

אֶרֶל  
Winter 2017 / Volume 1 / Number 25



ARIEL  
MINISTRIES

A Textual and Historical Defense of  
**The Authenticity  
of the Book of  
Daniel**

**Plus:**

**Counting the Costs:  
Following God's  
Calling in Italy**

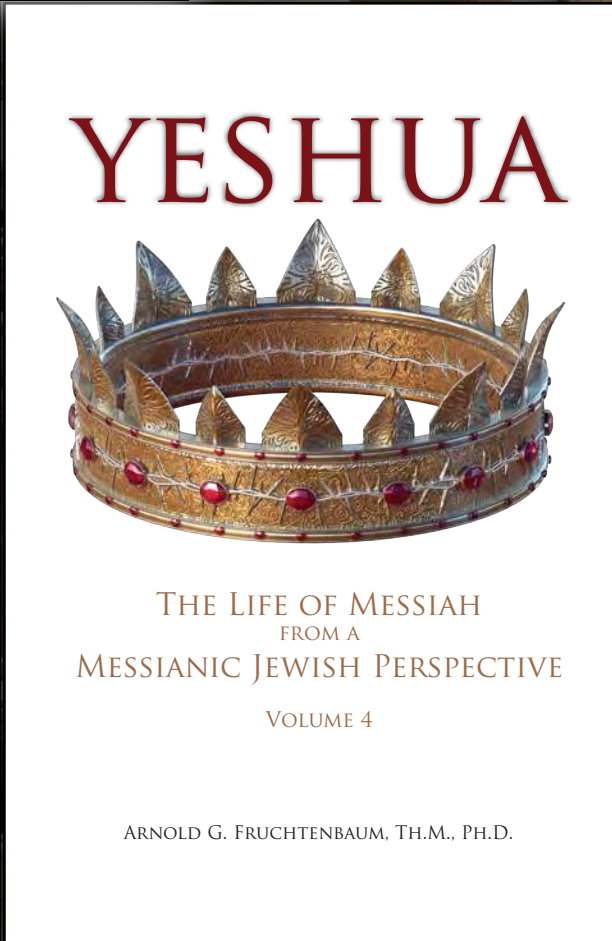
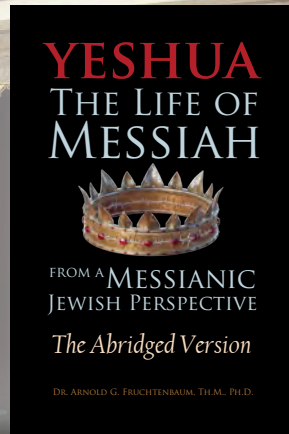
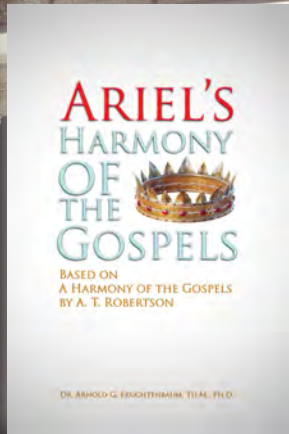
**How to  
Interpret the  
Bible Literally**

**Tisha B'Av  
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**Testimony:  
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# The Complete Set of 6 Now Available



In this four-volume commentary from the Gospels, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum shines a bright light on the life of Yeshua (Jesus) and the land of Israel from a Messianic Jewish perspective.

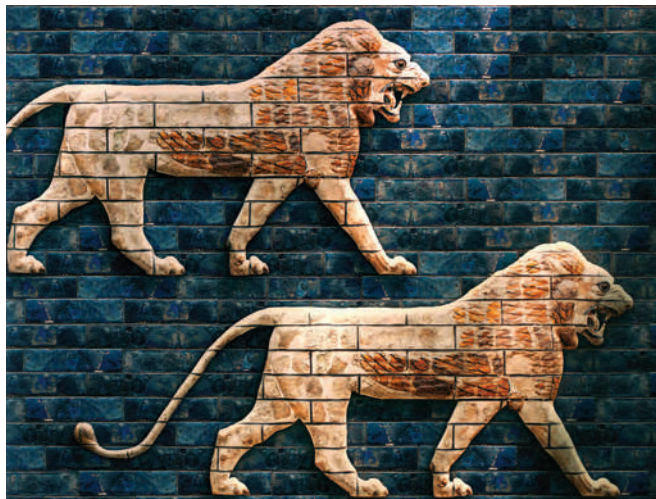
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## Cover Story:

The book of Daniel has been fiercely attacked by many, and especially its authenticity remains a subject of great controversy. The detailed prophecies contained in the book have motivated scholars and laymen alike to adopt the theory of a late date of composition in the time of the Maccabees, claiming that the book of Daniel was written around 168-165 B.C. In this article, Dr. Roger Liebi invalidates the theory by systematically refuting many of the arguments presented.

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## Feature:

Eye on Israel

Living in Israel comes with serious challenges. The constant threat of attacks from those who hate the Jewish people is real and palpable. Those who believe in Messiah Yeshua are under additional pressure. In an ongoing attempt to minister to our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, Ariel Ministries Israel provides teachings and marriage counselling, as this report shows.

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## Feature:

When a couple in Italy set out to translate Ariel Ministries' material, they were faced with a storm like none they had experienced before. "Counting the costs" took on a completely new meaning for them. Read their inspiring story to see how God became their "song in the night."

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## Feature:

In this article, Dr. David Mappes examines the definition and practice of literal interpretation of God's Word. He presents a valid theological method to sustain the historic author's verbal meaning in Scripture.

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## Feature:

Tisha B'Av is regarded as the saddest day in the Jewish calendar. Mottel Baleston gives an overview of calamities that happened on that day over the course of history and explains how Tisha B'Av is observed by Jews around the world.

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## Testimony:

Hana Shapiro is a young Jewish believer in Messiah Yeshua. In 2017, she used her training as videographer and filmed the teaching sessions at Camp Shoshanah. Read her captivating and soulful reflections on her Messianic identity.

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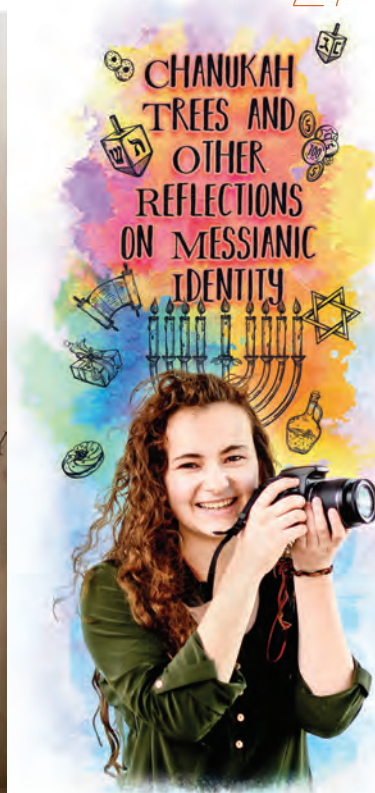


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## Purpose Statement

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

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## Are believers in Messiah Yeshua obligated to celebrate Christmas?



Considering the historical background of the holiday, are believers even allowed to celebrate Christmas? Shouldn't we all, Jews and Gentiles alike, rather celebrate Hanukkah?—These are questions of concern for many sincere believers. In fact, many believers dislike the season and have refused to celebrate Christmas at all. Others get all legalistic about the day itself. Surely, we need to set aside the 25th of December to commemorate Yeshua's first coming to this earth!

To answer a possible question about the day itself, let's turn to Dr. Fruchtenbaum, who in his *Yeshua* series has done a fantastic job in shedding light on this question:

"Miriam gave birth to her first son sometime between the years 7 and 6 B.C., but there is not enough information available to know when during that year the Messiah was born. Verse 8 of Luke 2 is often used to argue against a December 25th date for His birth on the basis that there would not be shepherds and sheep out in the field in the month of December. However, Israel's rainy season is from mid-October to mid-April. By December, a lush green carpet covers the country. Even the Negev Desert has grass. It is a great time for sheep to be out in the fields. This is not to argue in favor of a December 25th date. Insofar as the biblical record is concerned, there are no details given that make it possible to determine with any certainty the season of the year in which Yeshua was born, let alone the exact month and day."

Messianic believers have a slightly different problem. Surely, the Jewish Messiah was born on a Jewish holy day, probably Sukkot! To this, Dr. Fruchtenbaum responds:

"The attempts to prove that Yeshua was born on a Jewish holy day tend to be emotional reactions to the concept of Christmas Day, and often the arguments used are spurious. However, the Gospel writers were quick to connect Yeshua with the Jewish festivals. Whatever Yeshua may have said or done on a Jewish festival was freely reported. The birth narratives by Matthew and Luke do not mention or even imply that the birth occurred during a feast day. This shows that Messiah was born on an ordinary day, somewhere between 7 and 6 B.C., but the exact date cannot be known."

With this, let us grant each other the freedom to consider one day more holy than the other; and whatever it is you'll be celebrating in December, make sure to do so unto God (Rom. 14:6) by sharing Yeshua's great love for this fallen world!

Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas,

*Christiane Jurik*  
Christiane Jurik

editorarielministries@gmail.com

P.S.: If you are looking for a wonderful gift for the holidays, make sure to consider *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*. The abridged version is a must for everyone on my list!





# Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives

## ARIEL BRANCHES



### Ariel Australia Chris & Lisa Savage

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



### Ariel Canada Jacques Isaac and Sharon Gabizon

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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

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



### Ariel Israel Sasha G. & Lilian Granovsky

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



### Ariel China

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



### Ariel Germany

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



### Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

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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 Ministries Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

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

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## ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



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

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



### John Metzger – Field Representative (Pennsylvania)

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



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

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



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

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





## Hungary

In June, we finished the first part of the “Foot-steps of Messiah” teaching series. After the summer break, we picked up the teaching, which is now in full swing.

We are continuing our Messianic fellowship meetings. The summer topics were:

- The right motivation in the Christian life
- Self-examination by Paul—What does it mean?
- The connection between salvation and discipleship. Are disciples borne or made?

These are highly discussed topics, and we learned a lot about the doctrine of “Lordship salvation” and its consequences.

Also in the summer, we attended a weekly series of lectures about interesting topics of the *Shulchan Aruch*, or Jewish Law. The lectures were organized and taught by our Jewish friend Gabor who allows us to use his apartment and art gallery for our Bible studies and for the fellowship. The lectures provided a good opportunity for us to build new connections with Jewish unbelievers, as we were the only Gentiles in the audience.

Ivan continues to share diverse teachings (written and mp3) on our homepage and on Facebook. Rita, whose article about the early history of anti-Semitism was published in the fall magazine, received this personal letter:

“I am a Jewish believer in Jesus. I had been called a Christ killer and dirty Jew when I was young. I was born in 1951 in a Catholic/Lutheran neighborhood here in America. I have been a believer since 1989. Thank you so much for writing of the errors that have been taught and passed down through the centuries.”

This comment motivates Rita to continue translating her thesis which deals with this very controversial topic in the history of Christianity.

One of the most interesting meetings we had in the last few months was with a couple from the U.S., and it is such a marvelous story that we want to share it with you. The couple is from Hungary. The husband was Ivan’s classmate at the Catholic high school and one of the worst students. Ivan and he had not met each other for about 35 years. One day, when looking through the high school mailing list,

the man noticed that Ivan now leads Ariel Hungary. Some years ago, he and his wife became missionaries in the poorest slum section of Los Angeles. He teaches soccer to the Spanish children and shares the gospel with them. The stories he told us were heartbreaking.

The couple really enjoyed our Messianic fellowship and the teaching they received, so much so that they are now following us on our homepage and on Facebook. They wrote this note to us: “We are following your weekly Bible teachings. It was not accidental that we met when you happened to be talking about the discipleship, because we got a very strong encouragement and correction from the Lord that we were waiting for. As we are witnessing a huge amount of suffering, we want to do more and more for Him; and at the same time, we tend to forget our personal, intimate relationship with Him. We are grateful that you shared your teaching with us which obviously contains a lot of study and work. Thank you. It was so good to fellowship with you!”



## Australia

### Life of Messiah – A Life-Changing Experience

Around eight years ago, I was working my way through the “Come and See” series on the Ariel website ([ariel.org](http://ariel.org)), when I came across audio resources on the life of Messiah from a Jewish perspective. For many years, I had felt a lack in my understanding of the Bible; there had to be a way of coming to a richer and deeper appreciation of the context of first-century Judaism as I read the Gospels. I knew if I had this key, the Word would open in a fuller way than I had previously experienced. I requested and received a copy of the MP3 CD – Life of Messiah from a Jewish Perspective.

As I listened to the teachings of Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, I knew this was a life-changing experience. Suddenly, passages of the Scriptures that had been glanced over during private reading, or treated minimally by preachers, were illuminated in a way I could not have imagined. Things started to make sense!

Looking at the life of Yeshua and His ministry in a chronological rather than a geographical,

order, and gaining an understanding of the traditions and practices of the day in first-century Judaism, was a revelation to me. But what was I to do with this new-found understanding?

Discipleship—I had to pass it on!

I started meeting with a small group in a room at The Promise Building, now our Ariel training center here in Geelong, Australia. I simply shared what I was learning. There were light-bulb moments for all, as the Word was illuminated like never before. People who had walked with the Lord for decades and been in churches for years had never experienced the depth of understanding that is encountered when you study the life of Yeshua from a Jewish perspective.

Not long after, we were introduced to a family that had recently moved to our area. They were keen on getting to know other believers locally and, more particularly, wanted to grow more in the understanding of God’s Word. Six of us started gathering around a table once a week. We would share a meal and then study the course together. Over the next three years, six people became sixteen, and we were working our way through the Life of Messiah on a rotation, meaning we would complete the course and then go back to the beginning for those who had joined the group throughout the months. A Tuesday morning group started for those who couldn’t attend the evening group, and so it went on.

As you can imagine, it didn’t stop there. “Life of Messiah” has been an integral part of the Bible study groups that now meet under the banner of Ariel Messianic Ministries here at our Australian office and training center in Geelong. The teaching itself can be completed in 28 hours. But our experience has been that people attending the classes have so many questions, it can take more than double that time. We don’t discourage the questions, as this is a powerful discipleship tool.

PowerPoint presentations have been developed; there are worksheets for people to write their own notes; and over and over again, there are those light-bulb moments as people share what they thought passages meant, but now they know what they really mean, how God’s Word means so much more to them now, and that the life of Messiah was so much richer than they ever imagined.

At the conclusion of a recent Bible study group, we asked: “What did you get out of ‘Life of Messiah’ teaching?” Instantly people responded:

“This is the only teaching we have where we learn from an Hebraic background; I’ve never heard it taught like this before!”



"It covers so many aspects of the time, geography, history, culture."

"For the first time, I'm really starting to understand the Gospels."

"Things I thought I understood are really the opposite. It makes sense now, but it didn't before."

As for me, when I watch people grow deeper in their understanding of God's Word, I liken it to a skyscraper with the lights being turned on from the ground floor to the top floor, getting ever brighter as the building becomes illuminated. Eventually, the building becomes a beacon, and the individuals become bolder in sharing their personal walk with the "Life of Messiah."



*Ariel training center in  
Geelong, Australia*



**USA**

Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

This summer, I was privileged to spend four weeks at Ariel Ministries' Camp Shoshanah in upstate New York. Camp Shoshanah is a six week program of intensive Bible study with Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum and other teachers who present the Word of God from a Jewish perspective. There are three hours of teaching in the morning and two hours in the evening. The remainder of the day is available for study, fellowship, and sightseeing the Adirondack Mountain area. The following courses were among those offered this summer:

**The Book of Genesis**—We studied Genesis from creation to Joseph. The events and personalities of this book of "beginnings" came alive with biblical insights and understanding of the beginning of God's plan for humanity.

**History of the Messianic Jews**—Messianic Judaism was the core of the first church as all believers were Jewish at that time. This comprehensive teaching covered the history of Jewish believers from the first followers of Jesus to the modern era.

**Highlights of the Book of Daniel**—We followed Daniel from the Babylonian Captivity to his ascension to the upper echelons of the Babylonian and Persian empires. We also studied the end time prophecies that were revealed to him.

**The Holocaust**—This teaching was a complete and detailed description of the historical events leading up to the Holocaust and the horrifying results of this historical period.

**The Messianic Jewish Epistles**—This course covered Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude. We read and discussed the messages that were written specifically to Jewish believers.

**Life of Messiah from a Jewish Perspective**—This course provides an understanding of the Synoptic Gospels that one may have never been aware of before. The complete four-volume set of *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective* is now available on [www.ariel.org](http://www.ariel.org).

I also traveled to Corsicana, Texas, where I taught the dispensations of the Bible at a Spanish congregation. Recently, Dr. Fruchtenbaum's book *The Footsteps of the Messiah* was published in the Spanish language. The Spanish-speaking people are hungry for solid Bible teaching, and many copies were purchased. Ariel Ministries is making a great effort to translate the books and materials it offers into many languages to help spread the Word of God around the world. Some Ariel materials are available in Afrikaans, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

We finalized our schedule for monthly Saturday seminars for the North Dallas area. Please see our itinerary page at <http://ariel.org/ariel-itineraries-dfw.htm>.

## Touring Europe

In August of this year, Dr. Fruchtenbaum flew across the pond to visit and teach believers in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany. One of the many volunteers who made the trip possible was Eliška Nováková. She accompanied Arnold on his ten-day trip through her home country, the Czech Republic, and sent us her report. Kurt Fuss from Beth Sar Shalom in Berlin followed suit and provided a concise summary of Arnold's teaching engagement in the capital of Germany.

## The Moravian Tour

By Eliška Nováková

The Moravian tour of 2017 was different than the previous tour in 2015. While two years ago Arnold had spent 17 days in Prague alone, this time, every lecture was at a different place. The tour started in Králův Dvůr, close to Prague, and then continued in Moravia. The first venue was in Brno, the "capital" of southern Moravia. Arnold taught on the second coming of the Messiah. The attendance was huge, and several people decided to follow us on the tour. It was nice to meet some of them more than once!

From Brno, we traveled to Opava, and Arnold spoke in a small evangelical church. Again, word had spread nicely, and the room was full. Much to Arnold's surprise, the church was built on top of a synagogue. The topic was the rapture of the church. As in all the other Moravian and Silesian towns we visited, we were very warmly welcomed, and there were plenty of questions.

The next venue was a Baptist church in Vsetín, a town which used to have a large Jewish community, established there in 1888. From the outside, the church building looked like a big family home. When we asked for the reason, we were told that it was the requirement of the communist regime: Yes, you may build a church, but it must not look like a church. Arnold spoke about the church and the Jews, and the questions again were plentiful.

Wherever we went, we put a sign-up sheet on the table for people interested in Ariel Ministries, as the Czech Republic was just recently opened to Ariel. During the tour, 73 people signed up to receive more information about the ministry and specifically, materials translated into Czech.

The third venue was in Ostrava-Kunčičky, where Arnold taught on the second coming of the Messiah. The church building was huge and equipped with a lecture hall and a recording studio, and the attendees filled it about half way. One of the church's pastors, Jan Ostrolucký, showed us a "Righteous among the Nations" medal he had received in 1991 on behalf of his parents for hiding a Jewish family during the war. Two young men who also attended the lecture were from Slovakia. They had been interested in Ariel material long before it was available in Czech. A question that apparently stirred some people's interest pertained to the blood moons and the rapture which was supposed to happen on September 23, 2017. It turned out that a book had been published on this topic, and Arnold finished his biblically-based answer with his usual bit of humor, saying, "Just between you and me, as





Moravia is a region in central Europe that served as the center of the medieval kingdom of Great Moravia. In the 11th century, it became part of the kingdom of Bohemia, and in the 20th century, it was incorporated into Czechoslovakia. When Slovakia separated from the Czech Republic in 1993, Moravia stayed with the latter. The region is located in the south-east of the Czech Republic where it borders with Bohemia in the northwest, Silesia in the northeast, Slovakia in the east, and Austria in the south.



*Czech believers listening intently to Arnold's teaching*

soon as someone sets the date for the rapture, I think the Lord will postpone it just because of that person."

Our next stop was the town of Zlín, where seven churches had joined in founding a Christian educational center. These were the local Apostolic Church, the Unity of Brethren Baptists, the Seven-Day Adventist Church, the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the Christian Church, and the Christian Community. The educational center offers a very diverse program. Three days before Arnold taught there, someone lectured on Azerbaijan. Arnold's teaching was filmed by XTV Projekt Zlín.

The last venue was the Christian Church in Český Těšín, located on the border to Poland. The church entertained a similar concept as the educational center of Zlín, focusing on biblical education accompanied with lectures on various topics. Arnold taught on the Jewish wedding system and the bride of the Messiah. His second lecture was on the church and the Jews again. Český Těšín is an interesting town, half Czech and half Polish. So, you find the names of the streets written in both languages. We met a lady who offered to help me with my work on some of the "Life of Messiah" files, and I thank the Lord for her!

At this point, the Czech tour ended, and Arnold continued to the Polish side of the border. People have already asked me when he will be back.



*Arnold, Eliska, and one of their Czech hosts*



## Germany

### Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur

By Kurt Fuss

After returning to Germany from Poland, Arnold traveled to eastern Germany and taught in Berlin and Potsdam. Kurt Fuss from Beit Sar Shalom in Berlin sent us his report:

Once again, we had the privilege of hosting Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum in our Messianic institute of Beit Sar Shalom in Berlin. His visit fell just before the fall feasts of Israel, so we asked him to speak on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

There were about thirty people in attendance on both evenings, and many more followed us via livestream. For us, these numbers are surprisingly low. Was it the subject that deterred others from coming? Some Gentile believers certainly do not understand the importance of the biblical holy days. Or was it a lack of interest in solid Bible teaching? We may never know the answer to these questions, but once again, Dr. Fruchtenbaum's lectures and explanations were simply excellent. He first pointed out the significance of the feasts in the Hebrew Scriptures. Then, he elaborated on some rabbinic teachings and Jewish traditions pertaining to the feasts. Finally, he explained the Messianic significance of both Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. During his lecture on Rosh Hashana, Dr. Fruchtenbaum especially focused on the body of Messiah and the rapture of the church. My guess is that most students were utterly interested in this topic! Arnold's rabbi jokes caused much laughter and spread joy before and after the breaks.

Ariel Germany provided the translator, who did his job with great skill. He also made sure there was a nicely stocked book table. The students responded positively and bought a lot of reading material.

We are very grateful for Dr. Fruchtenbaum and his team, and we are looking forward to meeting them again in January of next year!



*At Beth Sar Shalom in Berlin, Germany*



*Kurt Fuss helps out at the booktable in Berlin*



# Eye on Israel

## Ministering Among Women (Glimpse on One of the Facets of Ariel Ministries Israel)

By Orit Kashtan

It is HaChotam's declared goal to equip the body of Messiah with the Word of God in any way we can. HaChotam is a publishing house in Israel, and God gave us the privilege to serve Him with books and magazines that we publish for adults, youth, and children alike. We also organize conferences for believers in Israel, the biggest one of which is an annual women's conference. We believe that having women who are strong in the Word and are good wives and good mothers will strengthen the body of Messiah in Israel.

We started the women's conferences nine years ago with 150 women, and praise God the women are thirsty to hear His Word! Today, we organize two conferences each year: The first one is held in Jerusalem, and this year 300 women from the south, the east, the west, and central Israel attended. The second conference is held in Haifa with 150 women from the north.

During the conferences, we meet women from all over Israel, speaking Hebrew, English, Arabic, Russian, and Spanish. Since we believe in teaching the Word and not Hebrew, we provide translations for all languages.

At every conference, we either study an issue that pertains to women, trying to find out how to solve it according to God's Word, or we encourage the women to serve our Lord in the church, at home, and everywhere else where they can be a light to the world. We study the role of the wife, the mother, or any woman according to the Word. We also hear about women from all over the world or from Israel who could be good examples for us.

We are blessed to have good speakers, and this year, Lillian Granovsky of Ariel Ministries shared with us about *kavod*, the respect we are to have for one another, and especially in a God-honoring marriage. This was in May, during the retreat in Haifa. In July, Lillian



*Worship and teaching equip the saints in Israel*



*Lillian passing on biblical wisdom to her sisters in Israel*

spoke to the women in Jerusalem about God's gift of words. She encouraged the audience to think carefully about the power of the tongue, explaining that words can uplift, encourage, and heal, but also destroy others. Her teachings were full of practical wisdom.

We always enjoy having Lillian with her big smile, peaceful talk, and knowledge. The women loved hearing her speak, and personally, I always make sure not to stand too close to her because she is so beautiful! ☺

We often hear testimonies of women who share how God's Word studied during the conferences has impacted their lives. Many started a change within themselves, treating their husbands and children differently and having better relationships with others by first changing their relationship with God.



*Lillian Granovsky of Ariel Ministries Israel at a women's conference in Haifa*

This year, God blessed us again with His Word presented to us by Lillian and others, and we would be happy if you pray with us to grow and share His Word and to strengthen the believing women in Israel!





# The Authenticity of the Book of Daniel

Outside of the Pentateuch, no book of the Hebrew Scriptures has been subjected to as much scrutiny as the book of Daniel. The detailed and accurate prophecies contained in the book have motivated many to adopt the theory of a late date of composition in the time of the Maccabees, claiming that the book of Daniel was written around 168-165 B.C. In his article, Dr. Roger Liebi invalidates the theory by systematically addressing many of the arguments presented.<sup>1</sup>

## ***The Main Attack***

The main attack against the book of Daniel was first put forward around A.D. 300 by the Neo-Platonic philosopher Porphyry. In his twelfth book against Christianity, he declared Daniel to be a fabrication from the Maccabean period (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.), reasoning that true prophecy simply cannot exist.<sup>2</sup> Especially in the last century, many Bible critics began to adopt this thinking and took up arms against Daniel's prophecies. Their attacks, however, shatter on the fact that the Bible is full of historically and scientifically verifiable prophecies.







As evidence that Daniel was written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., rather than the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Bible critics needed to discover historical discrepancies. These, they figured, would prove that the author knew the situation in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. only superficially due to the many centuries that had since passed. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, so much new information has come to light through archaeological, historical, and linguistic research that we are in a position to refute all attacks against the book of Daniel with ease.

## Belshazzar

Before 1854, Bible critics argued that all (!) available ancient extra-biblical sources speak not a single word about Belshazzar. Therefore, he must have never existed. This, in turn, proves that Daniel cannot be authentic.<sup>3</sup> Since then, cuneiform tablets from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. have been discovered that mention Belshazzar as co-regent with King Nabonidus (during a period when the latter stayed in Arabia). The agreement of Daniel 5 with the cuneiform texts is simply astounding!<sup>4</sup>

The lack of source texts after the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. shows that, apparently, Belshazzar was soon forgotten. The fact that the book of Daniel nevertheless knew of him testifies to its early date of authorship.

However, the findings did not convince the Bible critics, and they objected that Belshazzar was called neither “king” nor “Nebuchadnezzar’s son” (cf. Dan. 5:1, 11, 22). From the *Verse Account of Nabonidus*, however, it is understood that Nabonidus handed

over the emblems of sovereignty and transferred the kingdom to Belshazzar before departing to Arabia.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Belshazzar could be called Nebuchadnezzar’s son because in Semitic usage, the Aramaic word “son” also means “grandson.” Belshazzar’s mother was possibly a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Another Semitic use of the term “son” is “successor” (without reference to descent). The word has been recorded in this sense in ancient Near Eastern literature.

## Darius the Mede

The book of Daniel mentions a certain “Darius the Mede.” Since it was difficult to identify him with an historical figure, Bible critics viewed him as a literary fiction. This was supposed to be one of the most important evidences against the genuineness of the book of Daniel.

In his monograph *Darius the Mede*,<sup>6</sup> John C. Whitcomb compiled all the relevant biblical and extra-biblical information on this topic (including cuneiform inscriptions from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) with awe-inspiring accuracy. After comparing the material, he concluded that Darius the Mede is to be identified clearly with the mighty Gubaru, governor of Babylon.<sup>7</sup> “He is never mentioned by the Greek historians, but appears in various sixth century B.C. cuneiform texts under the name of Gubaru.”<sup>8</sup> To be sure, many scholars have seen the resemblance between this person and the Darius of Daniel 6. However, an inaccurate translation of the Nabonidus Chronicle at the time of its first publication in 1882 obscured the clear distinction between

Ugbaru and Gubaru in that chronicle for nearly half a century. It also obscured the fact that Ugbaru died shortly after the fall of Babylon. For this reason, many were led to assume that Ugbaru and Gubaru were the same person and were to be identified with Gobryas from Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*.

This effort to identify Darius the Mede as a composite “Gobryas” was clearly unsatisfactory and opened the door for critics to deny any possibility of an historical identification of Darius the Mede. But Sidney Smith’s new translation of the Nabonidus Chronicle in 1924,<sup>9</sup> plus the publication of additional Babylonian contract tablets bearing the name Gubaru, made it possible to see the error of the earlier Gobryas identification. The Assyrian Gobryas of Xenophon may well have been the Ugbaru of the Nabonidus Chronicle. In thus distinguishing Ugbaru the governor of Gutium from Gubaru the governor of Babylon, the way is opened for identifying Darius the Mede with Gubaru.

Conclusion: Regarding Darius the Mede, the book of Daniel proves to be absolutely trustworthy. Bible critics could learn from this development that it is always worthwhile to have the limits of their own knowledge in view, instead of carelessly questioning the Bible!

## An Independent Median Kingdom?

Some critics have proposed the argument that the writer of the book of Daniel erroneously reckoned with an independent Median Empire which ruled over Babylon before the Persians. This allegation is on

<sup>1</sup> The article is based on a chapter of Dr. Liebi’s book *Through the Eyes of the Prophet*. The text has been edited and many of the footnotes have been omitted for the sake of space. Please contact [editorielministries@gmail.com](mailto:editorielministries@gmail.com) if you are interested in receiving a complete list of Dr. Liebi’s sources. *Through the Eyes of the Prophet* may be ordered through our branch in Germany at <http://www.cmv-duesseldorf.de/de/>.

<sup>2</sup> R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1969), p. 1110.

<sup>3</sup> A. Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*, Vol. II, (Neptune, New Jersey; 3rd Edition; 1979), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* (New Haven, CT, 1929).

<sup>5</sup> G. Maier, *Der Prophet Daniel* (Wuppertal, 1982), p. 37. Cf. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* p. 193. Dougherty points out that the Cuneiform inscriptions shedding light on this situation clearly show that Belshazzar held this kingly position over a number of years.

<sup>6</sup> John C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede - The Historical Chronology of Daniel* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1959)

<sup>7</sup> The rulers in antiquity were often known by a number of names: Cyrus = Agradates (before becoming ruler); Xerxes I = Ahasuerus (in the Book of Esther); pseudo-Smerdis = Artaxerxes (in Ezra 4:7). “Darius” might be an honorary title Gubaru was given when he became viceroy of Babylon (cf. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, p. 26-28).

<sup>8</sup> Emanuel B. Daugherty, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Bethlehem, WV, 2006), p. 117.

<sup>9</sup> S. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (London, 1924).





par with pure fantasy. We can only call this wishful thinking on the Bible critic's part.<sup>10</sup> Daniel 5:28 clearly states that Babylon would be given into the hands of the Medes and the Persians. In Daniel 6:9, it is shown that the law of the vassal kingship of Darius is that of the Medes and the Persians. Additionally, Daniel 8:20 pictures the Medo-Persian dual monarchy as *one* ram with two horns.

### The Persian Kings

Based on Daniel 11:2, Bible critics insinuated that the writer of the book possessed such poor knowledge of history that he thought only four kings had reigned over the Persian Empire. However, Daniel 11:2 simply states that after Cyrus three more kings would arise in Persia. Then a "fourth" would stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. This prediction of a fourth king was fulfilled by Xerxes I, who ruled over Persia from 486 to 464 B.C. He wanted to bring Greece to its knees, but suffered an unexpected reversal at the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. Still, his extraordinarily powerful attack scarred Greece deeply. Approximately 150 years later, Alexander the Great started a campaign of revenge against Persia. This is the reason why Daniel 11:3 speaks of Alexander after Xerxes.

With the above cited criticism of Daniel, it is clear how biased the reading of the Bible can be when it is claimed that there are only errors to be found in it.

### Jehoiakim's Third Year

Daniel 1:1 reports that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim's rule. Bible critics claim to see an historical error in this statement. According to Jeremiah 46:2, the Babylonian victory over Pharaoh Necho<sup>11</sup> II at Carchem-

ish on the Euphrates (May-June 605 B.C.) took place in Jehoiakim's fourth year. In the view of the Bible critics, a siege of Jerusalem before this battle is questionable. It appears that the Babylonian Chronicle does not mention any military activity by Nebuchadnezzar in Judea in 606 B.C. Likewise, there is no explicit mention in Babylonian records of a siege of Jerusalem before the year 597 B.C.

Let us take note of the careful arguments of the critics:

- A siege of Jerusalem before 605 B.C. would be *questionable*.
- It *would appear* that the Babylonian records eliminate Babylonian military activity in Judea in 606 B.C.
- A conclusion is drawn from the alleged silence in Babylonian sources.

By no means do these objections imply that the siege of Jerusalem at the time given by Daniel was impossible. When the report of the Babylonian priest Berossus recorded by Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* X, 11.1 is considered, we find a clue regarding the event: The governor of Egypt, Coele-Syria, and Phoenicia, who was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar, rebelled against Babylon. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar came against him with a contingent force.

This report apparently speaks of a different event than that reported by the Babylonian Chronicle. This latter source reports a battle against Pharaoh Necho, and not merely against a Babylonian-appointed governor. The battle against the Pharaoh was identical with the famous Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C.

When the events are considered separately, the following clarifying picture falls in place: In 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar fought

against the governor of Egypt, Coele-Syria, and Phoenicia. At the same time, the siege of Jerusalem took place. It was Jehoiakim's third year. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar won a decisive victory over Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish (Jer. 25:1; 46:2). It was Jehoiakim's fourth year.

Other researchers have attempted to solve the problem of Jehoiakim's third year this way: One has to take into account that Daniel used the Babylonian system of dating. After all, he had been educated in Babylon. In Babylon, the first year of a monarch's regime was designated "year of accession." The following year was counted as the first year of rule. Hence, according to this reckoning of time, Jehoiakim's third year in Daniel 1:1 may correspond to Jehoiakim's fourth year in Jeremiah 46:2.

Furthermore, there is an extant entry in the Babylonian Chronicle which indicates that after the Battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar conquered all of the "land of Hatti" (possibly equivalent to Syria/Israel). On the basis of this information, it would be conceivable to estimate the time of the siege of Jerusalem as occurring in June-July-August 605 B.C. In September, Nebuchadnezzar was back in Babylon in order to be crowned king. In Daniel 1:1, Nebuchadnezzar is called "king," even though he ascended the throne after the siege.<sup>12</sup> Hence, an anticipated title is used. This is comparable to the phrase "King David tended sheep in his youth," which does not mean that David was king at the time he tended sheep.

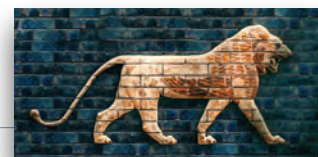
### Nebuchadnezzar's Second Year

According to Daniel 2:1, Daniel's dream-interpretation took place in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule. Several critics see a contradiction between this time

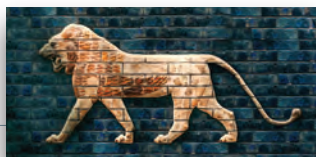
<sup>10</sup> In order to weaken the prophetic announcement regarding the Roman Empire in Dan. 2, Bible critics attempted, with the help of the mentioned supposition, to interpret the four world empires as following: 1. Babylonia; 2. Media; 3. Persia; and 4. Greece (cf. e.g.: Baumgartner, "Zu den vier Reichen von Daniel 2," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Basel, 1, 1945, p. 20). The sequence found in the book of Daniel, however, is this: 1. Babylon; 2. Medo-Persia; 3. Greece; 4. Rome.

<sup>11</sup> Also spelled "Neco."

<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, critics unnecessarily found fault here as well. Cf. e.g.: J.A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (The International Commentary; Edinburgh, 1964), p. 140-141.







specification and the mandate for a three-year training period for Daniel (Dan. 1:5).

If Daniel's deportation took place in Jehoiakim's third year, there is no cause at all to see a problem in the account. The chronology of Daniel's youth is as follows:

- 606 B.C.: Deportation to Babylon; beginning of three-year training in Babylon
- 605 B.C.: Nebuchadnezzar's first year of rule; Daniel's second year of training
- 604 B.C.: Nebuchadnezzar's second year of rule; Daniel's third year of training

In accordance with this alternative approach, the following dates are possible:

- In August 605 B.C., Daniel arrived in Babylon. At this time, his first year of training began. It lasted until the Babylonian new year (Nisan [March-April] 604 B.C.).<sup>13</sup> This corresponds to Nebuchadnezzar's "year of accession."<sup>14</sup>
- From Nisan 604 to Nisan 603 B.C., Daniel completed his second year of studies. This equates to Nebuchadnezzar's first year of rule, according to Babylonian reckoning of time.
- From Nisan 603 to Nisan 602 B.C., Daniel completed his third and final year of studies. This was the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

The difficulty disappears when the interpretation of the dream is placed at the end of this year.

### The Term "Chaldean"

In the book of Daniel, the expression "Chaldean" (Hebrew *kasdi*, Aramaic *kasdai*,

Babylonian *kasdu*) was used not only for the main people-group of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, but also for a category of wise men (cf. Dan. 5:30; 9:1 with 2:2, 4, 5). Certain critics maintain that such a double meaning was infeasible at the time of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and view this as evidence for a later composition date of the book of Daniel.

In response, the following points can be made:

1. This argument is not evidence, but speculation. There is no cuneiform or any other historical evidence that speak against the double meaning of the term "Chaldean."
2. The famous Greek historian Herodotus was in Babel in 456 B.C. In his *Histories*, he also used the term "Chaldean" for priests.<sup>15</sup>
3. The scholar R. D. Wilson has pointed out that two distinct words are being used here, but with identical meaning. One relates to the Sumerian designation for astrologer-priests who created celestial charts called *gal-du* (pronounced "kal-du") in the Akkadian Empire. In the Neo-Babylonian language-reform under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, an "l" before a dental sound (here "d") was replaced with a syllable (here "s"). This resulted in *kasdu*, which sounds the same as the original ethnic term for Chaldean in the Babylonian language.<sup>16</sup>

### Nebuchadnezzar's Insanity

In Daniel 4, it is reported that Nebuchadnezzar became insane and stayed that way for seven years. The critics of Daniel contested the account. It was said that extra-biblical history knew nothing of such an illness.

However, the following two sources disprove this theory:

1. The Babylonian historian Berossus (280 B.C.) reported that Nebuchadnezzar became ill at the end of his life. What his illness was is not recorded.
2. A further tradition is found in the works of Eusebius, who reported that Nebuchadnezzar went up to the king's castle at the end of his life (cf. Dan. 4:29). He suddenly became possessed, left the city, and disappeared, after giving a prophetic statement about himself. Eusebius seems to have based his report on the account of Abydenus (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.) who, in turn, based his statements on those of the Greek historian Megasthenes (around 312-280 B.C.).

Nebuchadnezzar's type of illness is also known in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is called boanthropy and is a rare form of monomania.<sup>17</sup>

Conclusion: The authenticity of Daniel 4 has been proven by extra-biblical sources and is therefore worthy of our full confidence!

### The Prayer of Nabonidus

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, another point of criticism of Daniel 4 has appeared. One of the Qumran manuscripts identified as "The Prayer of Nabonidus" (4QOrNab) reports how Nabonidus was afflicted by God for seven years with a physical illness (a "festering wound") while living in Tema. Bible critics draw parallels between Daniel 4 and Nabonidus' prayer, concluding that the record of the prayer is certainly very old and was reworked by the writer of the book of Daniel and attributed to Nebuchadnezzar.

<sup>13</sup> The first year is not necessarily a full year (cf. J.F. Walvoord: loc. cit., p. 46 and the literature reference).

<sup>14</sup> J.F. Walvoord, *Daniel, The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago, 1971), p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Robin Waterfield, trans. *Herodotus: The Histories* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> G. L. Archer Jr., *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 285-286.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the description of a case from the year 1946 in Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 1115-1117.





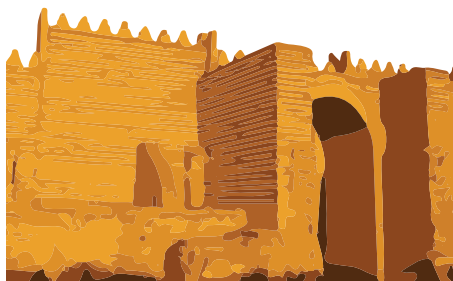
This type of argument, however, defies all concepts of academic research. There is absolutely no evidence for Daniel's dependence on Nabonidus' prayer, nor is there proof that 4QOrNab is older than Daniel 4. We could make a counter argument for independence with equal justification! The texts deal with different locations and completely different illnesses. Furthermore, it is not insignificant that the Qumran manuscripts cite only the book of Daniel as Holy Scripture.

### Daniel's Historical Reliability

We have seen that all attempts to provide evidence for historical errors in the book of Daniel have failed. Rather, the precise agreement of Daniel with history and the customs of 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. is positively astounding! The following points will further emphasize this fact:

1. In Daniel 1, certain eligibility criteria are listed for captives who should receive special training. The captives have to be of noble ancestry, show intelligence, and be physically beautiful. The following criteria for the selection of Babylonian fortune-tellers were found on a cuneiform tablet: ". . . of noble descent, also perfect in stature and measurements." Anyone who lacked the knowledge to be a wise man was not to be accepted.

2. A building in Babylon has been excavated which, according to the inscriptions, served as a training site for noble captives.



3. According to Daniel 1:5, the training of Daniel and the other chosen captives would last three years. A passage in the Babylonian texts states that a temple musician "had a three-year period of training to complete."<sup>18</sup>

4. In Daniel 2:2-27 and 4:4, different categories of wise men are mentioned. This reflects the fact that an exceptionally large number of priestly classes (over 30) existed in Babylonia.

5. Daniel 3 mentions the punishment of death by fire. This was typical for the Babylonian Empire. A huge oven has been excavated in Babylon whose inscription makes it clear that those who refused to honor the Babylonian gods were put to death here. Furthermore, there is the possibility that the Hebrew word for "oven," *attun*, comes from the Babylonian.

6. Daniel 6 mentions the death penalty of being cast into a lions' den at the time of the Persian Empire. According to our present knowledge, this was a typical Persian punishment.

7. The first-person account of Daniel 4 agrees with the literary custom for royal inscriptions in the Near East.

8. In Daniel 4:30, Nebuchadnezzar speaks of the great Babylon he has built. Babylonian cuneiform tablets have confirmed that it was Nebuchadnezzar who had turned Babel into one of the most formidable wonders of the ancient world, after it had been completely destroyed by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 680 B.C. On one inscription, Nebuchadnezzar states: "I made the city a magnificent show-piece . . . I . . . made the city of Babylon a fortress."<sup>19</sup>

9. It is notable that Belshazzar was only the co-regent, as Daniel 5:7-29 shows.

Hence, he was able to offer Daniel the third place in the kingdom.

10. According to Daniel 5, women participated in Belshazzar's feast. This is in contrast to the Persian Kingdom, where the women were not included (cf. Esther 1). History confirms that a woman's position in the Babylonian Empire was different than that in the Persian Empire.

11. The feast described in Daniel 5 shortly before Babylon's conquest is confirmed by Herodotus (500-424 B.C.) and Xenophon (430-355 B.C.), among others.

12. After the fall of Babylon, Daniel was given a high political position (Dan. 6). History confirms that Cyrus of Persia adopted Babylon's bureaucracy and left the hitherto existing officials in their positions.

13. According to Daniel 2, a Babylonian ruler was absolute and sovereign. According to Daniel 6, Persian rulers were bound by their own law (cf. Daniel 6:9,13,16 with Esther 1:19; 8:8). This corresponds exactly to the historical facts.

### Greek Loanwords

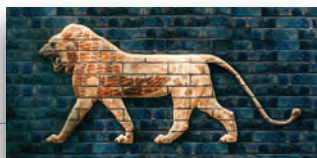
The next set of arguments revolves around language evidence in the book of Daniel. Most Bible critics mention four Greek loanwords that are (possibly) found in the Aramaic text of Daniel 3:5, claiming that the terms are proof that the book was written during the Hellenistic period. The words they mention all come from the musical field:

1. *Qatros* (zither)—This instrument is the Greek *kitharis*. The Aramaic term *qatros* is perhaps a Greek loanword.

<sup>18</sup> Maier, *Der Prophet Daniel*, p. 44 (see the additional bibliographies there).

<sup>19</sup> St. Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Vorderasiatische Bibliothek, 1912), p. 87.





However, it might also simply come from the same root as the Greek word.

2. *Sabcha* (sambuca)—This term may be derived from the Greek *sambuke*.

3. *Pesanterin* (lute)—Many consider this term to be a Greek loanword (from “psaltery”). However, this instrument was already known in Mesopotamia in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

4. *Sumponya* (music, orchestra)—The term is possibly loaned from the Greek *symphonia*.

These four words in no way point to a later dating for Daniel. Quite to the contrary, if the book originated during the Hellenistic period, we would be able to find many more Greek loanwords. There are at least three possibilities as to how these musical terms could have come to Babylon so early:

1. Through Greek soldiers who served in the Assyrian, and later in the Babylonian armies (at the Battle of Carchemish 605 B.C., among others)
2. Through Greek colonies which already existed in Israel in 700 B.C.
3. Through the commerce between the Middle Eastern countries and the Greek cities

## Persian Loanwords

Bible critics also view the presence of a series of Persian loanwords in the book of Daniel as an indication for a later composi-

tion date.<sup>20</sup> As an example, they point to the word *charosa* (herald) in Daniel 3:4. They also mention the word “satrap,” which they now know originates not from Greek, but from Old Persian (*kshatrapan*; on cuneiform tablets, it is also found as *shatarpanu*).

It is important to note that the Persian loanwords in Daniel are words which were in use before 300 B.C. Therefore, rather than proving a later composition date, these terms speak very clearly against the Maccabean dating of Daniel. It is to be expected that Persian loanwords are found in the book since it was written by Daniel at the beginning of the Persian rule (cf. Dan 1:21; 6; 9:1; 10:1).<sup>21</sup>

## Daniel's Aramaic and Hebrew

The book of Daniel was written in two languages: Hebrew (Dan. 1:1-2:4a; 8:1-12:13) and Aramaic (Dan. 2:4b-7:28). Many Bible critics believed that the existence of Aramaic was an indication for a later dating of Daniel, since they believed that the language was a relatively late linguistic phenomenon. In the more recent past, archaeology and linguistics have disproven this view. F. Rosenthal's studies have shown that the Aramaic<sup>22</sup> in the book of Daniel corresponds to that which became ever more dominant as the official language in the Middle East from the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. onward.<sup>23</sup> The Hebrew in the book of Daniel corresponds to the language style used in Ezekiel, Haggai, Ezra, and Chronicles.<sup>24</sup> This also supports the early dating of Daniel, and the arguments of Bible critics boomerangs.

## Silence in the Book of Sirach

In Sirach's “Praise to the Fathers,” Daniel is missing. Bible critics conclude that the book of Daniel did not yet exist when the book of Sirach was written (supposedly about 180 B.C.). This argument is very weak, as Sirach 39:4 might be a reference to the book of Daniel. Furthermore, in case Sirach would indeed not contain a reference to Daniel, no conclusion may be drawn from this silence. Important biblical figures such as Abel, Melchizedek, Job, Mordecai, and Ezra were also not mentioned. Yet, the author of the book of Sirach must have known of these people.

The following examples show how misleading such arguments from silence can be:

- Philo did not quote from Ezekiel, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, or Esther, although these books were known at the time of his writing (ca. A.D. 20).
- At Qumran, there are no excerpts from Joshua, Joel, Jonah, Haggai, Ruth, and Lamentations. Nevertheless, these books were available during the time of the Qumran community.

It is notable that Daniel was mentioned in the 6<sup>th</sup> century by Ezekiel 14:14-20 and 28:3). Ezekiel refers to Daniel's righteousness and wisdom (cf. Dan. 1:8ff. and 17ff.). The assumption that Ezekiel is putting Noah and Job on par with the legendary Phoenician hero Dan'el from the *Ras-Shamra-Epic* deserves no credibility.

<sup>20</sup> Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 1125f. The Old Persian period ended around 300 B.C.; the Middle Persian period lasted from ca. 300 B.C. until approx. A.D. 900; the New Persian period extends from ca. A.D. 900 to the present. (cf. K. A. Kitchen, “The Aramaic of Daniel,” D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965), pp. 31-79).

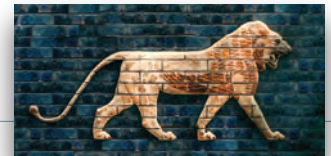
<sup>21</sup> W. Möller, *Grundriss für Alttestamentliche Einleitung* (Berlin, 1958), p. 315. Following R.D. Wilson, Möller makes it clear that Persian words are found where they would be expected to be found (e.g. Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles) and are missing where they, according to critics' dating, should be found (e.g. Leviticus, Joel, Jonah, Psalms, Job, and Song of Solomon).

<sup>22</sup> The so-called “Imperial Aramaic,” which disappeared after the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (cf. Kitchen, *Notes*, p. 79).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 1125. A current summary of the research of Aramaic in the book of Daniel is offered in the following publication: Kitchen, *Notes*, p. 31ff.; G.L. Archer Jr., “The Aramaic of the ‘Genesis Apocryphon’ Compared with the Aramaic of Daniel,” *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. by J.B. Payne (Waco/London, 1970), p. 160-169.

<sup>24</sup> Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 1125. Further useful information about the character of the Hebrew in the book of Daniel is given in the following essays: W. J. Martin, “The Hebrew of Daniel,” *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London, 1965), p. 28ff. G. L. Archer Jr.: “The Hebrew of Daniel Compared with the Qumran Sectarian Documents,” *The Law and the Prophets* [F. O. T. Allis] (ed. J.H. Skilton; N.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), p. 470-81.





## Daniel in the Ketuvim

As an argument for Daniel's later dating, critics point out that in the Hebrew Canon, the book is included in the *Ketuvim* ("Writings") instead of the *Nevi'im* ("Prophets"). Bible critics see this as evidence that the book was written too late to be included in the *Nevi'im*.

There is no proof that the books which are part of the *Ketuvim* are especially late-dated. Certain books from this part of the Hebrew Scriptures are very old! The inclusion of Daniel in the *Ketuvim* is better explained by the fact that Daniel was not a prophet in the same way as, for example, Amos, Jeremiah, or Isaiah, who mediated between God and the nation of Israel. Daniel was a statesman (like Joseph) and, because of his personal faith in God, received special insight into the ways of the Eternal God with this world.

## Daniel's Canonicity

The fact that Daniel is included in the Hebrew Canon provides very strong evidence for its authenticity. In order for a book to be included in the canon, it was necessary for it to go through a very rigorous examination. If Daniel were a fraud from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., this book would never, ever have been included in the canon. Daniel would have fared just as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, which never attained canonical standing in Judaism. Daniel's canonicity was also never discussed (in contrast to Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, et al).



## Late Theology?

Bible critics declare that very "late" theology is found in the book of Daniel (e.g. angelology, doctrine of the resurrection, apocalypse, etc). This is, however, circular reasoning.

We ask: How can one know, for example, that "apocalypse" or "Daniel's angelology" is "late" theology?

Answer: Because the book of Daniel is late-dated.

We ask back: How can one know that Daniel is late-dated?

Answer: Because the book contains late theology.

This circular reasoning is conducted *ad absurdum*!

## Alexander the Great Read Daniel

In his work *Antiquitates Judaicae*, Josephus describes how the high priest Jaddua showed Alexander the Great the book of Daniel when he was in Jerusalem. Alexander recognized himself prophetically described therein.<sup>25</sup> This account categorically contradicts a late dating for Daniel.<sup>26</sup>

## The Completion of the Old Testament Canon

In his work *Contra Apion*, Josephus relates that after Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464-423 B.C.), no further book would be accepted in the Hebrew Canon and that no one dared to make any changes to the canon

after that date. This report alone makes it impossible for any book to be added later than 423 B.C., and it excludes the assumption of editorial change after this time.

## Yeshua Recognized Daniel

The following argument is especially weighty for anyone who calls himself a Christian: Yeshua acknowledged the book of Daniel as authentic. He spoke of the Prophet Daniel (cf. Mt. 24:15) and often used the term "the Son of Man" from Daniel 7:13 to refer to Himself (cf. e.g. Mt. 26:64). It is a tragic contradiction when one considers himself a follower of the Messiah, but dismisses His testimony to the authenticity of Daniel. An attack on Daniel is consequently an attack on the roots of Christianity, in that Yeshua, the Son of God, is accused of error!<sup>28</sup>

The New Testament writers also identified Daniel as a prophet. This is clear from the great number of references to his book.

## Prophecy only until Antiochus IV Epiphanes?

Why is it that Bible critics fix the origin of the book of Daniel at 165 B.C.? The reason is as follows: Daniel's prophecies are historically verifiable only until Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.). Since genuine prophecy is impossible, the writer of the book of Daniel must have lived and worked in Antiochus' time. However, this whole line of thought shatters on the fact that Daniel's prophecy is historically verifiable after Antiochus. In Daniel 9:24-26, the exact time of the Messiah's coming is foretold and was fulfilled by Yeshua of

<sup>25</sup> *Antiquitates Judaicae* XI: 8,5.

<sup>26</sup> "It is interesting that the critics are happy to use the testimony of Josephus that Jaddua was the high priest who met Alexander (XI, 8.4), but refuse the testimony of Josephus that the Book of Daniel was shown to him!" (Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, p. 63).

<sup>27</sup> William Whiston, trans., *Flavius Josephus: The Complete Works of Josephus*; Against Apion, I, 8 (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1981), p. 609.

<sup>28</sup> "To reject [Daniel's] Prophecies, is to reject the Christian religion. For this religion is founded upon his Prophecy concerning the Messiah." (Isaac Newton, *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, Part I, Chapter III).





Nazareth in A.D. 32. Furthermore, the Messiah's death was spelled out by Daniel in 9:26a. Lastly, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was foretold in Daniel 9:26b and was fulfilled in A.D. 70.<sup>29</sup>

## Daniel at Qumran

In consideration of the above stated facts, it would be possible to fix Daniel's origin simply in the time after A.D. 70. This, however, would greatly conflict with the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the years following 1947, numerous manuscripts were discovered in eleven caves in Qumran which aroused great sensation in the whole world. The manuscripts stem, in part, from pre-Christian times. Except for the book of Esther, all the Old Testament books were documented in these discoveries, and the book of Daniel occupies a very special place in these manuscripts. A total of eight Daniel fragments were found in Caves I, IV, VI and XI. The oldest specimen was dated with the help of paleography at ca. B.C. 125 and the youngest at A.D. 50! This makes clear how absurd it is to attempt to place Daniel in the period after A.D. 70.

Considering the number of Daniel manuscripts found, the book must have been unusually popular at Qumran. The most obvious answer as to why is that this book must have made a strong impression on Judaism, particularly because of the astounding fulfilment of prophecy regarding the Ptolemaic and Seleucid, as well as the Maccabean periods (Dan. 11).

The Qumran findings, especially the oldest Daniel fragments, give evidence for a much earlier composition date than the Bible critic would wish. The discovered manuscripts are, after all, copies, and date back to older originals.

## Daniel's Popularity in Early Judaism

The book of Daniel did not only enjoy special popularity in Qumran, but also throughout the rest of Judaism. This is shown by the innumerable references to the book in ancient Jewish literature, such as the following:

- 1 Maccabees 1:54 (cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11); 2:59-60 (ca. 90 B.C.)
- 2 Maccabees 6:5-7 (last third of 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.)
- 3 Maccabees 13:9; 16:3; 18:12ff. (first half of 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.)
- Sibylline Oracles III: 397ff. (140 B.C.?)
- Book of the Wisdom of Solomon 3:4-8 (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.)
- Enoch 14:18ff.; 40:1; 46:1ff.; 60:1ff. (2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries B.C.?)
- Book of Baruch 1:15-3:8 (2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> centuries B.C., or later?)

It is unthinkable that a fraud from the Maccabean period (in which, furthermore, prophets' errors were lamented; cf. 1 Maccabees 4:27,46; 9:27; 14:41) would have made such an impression and made such an impact on Judaism.

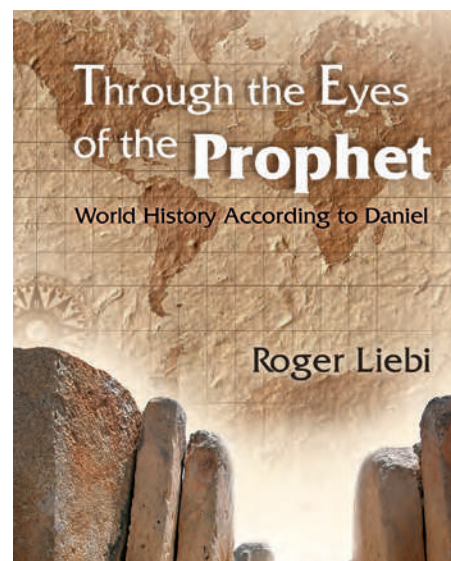
## Unity of the Book of Daniel

Should anyone still choose to see prophecies in the book of Daniel as forgeries having been inserted at a later time, let them be referred to the following argument:

In his study *The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and its Implications*, David W. Gooding showed that the book of Daniel possesses a complex and systemically thought-out composition. This very noteworthy fact shows that it is impossible to isolate any section of Daniel's prophecies and regard it as later addition. The perfect literary design would be destroyed by such an act. Incidentally, many Bible critics have accepted the unity of the book of Daniel.

## Conclusion

All attacks of Bible criticism on the book of Daniel have failed! The available historical, archaeological, and linguistic information indicates clearly that the book is authentic and stems from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., just as Daniel asserted. The Apostle Paul's words of I Corinthians 1:19-20 find in this context an appropriate and impressive application: *For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*



Dr. Roger Liebi, born in 1958, married with six children, studied music at the Conservatoire of Music in Zurich, languages (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian), and theology. He graduated with a Ph.D. from Whitefield Theological Seminary in Florida with a dissertation on the Second Temple in Jerusalem. He travels throughout the world, teaching on biblical archaeology and Israel's geography. He has published many books and worked on three Bible translations. In 2018, he will once again teach at Ariel's Camp Shoshanah.

<sup>29</sup> "and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." (Dan. 9:26b). This passage is also applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 in the Babylonian Talmud (Nazir 32b) and by Josephus Flavius (*Antiquitates Judaicae* X, 11.7; *De bello Judaico* IV, 6.3.; VI, 5.4).





Paolo and Martina (front left) with their congregation in Italy

## When God Becomes Your Song in the Night

By Paolo and Martina Speciale

We first came across Ariel Ministries in Canada, in the summer of 2005. We were visiting our family in Montreal, and on a Saturday, we went with them to their church, Beth Ariel Congregation. For the very first time, we heard the Bible preached from a Jewish frame of reference, and we immediately understood that if we really wanted to understand who Jesus was, and why He did many of the things He did, we couldn't ignore His Jewish roots anymore. The Lord was giving us the chance to better know Him and to strengthen our faith in Him. He was giving us the chance to better understand His love for us Gentiles, using the faithful servants of Ariel Ministries. We had found part of His faithful remnant living in our present time, as Romans 11 points out, and we didn't want to lose more precious time. There was just one "tiny" problem: We live in Italy, across the ocean. How could we still learn from such a distance?

We started by taking some material home with us to Italy, certain that the Lord would provide the necessary means to continue what He had begun in us. And He did—through Ariel Ministries' website. We could study and learn from Italy from the best of teachers, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Jacques Gabizon, Mottel Baleston, and many more.

It was amazing! A new passion for the Word of God was growing in our hearts. His joy was filling our lives. Learning to read the Scriptures in their own context, and not force our own culture on God, was changing our relationship with Him. We were growing closer to Him, and our relationship was becoming more intimate. It was like the Lord was calling us to better understand Him, His plan, His thoughts. He was giving us new means to trust Him better and to serve Him without restraint, no matter what.

Everything was great, but we had another problem: All the material was in English, and many members of our church who do not speak the language could not share the joy of these powerful discoveries by reading for themselves such amazing studies. We could still share what we had learned ourselves, but it wasn't the same. It was clear for us that Ariel Ministries' material had to arrive in our church and in our nation in Italian, so we started to pray that the Lord might send someone willing to do the job.

In the meantime, we bought Dr. Fruchtenbaum's *The Footsteps of the Messiah*. Words cannot express how this book impacted our lives. It was like the Lord was talking directly to our hearts. So many questions



Martina introducing Ariel Ministries to the congregation in Italy

that had remained unsolved for so many years were answered with such clarity. It was unbelievable! This book needed to be translated into Italian as soon as possible! That's when our prayer request began changing. We did not ask the Father to find someone else to do the job anymore. We asked Him to choose us to do it!

So, after we had prayed this new prayer, we contacted Ariel Ministries asking permission to translate *The Footsteps of the Messiah* to Italian. It was the 30<sup>th</sup> of December of 2014, and after just a few hours, we got mail! It was from Christiane Jurik, Ariel Ministries' Editor-in-Chief. We could not believe it! We introduced ourselves, and our adventure with the ministry began on January 4, 2015. We had to translate the first chapter of *Footsteps*, and if the work was done well, we would receive a translation agreement allowing us to continue the work. We were thrilled! The Lord was using us and was with us in this adventure leading us through His Word. We could not have asked for more!

However, when you do the will of God, the enemy is not happy and tries to destroy you with all his means. Just a few





days after beginning the translation work, our kids and parents started to have major health problems; and after a few more days, we lost our job. What a promising start! And we hadn't even signed the contract yet!

Some questions arose in our hearts, such as, "Is it really worth it to suffer so much for something you don't even know will impact other people's lives? Is it worth letting the people you love suffer to honor and serve God?" The answer to these questions, and many more, was: Yes, it is worth it because the Messiah loved us when we weren't lovable. He ransomed our lives. He chose to suffer willingly to obey the Father so that we could live with Him forever.

The words of Yeshua echoed in our minds:

<sup>26</sup> If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man

began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. (Lk. 14:26-33)

The Lord was giving us a sample of what would happen when we signed the translation agreement. He was giving us the chance to back down if we weren't ready. We chose Him over us. And that was the best decision of our lives! In March 2015, we signed the contract as voluntary translators for Ariel Ministries. We did face many trials, lots of health and financial problems, but the Father has been with us all along.

We faced two years of unemployment, filled with His joy and peace. We used this time to study His Word and translate some manuscripts for Ariel Ministries. We began to study the newly-translated manuscript "The Eight Covenant of the Bible" in our church. We presented Ariel Ministries in many conferences and told Dr. Fruchtenbaum's story to the children of the summer camp where we served last June.

Our Father has taken care of all our needs and has showed His love for us in our storms. He has used the material we have been translating to build in us a deeper knowledge of His Word, of His mercy, of His love. He has been our song in the night, our hope in difficult times, our joy in the middle of despair.

The translation of the *Footsteps* was finished in May 2017. Now we are in the process of revising the text. A new job opportunity has arrived in June 2017, on the day when we told the kids the first part of Dr. Fruchtenbaum's story. It was also the day of our 12<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. What a gift! Now we have a new job and a new opportunity to share the good news.

We really thank the Lord for what He has done in our lives since we first came across Ariel Ministries. And we really want to thank all of you who have been praying for us, and we ask you to keep fighting for us in prayer until all the translation work is finished.



Eager students in Italy



Martina sharing the lifestory of Dr. Fruchtenbaum with the children of her congregation



# Literal Interpretation and Theological Method: What Is It and How to Do It?<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. David Mappes



## Introduction

In 1961, Peter Yarrow wrote the classic folk-song “Puff the Magic Dragon.” A year later Peter, Paul and Mary released this cherished folk-song in their second hit album. Initially, the song was written as a poem in 1959 by Leonard Lipton. The lyrics depict a little boy named Jackie Paper who plays with his imaginary magical dragon friend named Puff who lived in the make-believed land of Honalee. The song was an instant success, as the allegory vividly portrays how little Jackie Paper and all children grow up and lose their imagination. With the instant fame of the song also came criticism. Critics claimed that “Puff the Magic Dragon” was really about promoting the drug culture in America.

Critics alleged this song was about smoking (puffing) marijuana. “Dragon” was viewed as cultural allusion to “dragin” as in taking a drag or inhaling the smoke from a marijuana cigarette, and Jackie Paper was said to be a veiled reference to rolling papers. The imaginary land of Honalee was identified with a very small town in Hawaii called Hanalei; this small town allegedly had a reputation for producing potent marijuana plants. Some suggested “autumn mist” represented an actual drug or perhaps an induced state of being in the land of Honalee.

Both the initial writer, Leonard Lipton, and the musician Peter Yarrow insisted the song was simply about the loss of innocence as children grow up and face the harsh realities of life. During the Peter, Paul and Mary 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert, Peter Yarrow humorously introduced this wonderful folksong with his own little musical comment when he sang, “There never was another meaning other than the obvious one. ‘Puff the Magic Dragon’ is only about the loss of innocence in children. And now you can tell your friends that you heard it from the dragon’s father’s mouth.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This article is adapted from excerpts of “Defining and Practicing Literal Interpretation and Theological Method” presented at the Pre-Trib Research Center 25th Annual Conference Dec 5-7, 2016 and an article by David Mappes and H. Wayne House titled “A Biblical and Theological Discussion of Traditional Dispensational Premillennialism” and published in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology*, 2013.

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<sup>2</sup>“Peter, Paul and Mary 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?vVg2RcX8KSk> (accessed Nov 14, 2016).

CALL OF  
RESPONSE  
APPLICATION

COHERENCE

CONGRUENCY

CONSISTENT  
HERMENEUTICAL  
APPROACH

COMPREHENSIVE  
CANONICAL







This humorous introduction surfaces serious hermeneutical questions: Who determines the meaning of a text? Is it the author or the reader? Does the reader become a “meaning maker” as alleged by many postmodern language theorists? Or is the meaning of a text perhaps a fusion of both the reader’s and the author’s interpretation? Does the text have a single meaning or can a text have multiple meanings based upon each reader’s context? Other questions revolve around how to validate meaning. What context has priority in determining and validating textual meaning? In the case of “Puff the Magic Dragon,” should the interpreter only consider the text of the song or does the interpreter look beyond the text to possible veiled references and allusions that correspond to other contexts such as the drug culture? How can one validate if Jackie Paper really is a little boy or perhaps an allusion to rolling paper for marijuana cigarettes?

These hermeneutical questions are critical issues today and directly impact biblical studies and especially studies in eschatology. In his work *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice*, Daniel Trier posits a postmodern linguistic theory and denies single-authorial meaning of a text; he concludes his book by articulating nine theses points referred to as the “Scripture Project.” He incorrectly concludes:

Scripture is rightly understood in light of the church’s Rule of Faith as a coherent dramatic narrative.

Faithful interpretation of Scripture requires an engagement with the entire narrative: the New Testament cannot be rightly understood apart

from the Old, nor can the Old be rightly understood from the New.

Texts of Scripture do not have a single meaning limited to the intent of the original author...

The saints of the church provide guidance in how to interpret and perform Scripture.

[Scripture] calls the church to ongoing discernment, to continually fresh rereadings of the text in light of the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Trier’s theological method clearly reflects a postmodern approach to interpretation and truth promoting perspectivism, thereby removing any kind of objective, stable textual meaning.

### What Is Literal Interpretation and How Is It Done?

The essence or (*sine qua non*) of a proper theological method entails the practice of literal interpretation, even though conservative scholars are not always consistent in how they define literal interpretation. Far too often, literal interpretation is simply contrasted with the allegorical or figurative sense; literal interpretation is simply said to not be the allegorical or spiritual sense; this contrast then leads to such assertions as to “take the literal sense unless the literal sense makes no sense.” Others describe literal interpretation as the clear sense, the normal sense, the plain sense, the obvious sense or the straightforward sense.

These generic qualifiers are too nebulous and place far too much emphasis on the

readers’ perspective rather than on the author’s intent within the author’s own historical timeframe. What is clear and obvious to one reader may not be so clear and obvious to another reader. In the case of “Puff the Magic Dragon,” the listener simply needs to focus on the entire allegory to discern its meaning. Even though the song is an extended allegory, it nonetheless requires literal interpretation; the listener literally understands its allegorical intended message. The whole of the allegory helps to interpret the various parts. Therefore, Honalee, Jackie Paper, and Puff are defined by the entire allegory and not through some type of veiled cultural correspondence to the drug culture. The listener allows the entire allegory to define the individual parts.

E.D. Hirsch, a well-known language theorist, uses a phrase called “intrinsic genre” to posit how the entire message of a text has the highest priority in governing the meaning of individual parts of a text. In his book *Validating Interpretation*, Hirsch emphasizes that textual meaning is understood and validated by this notion of intrinsic genre. Rather than focusing on individual parts of a text for meaning or interpreting part of a text through the lens of the reader, or looking for contemporary cultural correspondence, Hirsch insists the entire text always provides the controlling context to determine meaning. Hirsch emphasizes the “idea of the whole must arise from an encounter with the parts.”<sup>4</sup> For Hirsch, the essential context is always the whole of the single document being interpreted so “the essential component of a context is the intrinsic genre.”<sup>5</sup> The reader begins to share in the intended meaning of the author, as the reader discovers how the meaning of individual textual parts

<sup>3</sup> Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 199–200.

<sup>4</sup> E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 76.

<sup>5</sup> Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* 87.



contributes to the whole of a single text. Interpreters who minimize or ignore intrinsic genre are prone to misinterpret individual parts of a text by looking for meaning outside of the whole of the text. Textual meaning can be discerned and validated by examining what the author asserts by his text through its textual design.

Prioritizing the immediate historical-textual parameter of the human author in biblical studies is essential since this parameter preserves the authorial meaning of a text within its own deposit of special revelation. Since believers are called to compare, synthesize, and accumulate Scripture to provide a comprehensive answer of what the Bible teaches on any given subject, care must be exercised to preserve the meaning of each text. Since eschatology is such a vast subject occurring in all different genres, time-periods, and covenants, the interpreter must use a theological method that does not conflate the meaning of one text with another text. Scripture is first analyzed at the exegetical level to form a biblical theology, which then serves as the basis for systematic theology. Once the human authorial meaning is determined, that meaning becomes fixed in time and does not change. Since the Hebrew Bible provides the foundational building block for NT theology, OT literal interpretation must be preserved in light of later progressive revelation.

Prioritizing the immediate historical-textual priority further guards textual meaning against scholars who seek to interpret a text based upon a broader context outside the biblical text being studied. Many are familiar with oft-quoted phrase “a text without a context becomes a pretext for a proof text.” The essential question, of course, is what constitutes the primary context. Is the primary context the text

itself? Or is the primary interpretative context, the historical and cultural milieu of the social setting of a passage, obtained primarily through specialized background studies? Or is the essential context a relevant body of knowledge obtained through specialized studies such as archeology, genetics, or other studies that scholars seek to derive through general revelation, thereby making general revelation a primary context to interpret Scripture? Or is the essential context later canonical revelation and, ultimately, the entire canon of Scripture? Literal interpretation always looks to the immediate context within the author’s message rather than to other contexts.

Some scholars have suggested avoiding the term *literal* but rather use the term *literary*; this is a grave oversight that can lead to denying or de-historicizing events and eroding the factuality of the Scripture. The term *literal* includes such literary conventions as similes, hyperbole, parables, etc., while at the same time sustaining the historical meaning of the author. The term *literal* includes literary constructs and genres to affirm the author’s intention and truthfulness, though the term *literary* does not necessarily affirm the historical trustworthiness and truthfulness of the author.

Unfortunately, some scholars today use the term *literary* to suggest the authors of Scripture created literary figures and literary events that may or may not be true and construe that these literary constructs have veiled meaning foreign to the textual context. It is not uncommon to read the assertion that the authors of Scripture allegedly acquiesced to their social-cultural setting and adopted neighboring mythological and cultural viewpoints in constructing their *literary* argument; sadly, the unique-

ness and truthfulness of Scripture is denied; the interpreter is then flooded with background material, sophisticated literary studies, and hermeneutical theories that defy understanding. Scholars posit how the literary figures of Adam and Eve function in the coherent dramatic narrative of Scripture, while, at the same time, denying the historicity of Adam and Eve. The esteemed professor Eugene H. Merrill describes this literary hermeneutic, as he laments that the “Defenders of a ‘Bible uniqueness view’ have found themselves foundering about in a morass of data, debate, and sadly, defection from the time-honored views . . . of faith in the inerrant word . . . [with its] aversion to literal readings of a text.”<sup>6</sup>

Literal interpretation (*sensus literal*) means to discern the intention of the human author by examining what the author affirms in the historical context of his writing. The literal meaning of a text then is limited by its immediate historical-textual parameters as Hirsch correctly emphasized.

### Prioritizing the Historical - textual Meaning

An increasing challenge to this *sensus literal* view of interpretation comes from reformed theology. The *sensus literal* view disallows a progressive resignification of a passage or progressive re-interpretation of a passage through later revelation, oftentimes referred to as the Historical Progress of Revelation or Christocentric Model of Exegesis. This reformed model of hermeneutics incorrectly allows New Testament interpretation to change the historic verbal meaning of the OT text based upon a broader, fuller NT context.

The basis for this Christocentric hermeneutical model entails a distinction

<sup>6</sup> Danny R Falkner and Lee Anderson Jr, *Created Cosmos: What the Bible Reveals About Astronomy* (Green Forest, AR, 2016), 8-9.



between what the human authors intended by their text as opposed to what the Divine author intended. This A/author distinction of the text becomes the basis for a New Testament priority hermeneutic. Reformed author Vern Poythress correctly argues that any statement interpreted must be based on the context of the author; Poythress then incorrectly argues that since Scripture has both a human and a divine author and since their contexts are never *exactly* the same, the reader must consider the fuller contextual revelation of the New Testament to reinterpret the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup> He advocates for a progressive meaning of a passage. The passage is first understood “in the context of the particular book of the bible in which it appears and in the context of the human author and historical circumstances of the book,” and then this same passage is later understood “in the context of the total canon of Scripture available up to that point in time.” Eventually, this same passage is understood “in the context of the entire Bible (the complete canon).” The Christocentric model of interpretation allows the initial verbal historically determined meaning to change through various iterations of progressive revelation. This hermeneutical theory attempts to rationalize how unconditional and irrevocable promises made to Abraham and his descendants, including Israel, can be simply reinterpreted using the NT.

The issues of intertextuality and NT-use of the OT are too complex and too varied to justify a hermeneutic that allows a re-interpretation or resignification of an OT text. The use of the fulfillment formula in the NT is simply too broad to suggest that its mere

appearance indicates a historical completion of a prophetic promise. The context and use of each passage must be compared to the antecedent historical promise to validate a fulfilled prophecy.<sup>9</sup> Zuck describes ten different ways in which a NT author may use an OT text without altering the historical meaning or without claiming exhaustive, complete fulfillment:

1. to point up to the current accomplishment or realization of a prediction;
2. to confirm that a NT incident is in agreement with an OT principle;
3. to explain a point given in the OT;
4. to support a point being made in the NT;
5. to illustrate a NT truth;
6. to apply the OT to a NT truth;
7. to summarize an OT concept;
8. to use OT terminology;
9. to draw a parallel with an OT incident;
10. to relate an OT situation to Christ.<sup>10</sup>

The author of the text is the one who sets the parameters of when actual fulfillment occurs—the initial author cannot control how a later author might use his text though he can set the parameters for the

fulfillment of his text. Each aspect of a promise is historically governed by the textual parameters of that initial promise. Therefore, a strict one-to-one correspondence between details of a prophetic prediction and fulfillment of a prophecy must occur. This correspondence includes the details and “essentially the same message expressed in both passages.”<sup>11</sup> Fulfillment does not occur until all aspects of the initial promise have been satisfied.

*Prophetic fulfillment* occurs only when all the commitments and provisions in a promise have been realized. Kaiser correctly states:

The theological interpretation or exegesis of a given piece of text must be understood only in light of the antecedent revelations of God to that biblical author and those writers of scripture who historically preceded him . . . and who shared the same technical terms or analogous concepts in the progress of revelation . . . [and analogy of faith principle must not be used] until the present text’s author has had a chance to indicate his own distinctive verbal meaning and theological contribution in light of the Bible available to him up to the time of writing.<sup>12</sup>

In order to help preserve the author’s historical textual meaning, pastors and scholars should develop mini-biblical theologies before moving to synthesis. Biblical theology here is understood as the study to discover the particular viewpoint of a biblical author (e.g., Pauline theology) or the study of revelation in particular

<sup>7</sup> Vern S. Poythress, “Divine Meaning of Scripture,” *WTJ* 48, no. 2 (Fall 1986), 249–279.

<sup>8</sup> Poythress, “Divine Meaning of Scripture,” 241–79, esp. 267.

<sup>9</sup> See Charles H. Dyer, “Biblical Meaning of Fulfillment,” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Welsey R. Willis and John R. Masters (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 51–72.

<sup>10</sup> Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1991), 260–67.

<sup>11</sup> Elliott E. Johnson, “Premillennialism Introduced: Hermeneutics” in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Reader’s Understanding,” *TJ* 6 (1977): 192.



historical period (e.g., theology of wisdom literature).<sup>13</sup> This method helps to understand the author's message within his own historical framework. Yarbrough correctly asserts that biblical theology is the "Study of the Bible that seeks to discover what the biblical writers, under divine guidance, believed, described, and taught in the context of their own terms."<sup>14</sup>

### A Self-Correcting Theological Method<sup>15</sup>

A proper theological method differentiates hermeneutics, interpretative practices, theological method, and theology. A correct (and self-correcting) model for how to theologize (theological method) is necessary since the Scripture is progressively revealed, and no one topic is fully addressed by any one author in any one-time era. Secondly, a self-correcting theological method is required since interpreters grow in their knowledge and understanding of Scripture. Many times interpreters ask the wrong questions or ask the right question in the wrong way about a particular subject matter or text, which then creates difficult interpretive issues; these difficult issues take both time and proper exposure to resolve. A theological method exhibiting the following characteristics will help ensure a biblically balanced and self-correcting approach:

### Canonical



First priority and authority is always given to the canonical books of Scripture (*canonical* refers to all 66 books of the Bible and not to canonical interpretation) over personal

experiences, personal sensibilities, other writings, background studies, speculation, etc. In sum, Scripture is used to interpret Scripture in its proper context of progressive revelation. Scripture possesses a kind of inherent clarity to allow its central message and truths to be self-evident; this principle of self-authentication of Scripture provides the right for Scripture to speak first and provide its own context for understanding.

Background information and knowledge gained through general revelation can be helpful though priority should always be placed upon the meaning of Scripture in its immediate context; the primary context is always the immediate text itself. The interpretation is first validated by the immediate text and then through other Scripture within its own era of progressive revelation.

### Comprehensive.



All biblical teaching on a topic must be examined with greater weight given to the clearest and most definitive passages rather than selective or vague passages. This comprehensive process helps avoid mere proof-texting. Proverbs 18:17 says, "The first to plead his case seems just, until another comes and examines him." Any theological model must entail extensive examination and interaction with all Scripture. Partial and fragmented knowledge will lead only to a distorted view and shallow ministry and life. Wise interpreters continue to examine both primary literature (the Bible) and secondary literature (commentaries, theology books, etc.). Further reading and interaction helps to unpack the issues and

surface a number of sub-related themes and questions related to the initial question. Careful students are sure to restate and refine the initial question as they study. Many times properly defining the issue or question provides a path for healthy resolution. The overall goal is to become more sensitive to the literary features of the passage and allow a comprehensive view of a truth to shape one's understanding and life with God.

### Consistent Hermeneutical Approach.



The interpretive philosophy must be consistently used rather than allowing a shifting hermeneutical philosophy to vary from topic-to-topic, or passage-to-passage, or even from the Old Testament to New Testament. The goal is to always understand and validate the author's affirmed meaning by examining the historical-cultural meaning of the passage within the context of the author's book. God did not give all His revelation in one exhaustive act. Rather, He provided revelation through distinguishable stages in many literary styles or genres of writing. Each text of Scripture must be read in light of its own historical setting rather than simply superimposing later revelation onto earlier revelation. The interpreter should seek to determine and validate the original author's intended meaning by examining the writing within its own historical context and literary genre. This interpretative method allows the immediate historical-textual parameters of a passage to define and limit textual meaning. Inconsis-

<sup>13</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew, "Biblical Theology," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 84.

<sup>14</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, "Biblical Theology," in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 61.

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from "How to Think about and Practice Theology," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology*, (Spring 2014), 65-85 by David Mappes.



tent hermeneutical practices will skew textual meaning.

## Congruency.



The method of study must allow for proper association of one text to another text so that harmony, complexity, and tension of Scripture are realized without creating direct contradictions or forced harmonization. Valid interpretation does not minimize or worse, deny, one truth while holding firmly to another truth. Some truths simply exist side-by-side which the biblical authors never try to resolve. As an example, it is disingenuous to claim that God is love while then ignoring that God is also holy or wrathful. Scripture teaches that God's nature entails both holiness and love. The interpretative process should draw questions from the text of Scripture rather than create false dichotomies. The statement "if God loves me, then why did He allow this event in my life" is a classic example of not allowing complexity and tension in Scripture. The Scriptures clearly teach that God does love us and that He is also sovereignly orchestrating events in our lives. A theological method should not create false contradictions.

## Coherence.



Any theological method must demonstrate an intelligent, logical, clear ordering of investigation which prioritizes the greatest

weight of direct teaching material to address a topic. Some practices are described in the Bible (e.g., betrothal in marriage or washing feet before entering a home) while other truths are prescribed (e.g., how a husband should treat his wife). A coherent method recognizes this "prescriptive vs. descriptive" or the "is vs. ought" differences and allows the weightiest, clearest passages to address a topic. Descriptive truths describe things that simply existed while prescriptive truths prescribe a higher moral and ethical standard of what beliefs and life ought to be.

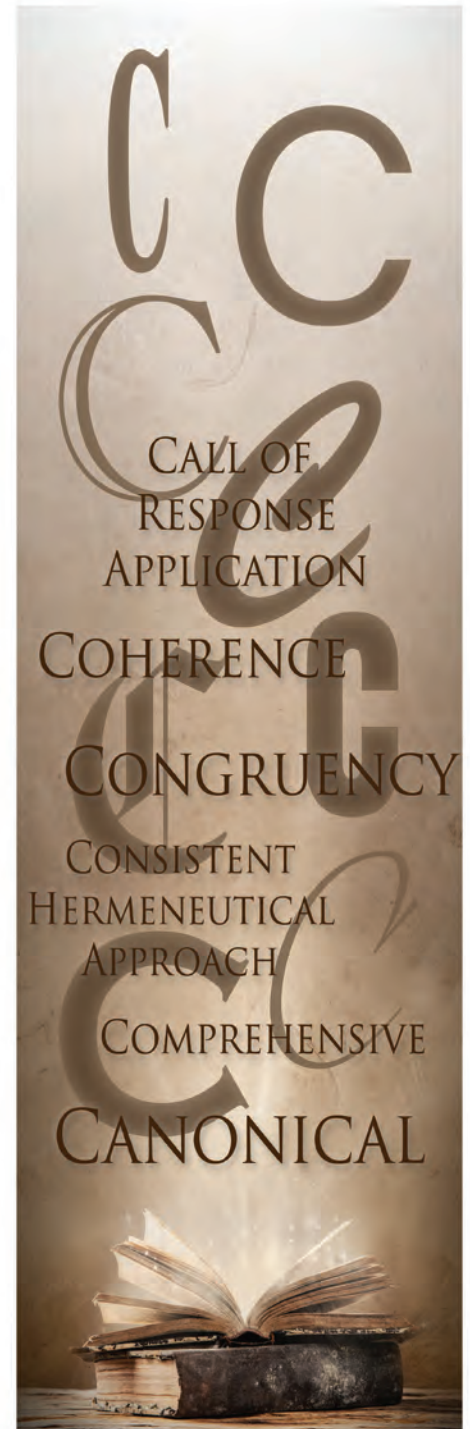
## Call of Response/ Application.



The call for personal response(s) must relate to the verbal meaning of the Scriptural truth/passage being considered. The authorial meaning of Scripture always controls this specificity for personal response. The extent to which a truth can be applied to the contemporary reader is measured by the degree of transfer.<sup>16</sup> The degree of transfer is the extent to which the current reader is similar to or different from the originally intended recipients. If the passage is specifically addressing husbands, is it legitimate to then apply and transfer that meaning to wives or to children? If a passage does not have a high degree of transfer, then broader Scriptural principles from the passage may apply. However, these Scriptural principles should always be measured by other Scripture that directly address the topic. Principles should not serve as the final weight of a truth or an application but rather be used to illustrate a truth taught elsewhere in Scripture.

## Summary

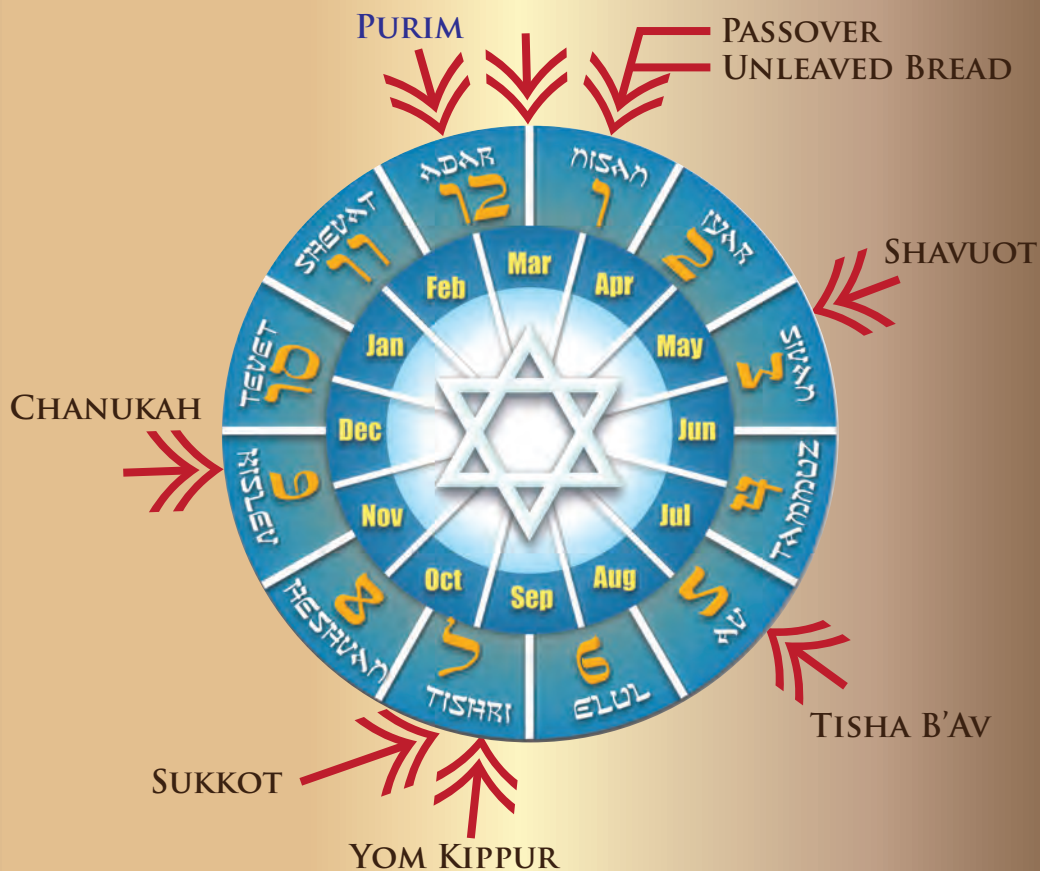
This article has overviewed the definition and practice of literal interpretation along with presenting a valid theological method to sustain the historic author's verbal meaning in Scripture.



<sup>16</sup> See Daniel Estes, *Learning and Living God's Word* (Schamburg, IL: Regular Baptist, 1993) for further discussion.



Just under the surface of the Hebrew Scriptures is something that, while often unseen, was the framework which gave order to the lives of the Jewish people. This “something” is the yearly cycle of holy days, observances, and celebrations God gave to Israel in Leviticus 23. Old Testament Jewish believers would arrange their lives in accordance with this God-given calendar, knowing that they were commanded to appear in Jerusalem three times per year for the festivals of ascent: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles.





These holy days were times to engage in special observances. The reason God gave them is simple: They were to be remembrances of what He had done for His people and of their relationship with Him. The fact that the festivals were repeated every year reinforced the lesson.

In addition to the seven God-given feast days in Leviticus 23, my Jewish people instituted other days of remembrance and celebration. Four particular fast days for mourning are mentioned in Zechariah 8:19, with the implication that these were observed by the Jewish people. An example of a joyous holiday is found in Esther 9, where the festival of Purim is established to celebrate the deliverance from the murderous genocide the evil Haman had plotted against the Jewish people of Persia. The holiday is reported in a positive way in Scripture. A further example is Hanukkah,

another instance where the annihilation of the Jewish people was plotted by pagan idolaters. But God intervened so that the Jewish people would survive, pen the Scriptures, and bring forth the Messiah. In John 10:22, we see Yeshua going up to Jerusalem to participate in the celebration of Hanukkah (or Feast of Dedication), even though the day was not one commanded by God in Scripture.

In mid-summer, there is a day on the Jewish calendar known as *Tisha B'Av*. The word *Tisha* is Hebrew for “ninth,” and *Av* is the fifth month in the Jewish biblical calendar. Hence, the term *Tisha B'Av* translates literally as the “Ninth of Av.” It solemnly remembers a number of catastrophic events that befell the Jewish people on that particular day of the year.

A partial list of these calamities includes the following dates:

The observance of *Tisha B'Av* is first mentioned in Zechariah 8:19, written about 520 B.C., where it is described as “the fast of the fifth month.” At that point, *Tisha B'Av* was to remember the destruction of Solomon’s Temple – a destruction which had happened just one generation earlier.

By A.D. 220, the time of the completion of the earliest section of the Talmud, the Mishnah, *Tisha B'Av* was already being observed in the Jewish community as a day of mourning for the destruction of both Jewish temples in Jerusalem. In later years, it was noted that other tragedies befell the Jewish people on this date.

Other than for Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), *Tisha B'Av* is the most solemn day on the Jewish calendar. For religious Jewish people, its observance involves a full day of fasting from food. Many healthy



## 586 B.C.

Destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians



## A.D. 70

Walls of the Second Temple compound were breached by the Romans (the Temple itself was destroyed several days later)



## 135

Destruction and massacre at Betar, the last Jewish fortress to hold out in the Bar Kokhba revolt against Rome



## 1492

Date by which all Jews who would not join the Catholic Church were forced to leave Spain (over a quarter million lost their lands and most possessions thereafter)



## 1914

World War I began (causing massive upheaval within European Jewry, directly leading to widespread pogroms against the Jews of Eastern Europe, and whose aftermath led to the Holocaust)



adults abstain from water as well. Long hours are spent in the synagogue in prayer. The congregation recites mournful sections from Lamentations and other passages relating to the dispersion from Jerusalem after the destruction of the First Temple and the dwelling in exile. Many will sit on the floor or on hard benches while reciting these passages. Another tradition is the avoidance of wearing any leather products, including shoes or belts, something also seen during repentance on Yom Kippur.

During the time I lived and studied in Jerusalem, I visited the *Kotel* (the Western Wall) on Tisha B'Av. Many men had spent the night next to the wall, which is the visible remnant of the courtyard wall of the Second Temple. The prayers uttered on the Kotel often focus on the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple. Biblically, we understand that the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC was a direct result of the idolatry in which Israel and Judah had engaged for generations. As Ezra 5:12 states,

*But because our fathers had provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.*



God allowed the Second Temple to be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 for a twofold reason: First, the destruction was part of the judgment upon that particular generation of Jews who had rejected the Messiahship of Jesus. Jesus Himself had foretold the judgment in Mark 13:1-2: *As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."*

Second, the destruction was also a result of the fact that the sacrifice of Messiah Jesus for atonement was the last sacrifice that God would accept for believers. The Mosaic sacrificial system ended with Jesus' death, as Hebrews 10:9b-10 explains: *He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Messiah Jesus once for all.*

Today, the Temple Mount is under Muslim control, by agreement with the government of Israel, and mosques now occupy the place where the Jewish Holy Temple and its courtyard once stood. While a discussion of the future temples is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to mention that there will be a third temple, built in Jerusalem during the tribulation. Ultimately, it will be the temple of the Antichrist. Upon Yeshua's second coming, a fourth temple will be built—that of the millennium, the one-thousand-year reign of Messiah Yeshua on earth. An excellent resource to understand these end-time events is Dr. Fruchtenbaum's work *Footsteps of the Messiah*, available through Ariel Ministries.

*Western Wall in Jerusalem, 1988. On Tisha B'Av, men will often sit on the floor for hours chanting through the book of Lamentations in a complete fast from food and water.*

While the feeling during Tisha B'Av is certainly that of mourning, the anticipation of Israel's future redemption has always added an element of hope. Tisha B'Av will eventually be an occasion for rejoicing, as Zechariah 8:19-23 relates:

<sup>19</sup> *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.'*

<sup>20</sup> *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'It will yet be that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities.*

<sup>21</sup> *'The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go."*

<sup>22</sup> *'So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.'*

<sup>23</sup> *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"*

The humanly-appointed fast days will turn into feast days, glad occasions when the Messianic kingdom is established visibly on earth, with King Messiah reigning from a restored Jerusalem.



# CHANUKAH TREES AND OTHER REFLECTIONS ON MESSIANIC IDENTITY



I am one of a few hundred versions of the same story. Second-generation Jewish believers in Jesus are an enigmatic breed with our own subset of defense mechanisms and inside jokes. With exceptions, we are the children of the 1970s Messianic movement.

We come in a variety of flavors, but are mostly all familiar with Jewish relatives perceiving us as estranged converts, and Christian peers perceiving us as exotic hybrids. Caught between these worlds, we learned from an early age to field a myriad of reactions to our identity.

Our parents were pioneers, walking us through these inherited frustrations without related child-rearing books, blog networks, or the luxury of calling their own Jewish parents for advice. Growing up, my mother and father were my only source of exterior legitimization, my only confirmation that my “different” was okay.

I could not find myself in pop culture—no classic holiday film featured characters celebrating both Chanukah and Christ-

We are young - young enough that we know G-d exists for the same reason we know the earth is round. I have never earned my beliefs; I do not know doubt.

“There’s no such thing as a Chanukah tree,” my sister Sarah insists.

“But I have to get one for Bubbe this year,” I retort. “You can’t, because there’s no such thing.”

“Then I’ll get her a Christmas tree.” “You can’t.” “Why not?”

“Because Bubbe<sup>1</sup> doesn’t celebrate Christmas.”

Taken aback, I’m scrambling to rationalize this when Sarah groans and rolls her eyes,

“You don’t get it—she doesn’t believe in Jesus.” There is absolutely no existing rubric

in my mind with which to file this information.

“But,” I sputter, “She’s Jewish!”

mas. In children’s literature, I could relate halfway to Jewish protagonists, and halfway to Christian protagonists.

This didn’t cost much when I was five, but given the built-in, perpetual state of emergency that comes with adolescence, my fellow Messianic teenagers and I took dual identity crisis to a new level.

In my version of the story, my sisters and I were raised in Minneapolis; at the time, there was no solid Messianic body nearby, so we ended up at a church. While we savored its doctrine and thriving community, at the end of the day, my family still required explanation and were still considered representations. For most of our fellow congregants, my family was their only exposure to Judaism.

We invited virtually the entire church to my Bat Mitzvah. The taste they’d received from hearing us describe Chanukah did nothing to prepare them for the ceremony—a number of people looked like they’d been thrown in a deep end. But they bore it with poise and open minds, many even joining the Israeli folk dances during the reception.

After the evening finally ended, my family lay exhausted in a heap in our living room, sorting through several dozen cards. Multiple were repeats, representing multiple well-meant, bewildered guests who wandered into a Target aisle and bought the first card with a cartoon Torah on the front. Some were for a boy’s Bar Mitzvah, some

were just birthday cards, and one had a crucifix on it.

I was enormously blessed with a church community who tried, who leaned in even when they didn’t get it. This privilege allowed me to coast through an otherwise unkind sea, robbing me of the empathy to understand or protect my friends from far more severe experiences.

Bullying and open displays of anti-Semitism crowd my friends’ versions of this story. In my friend Stephanie’s version, someone spray-painted swastikas on her synagogue sign and ripped down their sukkah. In Simone’s version, students at her Christian middle school put a picture of Hitler in her locker.

“I don’t think that’s necessary.” “What?” “You know, your background. You’re so . . . into it.”

I’m stunned silent by the sheer peculiarity of this concept. The suggestion that my heritage is something I choose, or furthermore, something I can will myself out of, has never occurred to me before.

Heritage is not a costume I pull on in the morning; I breathe it, exist inside it, consciously or not.

My mental stumbling gives Lee time for a second strike. “I mean, I’m something-percent Swedish, but I’m not that into my background.”

<sup>1</sup> Yiddish for “grandmother.”



"This isn't just ethnic," I muster. "It's part of my faith, too."

"But you believe what I believe now, that Jesus died so we wouldn't have to live under Mosaic Law."

"I didn't convert, Lee." My teeth are gritted now.

"Why not?" she glares back. "You're not Jewish anymore."

A shudder ribbons down my spine. "Y-yes," I stammer in a controlled growl. "Yes, I am." "You can't keep telling people you're Jewish if you're a Christian now."

"Lee—"

"Look, it's just my opinion!" She throws her hands up in defense. "I'm entitled to it. And in my opinion, you're not Jewish, or at least, you shouldn't be."

After high school, I interned with a Messianic ministry in Chicago, where the simplicity of being default was nothing short of an anomaly to me. I did not realize I was holding my breath until I'd been pushed to the surface for air. Late-night discussions of life and faith didn't require the routine definitions of terms, the deciphering, the defenses. I didn't even have to help anyone pronounce my last name.

Sharing an assumed identity, never having to state it, gave into baffled wonder: Is this how church feels to Christians? Is this how my friends feel all the time? Humbled, I recognized the flailing overcompensation I'd been parading back in Minneapolis. After years of receiving well-intended microaggressions, punctuated by the occasional, overtly racist remarks, I had built myself a barricade. I defensively preached my right to legitimacy, but moving in with three Messianic roommates made the entire world infinitely less frightening.

Suddenly, solving my identity didn't matter so much as not bearing it alone. I thought I

needed answers, but in reality, I mostly just craved companionship while searching for them. Untangling the yarn together, and sharing the mystery of our core beings, cooled my angered heart.

"You're Jewish, aren't you?"

Startled, I glance up. "Me?"

Moshe wears what I can only describe as an endeared smirk.

It's my first time in Israel, but my identity is hidden in a herd of gentile, Christian teenagers. There is nothing external to set me apart; we all wear the same wide-eyed, tourist-brand gaze as we wander through the Old City. Yet, this particular Orthodox shopkeeper has pulled me aside.

"How did you know?" I ask, incredulous.

"Four reasons," he smiles. "You said your name is . . ." "Hana."

"Ah, *Channa*, the prophetess!" he exclaims. "You asked me if I sell *Havdalah*<sup>2</sup> candles. No one else in this group knows what those are," he chuckles. "Thirdly, your Hebrew is quite good. I saw your friend ask you to pronounce the inscriptions on those souvenirs. And," he extends his hands, gesturing for absent words. "The way . . . the way you speak."

"My Hebrew?"

"No." Moshe leans in gently, his voice soft with the secret, passing me a gift. "Just . . . I don't know, the way you speak . . . the way you are."

Nothing is more seductive than the promise of belonging; some second-generation kids assimilated into the pop evangelical mainstream, while others dug their heels in, overcompensating to prove themselves to their extended families or Hillel campus groups.

After a lifetime of invalidation or bullying, some of my close friends can no longer bring themselves to identify as Jewish. Others, in

response to being challenged as poseurs, leaned so far into Torah observance that even other Messianic Jews criticize them.

I know individuals with inclinations all over this spectrum, but none who feel they've "found it," who are thoroughly rested about who they are, who they are not, and how others may react. The truth is that the Messianic movement is as diverse as the experiences of its adherents.

It is evolving, though; for the first time, Messianic children can relate theologically to their grandparents, a privilege I never knew. In recent history, Messianic resources and information have become accessible, to the education of those outside the movement, and the flourishing of those inside. Resources mean that more kids will grow up with a default sense of assurance—not necessarily normalcy, but the internalization that their "different" is okay.

While there is controversy in the aforementioned spectrum, I don't believe I am called to rank the positions others inhabit. Here in the Kingdom of G-d, there is room for every kind of crash landing, every tough question, and every lonely or exhausted sojourner.

My responsibility lies in my own journey forward. I have been given two invaluable gifts: the chance at salvation, and a rich, beautiful heritage. Combining the two is complementary in theory, but complex in modern practice; it is a wide-open field navigated by few through the entire course of history.

But exploring uncharted territory is in my blood. I am a Jew; what am I if not a nomad?



Hana filming the teaching sessions at Camp Shoshanah

<sup>2</sup> Just as the Jewish people proclaim the entrance of Shabbat by making *Kiddush*, they mark the exit of Shabbat (or a holiday) with *Havdalah*, a ceremony that separates the holy day from the ordinary weekday.



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