

Winter 2016 / Volume 1 / Number 21

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ARIEL
MINISTRIES



Plus:

Yeshua
in the Talmud

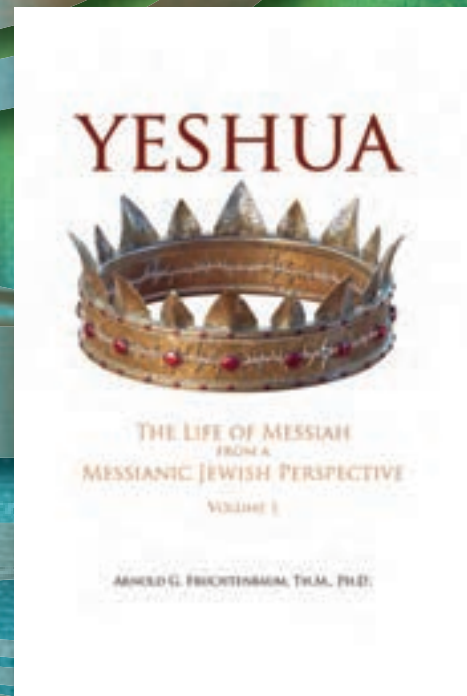
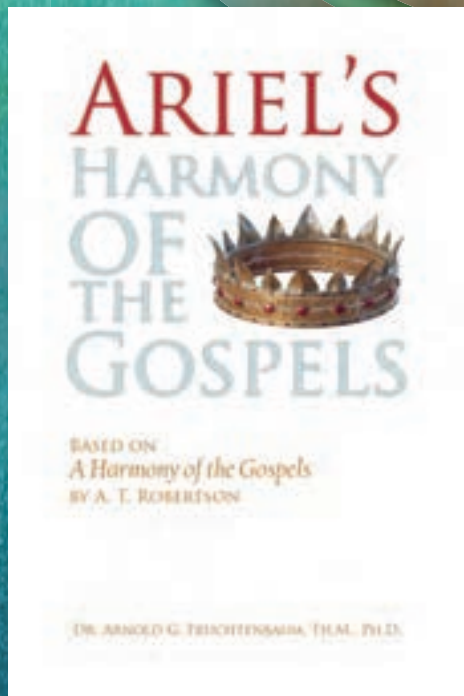
Gary Finn's
Personal Testimony



Interview:
Joel Rosenberg's
Response to the
Signs
of the **Times**

The Mosaic Law: A New Perspective on an Old Problem

THE ESSENTIALS



Ariel's Harmony of the Gospels:

Based on "A Harmony of the Gospels" by A. T. Robertson
by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Th.M., Ph.D.

Description: When the theologian and Bible scholar Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum developed his teaching on the life of the Messiah from a Jewish perspective, he used A. T. Robertson's harmony of the Gospels as a basis for his studies. However, he deviated from Robertson's work whenever the scholar chose not to follow Luke's sequential order of Messiah's life and ministry. Furthermore, Dr. Fruchtenbaum chose a thematic, not a geographical, approach to establish a coherent chronology of the events depicted in the four Gospels.

The basic translation used in the American Standard Version of 1901. However, the archaic language has been modernized, and the names of persons and places were transliterated in accordance with Hebrew pronunciation.

20.00

Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective

by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Th.M., Ph.D.

During His ministry to the Jewish people, Yeshua (Jesus) journeyed throughout the land promised to the Jewish patriarchs, presenting Himself to the Jews as their Messiah. He was a Jew living in a Jewish land among the Jewish people, yet, much of the knowledge of this Jewish society, its culture, and traditions has grown dim with the passage of time. In this work, Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum shines a bright light on the life of Yeshua and the land of Israel during the Second Temple period, interpreting the Gospels from a Messianic Jewish perspective. To achieve this, Dr. Fruchtenbaum has done original research in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek source texts, and has also drawn on the works of other scholars and the writings of the ancient rabbis. A. T. Robertson's time-tested A Harmony of the Gospels provides the framework for his exegesis.

\$33.00

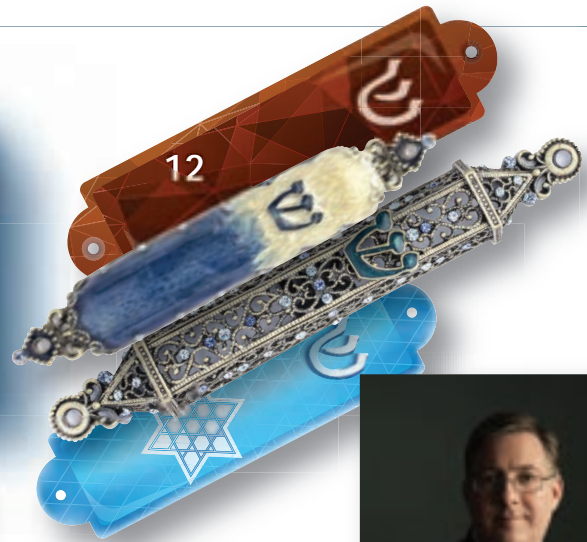


Cover Story:

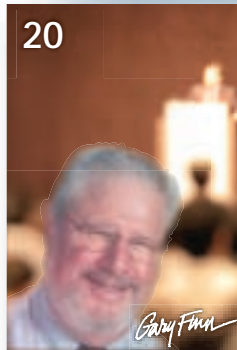
Torah observance—the obedience to the Law of Moses—is a “hot button” issue for many believers, especially those in the Messianic movement. Hardly a week goes by in which we at Ariel Ministries do not receive emails or letters with questions about the topic. The underlying sentiment seems to always be the same: Believers might be free from the ceremonial and legal commandments of the law, but the moral components are still valid today. Doug Friedman approaches the questions from the unique viewpoint of an engineer and proposes a new and rather freeing perspective.



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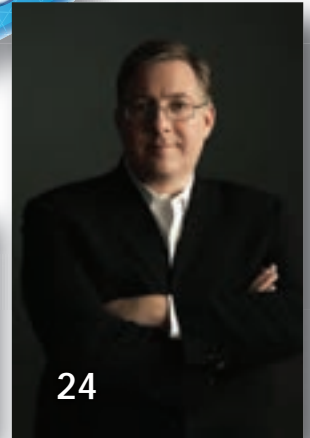
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07 Eye on Israel:

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A small box with a big message: Mottel Baleston shares his insights on the mezuzah.

14 Feature:

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Gary Finn tells his story of how he received God's indescribable gift of salvation.

23 Feature:

The birth of a far-reaching ministry: Gefen International Israeli Outreach.

24 Feature:

In an interview, Joel Rosenberg tells us what we ought to do with our knowledge of the end times.



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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Shining Brightly in a Dark World



This year, the first night of Hanukkah falls on Christmas Eve. While in the United States the festivities surrounding the birth of Messiah are commonly celebrated on Christmas Day, many people around the world light their Christmas trees and open their gifts the night before. So, this year, Jews and Christians around the world will enjoy a few hours of peaceful parallel celebrations—and maybe, just maybe, this will help some to realize how strongly the two holidays are connected.

It is quite simple. Without Hanukkah, there would be no Christmas! You all know the story behind the Feast of Dedication. You know that Hanukkah celebrates the triumph of Jewish freedom fighters over an oppressive government. You know that the victory came at a high cost to many Jewish people. You also know that the feast celebrates God's protection of His people from annihilation. And you know that it celebrates a traditional miracle—oil which should have only lasted one day, lasted for eight. Victory, sacrifice, redemption, and the miraculous are key components of the Hanukkah story. Does this sound familiar?

Almost two hundred years after God enabled the Maccabees to overthrow an evil dictator, He sent His ultimate redemption and sacrifice to Israel in the person of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach. Yeshua's miraculous birth, His victory on the cross, and His resurrection were only possible because God kept the promises He made to His Son, the patriarchs, and the Jewish prophets. Hence, the true connection between Hanukkah and Christmas is God's faithfulness and promise-keeping character.

Let us study God's promises! Let us take heart in them! The world we live in is a dark place, but God Himself has pledged to give us salvation, victory, and an eternal hope. Let us shine our lights brightly this Hanukkah season, and let us pass on our faith in the Prince of Peace to a dying world.

Merry Messiahdmas and a Happy Hanukkah!

Your sister,

Christiane J

Christiane Jurik, M.A.
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Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives

ARIEL BRANCHES



Ariel Australia Chris & Lisa Savage

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



Ariel Canada Jacques Isaac and Sharon Gabizon

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



Ariel India Bakul N. Christian

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



Ariel Israel Sasha G. & Lilian Granovsky

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



Ariel China

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



Ariel Germany

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



Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

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



Ariel New Zealand Johan Jansen van Vuuren

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



Ariel Raleigh/Durham, NC Chris & Tina Eisbrenner

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Chris and Tina Eisbrenner are missionaries representing Ariel Ministries in North Carolina. They live with their children in the Raleigh/Durham area. While they mainly minister in the Eastern United States, Chris teaches in churches across the country. He also teaches at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies.

ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



Michael & Hannah Gabizon – Students (Hamilton)

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



John Metzger – Field Representative (Pennsylvania)

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



Gary & Missy Demers – Camp Representatives (New York)

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



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

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



Hungary

The main event in the last three months was the Messianic conference with Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum in Budapest. This was the third such conference. To prepare for the role as interpreter, Ivan translated the material of one of the courses, "The Five Warnings of the Book of Hebrews," ahead of time. "The Reign of Emmanuel" and "The Servant of Jehovah" topics were easier insofar as he only had to



read the manuscripts a few times to re-familiarize himself with the courses.

The conference went very well. We had great partners, and the conference rooms were centrally located. Despite the fact that the first day was a national holiday, there were 120 attendees; on the second day, there was about two hundred, and at the evening lecture, 350 people came. The rest of the time averaged out at around

one hundred attendees, some of whom traveled from faraway places to listen to Arnold. Many asked for the mp3 recordings of the conference. Arnold gave an hour-long TV interview which will be used for a documentary about the Messianic movement. All our partners were greatly satisfied with the conference, and we agree.

The brothers and sisters who attended were very interested in the Jewish frame of reference.

I (Ivan) personally enjoyed Arnold's teaching of Hebrews the most. During the time leading up to the

conference, I was involved in a heated debate about eternal security with a church leader. The topic of the five warnings in Hebrews answers some of the most crucial questions concerning the possibility of losing one's salvation. Arnold's masterful explanation about the most difficult parts of the epistle dismantled some of the strongest weapons of those who argue against eternal security.

After many years of studying at Camp and being with Arnold, we can still learn new things from him. We can't wait for the next conference!



Field Representative

Roberto Anchondo

Pope Francis' Visit to Mexico

In the fall and winter of 2015, plans were in the works to have a Messianic rabbi teach on the importance of the role of Israel in God's plan to the people of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. In conjunction with the rabbi's teachings, an evangelistic event was planned for the churches in Juárez. Several speakers were invited, but none were able to attend due to scheduling constraints. Consequently, we had thousands of tracts, but no speakers. Guidance was sought from the Lord in prayer. A few days later, an article in the newspaper announced that in February 2016, the pope was planning a visit to Mexico and that he was considering to come to Juárez, which borders with the United States, just 300 feet from the Rio Grande and El Paso, Texas. This was not happenstance, but divine intervention. The leader of over 1.3 billion Roman Catholics was coming to our own backyard. As soon as the Juárez papal visit was confirmed, the decision was made: this Ariel field representative and 93 local churches would come together and prepare for the event.

Thousands of lives were stricken in Juárez during the period when drug cartels made it the most violent city in the world. It was during those years of bloodshed that many people were led to the Lord and came to the saving knowledge of Yeshua. As the bitter war between rival cartels slowly grinds to somewhat of an end, the city is breathing new life. It seems that Juárez is about to lose the title of world murder capital. The pope stated that his purpose for this visit to Juárez was to promote peace, with an emphasis on human rights and immigration. However, the pope also stated that he planned to visit the city in order "to bring back the people of Juárez who left the Roman Catholic Church." In other words, he intended to entice the flock to return to Roman Catholicism! These souls who were won over to the Lord were purchased at the price of the blood of the Lamb. Ariel Ministries labored in this field during the most tumultuous years. So it stood to reason that we had to go back to protect the flock during the pope's visit. Thus, this was the perfect opportunity to continue enlightening the local churches on the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant and spread this message to other parts of Latin America and the United States. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood* (Acts 20:28).

With the coming of thousands of people from different parts of Latin America and the United States, logic not only dictated to take the gospel via Juárez to other parts of the world, but also to teach the churches to stand for the "apple of God's eye." We printed 383,000 tracts, of which 50,000 were in support of Israel. With the clandestine, nefarious, and violent history that the Vatican has had towards



Israel, we set out to educate the churches that were assisting with evangelism at this event. The 50,000 tracts in support of Israel were used to expose what the Vatican has done to the Jews throughout history and to emphasize the importance of the Abrahamic Covenant. The tracts were given to the pastors to teach their congregations and were also used to evangelize the masses. Thousands upon thousands of them were carried from Mexico to the United States and into the world when those who had received them returned home. One of the tracts even went to a rabbi from Jerusalem!

Our ministry team set out to do some preliminary groundwork in preparation for the pope's visit. For a week, a team of six men from Albuquerque, New Mexico, led by Ariel Ministries, took to the streets, taught the pastors and their laborers about the fallacies of Roman Catholicism, and ministered the gospel. We prayed for the people of Mexico at different locations throughout Juárez—the entries of the city, symbolic of the city gates; on top of a hill; and on a mountain overlooking the city. We also went to all the stops that the pope was scheduled to make in Juárez, and at each location, we prayed for the people he would encounter along the way. A group of pastors took shofars and blew them over the city.

On the day of the pope's visit, we were gathered for prayer against the principalities of evil. Water and food were distributed to the people. We were not planning to minister on the day of the event in order to avoid trouble. However, the temptation was too great to resist. There were so many people gathered to worship a mere man that we were compelled to start ministering to them.

The pope was in Juárez for one day and rode by a huge crowd in his popemobile, traveling a bit too quickly for their taste. God blessed us beyond words! Days after the event, we continued ministering to the crowds as they were leaving Mexico. Our prayers and efforts were to labor so that Mexico and the United States would be blessed and not cursed for worshipping a false teacher. We asked God for His believers' sake to spare judgment on these nations for idolizing a mere man and a false religion. The Lord presented us with a huge opportunity to win souls by praying and by planting and watering precious seed. The doors that opened were a huge blessing. To God be all the glory! Selah!

Dallas/Fort Worth Texas

Beginning this fall, the Dallas/Fort Worth branch has scheduled our two study center sites for one ninety minute teaching session per month. We will add sessions as warranted. Each site is equipped with a library of books and other materials from Ariel Ministries that are available for those attending the sessions. There are two centers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. One is north of the metroplex in Argyle, Texas, and the other is just south of the DFW International Airport in Grand Prairie, Texas. There is no fee for these sessions.

The Dallas/Fort Worth branch has also scheduled two conferences

to be held at the Home Office of Ariel Ministries in San Antonio, Texas:

Saturday, February 18, 2017—

Topic: The Book of James (9 a.m. - 2 p.m.)

Saturday, April 22, 2017—

Topic: The Minor Prophets (9 a.m. - 3 p.m.).

Dates and times are subject to change. Please check our itinerary page at www.ariel.org.

There is no charge for these conferences. However, since seating is limited, registration is required.

We will be representing Ariel Ministries at the Pre-Trib Conference, December 5-7, 2016. If you are attending this conference, please stop by Ariel's book table to say "hello."

For more information about our study centers, conferences or if you would like us to speak at your church, home group or Sunday School contact us at dfw@ariel.org.



Chris & Tina Eisbrenner, Raleigh/Durham NC

Change is in the air. We are moving back to Raleigh, North Carolina. Our time working at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies (ASMJS) and living in New York has been a blessing and an awesome time of service. In the end, however, the move did not work out for us.

First and foremost, ASMJS only had a few students during its charter year, and it was not enough to sustain us financially. Then for our second year, which was set to launch in September 2016, we did not have enough student interest, so we had to cancel the academic year. God has His reasons, but clearly His timing for ASMJS to thrive is not yet. We are developing an online program, so we are hoping and praying that God will bless the school, and in God's time, enrollment will pick up and the residential program will take off someday soon.

Second, the public school system in Keeseville was not the best academically, and it was a very secular environment. Our kids had been in Christian school their whole lives, so this was a very difficult transition for them, and in the end, they were not happy. Tina's first concern is for her children, and mine needs to be for my family and keeping my house in order. This was heavy on our hearts.

For these reasons, we met with Dr. Fruchtenbaum this summer during Camp Shoshanah, and he agreed that without ASMJS launching this year, there is no reason we needed to remain in Keeseville at this time. We discussed with the board how our ministry was thriving in the Raleigh/Durham area from 2013-2015



and received their blessing to move back and open a new branch office in Raleigh. So we will remain with Ariel as missionaries and also head up the new Raleigh/Durham branch of Ariel Ministries. I will also be remaining on staff at ASMJS as a professor of Messianic Jewish Studies and thus will travel up to the school to teach if and when the residential program gets rolling. This change has allowed our children to return to Wake Christian Academy this year. This is the school they grew up in and loved, and they are very excited about returning to the friends, teachers, coaches, sports, and Christian atmosphere they missed so much. This is a blessing to us and our family, and we are thankful for Dr. Fruchtenbaum's understanding and blessing in this new ministry opportunity.

The Raleigh/Durham area of North Carolina is one of the fastest growing areas in the country with great schools, universities, and hospitals. It is called the "Research Triangle Park" as far as information technology jobs go. Thus people are moving down in droves from the Northeast – from places like Philadelphia and New York, including many Jewish families. It is becoming a great place to have a ministry to Jewish people. Synagogues and Jewish community centers are going up. Some estimate over 50,000 Jewish people are in the area now, and that number is growing. Please pray for Tina and me and our family as we transition back to North Carolina this fall and begin our new ministry. We hope to start up an outreach and a Bible study in the near future once we get settled. And of course, as the Lord opens doors, I will continue to speak in churches throughout the United States, teaching the Scriptures from a Jewish perspective.

Editor's Note: If you are interested in having Chris come speak at your church, please contact him at chris.eisbrenner@ariel.org.



Shalom from Australia

2016 was the first time in seven years that I did not attend Camp Shoshanah. Camp is my time of refreshing, and I dearly miss all my fellow

Shoshanaites. Next year!

In September, I taught at a place called "Yeppoon." This coastal resort area is located in central Queensland, the northern part of Australia, and it is sunny and warm. I had been invited to speak regarding the Jewish perspective of the Scriptures, as it was something that was relatively new to many in the audience. It is great to see doors opening in churches that have never been exposed to this perspective. I had a great time and spoke in four settings: in a Baptist church, a Wesleyan church, a home group, and a men's group. Furthermore, I held a Passover seder. For the majority of the 82 people who attended this meeting, it was something completely new. As always, the Passover and its significance captivated the audience. However, I think I was the one who was the most blessed because meeting so many men and women who have a passion for sharing the good news of Jesus

was a delight. Now there are many more who recognize that the church has a responsibility to bring the gospel to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. I also praise God for the chance to meet with two Messianic Jews while in the area.

I am continuing to teach at our discipleship training center. As a short break between finishing one Life of Messiah course and starting the next, I ran a short, four-week personal evangelism course. When the class realized that evangelism is a partnership between God and man, the response was great. We introduce our Messiah to friends, family, and co-workers, and the Holy Spirit then introduces them to their Messiah. He does the heavy work.

We have been able to distribute Russian Old and New Testaments to several Russian Jews who were interested in knowing more about this Messiah we believe in. One of the folks from a Life of Messiah class has been spending time in witness to them with the result that



one has now come to believe in Yeshua. The other four are still curious. Pray for them! We have a collection of the Jewish Scriptures in Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, and English which we distribute

to those we witness to and to those who simply want to read the Scriptures.

Each week, one of my ex-colleagues and I meet up for coffee. He often asks, "Is Jesus in?" Of course, the answer is always "yes." He also asked me if I would go back working for Qantas Airlines. I miss the crew of men I used to work with, and I pray for their eternal security, but to be where I am today is the most satisfying of all professions. To be right where Yeshua has called me to be is the most satisfying place of all. Sharing Him with the lost, discipling new believers, and teaching them to obey all that He has commanded us is the place of contentment for me. Every blessing to you all in our Messiah from Australia!





I went to the dentist



Eli is his name. He likes to talk with me about the Messiahship of Yeshua. Before he started to work on my teeth, he shared: “I used to write little notes on Facebook. This time of the year, I wanted to say something to my Gentile friends in Brazil. I did not want to write ‘Merry Christmas,’ since I am a Jew and it is not ‘appropriate’ for me to do that. So here’s what I wrote: ‘Yeshua was a Jew. He lived and died as a Jew. So, if it is the day that you celebrate His birthday, I want to say: ‘Happy birthday to the first Hebrew Christian in the world!’ What do you think, Lilian?”

“I think you are absolutely right. He was the first Hebrew Christian in the world.”

“Do you know how they reacted to my post?”

“How?”

“Absolute silence. They do not want to face it!”

“Do your friends belong to the Catholic Church?”

“Yes.”

“What are you expecting, then?”

“You say you are a Christian Jew, or what do you call it? I keep forgetting...”

“A Messianic Jew.”

“You are a Jew who believes in Messiah?”







“I am a Jew who believes that Yeshua is my Savior, Mashiach, Messiah.”

“Lilian, why Yeshua? I still can’t grasp it! Why in the world Yeshua?”

“If you will read the prophecy about Messiah—who He will be, where He will be born, what He will do—you will come to the same conclusion, as Yeshua fulfilled those prophecies.”

“I do not know the Scriptures so well. I don’t know what is written there, what those prophecies are.”

“They are prophecies about the redemption of our sins that comes through the Messiah. They were given long before His birth, so that we would be able to recognize Him.” And I began quoting each one to my dentist:

	The Messiah must be born into the family of King David.	Jer. 23:5,6
	He will be born in Bethlehem.	Mic. 5:2
	He will be born before the destruction of the Second Temple.	Dan. 9:26
	He will have divine nature.	Is. 9:6-7
	He will die without committing sin.	Is. 53:9-10
	Messiah will be raised from the dead.	Is. 53:12 Ps. 16:10

I could see that Eli’s heart was “soaking in” all the Scriptures that I quoted as the dry earth drinks the first drops of long awaited rain. After some time of silence he asked: “But the Messiah that we, the Jews, have waited for over such a long time had to bring peace, happiness, freedom.”

“You mean the kingdom of God on the earth?”

“Yes. If Yeshua was that One, why did this not happen?”

“The Scriptures say that He would come first as a servant, not as a king. He had to pay for our sins, to suffer in order to redeem us. That was the first part of God’s plan to save the world, and He has fulfilled it. If the Jewish people as a nation would have

receive Him as their Savior at that time, the kingdom of God would have come to the earth not long after. But it did not happen. So, the second part of His plan, His return as king, is still to come.”

Eli was in deep thought as he started working on my teeth. I was greatly encouraged because God had answered my prayer for Eli.

Heb. 12:1-2

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Yeshua the author and finisher of our faith.



There is hardly a subject in the modern Messianic movement that is more divisive than the Mosaic Law. Here is a sampling of the positions that some Messianic believers take today regarding the law:

- (1) "Yeshua never did away with the law; therefore, we must observe it!"
- (2) "We should now look at the law through the eyes of Yeshua!"
- (3) "All believers especially Jewish believers should obey the law!"
- (4) "The law is not for salvation, but for sanctification."
- (5) "The law is not for salvation or sanctification, but failure to observe it means that you're missing God's best!"

When Yeshua was speaking to the Judean religious leaders in the Temple some 2,000 years ago, He said to them: *You search the Scriptures (tas graphas, i.e. the holy Writ) because you think in them is eternal life, and it is these that testify of Me* (John 5:39). He was talking, of course, about the entire Hebrew Scriptures (the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings), what we would call today the Tanakh, or the Old Testament (the New Testament not having been written yet). The portion of the Tanakh around which the lion's share of the controversy swirls is the first part, i.e. the Law. Since the modern Messianic movement claims to be (rightly) Messiah-centered (indeed, their very name is "the Messianic movement"), how is it that,

today, opinions about the relevance of this Law vary so widely? Which, if any, of the five above-listed approaches to the law is correct, and how can we possibly decide?

My 45 years of engineering experience has taught me the value of always seeking as simple a solution to a problem as possible. Along those lines, I would like to offer what I think is the most straightforward way of answering this painfully divisive question and, in the process, promote the unity in our movement that we all know the Lord desired for us and even prayed for as He launched the original Messianic movement (*that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You* [Jn.17:21a]). When all else fails, read the directions. Instead of arguing about what we think is inside the box, let's open the box and see.

So, how shall we look at the laws themselves? In the second century, in m. Tractate *Makkot* 23b of the Babylonian Talmud, R. Simlai expounded: "Six hundred and thirteen mitzvot were communicated to Moses: three hundred and sixty-five negative mitzvot, corresponding to the number of days in a solar calendar year, and two hundred and forty-eight positive mitzvot, corresponding to the number of limbs in the human body." In the twelfth century, Maimonides made his own list of the 613 commandments and published them in volume 3 of his famous *Sefer HaMitzvot*, ("Book of the Commandments"). The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia published a list of both the 248 positive ("Thou shalt ...") and the 365 negative ("Thou shalt not ...") commandments, grouping them into categories of 18 and 13, respectively:

Again, my engineering background beckons. So, I entered the command-



Groups of Positive Commandments:

1	God	9
2	Torah	10
3	Temple and Priests	19
4	Sacrifices	53
5	Vows	4
6	Ritual Purity	18
7	Donations to Temple	20
8	Sabbatical Year	9
9	Animals for Consumption	11
10	Festivals	17
11	Community	14
12	Idolatry	5
13	War	4
14	Social	15
15	Family	15
16	Judicial	8
17	Slaves	4
18	Wrongful Acts	13
total		248



Groups of Negative Commandments:

1	Idolatry	45
2	Historical Events	14
3	Blasphemy	7
4	Temple	22
5	Sacrifices	69
6	Priests	14
7	Dietary Laws	30
8	Nazirites	8
9	Agriculture	20
10	Business & Slaves	43
11	Justice	57
12	Forbidden Relationships	32
13	The Monarchy	4
total		365



ments into a spreadsheet, and here is what the first twenty positive commandments look like in summary form:

By way of explanation, column 1 is simply a running count of the commandments; columns 2, 3, and 4 show the book, chapter, and verse of that commandment where Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are numbered from 1 to 5. Depending upon the font size one chooses, printing out all 613 commandments takes only about a dozen pages, in landscape orientation. That's a whole lot less than, say, the 2015 printing of the California Drivers' Handbook, which takes over 100

pages, or the IRS federal tax code, which, as of April 2015, was more than 74,000 pages long. God was relatively concise about how we are to live, wasn't He?

However, the main reason all of the commandments were entered into a spreadsheet was not to simply facilitate printing them out but, more importantly, to enable a detailed review of them so that, when one speaks of "the laws," we all know exactly what those laws are. Furthermore, we can then determine which, if any, of the five above-listed positions of Messianic believers make sense. In addition, we can then see what differences exist within the believing community regarding how well we are observing—or indeed can observe—these commandments. There are quite a few folks "out there" who take a measure of pride in stating that they are Torah observant. Are they? Having all of

the laws entered into a spreadsheet will allow an objective measure to that question. In a real sense, I have now constructed the very first Torah test that I know of (perhaps someone else has done this before me, but my unpublished version dates back to 2003). Regardless, this spreadsheet now permits any and all people to measure just how Torah observant they are and to then compare their "score" with those of others. In approaching this measurement, I divided the 613 commandments into five categories:

- (1) Not relevant to almost anyone's life today because it is **Not Observable**.
- (2) Most **B**elievers (both Messianic and non-Messianic) regularly observe this.
- (3) Most **M**essianic **B**elievers regularly, or at least often, observe this.
- (4) Only the **M**essianic believers who are "**T**orah **P**ositive" (i.e. those that make a definite, concerted effort to follow Torah) observe this.
- (5) Most Messianic believers who are "Torah Positive" *could* observe this, but most do not.

For simplicity in discussion, let me define the following short-hand notation:

- (1) **NO** (not observable laws)
- (2) **B** (most believers observe these laws)
- (3) **MB** (most Messianic believers observe these laws)
- (4) **MTP** (most Messianic Torah Positive believers observe these laws)
- (5) **No MTP** (not even MTP believers observe these laws, even though they could)

Now let's take a look at a sample of the 613 commandments and see how this nomenclature applies. It will help if we create a table that has the following seven columns:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| A. Command # | D. B |
| B. Summary explanation | E. MB |
| C. NO | F. MTP |
| | G. No MTP |

The table should now look like this:



Summary:

#	Bk	Ch.	v.	Topic	Summary Explanation
1	2	20	2	God	You are required to believe that God exists.
2	5	6	4	God	You are required to acknowledge His unity.
3	5	6	5	God	You are required to love God.
4	5	6	14	God	You are required to fear God.
5	2	23	25	God	You are required to serve God.
6	5	10	20	God	You are required to cleave to God.
7	5	10	20	God	You are required to swear only by His Name.
8	5	28	9	God	You are required to imitate God.
9	3	22	32	God	You are required to sanctify His Name.
10	5	6	7	Torah	You must recite the Shema each morning and evening.
11	5	6	7	Torah	You must study the Torah and teach it to others.
12	5	6	8	Torah	You must bind tefillin on your head.
13	5	6	8	Torah	You must bind tefillin on your arm.
14	4	15	38	Torah	You must wear fringes on your garments.
15	5	6	9	Torah	You must put a mezuzah on the door.
16	5	31	10	Torah	The people must be assembled every 7th year to hear the Torah read.
17	5	17	18	Torah	The king must write a special copy of the Torah for himself.
18	5	31	19	Torah	Everyone must have a Torah scroll.
19	5	8	10	Torah	One should praise God after eating.
20	2	25	8	Temple Priests	You should build a temple.



We can begin to fill in this table by considering a sampling of ten of the 613 commandments:

- (1) Consider command #1 (in row 2): "You are required to believe that God exists." This command is clearly true of all believers. Therefore, let us indicate that by putting a "1" in row 2, column D, i.e. the column labeled "B", meaning all believers observe this command.
- (2) Next consider command #2: "You are required to acknowledge His unity." This command is also clearly true of all believers. Therefore, we will indicate that by putting a 1 in row 3, column D.
- (3) Consider command #206: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This, too, should be a command which all believers observe. Once again, let's put a 1 in row 4, column D.
- (4) Consider command #15: "You must put a mezuzah on the door." This is a command which most Messianic believers probably observe, but non-Messianic believers probably don't. Therefore, we'll put a 1 in row 5, column E.

- (5) Consider command #19: "One should praise God after eating." Like the previous command, this is probably observed only by Messianic believers; therefore, let us put a 1 in row 6, column E.
- (6) Consider command #163: "You must rest on the day of Rosh HaShannah." This is a command which many Messianic believers do not often observe, but MTP believers more likely will take the day off from work on Rosh HaShannah. Therefore, we can put a 1 in row 7, column F.
- (7) Consider command #216: "Should a man die childless, his brother should marry his widow." I have never heard of even a single MTP believer follow this command. Therefore, I put a 1 in row 8, column G.
- (8) Consider command #53: "Every male should make a pilgrimage to the Temple during the three pilgrim festivals." While any believer living outside of Israel today *could* jump on an airplane and fly to Jerusalem for Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot (the three pilgrimage appointed times), in truth, not even MTPs do that. Therefore, as for the previous command, we will put a 1 in row 9, column G.

(9) Consider command #22: "You should guard the Temple at all times." This command is talking about the temple that God would call Solomon to build in Jerusalem. That temple is long gone, destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. When the Second Temple was built, one could argue that the temple was available again; but it was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, so we now have no functioning temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, it is not possible to observe this commandment, even if someone wanted to. Accordingly, we put a 1 in row 10, column C.

(10) Finally, consider command #50, "Musaf (additional) sacrifice should be offered on every day of Sukkot." As for the previous command, without a functioning temple, there is no way of making the *musaf* sacrifice, or any other animal sacrifice (many of which are called for in this list of 613 commandments). Thus, we will put a 1 in row 11, column C.

This process can be followed for each of the 613 commandments, provided one is willing to: (a) take the time to read each commandment, (b) properly consider who would likely obey it (opinions would, of course, differ on this), and (c) total up the results. I did that and now offer my results. (At the end of this article, I will explain how anyone who wishes to can freely download



Summary Explanation:

#	Summary Explanation	N.O	B	MB	MTP	No MTP
1	You are required to believe that God exists.		1			
2	You are required to acknowledge His unity.		1			
206	You shall love your neighbor as yourself.		1			
15	You must put a mezuzah on the door.			1		
19	You should praise God after eating.			1		
163	You must rest on the day of Rosh HaShannah.				1	
216	Should a man die childless, his brother should marry his widow.					1
53	Every male should go to the Temple during the three pilgrim festivals.					1
22	You should guard the Temple at all times.	1				
50	Musaf (additional) sacrifice should be offered on every day of Sukkot.	1				



my spreadsheet from the web and fill in their own answers; my spreadsheet will automatically total and summarize your results for you when you are done.)

The results reveal a number of things about the issue of Mosaic Law observance:

- (1) Well over half of the 613 commandments cannot be observed by anyone today, even if they wanted to. Therefore, whoever claims to be Torah observant is not telling the truth.
- (2) Most believers—even church attendees who are not striving to observe the Mosaic Law—actually observe almost 30% of them anyway.
- (3) Most Messianic believers only observe about 5% more than the non-Messianic church attendees.
- (4) Even those who are serious MTPs fail to observe 8% of the commandments that they could observe.
- (5) The difference between the number of commandments that most MTPs observe and those that most MBs observe is only about 1%. In other words, MTPs observe only about five more commandments than MBs. There is precious little difference between the MTPs and the MBs! So, why the division?

In order to summarize the above results in as graphic way as possible, I made the following pie chart:



The thin blue slice is all that separates MBs from MTPs! I therefore address the following question to all those who wish to make the observance of the Mosaic Law an issue: Do you really think it honors the Lord to create division within the Messianic movement over fewer than 1% of the Mosaic Law? I think not. Furthermore, here are some closing thoughts on the matter from the Scriptures:

- Moses: *You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD (Lev. 19:18, emphasis added).*
- John: *For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (1 Jn. 3:11, emphasis added).*
- Peter: *... fervently love one another from the heart (1 Pet. 1:22c, emphasis added).*
- Paul: *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (Rom. 13:8a, emphasis added).*
- Yeshua: *By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35, emphasis added).*

There clearly is a common thread expressed by these men of God that cannot be missed: Above all, love one another. Therefore, rather than creating division within today's Messianic movement over the Mosaic Law, recognize how few reasons there really are to divide. From this day forward, then, armed with the facts about how tiny the differences are between us, may we look upon all of our brothers and sisters—even those who may feel very differently than we do about the importance of trying to observe the laws of Moses—as our brothers and sisters indeed, fellow members of the family of God.



Results:

Category	Total	%
N.O.	358	58%
Most B observe	169	28%
Most MB observe (in addition)	29	5%
Most MTPs observe (in addition)	5	1%
Even most MTPs don't observe	52	8%
TOTAL	613	100%



If anyone wishes to take the above-described Torah test, just email me (Doug@BenDavidM-JC.org) and I'll send you the file. I'll also try to answer any questions you may have about it.



New York City is where I was born and where I grew up. More specifically, it was the borough of Brooklyn, which in the 1960s was a center of worldwide Judaism rivaled only by Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. Even more specifically, it seemed to me as a young boy that the world I experienced was almost entirely Jewish.

An example would be the housing project where I grew up, my “neighborhood” in Brooklyn. We lived in a large building which had nine apartments on each floor. There were eight floors and, thus, 72 families in the building. As a child, I would walk up and down those hallways and notice that the vast majority of entrances had two signs which indicated that a Jewish family lived inside. On the thick, brown metal doors would usually be a sticker noting that the family inside had donated to one or more of the popular Jewish charities of the day: Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem or the Jewish National Fund, which planted trees in Israel.

The second sign that a Jewish family lived there would be a small, rectangular box made of metal or wood that had been glued to the right hand doorpost at eye level.

That box is called a mezuzah. It is fastened there in obedience to a passage given by God through Moses which commands: *You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates* (Deut. 6:9). The pronoun *them* refers to the following words which immediately precede the mezuzah command: *Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might* (Deut. 6:4,5). When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment in the Torah, it is this very verse that He cited in Matthew 22:37. If one transliterates the original Hebrew text, the verses read: *Shema Yisrael: Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad! V'ahavta Adonai Elohecha, b'chol l'vavcha uv'chol nafsh'cha uv'chol m'odecha.*

This most famous passage in the entire Jewish Bible along with several other verses is written in Hebrew letters on a small, thin leather parchment, rolled into a tiny scroll, and placed into the open back of the mezuzah box. The box is then sealed, and in accordance with the Deuteronomy 6:9 passage above, fastened to the right doorpost. Most Jewish families have a mezuzah only on their front doorway, while Orthodox Jews put one on the doorpost of nearly every room in the home or business.

The average kosher mezuzah scroll is approximately four inches square (10 cm) and is made of cattle or goat skin that has

been cleaned, stretched, and sanded smooth, the same process used in biblical times and today to make a full-size Torah scroll. The 22 lines that make up the mezuzah are written with a quill pen dipped in thick ink made from an old formula of oak nut resin, acacia tree sap, oils, and charcoal soot. The scroll is called a *sopher*, which in Hebrew means “scribe.”

The mezuzah case can be inexpensive or costly. It can be large or small. It can be made of fine metal, pewter, ceramic pottery, or even plastic. Toward the top of the case, printed on the outside, will be the Hebrew letter *shin*, the first letter of the word *Shaddai*, meaning “Almighty.” Ornamentation and artwork are permitted on the mezuzah case, and so, one sometimes sees motifs of clowns or even superheroes at the entrance to a child’s bedroom.

As the case is a basic rectangular box, it is generally placed in a vertical position by Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews from the Middle East. Ashkenazi Jews like myself, whose ancestors spent a thousand years in Europe, hold to the tradition of tilting the top of the case in toward the door. The reason for the tilt will sound funny, but it is an example of how many Jewish traditions that are revered today actually evolved and are the product of compromise. In the 11th century, Rashi, a famous French rabbi and an authority on Jewish law, issued an opinion that when a mezuzah is fastened, it should be hung vertically. Years later Rashi’s grandson Rabbi Tam wrote that a mezuzah should be affixed horizontally because, in his understanding, the Ten Commandments and the Torah scrolls were kept horizontally in the ark in the Temple. About a hundred years later, the community decided that the way to honor both traditions was to compromise and affix the mezuzah at a slant, pointing into the room.

As for the inscription inside, traditional Orthodox practice is to insist on a “kosher” scroll, one that is made from properly prepared parchment and hand written with



a quill pen in the traditional manner by an Orthodox Jewish scribe. Those Jewish families who are not Orthodox often simply use the sample printed paper scrolls that come in some mezuzah cases.

While the above is the basic explanation of what a mezuzah is, as believers in Messiah Jesus and as Bible students, we want to go a little deeper. The Deuteronomy passage is found in the context of Moses' farewell message to the people of Israel, in which he encouraged them to follow the one true God as they were about to enter the land of Canaan. Moses knew that they might be tempted by the people occupying the country to worship idols in addition to the God of Israel, and so he admonished them, "Hear and obey, people of Israel: Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone."

It is likely that in the earliest years after the command was given, individuals actually took an instrument to write out the words on their bare doorposts. As they sat in their houses and walked along the way (Deut. 6:7), the words were a constant reminder that Jehovah was the only true God and the only God they worshiped. During the time I lived and studied in Jerusalem, I saw several homes with entrances made of stone where someone had taken an awl and deeply engraved into the stone the beginning of the phrase *Shema Yisrael*.

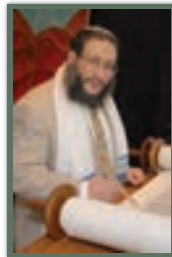
As is the case with so many biblical laws, the command to affix a mezuzah was given to remind people of their relationship with God. However, for some it has simply become a tradition that is adhered to out of a sense of obligation and identity. The practice of lightly touching the mezuzah upon entering a room and then bringing those fingers to the mouth for a symbolic kiss is likewise intended to remind one of the reverence we have for the words of Torah; but again, this can be either a reflexive move or something done with heartfelt intention.

As believers in Messiah Jesus, we need to be careful not to be overly swayed by outward

shows of religious tradition to the point where we hide our faith. On one hand, we see Jesus and the apostles fully participating in biblical Jewish traditions in the Gospels and the twelve continuing that practice in the book of Acts. Romans 14 reminds us that we have freedom in these areas of Jewish practice and cultural traditions. First Corinthians 9:20-21 further states:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the [Mosaic] law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Messiah's law), so as to win those not having the law.

While it is my personal practice to have a mezuzah on the doorpost of my home, and the vast majority of Jewish believers do likewise, I am under no legal obligation to do so because we are no longer under Mosaic Law. An increasing number of Gentile believers are fixing Mezzuzot to their doorways as a means of identifying with the Jewish community and providing opportunities for discussion about their faith in the Messiah of Israel. That can be a very positive thing if done for the right reasons. Most importantly, may God find us with His words written on the doorways of our hearts (Jer. 31:33)!



Mottel Baleston is the director of the Messengers Messianic Jewish Outreach of New Jersey and a teacher at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies. This text is the

fourth of a series of articles that will look at different items and terms found in or related to the Scriptures, while offering an understanding of these topics from the Jewish context and culture of the first century and today.

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INTRODUCTION



This study is based on the premise that the Talmud² contains rabbinic responses to the gospel story, intended

to neutralize the contention that Yeshua is the Jewish Messiah foretold by the prophets, expected by Second Temple period Jews, and announced in the Newer Covenant.³ Additionally, to some extent, the intra-familial interchanges between Yeshua and the Pharisees recorded in the Gospels continued through unilateral response during the Rabbinic period (200 CE-550 CE). This thesis assumes that the Newer Testament was accessible to the sages who constructed the Mishnah and Gemara, and that they were knowledgeable about its contents, whether by oral transmission or by reading gospel manuscripts. This is a

reasonable assumption since well before the Bavli Talmud was completed the Newer Testament scriptures were widely known and distributed within the Roman world.⁵

The Babylonian Talmud contains a number of writings that patently reference Yeshua; most, if not all of them, are disparaging.⁶ The primary reason for such malicious remarks is probably due to the number of Jews who came under the “spell” of the Newer Testament writings, many of whom embraced Yeshua and thereby challenged rabbinic authority. There were even a few sages reported in the Talmud to be the subject of Yeshua’s sphere of influence.⁷ Here is another chance for the post-70 CE rabbis and the anonymous voice of the Talmud to attack Yeshua without fear of a direct retort by the “opposition.” The Talmud was not widely

read by non-Jews. During the Medieval Ages it was the subject of censorship and even burning, but by then the “Talmudic anti-Yeshua monologue” was deeply ingrained within the Jewish psyche with little known counter-rebuttal. The Talmud had the ear of the Jewish reader. At stake here in the Talmud, as it was in the early part of the first century, was authority. The rabbis claimed authority from the succession of the sages as pronounced in Avot 1:1: “Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly.”⁸ However, Yeshua taught in his own name without citing the sages. This was perceived as a usurpation of proto-rabbinic authority, and post -70 CE Jews who embraced Yeshua were definitely accounted as outside the pale of rabbinic authority and thus the Mosaic faith.

METHODOLOGY



There are not many places where Yeshua is expressly named and treated within the “sea of the Talmud.”⁹ This

study identifies some of the obvious ones and then works backward to determine what gospel contention the Talmud is challenging. By retrograding in this way, we are able to determine what portions of the gospel the post-70 CE rabbis thought important enough to rebut, which were probably perceived as the ones that were most prone to challenge rabbinical authority. It is well to remember that only two major sects survived the destruction of the Second Temple: the Pharisees and the Nazarenes. The Pharisees morphed into the post-destruction Yavneh rabbis and the Nazarenes into Jewish Yeshua believers (Messianic Jews). The Messianic Jews adopted the Newer Covenant writings as their response to the destruction, while the rabbis constructed the Talmud in response. With these premises in place, let us begin the study.



THE NAME OF YESHUA AND HIS PEDIGREE



The Gospels present Yeshua as royalty. He is the offspring of David and thus heir to the eternal throne. From both his father Joseph and his mother Mary, he draws his lineage from King David whose progeny was promised the throne forever (Mt. 1; Lk. 3; II Sam. 7:12-16). Throughout the Gospels, He is addressed as the Son of David. He is born in Bethlehem, the place of David and the place from whence the One who would be “from everlasting” would be birthed (Mic. 5:1). He was destined to be the King of the Jews, and the Gospels tell us that He was taken to Egypt as an infant to escape the hand of Herod who had heard from the Magi of the east of this One who was to be born a King. He was given the name Yeshua, which means “salvation.” This was a common name in the first century, but it solidified this King Messiah’s mission as bringing salvation to the oppressed Jews under Roman legions, and also to the world. This was recognized early by Anna and Simeon when He was brought to the Temple as an infant (Lk. 2:25-38).

Miriam and Joseph were betrothed. The betrothal was really more like a marriage but without sexual intercourse. In fact, it took a divorce to sever a betrothal. When Miriam was found to be pregnant, Joseph was inclined to divorce her. Yet an angel intervened and let him know that this child was not one from an unfaithful relationship, but of the Holy Spirit. This biographical account sets the tone for Yeshua’s Messianic identity. It is noteworthy that we do not have a negative response to Yeshua’s origins and pedigree in the Newer Testament. Neither the Pharisees, the scribes, or the Sadducees protested the genealogy or the birth account. But now, with the rising threat of the Jewish Yeshua believers who

were locked out of the synagogue by 90 CE through the *birkhat haminin* pronouncement,¹⁰ the rabbis have a “shot” at a response that would undermine His legitimate claim to royalty, the throne, the messianic office, and hence deter Jewish “converts.”

In the Babylonian tractate *Shabbat*, the Gemara expounds on the law that denounces the writing of two or more letters on Shabbat as work.¹¹ The discussion turns to the question of the object of the writing and whether tattoos are prohibited. R. Eliezer says “yes,” and R. Yehoshua says that they are not prohibited. R. Eliezer, in the parallel reading of the Tosefta says: “But did not Ben Stada bring forth witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches/tattoos upon his flesh?”¹² The sages respond that Ben Stada was a fool and that a fool should not influence the implementation of the Sabbath laws.¹³ The uncensored version of the text then digresses by further debasing the defamed One through a discourse that attacks His pedigree apparently in direct response to the gospel account:

(Was he) the son of Stada (and not on the contrary) the son of Pandera?

Said Rav Hisda: the husband was Stada, (and) the lover was Pandera.

(But was not) the husband Pappos ben Yehuda and rather his mother Stada?

His mother was [Miriam], (the woman who) let (her) . . . [hair] grow long.

This is as they say about her in Pumbeditha: This one turned away from (was unfaithful to) her husband.¹⁴

Here is a question that needs to be resolved. Was this one the son of Stada or the son of Pandera? Rav Hisda, a rabbinic sage of the academy of Sura, suggests that there are two fathers—the husband and the lover—and thus two names were invoked: the son of Stada when referring to the husband and the son of Pandera when referring to the lover. But an anonymous voice rebuts this by saying that the father was Pappos b. Yehuda, and it was the

mother who was called “Stada.” Now, the discourse strays to the question of the meaning of “stada.” The rival academy in Pumbeditha responds and clarifies the meaning by noting that the mother’s name was actually Miriam; however, she is a “stada,” which means “one who has gone astray.”¹⁵ This raises the implication that she was unfaithful and, in fact, was a sotah and subject to the law of verification through drinking bitter water. This obviously plays to the hesitation that Joseph in the real story had against putting Miriam through the public display that the law required about testing for a woman’s unfaithfulness; so he contemplated divorcing her privately (Mt. 1:19).¹⁶

When all of this is digested it becomes clear that here is a post hoc attempt to denigrate the gospel story by impugning Miriam’s reputation, denying the legitimacy of Yeshua and thereby disqualifying Him from being the Jewish Anointed One. By pairing Miriam with Ben Pandera, the lover, this Yeshua is a *mamzer*, an illegitimate heir to any throne, and just a common person. Some translations refer to Miriam as a hairdresser, not so reputable a profession; the woman with long hair is equally spurned during this time as one who is promiscuous.¹⁷

In another Talmudic reference, we read that “Rabbi Shimon ben Azai said ‘I have found a roll of pedigrees in Jerusalem and therein is written a certain person of spurious descent...’”¹⁸ And another portion reads: “She was the descendant of princes and rulers; she played the harlot with carpenters.”¹⁹ Here are reinforced attacks on the genealogy of Miriam, from whom Yeshua claims direct Davidic rule, by alleging “spurious” descent and illegitimacy. However, it would be very unlikely that any records were recovered from the Jerusalem Temple area post-70 CE because of its total obliteration. Matthew and Luke both had access to the Temple records before the 70 CE destruction, and there was the place and the time to dispute the ances-



try, not centuries later when the records were no longer available and only speculation abounded.

THE DISCIPLES OF YESHUA



Yeshua had twelve apostles; when Judas was lost, the disciples cast lots and a replacement disciple was tapped (Acts 1: 12-26). The number twelve is significant. First, it is a substantial number, indicating that Yeshua had a critical mass of inner-circle devotees, whom he was specially discipling. But even more significant is the fact that there were twelve sons of Jacob, giving rise to twelve tribes. Hence, the twelve apostles correspond in some spiritual and eschatological way with the twelve tribes of Israel. In the New Jerusalem, the twelve apostles' names will be written in the twelve foundations of the wall (Rev. 21:4). This of course completes the high honor of the apostles who were chosen by Yeshua, much in the same way as the sages chose their disciples in that day. The apostles were the foundation of the *kehilah*,²⁰ of which the cornerstone is Yeshua. This lofty position was manifest throughout the Gospels.

The Talmud takes aim at the number twelve by listing only five of the apostles: Matthai, Nequai, Netzer, Buni, and Thodah.²¹ Moreover, instead of the exalted position the apostles find in the Gospels and their commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel, immersing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19), the Talmud relegates them to condemnation and death by execution for the "crime" of befriending Yeshua. They all died their deserved death, according to the Talmud.

What is even more rewarding in our search for the depths of the Talmudic exposition is the dialogue between rabbis on the mean-

ing of each of the names of the five disciples. Each disciple protests his death penalty citing a scriptural reference that portrays the good meaning of the name; a sage, however, counters with the same Hebrew word in a scripture that speaks of death. Each of these scriptural pleas for life and rabbinic rebuttals for death can be cryptically applied to the disciple's master, Yeshua,²² depending upon one's position.

THE TEACHINGS OF YESHUA



Here is where the Talmud is able to continue the dialogue that started between Yeshua and the Pharisees. Although there are a number of Talmudic passages that rebut the teachings of Yeshua, one stands out and is illustrative of the contention that the Talmud contains a counter-narrative to the gospel stories and in a sense serves up the last word from the rabbinical side of the dispute. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read:

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat! . . . Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth that is what defiles them." Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?" He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual

immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them." (Mt. 15: 1-20)

Here, Yeshua bested the Pharisees in the sparring. Just previously, He had turned the tables by saying that it is they who actually transgress the commandments of God by a certain tradition whereby under the guise of declaring possessions *korban*, they are able to defeat the commandment to honor parents by supporting their material needs (Mt. 15:3-9). This attack upon their Pharisaic rabbinical predecessors did not sit well with the Talmudic rabbis who looked back on the contest and now lodged a rebuttal and the ultimatum. The Talmud's counter-narrative condemns Yeshua for eternity, relegating Him to "boiling in his own excrement."²³ Thus, the rabbinic response to Yeshua is that since He undermines hand washing purity laws, He will be condemned to lie in His own excrement for eternity, thus providing the lesson to all those Jews who follow Him that what goes into the mouth and comes out the stomach does matter.²⁴ It is noteworthy that the Rabbis misunderstood Yeshua's narrative. He was certainly not saying that His Jewish followers could eat anything whether kosher or not. He was merely expounding on the tradition of hand washing and teaching that such tradition must yield to Mosaic commandments when they are in conflict, an accepted rabbinical practice today.

There is still another possibility for the underlying rationale for the vile accusation that Yeshua is "boiling in his own excrement." It is perhaps a response to the promise of eternal life that Yeshua offers to His followers through His resurrection. On the crucifixion stake, He said to the thief on the cross who repented: *Today you shall be with me in paradise* (Lk. 23:43). In fact, the Talmudic retort is, "No, Yeshua will not be in paradise but will be in hell burning in his own excrement," a pronouncement intending to send a frightening message to all those contemplating following Yeshua.



THE MIRACLES OF YESHUA



Yeshua performed miracles in the manner of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. The miracles were a sign of His specialness and, along with His teaching, attracted crowds. His popularity grew, and the word spread. His miracles consisted of healing the blind, the lame, and the dumb, as well as calming the winds, walking on water, and multiplying the bread and the fish. His authority came either from God or from the devil. Talmudic authorities answered that question by insisting that He derived His magical powers from the charms He had brought out of Egypt, thus disparaging the origins of His miracles while conflating and distorting a number of the gospel entries. Yeshua was shuttled to Egypt when a young child in order to flee from Herod. And there were magicians in Egypt from the time of Moses. The Talmud simply says that He “wrought his miracles by means of sorcery, which he had brought with him from Egypt.”²⁵ Hence, the Talmud picks up on the explanation of the Pharisees who accused Yeshua of casting out demons by the prince of demons (Mt. 12:24). It further explains that He got the sorcery out of Egypt by hiding the magic in an incision in his flesh,²⁶ thus breaking the law, certainly making Him ineligible to be the unblemished Lamb of God.

THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF YESHUA



The trial of Yeshua is treated in each of the Gospels (Mt. 27-28; Mk. 15-16; Lk. 22-24; Jn. 18-21).

Jewish law comprehends several methods of capital punishment, but not crucifixion. That was a Roman method. The Sanhedrin's right to implement the death penalty was stripped by the Empire well before Yeshua's execution. We know that Yeshua was convicted by the high priest and presumably the leaders of the Sanhedrin and turned over to the sovereign for execution, which under Jewish law was appropriate for the crime charged: blasphemy.

The Gospels assign some blame for the condemnation of Yeshua upon the high priest and the Sanhedrin of the day. However, there are elements that can raise an eyebrow, even in the Gospels, that militate in favor of the Roman government's culpability. First, the mode of execution is by crucifixion, a Roman not a Jewish method. Second, the Sanhedrin did not have the power to implement the death penalty. Third, there is a serious question about the legality of the trial process, suggesting that the Roman authorities under the circum-

stances are at fault for executing on a sentence that lacked due process.²⁷

The Talmud's response is a strange admixture of semi-truths gleaned from the Gospels, but modified for a particular purpose. Perhaps the purpose was to unequivocally place the blame on the Jewish people for the death of Yeshua, in order to make it clear that Yeshua deserved what He got for the sin of blasphemy. It would be difficult for the Talmud to justify the penalty while denying Jewish culpability.

The Talmud is recorded as saying that Yeshua was hung on the eve of the Passover.²⁸ Hanging was a form of punishment that was utilized by the Jews before they were stripped of it by Rome. First, the convicted would be stoned and then hung publicly. The Talmudic voice does not want to suggest that Yeshua was crucified but rather was hung in the manner of the Jews, thereby placing the responsibility for Yeshua's death squarely upon Jewish law, which supports the death penalty for blasphemy. Anticipating the accusation that Yeshua was not afforded due process, the Talmudic account clothes the procedure with legitimacy in at least two reports. One passage says that a herald went forth for 40 days before the execution, announcing the charges against Yeshua and pleading for anyone who knew something that would exonerate him to speak up. The law required the herald to go in front of the accused only immediately before the sentence was executed.²⁹ However, the Talmud in the special case of





Yeshua, because He was “close to the government” (*malchut*), delivers super due process to Him. At the same time, this explains why Pilate sought to exonerate Him (“because He was close to the government”). Second, the Talmud states that two witnesses were in the outer chamber while Yeshua was questioned in the inner chamber and thus heard Him blaspheme. This anticipates that there would be disagreement as to whether from the gospel story, two witnesses freely confirmed His guilt. Although the Talmud concedes that this “concealment” is highly irregular, it justifies it once again because, allegedly, Yeshua was favored by the sovereign and apparently would otherwise secure help from the Roman authorities.³¹

CONCLUSION



This study was not intended to be comprehensive, but only selective. It has not exhausted all of the Talmudic passages that refer to Yeshua, but sampled them under the gospel story. There is much that the Talmud does not expressly say about Yeshua, including any direct rebuttal to the resurrection claim. This is probably intentional so that attention would not be drawn to the resurrection; yet, it is impliedly rebutted by all the other defamations against Yeshua contained within the Talmud.

The study has presented a type of model for examining Talmudic disparagements of Yeshua by casting them as a specific reaction to the gospel claims. That model reads the Talmud references as a counter-narrative to the gospel story contained within the Newer Covenant. It continues the polemical conversation with Yeshua and His disciples expressed in both halakhic and aggadic discourses. By reacting to the gospel story, it becomes clear that the rabbis who had placed the Newer Covenant scriptures on the banned list nonetheless had a familiarity with them.

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Footnotes

- ¹ This article is based on a paper submitted to St Petersburg Seminary and Yeshiva in BNT 5523 Gospels in Jewish Context, Spring Semester 2013 taught by Dr. John Fischer. It was first published in volume 32:4 of *The Messianic Outreach* and is reprinted with permission. Minor edits have been made to the original text.
² In this article, the term “Talmud” includes the Mishnah and the Gemara.
³ See Peter Schafer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 16.
⁴ Babylonian Talmud
⁵ By the second century, the harmony of the four Gospels (*Diatessaron*) compiled by Tatian was circulating, and in the 5th century, the *New Testament Peshitta* was circulating. For an extensive treatment of the early versions of the Gospels, see Bruce Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford, Eng.: Clarendon Press, 1977), 10ff. Certainly Trypho, the Jew in dialogue with Justin Martyr, was aware of the gospel story in the middle of the second century.
⁶ The Yerushalmi Talmud also includes some disparaging comments about Yeshua, however, more sparingly, probably because it was less isolated from Christian watch and influence than the Amoraim in Babylon who were given great freedom under the Sasanian Empire. Nonetheless, the Talmud was under great threat, especially during the Middle Ages in Europe where disputations and persecutions often resulted in its burning and/or the censor's hand who extracted the denigrating portions. It is nonetheless possible to reconstruct the “original” by examining different Talmudic versions during different eras as has been facilitated by the electronic collections of manuscripts both online and maintained at the Jewish Theological Seminary. For a list of the various versions and comparisons, see Schafer, 131-44.
⁷ They included Shmuel Hakatan, the rabbi who reputedly constructed the *birkat hamaminim* and who was unable to pronounce the curse against the heretics, which included the Nazarene sect, either because he forgot it or because he had become a believer and would not level a curse against himself; Ben Zoma, a prominent second-century tannaitic sage who was adjudged as being “on the outside” by his peers, perhaps because he had gone astray, evidenced by his “trinitarian” allusions and cryptic comments about the virgin birth. See: *b. Hagigah*, 14b-15a; see also Samson H. Levey, “The Best Kept Secret of the Rabbinic Tradition,” *Judaism* (Fall 1972): 454-469. There was also Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, a Mishnaic sage who was effectively put under the ban for listening to a disciple of Yeshua, whose words he found pleasing. See: Rachmiel Frydland, “Yeshua and the Rabbis,” *The Messianic Outreach* Vol. 14:1 (1994): 41-42. Finally, there was Eleazar b. Dama who sought healing from a snake bite in the name of Yeshua. See: *b. Hullin* 2:22f.
⁸ *m. Pirke Avot* 1:1.
⁹ Some deny that the Talmud has anything to say about Yeshua, although this is a stretch. Gil Student, *The Jesus Narrative in the Talmud*, <http://www.angelfire.com/mt/talmud/jesusnarr.html> (last accessed August 3, 2013).
¹⁰ *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, Edited by Charlotte Elishiva Fonrobert and Martin Jaffee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xviii, 258-59.

- ¹¹ *m. Shabbat* 12.4; *b. Shabbat* 104.b.
¹² Schafer, 16.
¹³ *Ibid.*
¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.
¹⁵ See Joseph S., “Yeshua in the Talmud” *The Messianic Outreach*, Vol. 3:4 (1984): 13-14, arguing that the Talmud writers lacked understanding of the time of Yeshua's birth and His father's name.
¹⁷ Schafer, 18.
¹⁸ *b. Yebamot* 4.13.
¹⁹ *b. Sanhedrin* 106.
²⁰ Hebrew for “congregation.”
²¹ *b. Sanhedrin* 43a.
²² Mattai's plea: “When (*Matta*) shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:3); rejoinder: “When (*Matta*) will he die and his name perish?” (Psalm 41:6). Naqqai's plea: “You shall not execute the innocent (*naq*) and the righteous” (Ex. 23:7); rejoinder: “From a covert he executes the innocent (*naq*)” (Psalm 10:8). Netzer's plea: “An offshoot (*netzer*) shall grow forth out of his roots” (Isaiah 11:1); rejoinder: “You shall be cast forth away from your grave like an abhorred off-shoot” (*netzer*) (Isaiah 14:19). Buni's plea: “My son (*ben*), my firstborn is Israel” (Exodus 4:22); rejoinder: “Behold I will execute your firstborn son (*binka*)” (Exodus 4: 23). Todah's plea: “A Psalm for thanksgiving (*todah*)” (Psalm 100:1); rejoinder: “He who sacrifices the sacrifice of Thanksgiving (*todah*) honors me” (Psalm 50:23). *Ibid.*, 75-76.
²³ *b. Erubin* 21b.
²⁴ Schafer, 88-91.
²⁵ See, for example, *b. Shabbath* 104b.
²⁶ This teaching can be seen in the ancient book *Sefer Toledot Yeshu* (abbreviated as *Toledot Yeshu*), a polemic satire of the Gospels. The text exists in different versions, which seem to have been widely circulated in Europe and the Middle East during the medieval times. In their analysis of the text, Meerson and Schäfer state: “It is the insertion of the ineffable Name into Yeshu's flesh . . . that turns Yeshu into the all-powerful magician.” See: Michael Meerson, Peter Schäfer, eds. and translators, *Toledot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus*, vol. 1 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), p. 69.
²⁷ For an exhaustive treatment of the trial of Yeshua examined by an Israeli justice of Israel's High Court, see Haim Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus* (Saybrook, CT: Konecky & Konecky, 2000), who concludes that Rome was responsible for the death of Yeshua. See also *Why was the death of Jesus illegal?* <http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/how-was-arrest-trial-jesus-contrary-to-biblical-jewish-law.html> (last accessed August 3, 2013).
²⁸ *b. Sanhedrin* 43 a-b.
²⁹ *b. Sanhedrin* 43a.
³⁰ *Ibid.*
³¹ See the discussion in Schafer, 63-74.



That Sunday evening, I was a nervous wreck! It was as if I was having an “out-of-body experience.” My stomach was churning; I felt flushed and light-headed. I remembered experiencing similar feelings several years earlier, but the cause of tonight's angst was my first sermon in a church.

I was a recent graduate from Northeastern Bible College in Essex Fells, New Jersey. I was 24 years old and newly married. The worship center was packed with people.

Even more stressful was the attendance of my Jewish mother and father! This was surreal. I started asking myself questions driven by fear, anxiety, and doubt: “What’s a young Jewish man doing in a Baptist Church? Am I crazy? Is this a dream? Am I really doing this?” Pacing the pastor’s office, I stopped, fell to my knees, and prayed. It became a time of regaining my spiritual and emotional moorings. God filled me with a calming peace. My focus shifted from me to Him. From fear, I found joy, peace, and confidence in Him alone as my source of sufficiency. I enjoyed a time of thanksgiving and worship, amazed by all God had done in my life in just three years. And to think

my parents actually *wanted* to be there—in a church. It was a miracle I could not have imagined!

As the service began, I ascended the platform with our senior pastor and worship leader. The organ and piano were playing, and as I sat down, I saw my mom and dad sitting in the worship center, up front, in the center pew. Again I prayed, this time for my parents. This was a “first” for them as well. They had never been in a church. It was quite an evening, and God was gracious in using this humble servant and allowing me the great privilege of being a channel through which He might speak the truth of Scripture. The evening ended with a touch of humor, as my “Yiddish” mom delivered this line: “With a mouth like that, you should have been a lawyer!”

I experienced a similarly stressful evening a few years earlier, on November 7, 1971. I was a twenty year old student at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey. I had heard the message of Jesus as Savior and Messiah five months earlier at a high school graduation party of a close friend. I rejected the notion that a “traitor” could be my Savior. That was my impression of Jesus at that stage of life. After all, He was a Jew who had betrayed Judaism to start a religion for the Gentiles! He was good enough for Gentiles, but not for Jews. This erroneous thinking was about to change.

The same people who shared with me the truth of Jesus at that summer graduation celebration five months earlier had now invited me to attend a Bible study for high school and college students. The small

group of followers of Jesus who planned and coordinated this event for months had been praying for me. The goal was to establish an evangelistic outreach to share Jesus with friends who needed to know His forgiveness, and this was the first night of that Bible study. From the very moment the invitation was extended, I knew my life was at a crossroads.

At the age of twenty, I was a typical college student of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. College was more about the party, less about study. And then there was the fear of the draft and the Vietnam War. Privately, my life had been in a spiral into depression. A broken relationship, too much self-indulgence, and a sense of emptiness permeated my private thoughts and emotions. Something had to change quickly. Only a few people knew of my private pain. There were no answers provided, and I found no sense of life purpose or direction.

And there I was on that November night in 1971! It was a first for me. I had never been in a church before, much less a Baptist church. Entering the church building was traumatic. All I could envision was the expectation of hearing Gregorian chants, seeing statues, and smelling incense and burning candles. Frankly, all Christians seemed to meld together into one lump of assumptions for me. And then there was the fear of seeing that cross, a symbol of persecution of Jews for centuries. I was relieved when I entered the building, as I was escorted to a basement room that resembled an elementary school classroom. There were no crosses, statues, incense, or candles! But there were lots of young adults, mostly my age.



They were eating and laughing and chatting. This was a far more familiar and welcoming environment. I knew this was to be a life-changing night—I just didn't know why or how.

The “meeting” began. Most of it was a blur. The people around me started singing choruses I had never heard before. They seemed filled with joy in their worshipping, celebrating their relationship with Jesus with melody, clapping, and smiles. Several shared personal words of reflection about their relationship with God. That sounded strange to me. I never thought of having a relationship with God. More songs, more sharing, and then an awkward time (for me) followed. They shared mutual concerns and spent time in prayer. I felt out of place, even lost. I had no idea to whom they were talking. The only praying I ever understood was a reading from our Hebrew prayer book during synagogue services. Those prayers were read, chanted, or recited, sometimes memorized from years of repetition during Sabbath worship services. I never thought about talking to God directly, using my own words and thoughts. They were communicating with God, as if they knew Him personally. A Bible-teaching time followed. It was led by one of the men who first shared the message of Jesus with me five months before. I had never heard anything like it. He was teaching about Jesus—who He was and why He died on the cross. He was reading and commenting from someplace in the New Testament, the Gospel of John. But that was for Gentiles, not Jews!

My head was spinning! My heart was no longer resistant, my will no longer oppositional. I actually began to understand what the man was teaching. I remember asking myself, “Could this be true? Have I been wrong about Jesus my entire life? Were we (my family, the Jewish people) all wrong?” After the meeting ended, I spoke with several who were in attendance. Some shared with me Old Testament prophecies that appeared to predict the coming of Jesus (Isa. 7:14, 9:6; Mic. 5:2) and His death on the cross for my sin (Isa. 53; Ps. 22) and the sins of my people. I had never studied or even

read those prophecies before. My heart was racing, and I was sensing this was the life change I had been anticipating.

The Bible study leader, Sam, approached me. It was the first time I had spoken to him since that graduation picnic five months before. At that time, my reaction to him was one of offense, even anger. I thought, “You have a lot of nerve telling me Jesus is my Messiah, my Savior! Who do you think you are?” But this time was different. My heart was at a very new place. I was open, seeking, yearning, and hungry. I desired to know this forgiveness, life, hope, and joy that Jesus offered to those who would believe in Him.

After a brief discussion with Sam, he asked me, “Gary, would you like to ask Jesus to be your Savior?” My response was a consequence of my heart being at that crossroads. I knew this was what I had been anticipating all day and longing for over many months. I knew this was the path toward a new beginning, a place of forgiveness, the lifting of despair, the promise of purpose, and the answers to the big questions about life. I said to him, “I think I've been waiting for someone to ask me that all night.”

With the crowd of youth mingling, chatting, laughing, and eating, Sam and I walked off to a private hallway. There we stood together in quiet, just outside the restrooms. What a place for life transformation! He again asked me if I was ready to ask Jesus into my life, surrender to Him as my Messiah and Savior. I was ready! He closed his eyes, and briefly prayed first, thanking God for this Bible study and for bringing me to this place. He thanked God, believing that night was meant especially for me, and I knew he was right. After he finished, it was my turn. I had never done this before—speaking to God, using my own words! But it was easy, for the first time. All the angst turned to unspeakable joy. My body was shaking, and my heart was exploding with excitement! I closed my eyes, and in simple words I exclaimed, “Oh, God, I believe you are real, and Jesus, I believe you are my Messiah and Savior. I ask you to forgive all my sin, and I give my life to

you.” That was it—short, simple, void of platitudes, theology, or self-promotion! I opened my eyes, and “all things became new.”

Given my upbringing, life influences, and family background, I never could have anticipated this night. I grew up in a traditional Jewish home. My grandfather on my mother's side, whom we affectionately called “Pa,” was the patriarch of our close-knit family in Newark, New Jersey. He was kosher in lifestyle and a diligent synagogue participant on most Sabbath weekends, intent on keeping the Law of Moses. We celebrated the annual Jewish high holy days together. Pa led our traditional family Passover Seders each spring. I admired him, even idolized him. He was the rock of our family.

I had gone to Hebrew School through my childhood, largely going through the motions. I guess you could say I did the typical Jewish thing, but without much personal interest or passion. Much of my religious life and pursuit concluded once I completed Bar Mitzvah at age 13. My disconnect from my religious roots became easier since Pa died from heart disease and cancer six months earlier. He was the primary reason the family remained cohesive, both relationally and spiritually. Over the ensuing years, the family began to splinter, broken by petty jealousy, resentments, greed, selfishness, and unresolved anger.

After my spiritual life transformation at age twenty, having believed in Jesus as Savior, Messiah, and Lord, the fracturing within the family intensified. My “conversion” became the straw that broke the camel's back. While my parents were confused, hurt, and devastated, they resisted the counsel of many, including family, to shun me and expel me from their lives. My extended family was enraged. They pressured my parents to take me to see the rabbi. I went, along with my father, to talk to our local rabbi. It had only been one month since my dramatic spiritual transformation.



There we sat in his office. I was in a chair close to his desk, with Dad sitting to my right, slightly behind me. I shared my story, relating what had happened in my life over the past month. I was both nervous and excited. I had been praying for several days about this opportunity to share with Rabbi my new-found faith in Jesus.

The previous month, I was so excited about all I had been learning, I even went back to my college friends at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey. I shared the truth about Jesus with many classmates, and they thought I was crazy, wondering what I had been “taking” to indulge myself. I found it exhilarating to talk about Jesus, share my new life experience, and communicate the truth of the Scriptures I had been discovering. I was burdened to reach those around me I knew were spiritually lost. I could not be silent. I understood my passion was much like that of the Apostle Paul two thousand years earlier (1 Cor. 9:16; 2 Cor. 5:11; Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1).

I saw every opportunity to talk about Jesus as a source of unspeakable joy and honor, especially with my family, and here with our rabbi. After sharing my story with the rabbi, I reached to grab my Bible which I had perched on his desk. I had honest questions, and I genuinely sought his insight.

That Bible was given to me the night I received Jesus as Savior, Messiah, and Lord. It was a King James Scofield Reference Bible, now marked with prolific notes and red magic marker underlining newly-discovered verses and passages. Since that night, I found myself magnetically drawn to the Bible. I couldn't put it down. It was alive, dynamic, and it was as if my eyes were now open to its truth, and I longed to study and understand it (Ps. 1:2-3; 19:7-14; 42: 1-2; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:18). I attended two weeknight Bible studies, and also Sunday church services, at the very same church where I had come to

faith just a month before. I took detailed notes at every study, not wanting to miss any opportunity to grow in my understanding of the Scriptures. My hunger for God (Mt. 5:6) seemed to allow me the ability to overcome the cultural challenges that came with attending this Baptist church.

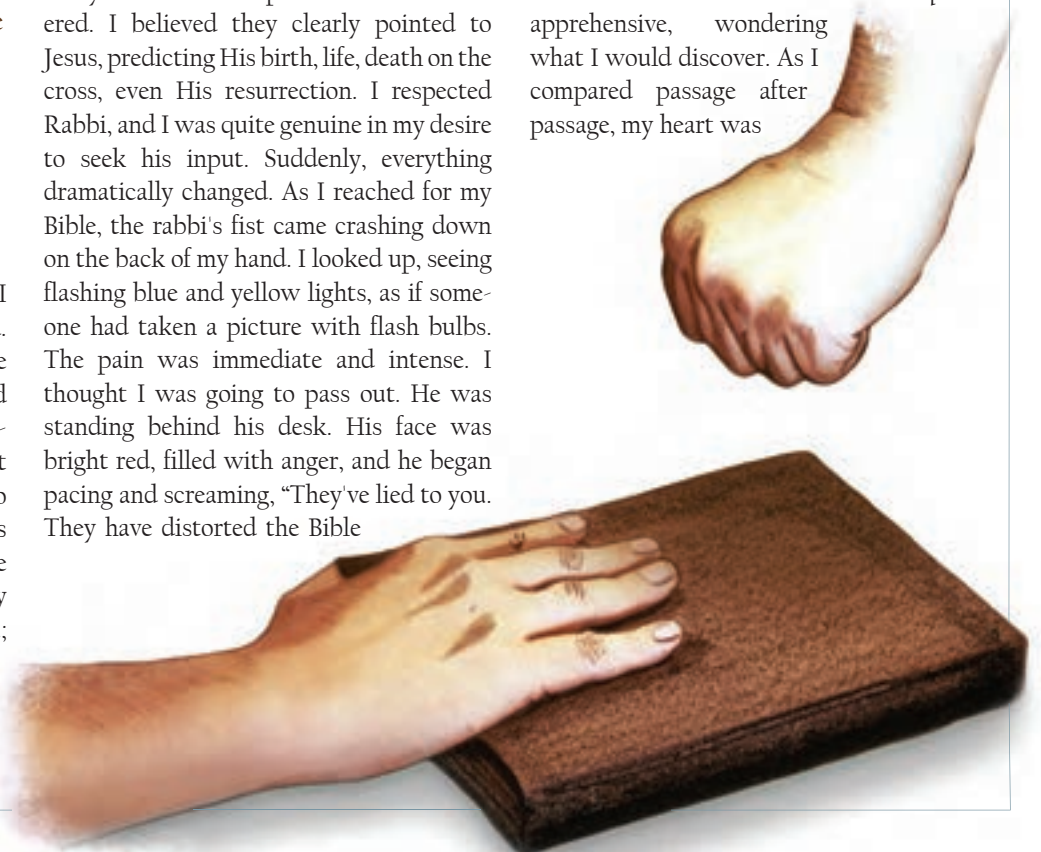
I did struggle for many weeks with the image of the cross, the offering plate as it circulated during worship, even the hymns and traditional church service. It was so vastly different from synagogue services. But the presence of many other Jewish believers in Jesus at this local church helped me to overcome those deeply embedded cultural offenses. Yes, there were many other Jewish followers of Jesus in this congregation. I thought this was normal, but eventually discovered my church was quite unique. What an environment to be spiritually nurtured, challenged, and encouraged. I became a “favorite son” among many in this loving, supportive congregation.

As I reached for my Bible, I intended to ask the rabbi his honest opinions about the many Old Testament portions I had discovered. I believed they clearly pointed to Jesus, predicting His birth, life, death on the cross, even His resurrection. I respected Rabbi, and I was quite genuine in my desire to seek his input. Suddenly, everything dramatically changed. As I reached for my Bible, the rabbi's fist came crashing down on the back of my hand. I looked up, seeing flashing blue and yellow lights, as if someone had taken a picture with flash bulbs. The pain was immediate and intense. I thought I was going to pass out. He was standing behind his desk. His face was bright red, filled with anger, and he began pacing and screaming, “They've lied to you. They have distorted the Bible

translation. They're deceiving you.” He continued to pace and rant, screeching at the top of his lungs. When it all ended, Dad and I left shaking. We were both in shock. All Dad said was, “I can't believe he did that. I can't believe he didn't let you talk.”

I went home startled and in much discomfort. The pain in my hand lasted for many months, reminding me of that frightening encounter, yet it paled in comparison to the spikes in the hands of my Savior, whose mighty hand was upholding me that very moment. Initially, I was shaken emotionally and spiritually. I respected Rabbi very much. I was young in my faith, and that night shook me to the core. I wondered, could it be true? Could he be right? Were the translations cunningly changed, were these teachers deceiving me? While I believed in Jesus, I was struggling with confusion.

The next day, I went to the local Jewish bookstore in a neighboring town. I purchased a copy of the Masoretic Text, the accepted English translation of the Hebrew Bible found in most synagogues. I hurried home, anticipating comparing my bible with this Hebrew text. I was quite apprehensive, wondering what I would discover. As I compared passage after passage, my heart was





relieved and filled with much joy. The translations were essentially the same. Slight variations were incidental, yet two interesting distinctions stood out. One was Isaiah 7:14, the virgin birth prophecy, where the term "young woman" replaced the term "virgin." I did research and noted the two terms in Hebrew were frequently interchangeable, essentially carrying the same meaning. The other was Isaiah 9:6, where the addition of the preposition "of" is found in the Masoretic Text, before the titles implying the deity of Messiah. In that translation it read as if the one described was not Himself the Messiah and God, but rather one who was sent by Messiah and God. My grammar research revealed the language did not allow for the preposition, but rather confirmed my Bible was accurate in its translation.

While I found great peace, joy, and reassurance, at the same time my heart was filled with grief and anguish. I realized the spiritual emptiness of the rabbi, my family, and all my people. How blinded they were to the truth (Rom. 11:25). It drove me to much prayer for them, and an intense desire to share the truth, as God provided opportunities. Those occasions increased over the years, with open doors to share Jesus with my parents and family, as well as many others through CPM and other ministries. Today, I serve as a pastor in State College, Pennsylvania, home of Penn State University. I have the privilege of shepherding a new, growing flock and engaging in work at the college with several campus ministries. I also have a part-time counseling practice, serving the local community, as well as Penn State students. In addition, God has opened a door of opportunity to conduct seasonal "Christ in the Passover" Seders. In all these years, I can continue to say,

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"
(2 Cor. 9:15),

and can rejoice in exclaiming the truth of the great psalm we recite every Passover at the fourth cup, the Cup of Praise, from Psalm 136: "His love endures forever."



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During the mid-1980s, the Lord's love for the Israeli people and the land was birthed in my heart whilst living in Israel. In the early 1990s, I traveled and worked with Israelis in the Far East who were on a "time-out" after completing their national army service. In 1993, while having morning coffee with Israeli friends on an island in Thailand, I asked them what their plans were for the day. One after the other told me they were going off to a Buddhist course, a Hindu meditation, or new age class run on the island. My heart filled with sorrow, and I felt real pain for them. I thought, "Of all the people who should know their Messiah, first of all it's the Israelis." From that day, the seed for the vision that became the *Gefen International Israeli Outreach* was planted, and later I realized that this perfectly fitted with Romans 1:16, which says the gospel must go to the Jewish people first.



Gefen International Israeli Outreach is a clear reflection and practical expression of God's heart for the Jewish people and for Israel, as revealed in His word (e.g., Gen. 12:3; Is. 62:11; 45:6; Jer. 31:3; Mt. 9:10-13; 10:23; 23:39; 25:34-40; Rom. 1:16; 10:1; 11:11-12, 25-26.) Its mission under God and for His glory is first to be a vehicle through which followers of Yeshua can practically bless and encourage thousands of Jewish Israelis traveling internationally and to give testimony as to the reason for their hope and faith. Second, it is to be a vehicle for believers to grow in their life with God and be blessed, as they love, bless, and pray for the Jewish people and share this truth with their own wider communities.



The majority of Israelis travel the world after completing their military service. During this time, an absolutely unique window of opportunity exists to give them gentle exposure to the gospel during a period when they actually have time to consider life's meaning and they are often searching for spiritual answers. Gefen means "vine" in Hebrew, and it is an international hospitality network for these Israeli travelers to freely use, where they are hosted by mature Jewish and Gentile believers in the true vine, Yeshua, the Messiah. The gospel is not pushed on the travelers, but the genuine love shown to them hugely touches their hearts, and they usually want to know why their host practices this "love to strangers." A natural as



well as divine opportunity is provided to give an answer and testimony of the faith.

Gefen ships and supplies *Hebrew Prophecy Edition New Covenant Bibles* and literature from Israel to host homes internationally, (where Israelis have visited), and other Hebrew Messianic literature for the Israelis to take free of charge. Many of these Bibles and books have been taken. Tanachs are also provided locally if possible.

So far, over 26,000 Israelis have used Gefen's international network. Most of them stay for several days, which means they are spending quality time with their believing hosts. Quite a number of Israelis have already come to the Lord and are being disciplined in Israeli congregations. Some have undertaken biblical studies and are now serving with Israeli congregations or are linked in projects. The frequency with which Israelis are coming to the Lord is also clearly increasing.

Gefen is very careful to find and accept only mature believers as hosts. These hosts, both Jewish and Gentile, are growing in their own faith as a result of hosting Israelis. They continue to press into the Lord to be more fruitful disciples of Yeshua and give an answer for their faith and hope. Gefen hosts also get invitations from Israelis they have hosted to come to Israel and stay with them, so a unique opportunity to visit and to be welcomed into Israeli homes is available.

The vast majority of comments from Israeli travelers are positive about the network, and the two reports in the Israeli secular media were 100 percent positive. This is nothing short of miraculous.

To support this great ministry in prayer, through your finances, and by becoming hosts, please visit our website to learn about the specifics: www.ariel.org/ariel-gefen.htm.

This text is a shortened and slightly edited version of the ministry's history, description, and mission statement. Please visit www.ariel.org/ariel-gefen.htm to read the full story and view a very encouraging video testimony from an Israeli who came to the Lord while using the network. There are also two video endorsements by leaders in the body of Messiah in Israel.



Anyone who has ever sat in one of Dr. Fruchtenbaum's classes on eschatology has heard him say that newspaper exegesis is a dangerous thing, and it is true. Trying to interpret current events against the backdrop of our eschatological knowledge can lead to much confusion. However, not many biblical topics received such direct promises of generating spiritual reward as the field of eschatology (e.g. Rev. 1:3), and the Lord Himself felt it important to inform us of His plans for the future (Mt. 24). The question then arises: What are we to do with our knowledge of things that will come to pass? One Jewish believer in Messiah, Joel C. Rosenberg, has answered this question for himself in a uniquely different way. In an interview, the author and founder of The Joshua Fund shared his thoughts with us. The interview was conducted by Lilian Granovsky. Also present were Joel's wife Lynn and the leader of Ariel Ministries Israel, Sasha Granovsky.

L: Before making Aliyah to Israel in 2014, you had the opportunity to work with some high-ranking Israeli politicians. What is it you actually did for them?

J: That's true, I did, and it was a great honor. I learned a great deal from them and their advisors. Back in 2000—sixteen years ago—I worked as a press aide to Natan Sharansky and then for Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu. I set up interviews for them, handled media requests, and helped them with a range of communications matters. In the case of Bibi, I worked for several months on his “comeback” campaign team, and they asked me to serve as the English language press secretary if he ran again for prime minister in 2001. In the end, however, Bibi was blocked from running, so this plan led nowhere. Now, it is important to remember that this was a long time ago. And it was not a season in my life where I was publicly preaching the gospel. I hadn't started writing books yet, and I was not preaching around the world. Neither was I on the Internet. Honestly, I don't think I would have been hired by Natan or Bibi or any other Israeli leader if I'd been so high profile at that time about my faith in Jesus the Messiah. I also do not want to suggest that I was doing more for them than I was. I only worked for Netanyahu for a few months, and then the campaign stopped. I only worked for Sharansky for a few months. As

I said, it was wonderful. I learned a lot. However, people often jump to conclusions, assuming that I was an advisor or even a “senior advisor” to Netanyahu, but that's not really the best way to characterize it. I was an aide. I helped the team. I loved it. But that's all.

L: Did they not know you were a believer?

J: Yes, both Natan and Bibi knew I was a believer, and they were both fine with that, as were their senior advisors. In the States, I was part of a wonderful Evangelical church, not the Messianic Jewish movement. And I was open about being an Evangelical Christian from a Jewish heritage. But again, at the time, I was not traveling around the world preaching the gospel to Jews and Muslims and writing Christian novels. So they were simply hiring a guy who had a lot of experience in the area of communications, and I'm glad they did. Working for both of them had a big impact on the political thrillers I would come to write.

L: In 2002, you published your first novel, *The Last Jihad*. Since then, ten other novels and five nonfiction books have hit the market, several of which made it onto the *New York Times* bestseller list. In one way or another, they all deal with terrorism, current political events, and Bible prophecies. What is your goal in writing books?

J: One of my goals is simply to tell exciting stories. Another part is to warn about geopolitical dangers that I think might arise if Western leaders are not careful. Many of them do not understand the threats coming from the Middle East—particularly from radical Islam and what I call “apocalyptic Islam.” My third goal is to share the gospel and to weave biblical truths into the stories. In some of the novels, though not all, I write about biblical prophecies that will come true someday. We do not know exactly when and how these prophecies will come to pass, but a novel allows us to imagine how they could happen. My goal is not to convince someone that this is exactly how it is going to happen, but to get people to think, “Hmm, I didn't even know those prophecies were there! Is that possible? Could that really happen?” That's my general approach to writing novels.

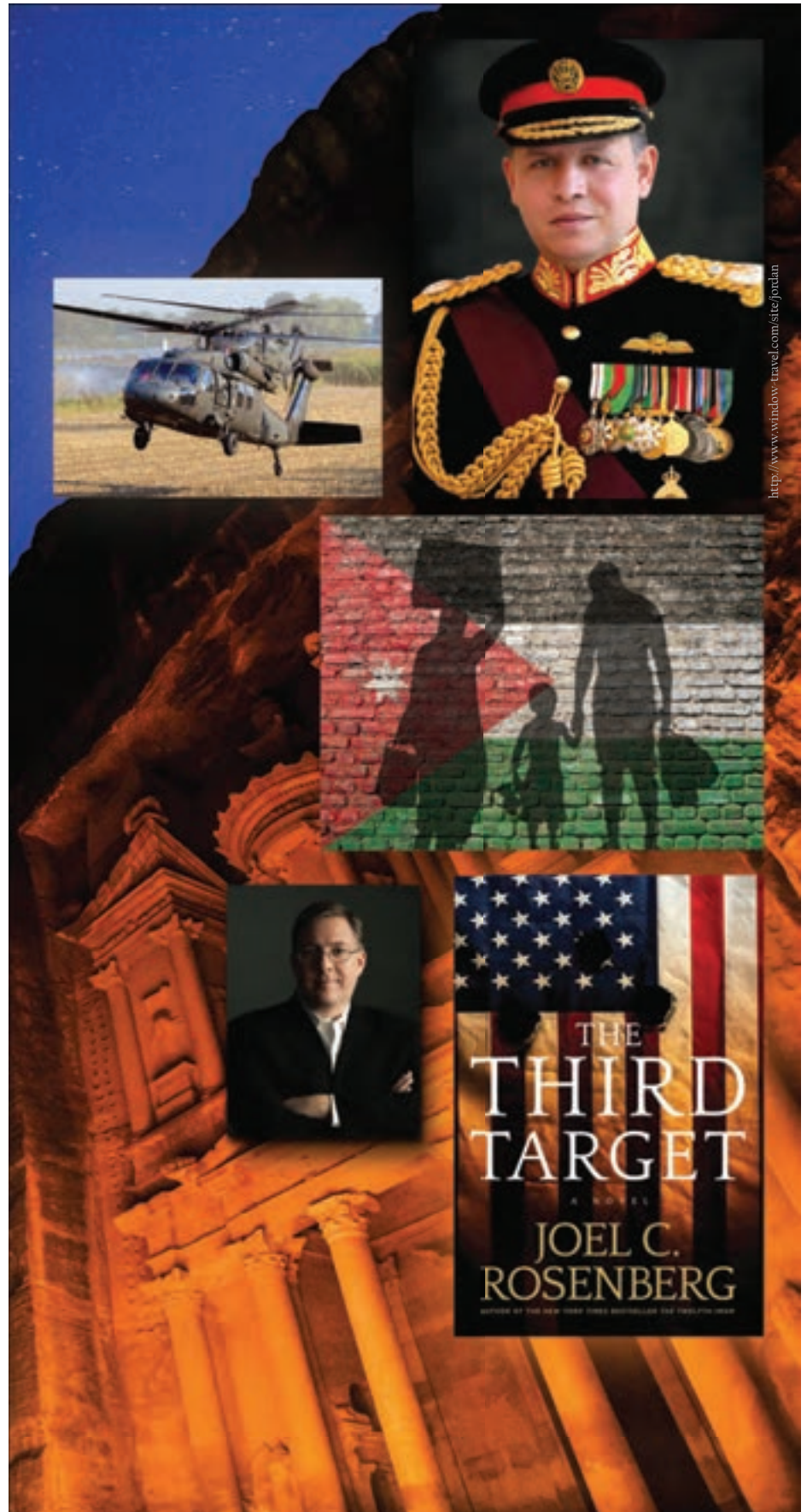
L: Your novels have generated much interest, even among non-believers. You are a sought-after speaker and have become very influential in the Evangelical world. In 2006, you and your wife Lynn founded an organization called The Joshua Fund with the goal to educate and mobilize believers worldwide to bless Israel and her neighbors in the name of Yeshua. Two years ago, you finally moved your family of six to Israel. So, without a doubt, your life has undergone



much change since you started writing books. Could you give our readers an idea of how the Lord is using all of this for His glory?

J: It has been amazing and humbling to see how God has used the books over the years, including to start The Joshua Fund. That's a ministry we love very much, giving us an opportunity to serve the Lord by serving Jewish and Arab people and loving them with the love of Yeshua. The ministry provides food and other humanitarian relief for the poor and vulnerable in the epicenter. It provides care for Syrian and Iraqi refugees. We encourage pastors and ministry leaders who are struggling or being persecuted. I've been invited to teach the Word of God all over the world, including in Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa, and that has been so exciting.

The books have also definitely opened up all kinds of interesting doors and have led to meetings with Jewish and Muslim leaders as well as the presidents and prime ministers of various countries. But as exciting as all of this is has been over the past ten years, what happened with my new series of novels surprised even us. The series begins with a book called *The Third Target*. The first sentence reads: "I had never met a king before." The monarch this sentence is referring to is the grandfather of King Abdullah II of Jordan. Amazingly, an advisor to his majesty read the book and got very interested in the story. So he gave a copy to the king. The king read it in just a few days and suggested that his advisor meet me and get to know me a little bit better and learn more about this. We ended up meeting several times—and then, to our surprise, my wife Lynn and I were invited by the king to come to Jordan to visit for five days. Astonished and excited, we accepted the invitation although my wife could only come for two of the five days. I had never met a king before so...





Jordan's Eschatological Future

By Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum

The Scriptures deal quite extensively with the prophetic future of the Arab states surrounding Israel. The key charge the prophets bring against the various states is their perpetual hatred of Israel. The hatred began as early as Numbers 20:14-21 and has continued throughout the biblical period into modern history. A passage that summarizes this entire attitude is Psalm 83:1-8:

¹ O God, keep not your silence:
Hold not your peace, and be not still, O God.
² For, lo, your enemies make a tumult;
And they that hate you have lifted up the head.
³ They take crafty counsel against your people,
And consult together against your hidden ones.
⁴ They have said, Come, and let us cut them off
from being a nation;
That the name of Israel may be no more in
remembrance.
⁵ For they have consulted together with one
consent;

Against you do they make a covenant:

⁶ The tents of Edom [Southern Jordan] and the Ishmaelites [Ishmael was one of the fathers of all the Arabs];

Moab [Central Jordan], and the Hagarenes [Egypt];

⁷ Gebal [Lebanon], and Ammon [Northern Jordan], and Amalek [the Sinai Peninsula]; Philistia [the Gaza Strip] with the inhabitants of Tyre [Lebanon];

⁸ Assyria [primarily Iraq and parts of Syria] also is joined with them;

They have helped the children of Lot. Selah

The psalmist begins by describing a united conspiracy against Israel (vv. 1-3). The collaborators are a tumultuous and crafty people who unite together against the Jews. Their aim is the total annihilation of Israel so that the very name of the nation will no longer be remembered (v. 4). It is no coincidence that Nasser, the former dictator of Egypt, repeated this verse almost word for word just prior to the Six Day War. The conspiring nations consult with each other in a covenant relationship (v. 5), and they come together to carry out the

Continued on Page 28

L: What happened?

J: After arriving at the palace, we had lunch with his majesty and his advisor. It was just the four of us. His majesty could not have been more friendly and warm. Never having met a king before, I really did not know what to expect, but he was gracious, engaging, and funny, and Lynn made him laugh. It was a very open, relaxed conversation—very insightful and fascinating. At the end of the meal, I realized that the king had only read the second book in the series, called *The First Hostage*, and so I gave him a copy of *The Third Target*. I opened it up and showed him the first line, “I had never met a king before.” Suddenly, he pulled out a pen and wrote, “Well, you have

now!” and signed it in English and in Arabic. It was very kind and thoughtful. Over the next few days, we went to a military exercise with him. We visited Mount Nebo. We stood where Moses stood and looked down the Jordan Valley and over across, to Israel. I had been to Jordan before. In fact, this was my seventh trip, but I had never gone up to Mount Nebo. It was so interesting to look at Israel from this side!

L: You mentioned that Lynn had to leave after two days. What did you do then?

J: The king and his team made arrangements for me to visit other biblical sites, such as Petra and Jerash. I also visited

Zaatari, a camp with 80,000 Syrian refugees. And then, one night, I was invited to have dinner with his majesty at his private palace. That was amazing! Two and a half hours, just with him and a few of his close friends. Again the king was warm and engaging. Considering that my novels are about the possibility of ISIS capturing chemical weapons in Syria and trying to overthrow the king of Jordan, one could imagine the opposite. I could have gotten banned from visiting the country forever. Instead, I was invited to meet with the king!

L: Why do you think the king invited you?

J: I think he could see that we actually love the people of Jordan and are concerned



about the security of his kingdom and want Americans and other Westerners to understand better why it would be so horrible if something terrible happened in Jordan.

L: It is quite unusual for an author of fictional stories to include a real-life character. It is even more unusual to include a monarch. Did you study the king's life before describing him in your novel?

J: Absolutely. Generally, you shouldn't write about real people in a fictional context. And to write about a Muslim monarch in a very sensitive part of the world, and to do so as a Jew, an Israeli, and an Evangelical—there is really no reason to take that risk. But the king's life is so interesting that I couldn't figure out how to make him a fictional character. He is a descendant of Muhammad who signed a peace treaty with Israel and is a strategic ally of the United States. He is probably the most faithful ally the Western Alliance has in the Sunni/Muslim world. He is a Special Forces commander. He leads his own forces in exercises. He is uniquely qualified to defend his country at this moment. He is like Jason Borne and James Bond all wrapped up into one. No one would believe that if I'd made him a fictional character, so I decided to take the risk, to write him into the novel as one of the protagonists. I read many, many books about him and met with lots of different people who knew the royal family. I had watched programs about him, read his speeches and the book he wrote. I tried to immerse myself in every detail of his life.

L: How did your research fare in comparison to the real king?

J: Well, we got to see his majesty in a business suit at his palace. We got to see him in his military uniform, flying his own Black Hawk helicopter and overseeing a military exercise with real missiles, bullets,

and bombs. He had us come stand next to him so that he could explain everything to us, and we were thinking we had never seen anything like this, and we certainly had never done it standing next to a Muslim monarch! Meeting the king was better than anything we could have hoped for, dreamt of, or imagined. By God's grace, I have had the privilege to meet a lot of leaders in my life. I do not like to just meet someone and get a handshake and an autograph. I want to build a relationship, a friendship. I want to understand the world the way they see it. God seemed to open the door to Jordan, and I want to guard the friendship that developed. I want people to pray for the king, his family, and the people of Jordan in these very difficult times. Jordan hasn't had a major terrorist attack like Istanbul, Paris, or Brussels in more than ten years. This is a testament to the king's leadership and the leadership of his military and security forces. However, he has taken in over a million Syrian refugees, and a small percentage of them could be terrorists. There is a real risk to him and to the country. So, we need to be praying for this remarkable nation.

L: You mentioned that your novels are supposed to make the reader aware of biblical prophecies. Why is this important to you?

J: According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, there are three reasons for prophecy. It is supposed to edify, encourage, and comfort people. So, when I study prophecy or when I write about it or when I teach it, I try to accomplish these three things. Novels are one way to get a conversation going and to get people thinking about some prophecies that they may have never thought of before. My first series was about Ezekiel 38 and 39, when Russia and Iran and these other countries form an alliance against Israel. My second series included prophecies about the destruction of Damascus

described in Isaiah 17 and Jeremiah 49. I obviously do not know how the prophecies will be fulfilled exactly, but people need to be aware of them and ask themselves: How should I, as a believer, act in light of knowing that some country is going to face a terrible judgment? Shouldn't I be doing more to share the gospel with the people of that country? Shouldn't I be trying to help strengthen the pastors and to care for the poor and the needy?

Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and obviously Israel have prophecies about very, very hard times coming to them. For me, one of the most important reasons to study Bible prophecy is to say, "Alright God, if you are telling me that all these bad things are going to happen in this country or the other, what can I do to help the people in these countries? What can I do to make sure they hear the gospel in their own language, read the Bible in their own language, and make a decision for Christ? How can I strengthen the church in that country?" If it is a country that faces persecution, then they are already facing hard times. How can we be helpful today? Even if the prophecies are not going to come true for another one hundred years, there are already very bad things happening in that part of the world right now. As believers, it is our responsibility to act upon our knowledge.

Hopefully, as unbelievers read my novels, they will hear and understand and say "yes" to the gospel message. And hopefully, as believers read them, they will be encouraged and inspired to serve the Lord more boldly and more faithfully in the time that we have left on this earth. That's my heart. That's why I write. And I can tell you, honestly, I can't imagine doing anything else.



program of the previous verse. Then, in verses 6-8, the countries are listed, one of them being modern day Jordan, the topic of this study. During biblical times, this nation was comprised of three different countries: Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Since God does not have the same future for each individual segment of Jordan, they will need to be studied individually.

1. Edom : Southern Jordan

It is Edom, or southern Jordan in particular, that the prophets were concerned about. Several passages disclose that peace will come between Israel and southern Jordan by means of destruction. One such passage is Ezekiel 35:6-9. The picture these verses paint is one of massive destruction, with blood and dead bodies filling the mountains, hills, and valleys (vv. 6-8): Edom will become a perpetual desolation (v. 9).

Jeremiah 49:7-13 confirms the destruction of Edom and emphasizes its totality: The seed of Esau will be wiped out completely (vv. 7-10). The nation had been given an opportunity to trust in the Lord but failed to respond (v. 11). So now the cup of iniquity is full, and Edom must drink of the cup of God's wrath (v. 12). The result is that the land will become nothing but an astonishment, a reproach, a waste, and a curse (v. 13). To all this, Jeremiah 49:19-20 adds a note that the final desolation of Edom will come by means of a war and an armed military conflict.

The smallest book of the Old Testament, Obadiah, centers its entire attention on Edom's annihilation. Like the other prophets, the writer emphasizes the totality of the destruction (vv. 5-6), pointing out that the nation would not be aided by his friends (v. 7) nor by his own wisdom or military might (vv. 8-9). Later, in verses 17-21, Obadiah provides some interesting information about the time frame of the prophecy: The time of Israel's final restoration will also be the time of Edom's final destruction (v. 17). Furthermore, this destruction will come through the Jewish people (v. 18), for the two houses of Israel will be like fire, while Edom will be like stubble that quickly catches fire when exposed to the flame. Nothing will remain of Esau's descendants, while the descendants of his brother Jacob will own and possess the mountains of Edom (vv. 19-20). It is out of Mount Zion that judgment will fall on Edom (v. 21).

The fact that Israel will be used to bring about the final destruction of Edom is further portrayed in Ezekiel 25:12-14. Edom's sin is described in verse 12: The nation has taken vengeance against the people of Israel. In judgment, God will now stretch out His hand against Edom in order to destroy everything in it. Again, the totality of the destruction is pointed out (v. 13). It will come by means of the people of Israel in an armed military conflict (v. 14).

So Edom, or present-day southern Jordan, is to suffer desolation, and the destruction of all descendants of Esau will come by means of the people of Israel. Hence, there will not be a nation called Edom in the messianic kingdom.

2. Moab: Central Jordan

As for Moab, present-day central Jordan, it, too, will suffer destruction (Jer. 48:1-46), but it will not be total. Those who survive will come to repentance, and a remnant of Moab will return (v. 47). Thus, there will be a saved nation called Moab in the messianic kingdom.

3. Ammon: Northern Jordan

Concerning Ammon, or modern northern Jordan, it will also suffer a partial destruction and become a possession of Israel. This is described in Jeremiah 49:1-2. As with Moab, the destruction of the nation not be total, and those who survive will turn to the Lord, for a remnant of Ammon will also be found in the kingdom, according to Jeremiah 49:6. Thus, peace comes between Israel and northern Jordan by means of a partial destruction, followed by conversion, and there will be a saved nation called Ammon in the kingdom.

4. The Two Desolate Spots of the Kingdom

During the messianic kingdom, the world will be beautiful, fruitful, and very productive. However, there will be two spots of burning pitch and brimstone: Babylon and Edom. The reason for the judgment on Edom is mentioned again in Isaiah 34:8-15: The Lord God has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion (v. 8). Because Edom hated Israel so much, it will become a place of continual burning and smoke (vv. 9-10), inhabited by various foul birds and animals and characterized by confusion (v. 11). No human being will live there (v. 12), and only the animals mentioned will inhabit the land (vv. 13-15). Yet these animals as we know them cannot live in a place of burning pitch and brimstone. Two clues in this text show that these are not literal creatures. The word translated as "wild goats" actually means "demons in goat form." The word translated as "night-monster" means "night demons." Edom will be an abode of demons. Another prophecy, in Jeremiah 49:17-18, again emphasizes the totality of the destruction, for no human will inhabit Edom or even pass through it. The desolation will be similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The reason for such massive destruction in Edom is amplified by Ezekiel 35:10-15: Because of Edom's glee over the fall of Israel and Judah, the punishment must come (vv. 10-13). So while the whole earth is beautified, Edom will be a desolation (v. 14). The calamities which fell on Israel and over which Edom rejoiced will now fall on Edom in a more severe way (v. 15).

Finally, Joel 3:19 notes that because of his unique violence against Israel, Edom's desolation will be permanent and last throughout the kingdom. The smoke of this nation burning with pitch and brimstone will rise and be visible for the entire one thousand years. While Satan will be confined in the abyss, his demons will be confined in Edom and Babylon. These two places will be the abode of demons for the entire kingdom period.



This article is based on Dr. Fruchtenbaum's book *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, published by Ariel Ministries. The original text has been heavily edited to better fit the format and purpose of this article.

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