Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on the earth." God used the words "us" and "our" in relation to Himself, which obviously refer to two or more persons. In Hebrew, the name used in this verse for God is *Elohim*, a plural term. The pronoun "us" describes *Elohim* when He was about to create man in His image and His likeness. The two Hebrew words translated as "in our image" and "in our likeness" have plural suffixes.¹ The words "image" (*selem*) and "likeness" (*demut*) are in the singular.² Clearly, the

uniqueness of the plural personal pronouns in Genesis 1:26 draws attention to *Elohim*'s choice of specific words to indicate specific actions. The pronoun "our" is tied to the two singular words "image" and "likeness," showing the One speaking as being plural while at the same time confirming His unity.

Jewish scholars and a number of Christian scholars seek to discredit the plural personal pronouns by using one or more of four different lines of argument: The first line of argument is that when God used the words "us" and "our," He was referring to His "heavenly court," which included angels, sons of God, and seraphim; the second is "plural of majesty"; the third is the "plural of deliberation" argument; and the fourth is that God was referring to the earth which He had just created to assist Him.

Heavenly Court

The first line of argument is reflected by the following comments in the Jewish interpretation of the plural personal pronoun "us" in the Tanakh. The biblical scholar and author Nahum Sarna (1923-2005) refers to *Elohim* and the pronoun "us" by saying: "This is an Israelite version of the polytheistic assemblies of the pantheon monotheized and depaganized."³ Sarna gives his resistance to the plural personal pronouns by noting: "*Elohim* is a comprehensive term for supernatural beings and is often employed for angels."⁴ He asserts that in Genesis 35:7 angels are seen as divine beings.⁵

There is another Jewish response by Israel Wolf Slotki (1884-1973), in the Soncino series, whose sources of authority are Rabbis Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) and David Kimchi (1160-1235).⁶ Slotki

¹John Joseph Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 1:5.

²Paul A. Miller, *Gramcord* (Vancouver, Wash: Gramcord Institute, 1999), www.gramcord.org.

³Nahum M Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 12.

⁴*Ibid.*, 25.

⁵*Ibid.*, 241.

⁶I. W. Slotki, *Isaiah* (New York: Soncino Press, 1983), 30.



states that the "us" of Isaiah 6:8 represents the angelic host.

According to the famous medieval rabbi Rashi (1040-1105), God was being polite or showing good manners and humility by asking permission of the lower beings (angels) to create man in their image:

We will make man – Although they did not assist Him in forming him and although this [use of the plural] may give the heretics an occasion to rebel, yet the passage does not refrain from teaching proper conduct and the virtue of humbleness, namely, that the greater should consult, and take permission from the smaller; for had it been written, "I shall make man," we could not, then, have learned that He spoke to His judicial council but to Himself. And as a refutation of the heretics it is written immediately after this verse "And God created the man," and it is not written "and they created."⁷

Rashi's whole statement is an assumption that he makes with absolutely no precedent in the Tanakh of Elohim showing humbleness by consulting the lesser (angels) before He created man. Bishop Herbert E. Ryle (1856-1925) adds this statement in connection to Genesis 1:26:

In the thought of the devout Israelite, God was one, but not isolated. He was surrounded by the heavenly host (1 Kgs 22:19), attended by the Seraphim (Isa 6:1-6), holding His court with "the sons of God (Job 1:6)."⁸

Among Christian scholars, the Canadian-American theologian Victor P. Hamilton replicates the Jewish argument that the

pantheon of gods was replaced by the heavenly court concept:

In the biblical adaptation of the story the pantheon concept was replaced with the heavenly court concept. Thus, it is not other gods, but to the angelic host, the "sons of God," that God speaks.⁹

The German Old Testament theologian Claus Westermann (1909-2000) speaks of Genesis 3:22 and states that many modern scholars refer to the heavenly court as polytheistic in intent:

Namely whether the phrase 'like one of us' means 'the higher spiritual beings,' or the heavenly court (H. Gunkel and the majority of recent interpreters), or whether God includes the other gods with himself, the phrase being actually polytheistic in intent.¹⁰

Driver uses ancient Babylonian accounts to support his argument that the biblical

account rose out of a pantheon of gods in a pre-Israelite background:

There is force in these considerations; and probably the ultimate explanation has to be sought in a pre-Israelite stage of the tradition (such as is represented by the Babylonian account; where a polytheistic view of man's origin found expression). This would naturally be replaced in a Hebrew recession by the idea of a heavenly council of angels, as in 1 Kings 22; Job 1:38; Daniel 4:14; 7:10.¹¹

Opinions like these are clearly contradicted by true biblical scholars, such as Andrew B. Davidson (1831-1902), who are convinced that God's plurality is not represented by pagan polytheism. God is representing Himself as a true plurality in unity, as Isaiah 6:8 and Genesis 1:26 affirm:

There is no vagueness or obscurity in either of the passages referred to. If



⁷Eugene H. Merrill, "Rashi, Nicholas De Lyra, and the Christian Exegesis," *WTJ* 38 (1975): 66-79.

⁸Herbert E. Ryle, *Cambridge Bible: The Book of Genesis* (London: Cambridge University, 1914), 19.

⁹Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 20 Vol. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:133.

¹⁰Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary* (Translated by John J. Scullion. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 272-273.

¹¹S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 31.



God, who speaks in these passages, uses the word “us” of Himself, there is a perfectly clear statement to the effect that the Godhead is a Plurality.¹²

It is clear to this author that when the plain sense of Scripture is used and left to speak for itself, there is no problem with the understanding of Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8. The danger of perverting the text occurs when a person has a preconceived belief and cannot see the plurality of God. As Creator of the universe, God was always a plurality and is understood in the New Covenant as a tri-unity. Scholars, both Jewish and Christian, are taking liberties with the Scripture in an attempt to understand it, but in reality, they are perverting it. The reality is that God, in the presentation of His Son to Israel as their Messiah and to mankind as the Savior from sin, would not present a new doctrine of plurality or tri-unity. God would not, in the middle of His redemptive plan for Israel and the world, present the central figure of Scripture without a foundation being laid in the Tanakh. The Tanakh minimally presents the plural unity of Elohim.

Plural of Majesty

The second line of argument is the view of “plural of majesty.” This argument given by

both Jewish and Christian scholars contends that God was speaking as a western monarch—as the Queen of England, for example, would speak to her subjects. In speaking of Genesis 3:22, the Haftorah refers to the “us” as a plural of majesty, and as a consequence of the fall, man became “as one of the angels” or “us” in a plural of majesty.¹³ Rabbi Hertz (1872-1946), editor of the Haftorah, follows the logic to its natural conclusion:

Man is become as God – omniscient. Man, having through disobedience secured the faculty of unlimited knowledge, there was real danger that his knowledge would outstrip his sense of obedience to Divine Law.¹⁴

That interpretation of “us” as a plural of majesty puts Elohim in the same class of beings that are ministering spirits (angels) to man. The rabbis say that Elohim is speaking like a Western monarch who uses the royal “we.”¹⁵ Authors such as Ryle, Hamilton, and Westermann cite others who raise the possibility that these arguments of “plural of majesty” and “heavenly court” could be a reference to a

pantheon of gods with a polytheistic reference to God. What is notable is that frequently “plural of majesty” and “heavenly court” are linked to a pantheon of gods or a survival of polytheism, as it relates to these four plural personal pronoun texts.

Plural of Deliberation

The third line of reasoning is the argument of “plural of deliberation,” meaning the speaker is conferring or consulting with himself. William Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry refer to Isaiah 6:8 as an example of God consulting Himself before acting.¹⁶ Westermann uses grammar to further his argument in pressing for “plural of deliberation”:

The grammatical construction is a plural of deliberation. In favor of a plural of deliberation in [Genesis] 1:26 is the fact that in Isaiah 6:8 the plural and the singular are used in the same sentence with the same meaning; similarly in 2 Samuel 24:14 where it is a question of one and the same conclusion: “. . . Let us fall into the hand of the Lord . . . but let me not fall into the hand of man.” . . . A clear example of this type of deliberation occurs in Genesis 11:7; “Come let us go down . . .,” has shown that

¹²A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, 129.

¹³Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary on Genesis*, 13.

¹⁴Joseph Herman Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1952), 13.

¹⁵For more information on “plural of majesty” refer back to *Elohim* in chapter 2.

¹⁶William D. Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 50.



this usage perseveres right down to the present day.¹⁷

But Westermann misses the point of his own examples. When David says "us," he means the nation. However, when Yahweh (singular) says "let us go down," it is the one God who expresses His plurality. The Haftorah, which refers to Genesis 1:26, states that the "Scripture represents God as deliberating over the making of the human species." The phrase "Let us make man" is a "Hebrew idiomatic way of expressing deliberation as in 11:7; or, it is the 'plural of majesty,' royal commands, being conveyed in the first person plural."¹⁸

It is highly improbable that an all-knowing and all-powerful Yahweh Elohim would talk with Himself; rather, Elohim is to be understood minimally as a plurality. Both Jewish and Christian scholars seem to be forcing an interpretation on the text that is not there. God is not deliberating with Himself. There is no need to, because He is plural, yet a unity of one, indivisible.

The Earth

The fourth line of argument is that Elohim is referring to the earth that He had just created. Rabbi Maimonides (also known by the acronym Rambam; ca. 1135-1204) says of Genesis 1:26 that the phrase "let us make in our image" refers to "the aforementioned earth,"¹⁹ for the earth supplied the body of man and Elohim provided the soul of man.²⁰ Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman (commonly known as Nachmanides; 1195-1270) gives the following reason for the usage of the earth in the creation of man:

The correct explanation of na'aseh (let us make) [which is in the plural form when it should have been in the singular] is as follows: It has been

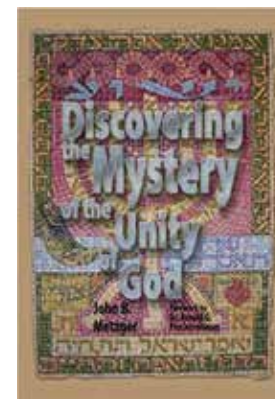
shown to you that G-d created something from nothing only on the first day, and afterwards He formed and made things from those created elements. Thus when He gave the water the power of bringing forth a living soul, the command concerning them was Let the water swarm. The command concerning cattle was Let the earth bring forth. But in the case of man he said, Let us make, that is, I and the afore-mentioned earth, let us make man, the earth to bring forth the body from its elements as it did with the cattle and beasts, as it is written, and the Eternal G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and He, blessed be He, to give the spirit from His mouth, the Supreme One, as it is written, And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And He said, In our image, and after our likeness, as man will then be similar to both. In the capacity of his body, he will be similar to the earth from which he was taken, and in spirit he will be similar to the higher beings, because it [the spirit] is not a body and will not die. In the second verse [Genesis 1:27], He says, In the image of G-d He created them, in order to relate the distinction by which man is distinguished from the rest of created beings.²¹

One of the major problems with his interpretation is that in verses 3, 6, 9, 14, 20 and 24 of Genesis 1, there is not a plural personal pronoun in connection to the "Let the" or "Let there" as on the other days of creation. Only in verse 26, with the creation of man, is there a plural personal pronoun. Nachmanides uses a logical argument

except when he includes the earth as a partner in the creation of man. That is not a rational statement. Material things do not have intelligence to understand or emotion to feel, let alone a will to make a choice. The earth is there simply because God placed it there. The only thing that the rabbis can point to is the statement that if they do not obey the law (Deut. 4:26, 30:19, 31:28), God promises to call heaven and earth to witness against them. Furthermore, Isaiah 40:13 is quite clear that God does not have to be informed by any counselor, whether it be the material earth or created beings.

Conclusion

The plurality of God does have an impact on witnessing to Jewish people. Mankind and Jewish people, according to Romans 1, stand before God in judgment, condemned. Jewish people were worshipping the one true God, not idols, but they still missed their Messiah (God incarnate) because they did not recognize the plurality of God in the Tanakh. Yet, God did give ample testimony of His plurality in Genesis 1 of the Torah, as well as the rest of the Tanakh. It is important to study the relevant passages and be able to explain them to whoever is willing to listen and hear.



John Metzger's opus magnum provides an eye-opening exploration of the triune nature of God from the pages of the Scriptures.

¹⁷Westermann, *Genesis 1-11, A Continental Commentary*, 145. See also Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 23; Ryle, *Cambridge Bible, the Book of Genesis*, 148; Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 208.

¹⁸J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1952), 5.

¹⁹Moshe ben Nachman, *Ramban (Nachmanides), Commentary on the Torah – Genesis* (trans. Charles B. Chavel; New York: Shilo Publishing House, Inc., 1999), 52.

²⁰Payne Smith, *The Handy Commentary: Genesis*, ed. Charles John Ellicott (London: Cassell & Co, n.d.), 79.

²¹Nachman, *Commentary on the Torah – Genesis*, 52-53.

The Massacre at the Pittsburgh Synagogue

by Mottel Baleston



On the pleasant Saturday morning of October 27, 2018, over one hundred Jewish people were gathered in the suburban Pittsburgh building of Tree of Life synagogue. Three distinct Jewish congregations use the large facility for their Sabbath services, and at 10 a.m., all three services were underway, with Bible study, public Scripture reading, and a baby dedication.

At that moment, a crazed gunman burst into the building, his heart filled with hate, and his mind filled with irrational lies and nonsensical conspiracy theories against the Jewish people. With bursts of gunfire from a semi-automatic rifle and three handguns, he methodically went from floor to floor, murdering all in his way. As he moved from

room to room, Robert Bowers shouted, “All Jews must die!”

In the carnage, 11 Jewish people were shot to death, murdered; others were wounded; and as brave police officers quickly responded to the scene, four were injured during the gunfight before the shooter was subdued. As he arrived in the emergency room, he was shouting, “I want to kill all the Jews!”

At the Pittsburgh hospital, he quickly received the best possible care. It so happened that the emergency room surgeon who removed the bullets and cleaned and bandaged his wounds was Jewish. The nurse who attended to him was Jewish. The administrator of the entire hospital is

Jewish. They saved his life. He now sits in jail awaiting trial.

As horrible as his deeds are to every sane human being, what should make this of special concern to believers is that several weeks before his murderous rampage, Bowers wrote a string of vile accusations against the Jewish people in his online blog, intertwining them with Christian phrases.

I would like to say that I am unfamiliar with such ugly sentiments coming from a person who claims to be a Christian. I would like to say that, but that would be false. Four years ago, my testimony as a Jewish person who came to faith in Messiah Jesus was professionally filmed, edited, and promoted online by a collaboration of



two large ministry organizations. They used my video to launch a year-long evangelistic campaign. While the filmmakers hoped to have 25,000 online views after a year, within three months, they had over two million, and after three years, over ten million views of that video occurred.

Wonderful things happened, Jewish people came to saving faith in Messiah Jesus, many more came face-to-face with His Messianic claims, and millions of believers were encouraged to see a Jewish person standing so clearly for faith in Jesus. The online comments were mostly filled with joyful exclamations of praise and joy from believers. Comments like “Praise the Lord” or “It’s wonderful to see Jewish people coming to faith in their Messiah” or “God loves Israel” were most common. There were literally thousands of these.

Scattered among those joyful comments were a dozen very ugly ones from people who see themselves as Christians. They said things like “no Jew will ever really believe,” “Jews are the tools of Satan, I don’t believe this man is a Jew,” “Jews are the antichrist, don’t ever believe a Jew,” and “all Jews should die.”

Over the years, I have heard similar sentiments, some were even addressed to me in anonymous online posts. They were far outweighed by the wonderful expressions of love for the Jewish people that are made by the majority of evangelical Bible believers. In the past few years, I have made many close friends who are not Jewish, I have stayed at their homes, enjoyed meals at their table, and have come to see the love that they have for Jewish people because of their love for Jesus the Jewish Messiah. Never have more evangelicals been staunchly pro-Jewish and pro-Israel. Yet at the same time, there are some evangelicals perpetuating classic anti-Semitic lies. Thirty years ago, these falsehoods were spread on cheap photocopied handouts and had limited influence. Now they are slickly produced videos online, yet they are just as

false and Satanic as they have always been. Those who don’t examine the actual facts are quickly seduced by this hateful propaganda.

Racism never needs a rational basis to exist; it is the result of the sinful nature of mankind. When untruths about the Jewish people are spread online, it gives those with an inclination toward racism an imagined rational reason for their sin. Several myths regarding Jewish people have been around for hundreds of years. The idea that all Jews are wealthy is quickly dispelled when one tours Jewish communities around the world. In medieval ages, it was noticed that Jewish communities were less affected by the plagues that periodically swept through Europe, and so Jews were accused of “poisoning the wells.” The truth is simple: Jewish rituals involve handwashing before every meal, something not done centuries ago by the masses, hence Jewish communities were spared disease. In reality, Jewish communities have endured over one thousand years of violent persecution by

those who were associated with church denominations. The Crusades, the Inquisition, the Pogroms, and the Holocaust are a short list of these horrors. Of course, this violence was done by people whose loyalty was to a church denomination and not to Jesus the Messiah. Evangelical Bible believers are becoming more and more known as those who love the Jewish people and stand up in defense of Israel.

It was Messiah Jesus Himself who, in John 4:22, said, “Salvation is of the Jews.” When anti-Semites pull verses out of context from the New Testament to support their dislike of Jews, as the Pittsburgh terrorist did, they ignore the fact that the New Testament records a dispute *within* the Jewish community over whether Yeshua was the Messiah. When Yeshua told the Jewish leadership who rejected Him, “you are of your father the devil” (Jn. 8:44), it was directed at only that group of people. To apply it to the Jewish people generally is the



most horrendous twisting of God's Word and directly in contradiction to everything else the Scripture says about the Jewish people.

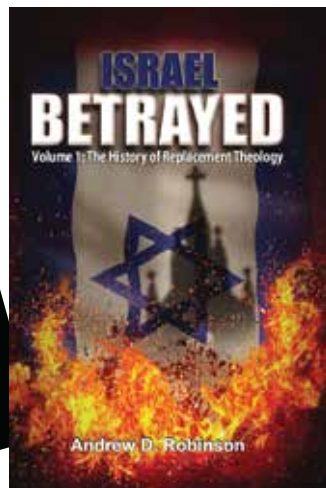
After the Pittsburgh shooting, several prominent evangelical leaders quickly came forward to denounce it and once again state their respect for the Jewish community. All believers need to be proactive in cultivating friendships with their Jewish friends, neighbors, and relatives. These friendships need to be genuine. While the friendships should be unconditional, not dependent upon whether a Jewish friend agrees with one's faith in Jesus, at the same time, it is not genuine friendship to withhold the good news of the arrival of the Jewish Messiah.

This short article can only begin to address this very important subject. Believers need to acquaint themselves with the background of anti-Semitism within Christendom and what they can do to build friendships with Jewish people that result in good opportunities to share Messiah. Here are two books we can suggest to begin that process:

1. Our friend Oliver Melnick has recently written a book entitled *They Have Conspired Against You* in which he responds to the new anti-Semitism. The book is highly recommended by us.

2. To better understand how false teaching against the Jewish people crept into Christendom, we suggest this book: *Israel Betrayed – The History of Replacement Theology*, by Andrew D. Robinson, published by Ariel Ministries.

Our concern for Jewish people goes beyond simply being nice as believers, but rather it is a mandate, part of the eternal Abrahamic covenant, in which God promises, *I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, for through you I will bless all the families of the earth* (Gen. 12:3).



How to Respond to the Monster of Anti-Semitism

Christiane Jurik interviews Olivier Melnick

In the light of increasing anti-Semitic violence in the United States, a lot of American Jews are starting to ask themselves the same questions that European Jews have been grappling with for a couple of decades: Are Jewish people no longer safe in America? Do we all need to move to Israel? What can be done to fight the evil of anti-Semitism? In this interview, Olivier Melnick answers these and other questions.

**Christiane Jurik:**

On October 27, 2018, eleven people were killed and seven were injured in the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the United States. The mass shooting took place in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA. How do you interpret this incident?

Olivier Melnick:

The Tree of Life Synagogue might have appeared like the act of an isolated deranged person, but it was a symptom as much as it was a problem. The problem of evil in our postmodern world cannot be ignored. When we relegate the actions of an evil person to insanity, we exonerate personal responsibility. Evil is willful, while insanity is often uncontrollable. Hitler was evil, not insane!

Christiane Jurik:

From what I can tell, the global media outlets report widely about the increase in anti-Semitic attacks and the lack of compassion toward the Jewish community. Why is it so difficult to fight anti-Semitism on a global level?

Olivier Melnick:

There is a real danger today for Jewish people everywhere because, except for the Jewish State, all foreign governments approach anti-Semitism differently, and they are not necessarily very efficient. Definitions of what constitutes anti-Semitism vary from country to country and sometimes even from various organizations

within the same country. That is one reason why it is difficult to fight anti-Semitism. Furthermore, in the United States, acts against Jewish people are often under-reported, misreported, or worse not reported at all, especially if it involves a Muslim. The politically correct fear of insulting a particular group is so prevalent in the United States that an anti-Semitic crime might simply be categorized as a violent crime in fears of reprisals.

Christiane Jurik:

So, what do you think needs to happen?

Olivier Melnick:

It is time for all Jews to unite against anti-Semitism. But unfortunately, we are far from being united, and it helps the enemy greatly. Jewish people define themselves in a variety of ways including religiosity, ethnic origins, and Zionism to name just a few. It can get confusing when one doesn't differentiate between Jewishness (ethnic connection) and Judaism (religious affiliation). But really, one can be ethnically Jewish without practicing Judaism, and one can practice Judaism without being born Jewish.

Then you have Messianic Jews, those of us who know that you can be Jewish and believe that Yeshua is the Messiah. Truly if one can be Jewish independently from believing in anything, one can remain Jewish when they believe in anything, including that Yeshua of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah. Unfortunately, Jews who do not recognize Yeshua as Messiah also often reject the idea that once we follow His teaching, we remain Jews. This 2000-year old debate is far from over, and it must be noted that Christian anti-Semitism hasn't helped the matter.

Considering all the ways we can define who is a Jew, there is one fact that the anti-Semites are right about: We are all Jews, and as such we are a nuisance to these people, who in some cases, as we

witnessed during the Tree of Life massacre, cry, "All Jews deserve to die!"

Christiane Jurik:

What's your point?

Olivier Melnick:

My point is that to an anti-Semite, a Jew is a Jew regardless of whether he is Ultra-Orthodox, agnostic, Reconstructionist, or even Messianic. The anti-Semite is an equal opportunity xenophobe. He does not discriminate. To that person, we are all Jews indeed!

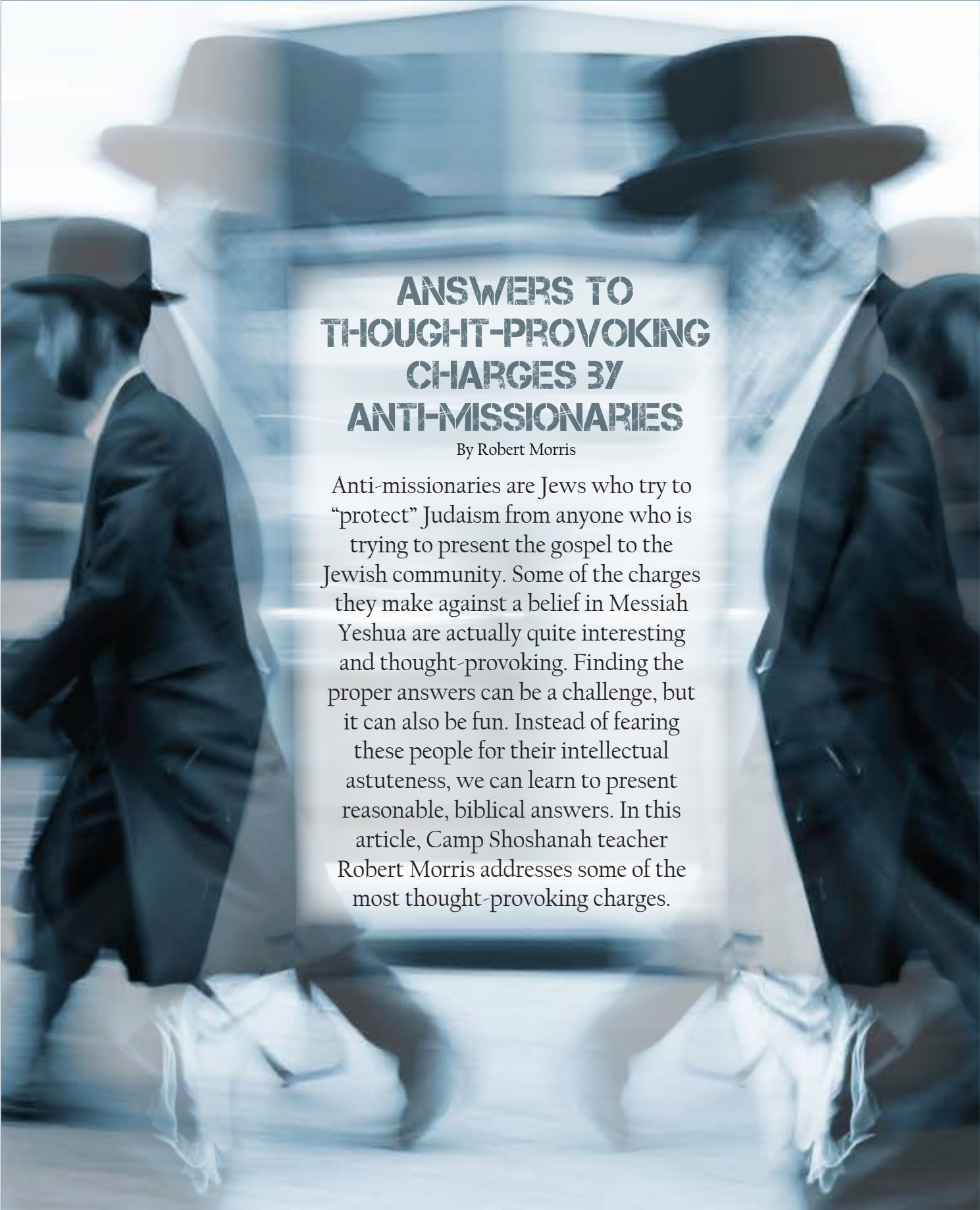
Christiane Jurik:

My question again, then: What do you suggest needs to happen?

Olivier Melnick:

Fighting the monster of the New Anti-Semitism is akin to fighting the mythological Hydra of Lerna. Whenever you cut one of its many heads, two more grew in its place. Mythology tells us that Heracles had to enlist the help of his cousin Lolaus to cut all the heads at once and cauterize the neck with fire so that they wouldn't grow back. I don't ever want to be seen as promoting mythology over biblical truth, but by analogy, this story teaches us that anti-Semitism is a regenerating monster that will grow exponentially until all Jews will put their differences aside. Now is the time to join forces and cut all of anti-Semitism's ugly heads, such as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), Christian Palestinianism, Replacement Theology, Campus Intifada, and anti-Zionism. If we don't fight anti-Semitism together NOW, there might not be enough Jews to hold hands tomorrow. Incidentally, there are still quite a few evangelical believers who love Israel and the Jewish people, and their hands are also worth holding in solidarity against the monster of anti-Semitism. And by their actions, the Jewish people will see God's love for them.





ANSWERS TO THOUGHT-PROVOKING CHARGES BY ANTI-MISSIONARIES

By Robert Morris

Anti-missionaries are Jews who try to “protect” Judaism from anyone who is trying to present the gospel to the Jewish community. Some of the charges they make against a belief in Messiah Yeshua are actually quite interesting and thought-provoking. Finding the proper answers can be a challenge, but it can also be fun. Instead of fearing these people for their intellectual astuteness, we can learn to present reasonable, biblical answers. In this article, Camp Shoshanah teacher Robert Morris addresses some of the most thought-provoking charges.



The Anti-Missionary's Charge: "Jesus became impure."

Yeshua could not have been pure (thus sinless) because He touched leprous and unclean, dead bodies. In doing so, He became impure under the Mosaic Law; therefore, He did not perfectly keep the Mosaic Law and cannot be the Messiah.

Response:

The fact that Yeshua touched lepers and unclean bodies does not disqualify Him from Messiahship. This is especially true in light of the rabbinic doctrine concerning the "Leper Messiah," taken from Isaiah 53:4: *Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.* According to Raphael Patai (1910-1996), an anthropologist specializing in the field of Hebrew myth and history, the name of the Messiah connected to Isaiah 53:4 is "The Leprous of the House of Study."¹ The Babylonian Talmud states in reference to this verse:

What is his [the Messiah's] name? ...

The Rabbis said: His name is 'the leper scholar,' as it is written, Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted."²

The story of the Baal Shem Tov³ and the Leper Messiah sheds additional light on the Jewish perception of this topic:

[One Friday afternoon a young Talmudic scholar was riding with the Ba'al Shem in a cart across the open field, when] all of a sudden he espied a village in the distance, and he was filled with joy, for he thought that they would surely spend the Sabbath there, and not out in the open. And in that very moment they entered the village, and, behold, the

horse went on of its own through the village and did not stop at any house. The youth became saddened by this, for [it seemed that] they would, after all, not spend the Sabbath in the village. But when the horse reached the end of the village, it stopped in front of a ruin. The youth thought that they would spend the Sabbath in that ruin and became filled with joy, for it was better than being in the field. And the Ba'al Shem entered the ruin, and the youth went after him. And, behold, in the ruined house lived an old man, a leper; from



head to foot there was no hale spot in his body, he was so full of wounds and boils. And his wife and children walked about in torn and tattered

garments. And when the Ba'al Shem opened the door, the old man became filled with joy, and ran up to the Ba'al Shem, and said to him, "Peace be unto you, my Master and Teacher!" And he who saw not their joy has never seen joy in his life . . . [On the way back home the youth asked the Ba'al Shem: "What was the meaning of] the joy which the encounter with the old leper caused to both of you? . . ." And the Ba'al Shem said to him: ". . . there is a Messiah in every generation in This World, in reality, clothed in a body. And if the generation is worthy, he is ready to reveal himself; and if, God forbid, they are not worthy, he departs. And behold, that old man was ready to be our True Messiah..."⁴

In this story, the Messianic candidate is a leper, and again it becomes evident that in Judaism, contact with leprosy is a qualification for Messiahship, not a disqualification.

In addition to these rabbinic writings, one needs to consider that there is no record in the Hebrew Scriptures of a genuine leper having been healed by man. A number of lepers were healed (Moses in Ex. 4:6-7; Miriam in Num. 12:10-15; Naaman in 2 Kgs. 5:1-19), but they were all healed by the direct hand of God. Yeshua touched a leper, but it was the act of healing (Mt. 8:1-3, Mk. 1:40-42, Lk. 5:12-13). He also healed lepers without touch (Mt. 11:4-5; Lk. 17:12-19). Since there is no record of a leper having been healed by man (2 Kgs. 5:7) and since there is no biblical record of treatment or remedy for leprosy, the implication of these healing acts is that Yeshua is God in a human body. There is no disqualification from the office of Messiahship here.⁵

¹Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (), p. 17.

²Thomas Huckel, *The Rabbinic Messiah (Is 53:4)* (Philadelphia, PA: Hananeel House, 1998), quoting b. Sanhedrin 98b.

³Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov or as the Besht, was a Jewish mystical rabbi considered the founder of Hasidic Judaism.

⁴Kadaner, *Sefer Sippurim Noraim*, pp. 9a-b, 10b

⁵For more information, see Tom Huckel, *The Rabbinic Messiah* (Philadelphia, PA: Hananeel House 1998); b. Sanhedrin 97a, 98a.

The Anti-Missionary's Charge: Psalm 22

Another objection voiced by anti-missionaries runs along these lines: The Gospel writers do address the prophecy of Psalm 22 about dividing the garments and casting lots, but if the “pierced my hands and feet” was truly in the Septuagint, why would the writers fail to include the prophecy that is vastly more evident and more specific?

Response

No one can answer the question regarding why or why not the Gospel writers included or excluded material from the New Testament. That is a totally inappropriate question to ask. That question can only be asked to the Gospel author. We cannot know why God moved them to select the material they selected. We know that the Gospel writers were deliberately selective, but we are not told why they made their selections. We get a little taste of their decision-making in Luke 1:1, John 20:20, and 21:25. The point is not to focus on what we cannot know. The anti-missionary is trying to direct our attention away from what we do know. If we stick with Scripture, we will receive a more than satisfactory answer to all our questions. The rabbis know that, and so they use other tactics to throw us off course and cause doubt.

A second aspect of the answer lies in the fact that there were no chapter and verse divisions in use in those days. In the first century, a section of Scripture was referred to by quoting a verse from it. There were no precise chapter and verse notations to use. When Yeshua was quoting Psalm 22:1 while hanging on the cross, He was directing His listeners to the whole psalm. The first century reader of the Gospels would know that he was being directed to the entire psalm. He would understand that he should read and study the text in its entirety to ascertain the impact and importance.

He would understand that he is not to read only verse one and stop there. If the first-century reader read the entire Psalm, as would be expected, then he would have read verse 16 and a lot more verses as well. Psalm 22 is full of Messianic data. So, it is likely that Yeshua on the cross and Matthew, Mark, and Luke in their Gospels were all directing the first century reader (and us, some 21 centuries later) to read the entire psalm. Again, this would be the normal expectation in the first century.

A third response to the anti-missionary's charge is a counter-question: What do the rabbis say about Psalm 22? According to



Alfred Edersheim, they applied it to the Messiah:

On Ps. 22:7 (8 in the Hebrew) a remarkable comment appears in Yalkut on Is. 60, applying this passage to the Messiah . . . and using almost the same words in which the Evangelists describe the mocking

behaviour of the Jews at the Cross. [As to] Ps. 22:15 . . . there is a similarly remarkable application to the Messiah of this verse in Yalkut.⁶

Dr. Edersheim shows us that the rabbis themselves saw Psalm 22 as a Messianic text in keeping with its use in the New Testament. Hence, Yeshua was directing us to a psalm that was interpreted as Messianic by the Jewish community.

Finally, the anti-missionary's charge seems to doubt that parts of Psalm 22 are in the Septuagint. Let me assure you the Psalm is most certainly there in its entirety and translated by Jewish rabbis 200 years before Yeshua ever came on the scene.

The Anti-Missionary's Charge: “The book of Luke is invalid.”

Another objection by anti-missionaries goes like this: “Quoting Luke is invalid because Luke was not Jewish. He was also not Jesus' disciple. He was just a person with an opinion.”

Response

Rather than being a Gentile, it is very likely that Luke was Jewish. The *New Bible Dictionary* notes:

LUKE. Among the companions of Paul who send their greetings in his letter to Colossae there appears 'Luke (Gk. Loukas) the beloved physician' (Col. 4:14); the way in which he is described suggests that he had given medical care to Paul, no doubt during the latter's imprisonment. In Philemon 24, probably written at the same time, he is described as a fellow-worker of Paul, which suggests that his help in the work of the gospel was not confined to his medical skill. There is a third reference to him in what appears to have been one of Paul's last messages: 'Luke alone is with

⁶Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (electronic ed.), Copyright 2002, E4 Group, Appendix IX.



me' (2 Tim. 4:11), and this confirms the close link between the two men. He is generally thought to have been a Gentile, but E. E. Ellis (pp. 51-53) has argued that Col. 4:11 refers to a particular group within the wider circle of Jewish Christians, and that consequently Luke may have been a Jewish Christian of the Dispersion [emphasis added].⁷

The reference in Colossians 4:11 could very well refer to Messianic Jews who became believers in Yeshua from among the Pharisees. This group felt that Gentiles could not be saved unless they were circumcised first, which is the whole debate in the book of Galatians. As a result, they were called the "circumcision party." The circumcision party makes its first appearance in Acts 11:1-2:

Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

The reference to the "circumcised" cannot be Jewish believers in general because they all were Jewish. Every single one of the men in this gathering were circumcised Jews, yet a distinction is made specifically identifying one group. Most likely the group that has been specifically identified are Jewish believers from among the Pharisees. Jewish believers from that mindset would be zealous for the Mosaic Law and Jewish traditions. This being the case is supported by Acts 15:5:

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

The Jewish believers quoted are specifically identified as formerly belonging to the

Pharisees. Eventually, those Jewish believers became known as the circumcision party, as we see in Galatians 2:12:

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

When Paul makes his statement in Colossians 4:10-11, he is probably referring to this group:

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); and *also* Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

It is often assumed that Paul is referring here to Messianic Jews only and thus stating that only three Jewish believers were coworkers with him. Since Luke is not part of this group, it is assumed that he must be a Gentile. This seems unlikely because at that time, most believers in the Messiahship of Yeshua were Jewish.

The more likely scenario is that there would be few coworkers from the Messianic Jews of Pharisaic background. The circumcision party opposed Paul's position on the Law of Moses and circumcision. To exclude Luke from this group would only indicate that he did not belong to the Pharisees. It is just as likely that Luke was a Diaspora Jew who came to faith under Paul's ministry. In addition, the Jewish community was *entrusted with the oracles of God* (Rom. 3:2). Since every other book of the New Testament was written by Jews, it appears most likely that the book of Acts would be as well.

As far as Luke's not being a direct disciple of Yeshua but merely a person with an opinion, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* puts it well:

[Luke] does not claim to have been an eye-witness of our Lord's ministry, *but to have gone to the best sources of information within his reach, and to have written an orderly narrative of the facts* (Luke 1:1-4) (emphasis added).

While Luke was not a direct disciple of Yeshua but a disciple of Rabbi Shaul, he said that he had done careful research. The historical accuracy of his book is well substantiated today:

The historical trustworthiness of Luke's account has been amply confirmed by archaeological discovery. While he has apologetic and theological interests, these do not detract from his detailed accuracy, although they control his selection and presentation of the facts. He sets his narrative in the framework of contemporary history; his pages are full of references to city magistrates, provincial governors, client kings and the like, and these references time after time prove to be just right for the place and time in question. With a minimum of words he conveys the true local colour of the widely differing cities mentioned in his story. And his description of Paul's voyage to Rome (27) remains to this day one of our most important documents on ancient seamanship.⁸

Luke was a careful and accurate investigator whose work has stood the test of time and objective analysis. We can trust his account of the life of Yeshua and of the early years of the Messianic Jews.



⁷I. H. Marshall, (1996), "Luke," in D. R. W. Wood, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible Dictionary*, (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 3rd. ed.), p. 703.

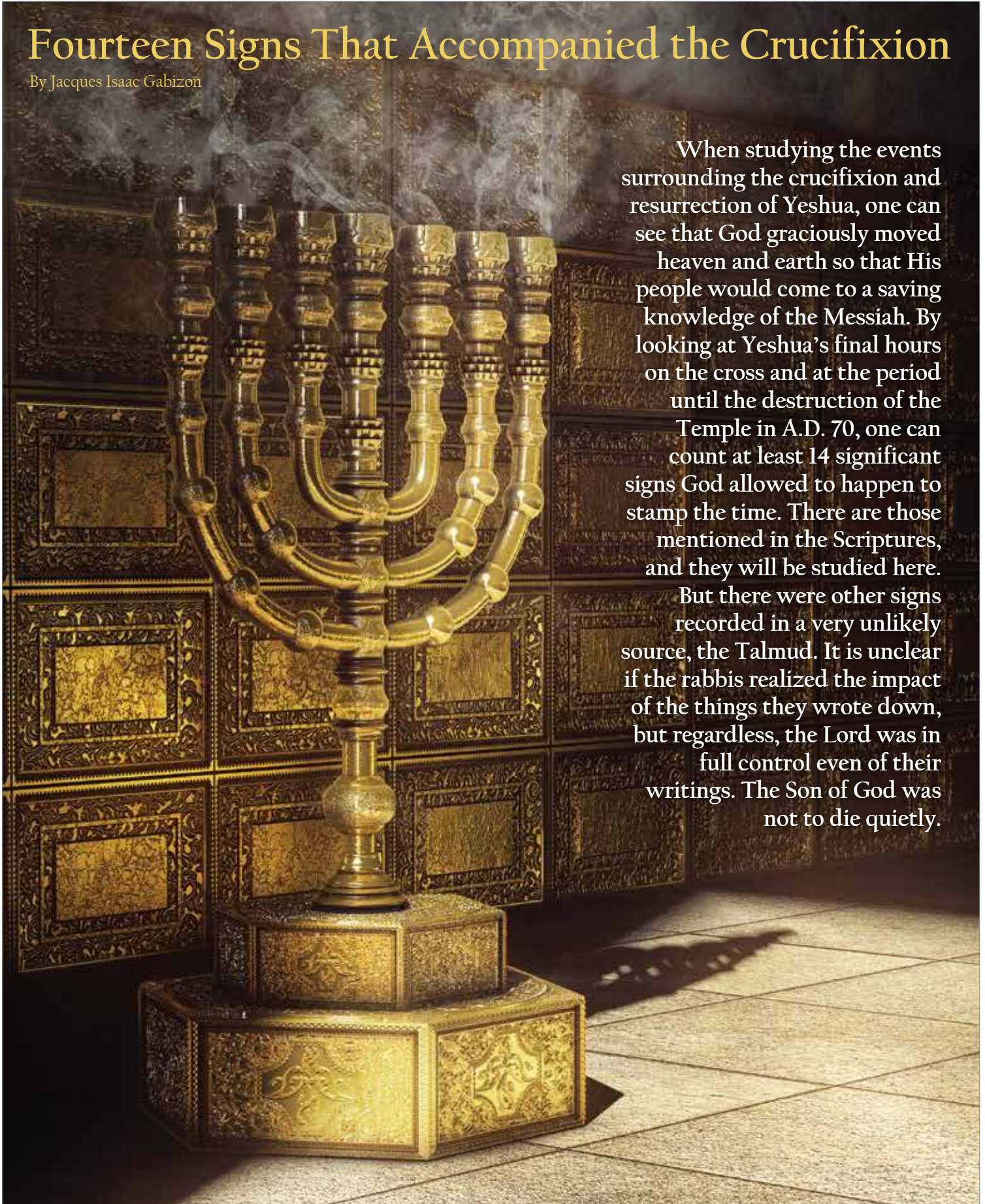
⁸Wood, D. R. W., Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996, c1982, c1962). *New Bible Dictionary*. Includes index. (electronic ed. of 3rd ed.) (Page 11). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Fourteen Signs That Accompanied the Crucifixion

By Jacques Isaac Gabizon

When studying the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection of Yeshua, one can see that God graciously moved heaven and earth so that His people would come to a saving knowledge of the Messiah. By looking at Yeshua's final hours on the cross and at the period until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, one can count at least 14 significant signs God allowed to happen to stamp the time. There are those mentioned in the Scriptures, and they will be studied here.

But there were other signs recorded in a very unlikely source, the Talmud. It is unclear if the rabbis realized the impact of the things they wrote down, but regardless, the Lord was in full control even of their writings. The Son of God was not to die quietly.





When Yeshua died, several significant events took place. It is hard to deny that they were signs. The signs were not threats, but signs of grace, signs of warning. God was not angry. He was sad. He was not sad for His Son; He was sad for His people. While His Son was experiencing all the pains of the past, present, and future sins of the whole world, our merciful God was still pleading for them to repent. "Wake up!" He was telling them, "Wake up! Do you realize that I gave you My own Son so you may live?" He is still telling us this today.

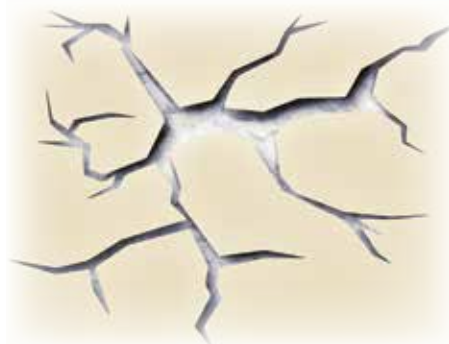
The signs studied in this article are found both in the Scriptures and in the rabbinic writings. The first set is in Matthew 27:50-53:

⁵⁰ And Yeshua cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.



Six major signs took place when Yeshua yielded His Spirit. The first sign, the torn veil, was to the priesthood. This curtain was not like the curtains we have on our windows at home. According to Josephus, the veil was 60 feet by 30 feet and about four inches thick. It separated the Holy of Holies representing the presence of God from the rest of the Temple. No one could

enter this place but the high priest, and he could only do so once a year, during the Feast of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*. Hence, access to God was limited, and what limited it were our sins. But as the Son of God was taking all the sins on Himself, the veil of separation was torn in two so that those who believe in Him now have full access to God (Heb. 10:19-22). The veil was torn from top to bottom because it was God's doing. If man had to tear a curtain, he would start at the bottom, but this one was torn from the top down, showing that the whole plan of salvation is God's doing.



The second sign, the earthquake, was a call to all the people.

As a third sign, rocks were split. This miracle resembles the judgments of the end times. In Revelation 6:16, the people are



asking the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of God and the wrath of the Lamb. On the cross, Yeshua was taking all the wrath, and so it was as if a choice was given to the people who witnessed His crucifixion: You take Yeshua as your Savior now or He will be coming back as a judge.

As a fourth sign, graves were opened. It is not surprising that most Bible commentators mention this event and go on to the next verses. They fail to see the irony here. After Yeshua died, the religious leaders



were in a hurry to get His body off the cross in order to avoid desecrating the Sabbath. Yet, here we learn that during the whole Sabbath, tombs stood open. The Sabbath and the whole land were desecrated. The religious leaders must have noticed the open graves but could do nothing because it was the Sabbath. Yet, these open tombs reminded them that any idea of consecration and holiness could not exist apart from God. They had just crucified the Son of God, and they wanted to be consecrated and holy. They wanted to have religion without God.

After the Sabbath ended on Saturday evening, when the first day of the new week began, the religious leaders may have



sent people to cover these tombs. Yet, the graves were empty because the dead had risen. This is the fifth sign. It is significant that only tombs of believers were opened. They were raised from the dead at the same time as Yeshua rose from the dead, and they began walking through Jerusalem. What a

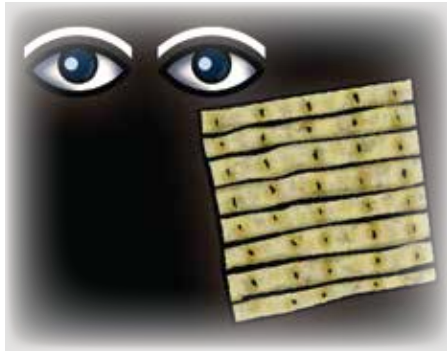
great sign that must have been! How many were there? To whom did they go? Did they stay alive for a long time? We do not know, but what we do know is that our God was moving heaven and earth for the salvation of the people.

It is surprising that only 3,000 people came to faith at Pentecost (Acts 2) despite all these signs. According to Josephus, more than 3,000,000 people were in Jerusalem at the time to celebrate Passover and Pentecost. That is a sad 0.1%!



The sixth sign was different than the previous signs, as it stretched over a longer period of time: At noon, when the sun was at its highest, a darkness fell over all the land. It lasted for a long time. This was not a simple solar eclipse. A total solar eclipse can last a maximum of seven and a half minutes. This darkness lasted for three hours. It was miraculous and was yet another call on people to reconsider the One they were crucifying.

But why did the darkness strike at the sixth hour? In Exodus 12:15, God ordered the Israelites to remove the leaven (representing sin) from their houses. They were to do this *on the first day*, the 14th of Nisan. In the Talmud, the rabbis decided when exactly on this day the leaven was to be removed and burned: “Both according to R. Jehudah and R. Meir it is prohibited to eat leavened bread from the sixth hour, and further, of the fourteenth of Nisan, let the time for searching commence at that hour.”¹ At the sixth hour of the 14th of Nisan, when the Messiah was taking all the sin of the world upon Himself, the Jews were busy cleaning



the leaven from their homes. However, at this very time, a darkness fell over all the land, so they could not see where the leaven was. It was all on the cross, on the Son of God. This is the seventh sign.

The eighth sign pertains to the timing of Yeshua's death. The Messiah breathed His last at the ninth hour, the very time the last sacrifice of the day was offered.²

Imagine you are an Israelite living in Jerusalem at that time. As a good Jew, you are searching for the leaven in your home, and perhaps as you are holding some of this



leaven in your hand, the floor underneath your feet begins to shake. As you are bounced left and right by the earthquake, the leaven slips from your hand into the air. At that moment, complete darkness strikes. Suddenly, you hear a tremendous noise you have never heard before, and someone yells, “The rocks are splitting open!” A little later, you hear people outside yelling that the tombs were opened. Others are yelling that some of the dead were spotted walking the streets of Jerusalem. Think about it! This must have been the most terrifying time ever for an Israelite. Did you think for a minute that God was to let His Son die on

the cross without moving heaven and earth and without making any noise?

The miracles were even more powerful for the priests who were at the Temple. Unlike the rest of the population, they experienced additional signs described in the rabbinic writings. The Talmud confirms that Yeshua was crucified on Passover: “On the eve of Pesach they hung Jesus [the Nazarene].”³ Then it goes on to explain what happened at the Temple after the veil was torn: “During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand . . . nor did the westernmost light shine.”⁴ This passage reveals that forty years before the destruction of the Temple, meaning at the time of the crucifixion, the lampstand in the Holy Place went out by itself. This candelabra was called “westernmost” because it was



placed on the westward side of the Holy Place.

The light of the lampstand was very significant for the priests because to them, it represented God's presence: “But it is a testimony to mankind that the Divine Presence rests in Israel. What is the testimony?—Said Rab: That was the western branch [of the candelabrum].”⁵ The rabbis saw the light as a sign that the *Shechinah* rested over Israel. As the holy place became completely dark, the high

¹ *b. Pesachim* 1 (Rodkinson, Vol. 5, p. 3).

² Josephus, *Ant.* 14.4.3.

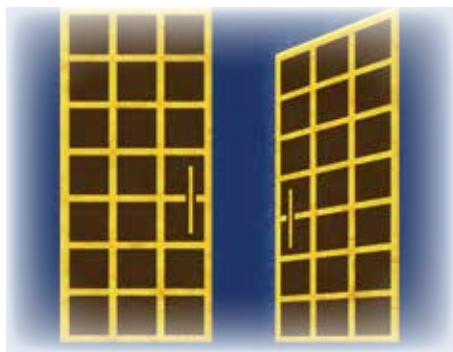
³ *b. Sanhedrin* 43a.

⁴ *b. Yoma* 39a.

⁵ *b. Sanhedrin* 22b.



priest must have rushed outside, and there was darkness as well. At the same time, the veil was torn from top to bottom. All these things must have had a great impact on him and the other priests. This was the ninth sign.



The tenth sign must have been a very noisy one. The Talmud in *Yoma* says: “The doors of the Hekal would open by themselves.”⁶ These are the doors of the Temple. There were eight of them, and while it is not clear from the Talmud which doors opened, it was probably the main doors, the Eastern Gates. Josephus speaks of these doors and reports as well that they opened by themselves: “Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night.”⁷ This must have been quite loud. The poor priests who were in this Temple found themselves without lights, the veil was torn, the door mysteriously opened, and the earthquake shook them. Acts 6:7 says that many of them came to believe in Messiah Yeshua.

The remaining signs did not occur right at the sixth hour of the crucifixion, like the others, but in the years leading up to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. There was a period of grace of forty years, an awakening phase God allowed above and beyond what He had already given, and the years did not go unnoticed in the history of

Israel, as the next sign will show. This sign is directly connected with the tearing of the veil and lasted until the end of the Temple era. It began on the Yom Kippur following the crucifixion. There, the rabbis noticed a drastic change. Among the many sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, two goats had to be presented to the high priest; one was sacrificed, and the other, the scapegoat, was let go (Lev. 16:7-10). The Hebrew word for “scapegoat” is *Azazel*. The Talmud says that the rabbis used to tie a red ribbon on the neck of the Azazel, and as it went away into the wilderness, the red ribbon turned white. This was a yearly miracle which happened every Yom Kippur. The rabbis interpreted this miracle as a sign of God that their sins were atoned for (Isa. 1:18). At the first Yom Kippur, in the year of the crucifixion, something began to happen: “During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand . . . [and] the crimson-coloured strap [did not] become white.”⁸ The “lot for the Lord” refers to the scapegoat of Leviticus 16, and the red strap did not become white as it miracu-



lously did for many years before.

Notice how God spoke directly to the religious leaders of Israel, through their own writings, bringing them to realize that something extraordinary happened when Yeshua was crucified. The words cannot be clearer. The time could not be clearer. Search, then, and seek who the Messiah is!

The twelfth sign is equally significant. Right after mentioning the Azazel, the Talmud links the scapegoat with the very

name of God: “The rabbis taught: Six times the high-priest pronounced God’s name, as it is written (Jehovah), during the Day of Atonement: three times in the first confession and three times in the second confession, and the seventh time when he had drawn the lot.”⁹ Once a year, during the time of the Azazel, the high priest pronounced the name of God. We have lost the pronunciation of His name. “Yahweh”



or “Jehovah” are fairly new pronunciations. The last time the very name of God was pronounced in its original form was the year of the crucifixion. The Talmud reports that forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple, the priests ceased to pronounce the name.¹⁰ The Jewish Encyclopedia reports: “From that time on, the pronunciation of the name was prohibited: ‘Whoever pronounces the Name forfeits his portion in the future world.’”¹¹

This was a drastic change. From this time on, God had a new name, and the first one was graciously transformed to the name Yeshua, which itself means “salvation.” This is the name of the Messiah. According to Acts 4:10-12, there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

The thirteenth sign pertains to the Sanhedrin, the revered court of Israel whose chief was the high priest. This organization, for unknown reasons, was

⁶ b. *Yoma* 39a.

⁷ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* VI, v. 3 (Whiston)

⁸ b. *Yoma* 39a.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ b. *Yoma* 39b.

¹¹ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9, p. 162, citing Sanh. xi. 1.



fired out of the Temple ground: "Forty years before the destruction of the Temple the Sanhedrin went into exile and took its seat in the trade halls."¹² The fact that both Talmuds report this event shows what a blow it was to the Sanhedrin. Right after the crucifixion of Yeshua, the Sanhedrin, who for many hundreds of years gathered in the Hall of Hewn Stones had to move out of the Temple to a place called "Hanuth" on the Mount of Olives. "Hanuth" means "market." Hence, the seventy members of the Sanhedrin became like the vendors driven out of the Temple by the Messiah. Through this move, the influence of the court diminished.



The last sign also shows the loss of the Sanhedrin's power: "Forty years before the Temple was destroyed, the right to judge capital cases was taken away from Israelite courts. In the time of R. Simeon b. Shatah, the right to judge property cases was taken away from Israelite courts."¹³ Not only was the Sanhedrin removed from the Temple compound, but they were also no longer allowed to judge certain cases. After misjudging the Son of God, they were demoted.

From that time on, things were not the same in Israel. Between the crucifixion and A.D. 70, insurrections and wars filled the land. Over 50,000 Jews were slain in Seleucia, and 20,000 died in Caesarea in a different battle. Constant rumors of war kept the Jews in an unsettled state. In A.D. 70, the Romans entered Jerusalem under Titus and killed 1,300,000 Jews and took many into captivity. Jerusalem was plowed up as a field. This marked the beginning of the Jewish dispersion, and history testifies of the continuous unrest within the Jewish population. According to the Scriptures, the time of unrest will not stop until the second coming of the Messiah.

God still uses miracles today to save people. The one sign He uses over and over again is found in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, where it says: *You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Messiah, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.* Putting the verses in very simple terms, believers are the miracle today. In many ways, they are God's walking letter to this world, and their presence, which is filled by the Spirit of the Living God, is the means through which these signs are kept alive. From the Holy of Holies, God moved to take residence in the hearts of believers, who are now His Temple (1 Cor. 6:19).



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¹² y. Sanhedrin 12; b. Shabbat 15a.

¹³ y. Sanhedrin 7:2.



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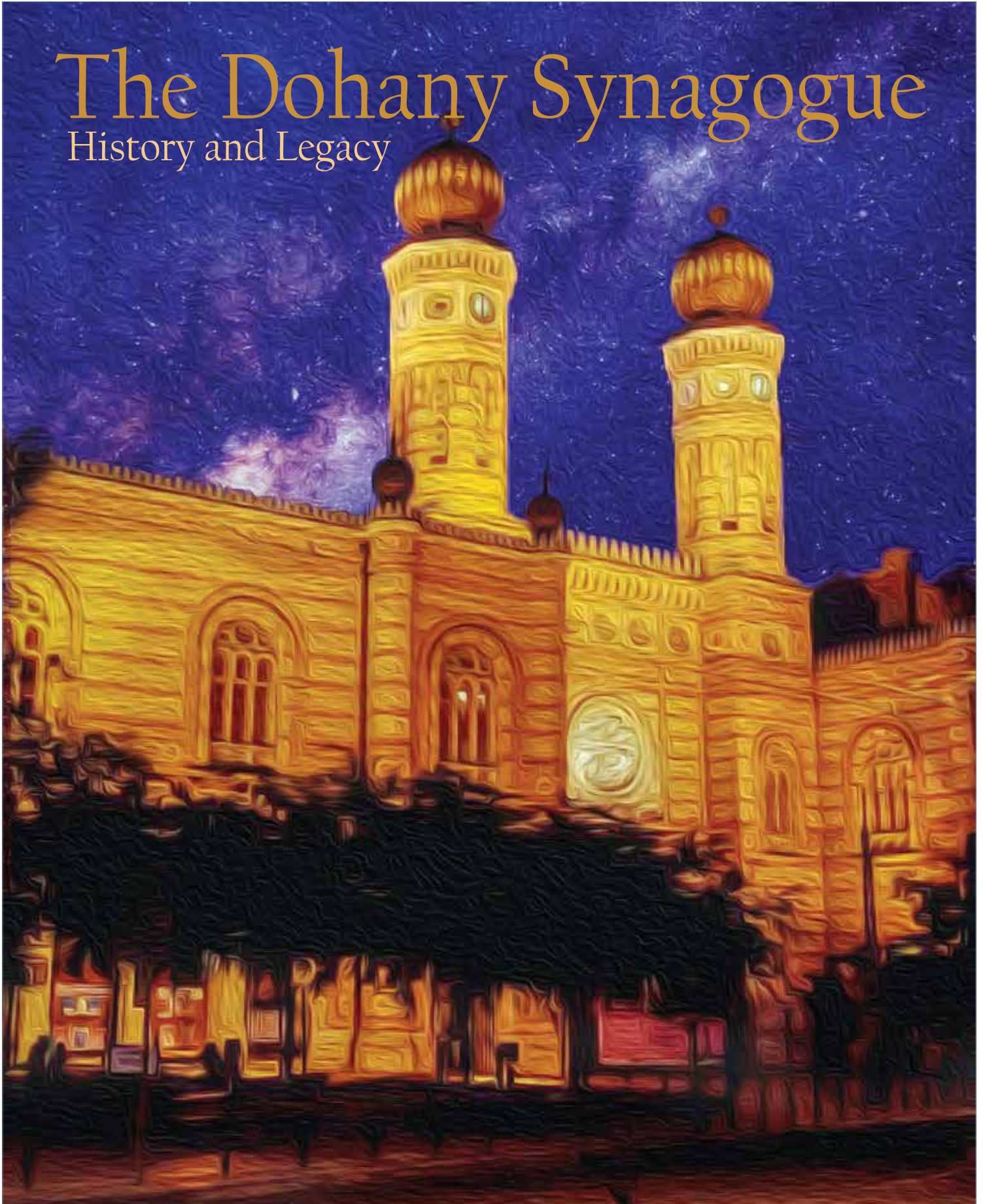
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The Dohany Synagogue

History and Legacy





The synagogue in the Dohany Street of Budapest is not only the most impressive one in the country, it is also the largest synagogue of Europe and the second largest synagogue in the world. The building has a history of 160 years. In the 21st century, the Jewish community still views it as a symbol of emancipation. In the time of its beginning, Theodore Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement and the father of the State of Israel, used to attend the Dohany Synagogue on Sabbaths and holidays.

Why does this magnificent building have the legacy of equal rights for the Jewish people, and why is it the symbol of the modernization of Jewish life in Hungary?

The Jewish community has lived in the Buda side of Budapest from the 12th century onward. On the Pest side of the city, they began settling in 1786, when the king gave them the right to live in the area around the marketplace and the surrounding streets. This district became the primary place of residence of the Jewish population of Pest, and it is the reason why this part of town is

still called the Old Jewish Quarter. During the 18th century, the Jewish people were not allowed to buy land. So, they lived in rented houses, and the prayer houses and synagogues were also set up in these rented places.

By the mid-19th century, at least 40,000 Jews lived in the capital of Hungary. It was a period of assimilation and flourishing, “a golden age of Jewish life” in Hungary. The growth of the Jewish community both in number and wealth eventually warranted a new synagogue, one that matched the community in size and appearance. Hence, in 1854, the building of the Dohany Street Synagogue began.

The synagogue became the symbol of the assimilation of Jews in Hungary. When it was built, and even today, many Jews called it “temple.” Ever since the Second Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, there has not been a Jewish temple (*heikhal*) in the literal sense of the word. “Synagogue” is a Greek word, seldom used in Hebrew or Yiddish. Its Hebrew equivalent is *bet ha-knesset*, which means “house of assembly,” or *bet tefillah*, meaning “house of prayer.” The Ashkenazi term for “prayer house” is the Yiddish word *shul*. The word “temple” was first used in the German Reform movement, in the 19th century. Among the Jewish community in Hungary, Orthodox used *shul*, while Neolog (Reformer) Jews called it “temple.”

Neolog Judaism is a unique Reform movement within Judaism, mainly in Hungarian-speaking regions of Europe. The movement began in the 19th century, and the reforms that were undertaken are comparable to the more traditional wing of U.S. Conservative Judaism. Yet, at the time of its founding, the Orthodox were rigidly opposed to all modern innovations. Hence, even the modest reforms of the Neolog Jews led to a sharp organizational separation.

In the 19th century, the Neolog Jews lived mainly in the cities and larger towns of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the Hungari-

an portion of the empire, most Jews (nearly all Neologs) adopted Hungarian rather than Yiddish as their primary language and viewed themselves as “Hungarians of Jewish religion.” They also called themselves “Israelites,” a term that was still used in the 1990s. Nowadays, the term “Jewish” (*zsidó* in Hungarian) is used again.

The Neolog Jews introduced many reforms, some of which are reflected in the Dohany Street Synagogue. *Dohány*, a loan word from Ottoman Turkish *duhân*, means “tobacco” in Hungarian. Before the official split in the Jewish community, the concept of the “Dohany Temple” was introduced, and the community decided to build an organ into the synagogue as a symbol of reforms.

The synagogue had to be constructed on an asymmetric lot in order to place the Ark looking east. The architects, Frigyes Feszli and Ludwig Förster, created their masterpiece in the middle of the metropolis using the Oriental-Byzantine (Moorish) style influenced by Muslim architecture. But one can also notice Byzantine, Romantic, and even Gothic design features. The talent of its architects is seen in the impressiveness of the building, although it is facing a small square and not the main boulevard.

One of the architects, Austrian Ludwig Förster, used the description of Solomon’s Temple in the Bible as a model of the synagogue. He also integrated the medieval Romanesque and Gothic style of Christian churches. Hence, similar to Catholic basilicas, the building consists of three spacious, richly decorated aisles, two balconies, and the organ. The synagogue in Dohany Street was one of the first monumental examples of European synagogue style which strongly influenced several later synagogues as well. The Central Synagogue in Manhattan, NY, for example, is a near-exact copy of the Dohany Street Synagogue.

The two towers made the synagogue resemble a Christian church. Never before was a synagogue built like this! There is a



special emphasis on the Ark, which is almost a small temple in itself.

The aforementioned organ is of specific importance in the Dohany Temple. It was a scandal for Orthodox Jewry to follow Gentile customs (*hukkot ha-gojim*) and to disturb the sanctity of the Sabbath by any kind of work, even if it was by playing of an instrument. On the other hand, for Neolog Jews who wanted to modernize the service, the organ became a symbol of the reforms. Decades earlier, Hungarian rabbis were involved in discussions whether to permit the usage of the organ in synagogue services, and they were supportive of the reforms.

The rostrum (*bimah*) for the reading of Torah was placed in front of the Ark, not in the center like before. The women's gallery was not segregated by a grill (*mehitzah*), though in Orthodox circles, even the density of its bars was prescribed. Furthermore, the reformers changed the language of the sermons from Yiddish (the only appropriate language for the Orthodoxy) to Hungar-

ian and German. Rabbis began dressing in robes for the services, and so they became more and more like priests. A Jewish friend of ours said this recently: "In my childhood, they called the synagogue 'Jewish temple,' the rabbi Jewish 'priest,' and the Pesach 'Jewish Easter.'"

A huge triumphal arch, 12 meters in diameter, divides the sanctuary of the Dohany Synagogue from the nave. This again resembles the design of many Christian churches, and the synagogue became known, not without irony, as the "Israelite cathedral."

The building is 75 meters (246 ft) long and 27 meters (89 ft) wide. Two onion domes sit on the twin octagonal towers 43 meters (141 ft) above ground. A rose stained glass window sits over the main entrance. The synagogue seats up to 3,000 and has room for an additional 2,000 standing people.

The consecration of the synagogue took place on the 7th of Elul, 5619 (September 6, 1859) and was a major social event. Rabbis

gave speeches, there was a men and boys' choir, and the organ was played. Twelve Torah scrolls were placed in the Ark.

For decades, the synagogue was a symbol of the assimilation of the majority of Pest Jews who became part of the Hungarian nation. The emancipation of Jews (1867) was also celebrated here. For a few decades, there was not only a Hungarian, but also a German preacher for those Jews who only spoke Yiddish. Starting in 1870, Mayer Kayserling (1829-1905), an outstanding German scholar of Sephardi Judaism, had this function. His works are widely read even today. In the period between the two world wars, there were four rabbis in Dohany Temple, two chief rabbis and two rabbis.

Today, the Dohany Synagogue complex consists of the Great Synagogue, the Heroes' Temple, the graveyard, the Memorial, and the Jewish Museum. The arcade surrounding the inner courtyard of the synagogue and the Heroes' Temple, which seats 250 people and is used for religious



services on weekdays, were added to the Dohany Synagogue complex in 1931.

The Raoul Wallenberg Emlékpark (memory park) in the rear courtyard holds the Memorial of the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs: Almost half a million Hungarian Jews were murdered by the Nazis. The memorial resembles a weeping willow whose leaves bear inscriptions with the names of the victims.

In 1944, the final year of World War II, the Dohany Synagogue was transformed into a military command post. The Germans used it as a detention camp, and as such, it was part of the Jewish ghetto of Budapest. Over two thousand of those who died in the ghetto from hunger and cold during the winter 1944-1945 were buried in the courtyard of the synagogue. During this dark time, over the course of only six short weeks, almost half a million Jewish people from the countryside were deported by Hungarian authorities to Auschwitz, where they were murdered. The deportation was stopped in Budapest in July 1944.

It is not customary to have a cemetery next to a synagogue, as Judaism separates life and death and never allows a cemetery to be located near a synagogue. The establishment of the cemetery in the courtyard of

the synagogue was only the result of the brutal historical circumstances, the Holocaust. When the ghetto was liberated on January 18, 1945, thousands of unburied corpses were lying in the streets; more than three thousand dead bodies were found on Klauzál Square alone. One thousand one hundred and forty known and 1170 unknown martyrs were buried in 24 common graves in the yard of the synagogue.

Since it was built, the Dohany Synagogue has been the main synagogue of the Hungarian Jewry. Its rabbi was the leading “national chief rabbi of Hungary.” However, this is not true for Orthodoxy. A true Orthodox Jew would never set foot in the Dohany Temple. But visitors from abroad and younger people are not bound by this tradition. Israeli tourists tend to laugh when they see the organ.

In mid-1990, the synagogue underwent a major reconstruction. The reopening ceremony took place in 1996, in the presence of Hungarian President Árpád Göncz and the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Shamir.

The synagogue is a European cultural heritage site, and every year, it has more than 250,000 visitors. In front of the build-

ing, there are constant lines of people from all around the world longing to walk through the beautiful building with guides who speak in ten different languages.

Today, there are around 70,000 to 110,000 Jews living in Hungary, and most of them reside in the Budapest area. This makes it the biggest number of Jews in central Europe. It is difficult, if not impossible, to keep the women’s gallery separated. Women and girls who are not used to strict religious rules often come down and mingle with the men, and the congregation appears to be large and thriving. Yet, in reality, the Dohany Synagogue is filled to its capacity only on Jewish High Holy Days.

The Dohany Synagogue remains the most important religious center of the Neolog Jews in Hungary to this day. It is also a place where concerts are held several times a year, Jewish or not, liturgical or not.

¹Dr. Nagy holds her Ph.D. in Literary Studies from the University of Miskolc. She and her husband Ivan are representatives of Ariel Hungary. The main source for her article is Kinga Frojimovics, Géza Komróczy, Viktória Pusztai, Andrea Stribik, *Jewish Budapest: Monuments, Rites, History* (Budapest, Hungary: CEU Press, 1999).

God’s Love for the Jewish People in Hungary

By Mottel Baleston

In September 2018, it was my privilege to be in Budapest as a guest of my friends Ivan and Rita Nagy, help in ministry events and outreach there, and visit the famed Dohany Synagogue. That the building is breathtaking is clear to all, but I could not help thinking about the drama of Jewish existence in Hungary, the large and influential Jewish community, the significant number of Jewish believers in Jesus who lived there, and the horror of the Holocaust that had befallen them.

Ultimately, Jewish history is about people, and the Scriptures remind us of God’s continuing love and concern for the Jewish people. I am appreciative of the teaching that the Nagys are doing in Budapest to facilitate Jewish people coming face to face with the claims of Messiah.






I ONCE WAS LOST

by Tim Velasco

According to Romans 1:16, it is our duty to share the good news of Messiah Yeshua with the Jews first. However, the Jewish people have been hurt by what has been done to them in the name of “Christianity” and the cross. In their hearts, there is a wall against the gospel. Many do not even think God exists, or if they do believe in God, they think that He has left them behind. So, how can we fulfill our calling and defend our faith with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15)?

The famous hymn “Amazing Grace” contains this line: “I once was lost, but now I am found.” As many know, this hymn was written by slave trader-turned pastor John Newton. What some may not know is that he was a sea captain.¹ In his day, the prospect of being lost at sea was indeed very real. The ability to determine latitude (how far north or south one is in relation to the equator) was relatively easy, but to determine longitude (how far east or west one is in relation to his point of departure) was rather difficult and fraught with the potential for error. One had to rely on many techniques and procedures, all of which required accurate time-keeping at sea, something very difficult to do reliably during Newton’s time. One technique was to follow a particular line of latitude when crossing the oceans and continue on this line as long as the currents and winds

allowed. This technique presented its own set of challenges. For example, one could find themselves in the doldrums, an area with no wind, and therefore no forward progress. Or one could become the victim of piracy, as pirates were adept at waiting at particularly well-traveled lines of latitude, looking for targets of opportunity.

And so was our life before faith in Yeshua! It was fraught with “dangers, toils and snares.” Do you remember when you were lost? Do you remember the thoughts that occupied your mind? The cares that you took to navigate this world? Take a moment to think back—not with fondness or regret—but think! And as you remember the past and leave it behind, I ask you to look to the present and see how far the Lord has brought you. Now, I know that at times we like dogs return to our “vomit” (Proverbs 26:11); perhaps you still struggle with

sins that in your mind should have long departed. Don’t be discouraged, be encouraged! After all, you do not need to navigate this world alone, and when an “error” in navigation occurs, and you find yourself in the doldrums and at the mercy of pirates, going nowhere and under attack, remember that the Spirit of God is like a wind that propels you forward no matter where you are. So, confess and be forgiven (1 Jn. 1:9) and allow the Wind of God, the *Ruach HaKodesh*, to propel you forward and back on course—not from where you started, but right from where you left off.²

We who have tasted and seen that the Lord is indeed good (Ps. 34:8) always have opportunities to share His goodness with

¹For additional information on John Newton, see Jonathan Aitken, *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

²See Ariel’s MBS 136 for more information.

others. In light of where we have been, is it not logical and sensible that we should be gentle and respectful (1 Pet. 3:15)? Indeed, it is, and in fact we must be! When dealing with the lost in this world, take a moment to remember that you too were once lost. Take a moment to pray and ask God to give you His love for the lost, the same love He has for you; and when the lost speak of their life, listen. But remember that they are likely very adept at “navigation,” as they think themselves the captain of their own souls. They may know all the techniques and procedures that they think are required to navigate this life. In fact, some may even seem to be such good sailors as to have arrived at the “perfect” life. But remember that they, unlike you, are lost. They have no real point of reference and no accurate way to gauge time. Their compass does not point north, and their maps are tools of the devil. Whether they realize it or not, they are at the mercy of pirates and their final destina-

tion is a terrifying land filled with the unspeakable reality of eternal separation from God.³

I think it is easy to become discouraged when we testify of the goodness of God to our Jewish friends and family and receive little to no interest or response. I have many Jewish friends that seem to have it all together. They are successful in business and happy in life. Some are so wise, and many are such beautiful, thoughtful, and kind people, that sometimes I forget that they are lost. During these times, I remember to turn and watch the testimonies found at imetmessiah.com. There, among the many faces of Jews who have been transformed by the grace of Yeshua, I am reminded of where my friends are, and I am filled with hope for where they can be. I strongly encourage you to check these videos out for yourself.

Isn't it amazing that this is where God has put you and me, in a world full of lost

captains? As a captain myself (albeit in the air, not the sea), it is hard sometimes to admit to mistakes and failures, but it is essential if I am to be the best and most effective captain I can be, a captain who is open to constructive input and who truly knows how to lead the lost safely to the right destination. So as the Lord equips you with knowledge from the tools and resources available through Ariel Ministries (The Spiritual Life Series of Messianic Bible Studies, perhaps), don't forget the greatest tool of all, the tool that brings everything into balance: love that comes from the Father's heart. And always be ready to *make a defense* (ἀπολογία = apologia) to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience (1 Pet. 3:15). This hope is embodied in the gracious Person of our God-Man Yeshua: Share Him!

³See Ariel's MBS 143 for more information.

LEADING SOMEONE TO YESHUA

A) Point out the Separation

We are all sinners (Ps. 14:2-3; Jer. 17:9; Ps. 51:5,9).

Our sins separate us from God (Isa. 59:1-2).

Our good deeds are not sufficient to please God (Isa. 64:6).

God gave a blood atonement sacrifice to cleanse us from sin (Lev. 17:11).

God promised a suffering Messiah and a reigning King Messiah (Isa. 53; Zech. 9:9-10, 12:9-10).

B) Present the Remedy

Isaiah 53:6

1 Peter 2:24

John 3:16

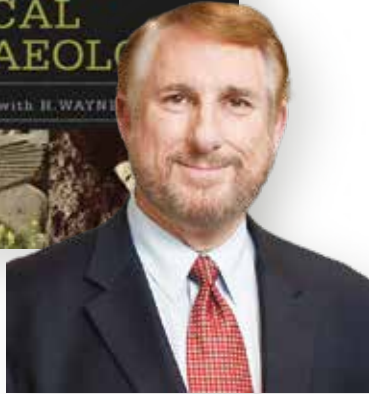
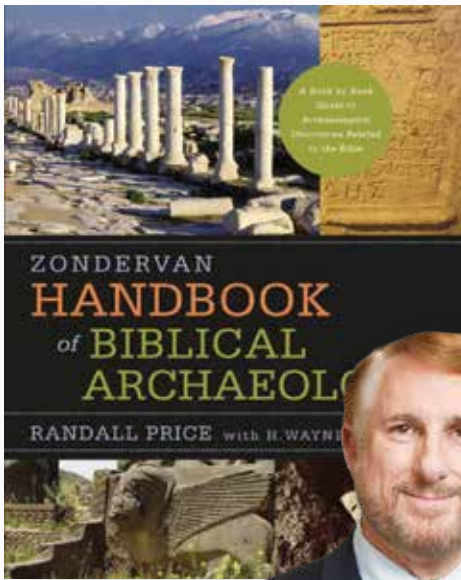
C) Gently Encourage the Recognition

Jeremiah 3:13

Romans 10:9

D) Present the Aftermath

Matthew 28:19-20



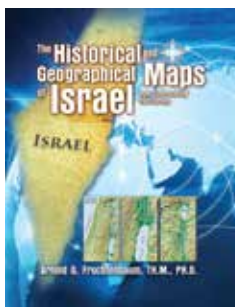
A few months ago, archaeologist Dr. Randall Price taught an illustrious group of scholars, pastors, and teachers about the prophetic significance of the modern State of Israel. The venue was the Pre-Trib Conference, which takes place annually in Dallas, TX. Dr. Price began his lecture with the following words:

“In a conversation on religious questions, Fredric II, King of Prussia (1740-1786) asked Joachim von Zieten, General of the Husars, whom he esteemed highly as a Christian for his plain and uncompromised views, ‘Give me proof for the truth of the Bible in two words!’ To which Zeiten replied, ‘Your majesty, the Jews!’ The General’s statement reflected his understanding of not only the miraculous preservation of the Jewish people, but his belief that their preservation was for the purpose of bringing God’s unfulfilled promises to pass. To Zeiten, the present existence of the Jewish people was proof that God’s Word was true because Scripture had promised that they would remain until all that had been prophesied concerning them was fulfilled. Remarkably, this expression of faith was made in a day when the Land of Israel was desolate of a Jewish population and the majority of Jews were scattered among the nations.”

We live in a time when prophecy is playing itself out in front of our eyes. Still, there are many believers who neither understand prophecy nor are they able to put them in a historical context. Dr. Price has written several books, one of which is the very remarkable *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*. In the Preface, the author notes:

“You are involved in Bible study and have come across something in the text that relates to ancient persons, place, or events. How can you understand this past context? What is needed is to travel back in time and see the ancient world, what the cities were like that the biblical figures occupied and how its people lived, and then to understand from them the meanings they attached to their religion and customs. In other words, it is necessary to understand the biblical message in its original historical context before we can apply its truths in our own time.”

We at Ariel Ministries could not express more aptly this goal that Dr. Price and Dr. Fruchtenbaum seem to have in common. How refreshing it is to see that others share the burden of presenting God’s Word in a historical and geographical context!



Just like Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s excellent work *The Historical and Geographical Maps of Israel and Surrounding Territories*, Dr. Price’s book *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* is packed with important, reliable, and biblical information. What distinguishes the two books is Dr. Price’s focus on biblical archaeology. His *Handbook* includes an introduction to this field of study, followed by a chronological analysis of the Scriptures (from Genesis through Revelation) in their historical and geographical context. Also included is a section on the intertestamental period.

The format of the book, the fonts used, and the overall appearance make the *Handbook* very attractive. The pictures are beautiful, and the charts and graphs provide concise overviews of time periods and important facts. The *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* was co-authored by H. Wayne House and is easy to read without compromising its scholarly background and the huge amount of research that went into writing it.



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