



The Chosen People



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REJOICING IN THE HARVEST

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LESSONS IN THANKSGIVING FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE

Shalom and Happy Thanksgiving!

During this season of Thanksgiving I want you to know that I am very grateful for you! May the Lord continue to bless you for blessing the Jewish people. Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and financial support—we could not do the work of bringing the Gospel to Jewish people across the globe without your partnership.

The Sabbatical (Shemittah) Year

As you know, the Jewish calendar is quite different from the non-Jewish calendar. The Jewish year is a lunar year with 30-day months, and the Julian calendar is solar with both 30- and 31-day months. This makes it a little confusing when you are trying to align the Jewish calendar with the Julian calendar. We are now just a few months into the new Jewish year of 5776, based upon the traditional rabbinic date for creation.

The Jewish calendar has received a lot of attention over the past 12 months because of the many books and articles telling us that the year 5775 was a Sabbatical year, also known by the Hebrew term *shemittah*, or in English, “release.”

The primary rule of thumb for observing the Sabbatical year, which occurs every seventh year, was that the Israelites were supposed to leave the land fallow so that it could rest. They were to refrain from planting crops in that particular year and to trust God to provide for them.

You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so

that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove (Ex. 23:10-11).

A second, and very important part of the Sabbatical year was the forgiveness of loans. The Scripture continues,

At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts. This is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed (Deut. 15:1-2).

Again, during the Sabbatical year, the Israelites were to show special mercy and grace towards the poor. This was to be done in a few different ways. First of all, the “successful” Israelite was commanded to help fellow Israelites who were impoverished by loaning them what was needed for their survival.

If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but

you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks (Deut. 15:7-8).

Secondly, they were to release those who indentured themselves because they had probably fallen on hard times for some reason—perhaps health, bad crops or whatever caused them to “lose the farm.” The only way for them to survive was to become enslaved to one of their fellow countrymen.

If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed (Deut. 15:12-13; see also 15:14-18).

Therefore, the “release” of the Sabbatical year meant that the Israelites could not plant crops in their fields, collect payments on loans, and keep all of what they produced and stored for themselves rather than giving generously to the poor. At the heart of the “release” was the opportunity to trust God for all of their needs.

Unfortunately the Sabbatical year was rarely followed and became the basis for God’s judgment during the 70 years of captivity in Babylon (Jer. 25:11).

Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete (2 Chron. 36:20-21).

The Year of Jubilee

The Sabbatical year was, of course, to be observed every seventh year, but then in the 50th year—seven sabbatical years—a year of Jubilee was to be celebrated by the Israelites. You might view this as a *super* Sabbatical year! The word *jubilee* is a transliteration of the Hebrew word *yovale* literally meaning “with a rushing noise.” (Ex. 19:13, Josh. 6:5).

Whereas the Sabbatical year helped alleviate the immediate needs of the

poor, the Jubilee year was designed to give the poor in Israel a chance to start all over again. Leviticus 25:8-12 provides us with a full description of the laws for the Jubilee year.

You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family (Lev. 25:10).

God Himself was also the original distributor of the Land to the twelve tribes of Israel, and again, He simply allowed *His land* to be used by the Israelites (Num. 32, Josh. 19)—as the giving of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people was always portrayed in Scripture as a gift from God (Gen. 12, 15, 17, etc.).

Moses also promises Israel that if the Jubilee year is faithfully observed, the

Joshua and Caleb said to all the people, “It is a wonderful country ahead, and the Lord loves us. He will bring us safely into the land and give it to us. It is very fertile, a land ‘flowing with milk and honey!’” Num. 14:7-8

Lord will miraculously cause the crops to grow during the years that the ground was fallow (Lev. 25:18-22). The God who demands that the land remain unplanted is the same God who promised to provide in abundance.

It is also interesting to note that the Jubilee year began on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9) as the spiritual cleansing of the land began with the spiritual renewal of the chosen people.

As one Old Testament commentary describes,

This year of grace was proclaimed to begin with the Day of Atonement of every seventh sabbatical year to show that it was only with the full forgiveness of sins that the blessed liberty of the children of God could possibly commence.¹

Lessons in Thanksgiving

There are so many lessons to learn from the Sabbatical/Shemitah and Jubilee years. The most important lesson for us is to recognize that *all that we have in this world comes from God*. He owns everything! This means that every single one of our possessions, even the ones we worked so hard to earn, are ultimately *gifts from a good God* who loves His children.

The Israelites are also asked to recognize the special place given to the Levites who have a permanent right of redemption to their houses and whose crops could not be sold. They did not own land of their own, but were to be cared for materially as they cared for the Israelites spiritually (Lev. 25:32-34).

Clearly, one of the great lessons of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years is that God has called us to be stewards of all that He provides. His gifts are designed to be enjoyed, nurtured and, most importantly, shared.

We are to help provide for the poor, respect the poor, and warned not to take advantage of the poor (Lev. 25:35-43). This is one of the reasons why Your Mission to the Jewish People is doing so much to alleviate the pain of poverty in the lives of many, mostly elderly, Jewish people.

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite times of the year as it reminds me of how generous the Lord has been to me, to my Jewish people and to Chosen People Ministries.

Again, thank you for your prayers, love and support. I believe you are going to be blessed by reading the following expanded ministry reports of all God is doing in the lives of Jewish people around the globe.

Happy Thanksgiving and may the Lord fill your heart and home with His joy!

Your brother,



Mitch



Dr. Mitch Glaser
President

¹ Keil and Delitzsch Commentary p. 729

REJOICING IN THE HARVEST

Chosen People Ministries reaches Jewish people for the Messiah in a variety of ways. We strive to keep in touch with those who have given us their contact information and are interested in learning more. Many of these precious people are genuinely interested in discussing spiritual matters, the Bible, and even Messiah. Others are just curious to find out what we believe. Some are cold to the Gospel, but for one reason or another have given us their information. However, in all cases, our staff knows that even a relationship such as this can lead to people accepting Jesus as their Messiah. Mitch Forman, Vice President of U.S. Ministries,

describes the fruit of such relationships:

One of my joys when traveling is to meet those whom I have talked to by phone, but haven't met yet. I have been talking to a Jewish man for quite a while and we've had a couple of good talks over the phone. Jason is married to a Christian woman who has been praying for him for many years. When we finally met, he shared with me that he and his wife went to Israel and he was baptized in the Jordan River. I asked him why he did this. He told me because he believed and it was a perfect time to make the decision for Yeshua. Please pray for Jason! We really connected and he wants to study the Scriptures with me from a Jewish perspective.*

As you may know, Passover season is often a busy time for our staff. They are usually traveling presenting Messiah in the Passover at churches around the country. It is a wonderful opportunity for these churches to host unbelieving Jewish people invited by their congregants. At these presentations Jewish people, often for the first time, hear the Gospel presented in a Jewish context. Read one such story from, Vladimir Pikman:



This Passover season we had a number of rather spontaneous Passover dinners and presentations close to where we live. The events were relatively small—not more than 200 people in attendance—but outstanding evangelistic opportunities. We had Jewish people, primarily invited by their Christian friends, in attendance for every one of them! God was touching the hearts of the people.

A couple of Jewish ladies came to a Messiah in the Passover presentation. Originally from New York, they are currently living in Dallas. They were sitting in the very first row. When I was explaining Yeshua in the afikoman and the third cup, one of them started crying and could not stop until the end of the presentation. God was at work! Afterwards she came to me saying, “Tonight I understood that Jesus is my Messiah!” Praise the Lord! What a joy!

Often Jewish people will face opposition from family and friends who do not yet know the Messiah. Because of misconceptions about Jesus and Christianity, friends and family are genuinely worried. But even this can be a witness of God’s power in a new believer’s life. See this story below from Cathy Wilson who serves in the Phoenix, Arizona area:

Sweet Carol, our 96-year-old Jewish believer friend, has been confronted by the Jewish people at her retirement center to abandon her new faith and to engage in a conversation with a rabbi. Why? The thinking on the part of the Jewish community without Jesus is if a Jewish person is “brainwashed” into thinking that Jesus is the Messiah, a rabbi could certainly talk a Jewish person out of such foolishness. Carol did speak with an Orthodox rabbi. She reported on their conversation and said, “I didn’t understand anything the rabbi said. He didn’t answer my questions. I understand Cathy clearly.” Praise God that when we are born again, we are kept by the power of God through faith (1 Peter 1:5)!*

We often don’t know what the Holy Spirit will use to draw Jewish people to accepting the Messiah. Sometimes it is a Passover presentation, other times it is a life-long friendship and witness. Occasionally, it is an invitation to a Bible study by a trusted friend. Take this story from Ron and Paula Michaelson, for example:



A simple invitation to a Bible study can have lasting consequences. A Jewish man named Robert, who lives in our community, was invited by a friend to our Messianic Bible study on Jeremiah. I learned that this man had once also lived on a kibbutz in Israel. At*

first he referred to himself as a secular Jew, not having attended a synagogue. Each week he came early to the study so we could talk. Soon he began to attend our congregation. He said that it was because it was so friendly. The fact that Paula and I are Messianic Jews, attending this congregation, added to his feeling at ease about his Jewishness. He saw for himself that you could believe in Yeshua (Jesus) and still be Jewish.

Last Sunday Paula and I were thrilled to see him in line to receive the Lord’s Supper. Kneeling at the communion rail, our pastor paused when he came to Robert. He knew the background of this man, and asked, “Do you believe Jesus died for the forgiveness of your sins?”

“I do,” Robert answered, and received communion for the first time.

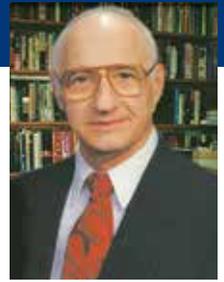
Our dedicated Israeli worker, Maxim, shared a story from a recent children’s camp that Chosen People Ministries runs. This Sukkot they were able to serve 50 kids from around the country. The kids learned about God’s protection and faithfulness and about how God has given us armor against hostile attacks (Eph. 6:12-19). Every day they discovered new truths about God and the Messiah and many walked away with a solid understanding of what it means to live for God.

The kids also enjoyed games and kayaking on the Jordan River. The last day at camp the kids had the opportunity to pray and ask Yeshua to be their Lord and Savior, and many did! Please continue to pray for each of these children, for their decisions to remain steadfast and for their faith to grow as they continue their new walk with the Lord.

*name changed

SEE THE BIBLE THROUGH JEWISH EYES

BY DANIEL GOLDBERG, TH.D., D.D.



Dr. Goldberg serves as International Ministries Representative for Chosen People Ministries and lives in Pineville, North Carolina with his wife, Madeline.

A CONCLUDING SUMMARY OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

ISAIAH, PRINCE OF THE PROPHETS

The brilliance of Isaiah's writings eclipses even the beauty of the other major prophets—including Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Each of these prophets wrote during the time of the nation's demise, a bleak era in the nation's history when foreign empires conquered David's once mighty country, beginning shortly before 700 B.C. and continuing for a period of 200 years.

Many of the prophets, like Isaiah, addressed their messages to Judah, the Southern Kingdom, before Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem in the eighth century B.C. and attested to the death of King Uzziah, about 740 B.C. (Isa. 6:1).

God sent the prophets on a dangerous mission to try to halt the nation's headlong rush to destruction and to call the nation to a restored relationship with God.

ISAIAH – THE FIFTH GOSPEL

In the same manner the New Testament concentrates on Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's hope for the Messiah, Isaiah's central theme anticipates the arrival of the Messiah, Israel's deliverer. Isaiah's vivid picture of the Messiah has led some to refer to

the prophet as the fifth evangelist and his book called the fifth Gospel.

Isaiah depicts the virgin birth of Messiah, along with His life, character, death, resurrection and His second coming with remarkable clarity (See 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Lk. 4:16-22; Isa. 53; 61:1-2).

There are 66 direct quotations from Isaiah in the New Testament, plus approximately 20 allusions to Isaiah's book. Isaiah contains many prophecies that the New Testament shows were fulfilled 700 years later. Since one of the most solid proofs of the inspiration and accuracy of Scripture is fulfilled prophecy, Isaiah's record powerfully attests to the reliability of the Bible.

Broadly speaking, Isaiah may be divided into three main sections, namely:

1. Judgment (Poetry), Ch. 1-35
2. Historical Interlude, Ch. 36-39
3. Salvation, Ch. 40-66

Isaiah was the prince of all the Hebrew prophets. More than any other prophet, Isaiah has powerfully influenced both Jews and Christians for over 2,800 years. The time and manner of his death are not known, but tradition suggests he died during Manasseh's early reign. Perhaps Hebrews 11:37 indicates he was "sawn asunder" with a wooden saw.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ISAIAH'S LEGACY IN SUBSTANTIATING NEW TESTAMENT TRUTH

1. According to Matthew 1:22-23, the virgin birth of Messiah was a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14.
2. The ministry of Jesus healing the sick was predicted in Isaiah 53:4 (Mt. 8:17).
3. God's free gift of grace is amplified by Paul in Romans 5:15 (Isa. 53:11-12).
4. That every believer will stand before the judgment seat is a quote of Isaiah 45:23 in Romans 14:11.
5. The truth that the message of the cross is "foolishness to the perishing" in Isaiah 29:14 is cited in 1 Corinthians 1:18-19.
6. The parables in Matthew 13:13-15 that Jesus spoke that illustrated the blindness of Israel are deeply influenced by Isaiah's message (see Isa. 6:9-10).
7. The atonement of the Messiah Jesus for sin was predicted 700 years B.C. by Isaiah and amplified by New Testament authors (Isa. 53:4-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:21-25).

Have you met the One whom Isaiah predicted would enter our midst? If you do not yet know Jesus, the Lord Messiah and King, now would be the perfect time to ask Him to enter your life.

FRIENDS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

Bob and Emily Seemar recently traveled to Indiana, where they had several opportunities to speak in a few churches. One of these meetings was a home group at which there were about 16 Burmese Christians from Myanmar, and Bob and Emily had to speak through an interpreter. Bob spoke about Chosen People Ministries and Emily shared her testimony. They did not know how these dear people could possibly identify with them and our ministry. But to their surprise and delight, the group turned out to love God's chosen people! They even quoted Genesis 12:3, *"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* What a blessing!

MAKING THEM DISCIPLES...

Our Midwest director continues to meet regularly with a Jewish man who recently came to faith, helping him understand what it is to be a believer in Yeshua. He was introduced to the ministry by one of the men who came to Israel on a tour. Join us in lifting him up in prayer.

A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Neal and Kim Surasky, who serve in the Washington, DC area, recently shared: "We recently attended a funeral of a friend who died from brain cancer. His 'going home' celebration was attended by over 600 people and many were not yet believers. I know that the Lord was pleased, as each of his friends and family took the stage to speak of how his life was such a strong testimony for Messiah! May the seeds that were planted that day grow abundantly!"

FROM THE CORNERS OF THE WORLD BACK TO JERUSALEM

Jorge Sedaca, our Canadian Director, shared the following: "The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) met in Jerusalem this year. Leaders of missions and other organizations working with Jewish people met for a week of worship, teaching, discussions, fellowship and future planning. We also got a glimpse of the evangelism efforts being carried out in different ways by various groups to reach Jews all over the world with the Gospel. The final day we approved a declaration that speaks to the importance of Jewish evangelism as we get closer to Messiah's return. Pray with us that God blesses our efforts and strengthens our resolve."



JESUS BOLDLY PREACHED ON CAMPUS

Robert Walter, our Director of the Feinberg Messianic Center, had a fruitful evangelistic conversation at New York University with Abraham,* a 19-year-old Jewish Marxist who was using street art to call for a revolution. As they spoke about the state of the world, Abraham admitted that mankind is sinful. Robert began sharing with Abraham that we will never have true peace until the Kingdom of God comes down to us. Abraham balked at the idea and went on to question why in other cultures there seems to be a higher moral standard. The example he gave was that of a Native American chief sacrificing his own food in order to save his whole tribe from starvation. Robert was able to use this to make the connection with God's kingdom. Just as the chief willingly laid down and sacrificed his own sustenance, his own survival, for the sake of others, so too God loves us so much that He gave His only begotten son, so that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Robert shared the entire Gospel with him and he listened. Please pray for Abraham's salvation!

*name changed

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and serve Jewish people everywhere!

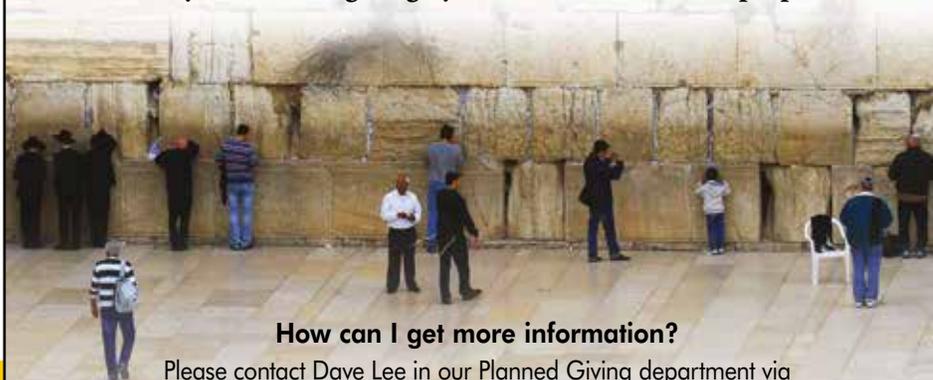
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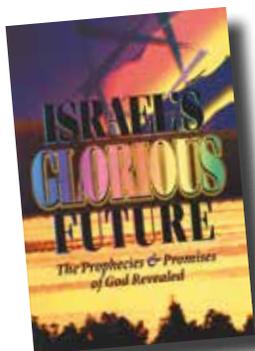
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will. "I will bless
those who bless
you." (Genesis 12:3)



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