



WHO IS ISRAEL'S REDEEMER?

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Who is Israel's Redeemer?

An Exploration of Prophetic Scriptures Concerning Israel's Messiah

Forward

This booklet originated as a series of lectures on the subject of "Who is Israel's Redeemer?" The lectures were originally given in Hebrew and compiled in written form for educational purposes. A few years later it was decided that these lectures should be translated into English and made available for distribution. The original audience was Israeli men who possess a competency in Orthodox Judaism. The English translation of the original Hebrew booklet has been adapted by the staff of Hope 4 Israel with the author's input in order that these lectures might have a broader audience.

The purpose of the English translation of this booklet is to give readers a fuller understanding of the biblical revelations concerning Messiah. Considering the originally intended audience, this booklet provides views of Orthodox Judaism as espoused in the Talmud to present Judaism's traditional view of the Messiah.

Note: All scripture citations in this booklet are the work of the staff of Hope 4 Israel who translated them from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

Rambam, the famous rabbinical commentator of the 12th century, authored 13 Principles of Judaism. The 12th Principle deals with the concept of Messiah:

"I believe with a perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah. And even though he tarries, with all of this I will wait for him every day that he should come."

Chapter 1

Torah and the Messianic Lineage

The book of Ruth reveals the foundation of the Davidic kingdom and gives insights into the characteristics of the Messiah. The book of Ruth opens with the verse,

"...a man from Bethlehem of Judea went to live in the fields of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons." ~Ruth 1:1

It is noteworthy that this verse mentions Judea. In Genesis 49:10, the patriarch Jacob reveals that the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah. The name of this man who departed from Bethlehem was Elimelech. His two sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Elimelech and his sons died, and his wife, Naomi, and only one of her daughters-in-law returned to Judea.

Naomi said,

"I went out full, but empty I returned..." ~ Ruth 1:21

When Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, returned to Judea, their financial situation was dire. Therefore, Ruth gleaned in the fields after those who were harvesting (Ruth 2:3). Ruth took this action because the Torah instructs,

"And when you harvest the harvest of your land, you shall not completely harvest the corners of your field, nor shall you (completely) glean the gleanings of your harvest. And (in) your vineyard you shall not pick the undeveloped (grapes) of your vineyard nor shall you take the gleanings, but you shall leave them for the poor and the proselyte, I AM the L-rd your God." ~ Leviticus 19:9-10

Ruth the Moabite utilized the commandments in order to receive the blessings of the L-rd. Because she responded to the Torah commandments, she also found favor in the eyes of Boaz, an extremely wealthy man and a relative of Naomi's family. Upon noticing this young Moabite woman keeping the Torah, he asked,

"Who is this young lady?" ~ Ruth 2:5

Boaz also said to Ruth,

"...surely you shall listen, my daughter, do not go and glean in any other field, and also do not leave from this place. Thus you shall cling to my young women; your eyes shall be on the field which they are harvesting. And you shall walk after them, for I have commanded the young men that they should not touch you..." ~ Ruth 2:8

Boaz continued and blessed Ruth saying,

"May the L-rd pay you for your actions and may your reward be full with the L-rd, the G-d of Israel, whom you have come to seek refuge under His wings." ~Ruth 2:12

These verses are very significant. The expression "under His wings" is a Hebrew idiom which means to obey the Torah commandments. In order to understand this expression, one must remember the commandment of tzitzit (the fringed garment):

"And the L-rd spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and you shall say to them, 'Make for themselves tassels upon the corners (wings) of their garments throughout their generations. And they shall place upon the fringed garment (tzitzit) a blue thread. And it shall be for you a fringed garment and you shall look at it and you shall remember all the commandments of the L-rd and you shall do them and you shall not stray after your heart or after your eyes, which you prostitute (yourselves) after them. On account of this, you shall remember and you shall do all My commandments and you shall be holy to the L-rd your G-d'" ~ Numbers 15:37-40

In chapter three we see another example demonstrating Ruth's observance of the Torah in order to receive the blessings of G-d. According to the Torah, there is an obligation upon a widow to raise up an heir for her departed husband (if he died without any children). This commandment requires the widow to bear a son by means of one of her brothers-in-law or a close relative:

"For when brothers dwell together and one dies among them, and he does not have a son, the wife of the deceased shall not marry outside to a strange man (non-relative). Her brother-in-law shall come upon her and take her to himself for a wife and do levirate marriage (yibmah). And it shall be that the firstborn whom she bears will establish the name of his dead brother and his name will not be wiped out from among Israel." ~ Deuteronomy 25:5-6

In this account from the book of Ruth, Boaz performed the duty of the levirate marriage and raised up an heir for the deceased. It is important to note that scripture calls the one who raises up an heir, in this case Boaz, a redeemer. All commentators agree that the word "redeemer" hints to the Messiah: Israel, due to sin, was spiritually dead, and it is Messiah who has the responsibility to raise Israel up so they might inherit the kingdom of G-d.

The book of Ruth ends with the genealogy that ties the tribe of Judah to Boaz. It is very significant that this genealogy begins with Perez, the child that was born to Judah and Tamar also through a levirate marriage. The genealogy ends by informing us that the name of the child that Boaz raised up with Ruth was named Obed, the father of Jesse, who begot David.

What is one to conclude? It was the Torah observance of Ruth and Boaz that caused the Messianic lineage not to be wiped out. Through their faithfulness, the House of David was established. In regard to recognizing the Messiah, one must conclude that the Messiah will be one whose character is reflected through Torah observance.

Next we will connect Bethlehem, the city where the book of Ruth took place, and the birthplace of Messiah.

Chapter 2

Messiah Rejected

The opening verse of Micah chapter five clearly speaks about the Messiah. Before continuing with this chapter, however, we will first investigate the preceding chapter to illuminate the context of Micah's revelation in chapter five and provide a more in-depth understanding of Messiah's identity. The prophet Micah begins to speak about the last days in chapter four:

"And it shall come about in the latter days that the mountain of the L-rd shall be established as the chief of all mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills and many people shall stream into it. Many nations shall come and they shall say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the L-rd, to the house of the G-d of Jacob. And He shall teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths; for from Zion shall go forth the Torah and the Word of the L-rd from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between many peoples and prove (what is justice) to mighty nations far away. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. And nation will not lift up against nation a sword, and they shall not learn war any longer.'" ~Micah 4:1-3

This same prophecy also appears in Isaiah chapter two. All commentators agree that this prophecy speaks of the rule and reign of the Messiah on earth. In Micah 4:10, the prophet begins to speak about the Babylonian exile; in the last part of verse 10, however, he confirms that G-d will ultimately redeem Judah from Babylon. Most of the commentators say that the verses directly following (Micah 4:11-13) describe the Messianic age which will begin with many nations coming to make war against Israel. It is during this period that G-d will strengthen the Jewish people and defeat the nations:

"And now many nations shall be gathered unto you; they shall say, 'Let her be (called) guilty and let our eyes behold Zion', but they do not know the thoughts of the L-rd and they do not understand His counsel, for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor. Arise, and thresh, O Daughter of Zion, for your horn I will make iron and your hooves I will make copper and you shall grind many peoples. I

will consecrate to the L-rd all their fraudulent riches and their wealth to the L-rd all the earth." ~Micah 4:11-13

In Micah chapter four, the prophet emphasizes the fact that the Babylonian captivity will by no means nullify the future redemption of Israel. In fact, Micah wrote this chapter to encourage the Jewish people; in spite of a very difficult exile, the promises of G-d are still valid. And just as Micah 4:10 likens Israel's ordeal in the Babylonian exile to a woman in the agony of childbirth, Micah 5:2 also equates Israel's future final redemption to a woman giving birth: despite very intense pain, the end result is marvelous. In the same manner, so too will the final exile end: there will be intense suffering, but, in the end, the final redemption, i.e., the Messianic age, will come.

At the end of Micah chapter 4 (5:1 for English translations), there is a very strange and difficult verse to understand:

"Now cut (yourself) O daughter of the battalion. A siege is set against us with a rod they shall strike upon the cheek the Judge of Israel." ~Micah 4:14

This verse opens with the word "now". To which period of time does the "now" in this verse refer? Most commentators think that this verse refers to the period of time just prior to the destruction of the Second Temple. If that is so, this verse deals with the beginning of the last Jewish exile that began when the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. This is the final exile that will end with the coming of the Messiah. Having established that Micah 4:14 refers to the period of time right before the destruction of the Second Temple, let's explore the rest of this complex verse.

The Hebrew imperative verb form in Micah 4:14 after the word "now" is often translated in English as "muster yourself". However, it literally means "cut yourself". This meaning, I believe, is correct and the one I wish to investigate. What, then, is the significance of this seemingly strange word-choice? *Metzudat Tzion*, an 18th century Jewish biblical commentary, says this word refers to a laceration of the flesh, i.e. cutting, for a pagan religious purpose. The same word is used in the book of Deuteronomy:

*"You are children to the L-rd your G-d, **you shall not cut yourselves** and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for a dead person."* ~Deuteronomy 14:1

There are additional appearances:

*"They called in a loud voice **and they cut themselves**, according to their custom, with swords and with spears, unto blood poured out upon them."* ~I Kings 18:28

*"Baldness comes to Gaza, demolished is Ashkelon, the remnant of the valley; how long **will you cut yourself?**"* ~Jeremiah 47:5

*"Great and small shall die in this land. Do not bury (them), and do not eulogize for them, (no one) **shall cut himself** (for the dead) and do not make yourself bald for them."* ~Jeremiah 16:6

These verses reveal that there was a pagan tradition of cutting one's flesh in order to express mourning or deep sorrow. In Micah 4:14, the siege about which the prophet is speaking is the siege of the city of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD. During this period the Second Temple was destroyed, and Jerusalem was laid to ruins. Micah used the words "cut yourself" in order to reveal the bleak spiritual condition of the Jewish people at that time; though they may have been religious in external appearances, their hearts were far from G-d. This condition was similar to the days of Elijah the prophet:

*"And Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are the many and call out in the name of your gods but fire you shall not put.' And they took the bull which he gave to them and they prepared (it) and they called in the name of Baal from the morning until noon saying, 'Baal, answer us.' But there was no voice and there was no response and they danced by the altar which he had made. And it came about at noontime, Elijah ridiculed them and he said, 'Call in a loud voice, for he is god for he is talking or (perhaps) pursuing (an enemy) or (perhaps) relieving himself (or) perhaps he is sleeping and he will awake.' And they called in a loud voice **and they cut themselves** according to their customs with swords and with spears until blood poured out upon them."* ~I Kings 18:25-28

Micah concludes this verse and chapter with the words, "*they shall strike upon the cheek the Judge of Israel.*" We have already established that the context for this verse was the Roman occupation and that people's hearts were far from G-d. The remaining questions for Micah 4:14 are: "Who is the Judge of Israel?" and "What happened to Him?"

The biblical commentary of *Metzudat David* says,

"In the days of the exile, we were despised in their eyes, and they even hit the Judge of Israel upon the cheek with a blow of contempt, and thus it is said,

'He will give his cheek to him (who desires) to hit him, let him be filled with disgrace.' ~Lamentations 3:30"

This reveals to us that the Judge of Israel received a blow of contempt and disgrace. But it is still not known who this judge was. In order to help us answer this question, we have to move on to Micah chapter five.

Micah 5:1 (5:2 for English translations) says,

"And you, O Bethlehem, Efratah (too) insignificant to be among the thousands of Judah (but) from you of Me shall go forth (One) (Who is) to be Ruler in Israel. And His origin is from before the days of old." ~ Micah 5:1

Are the Ruler of Israel in Micah 5:1 and the Judge of Israel mentioned in Micah 4:14 the same individual? Rashi says that the one who comes from Bethlehem in Micah 5:1 is the Messiah, son of David, and he provides the following verse from Psalms to reveal an important aspect of the Messiah:

"The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." ~Psalms 118:22

Hence, Rashi understands that the Messiah from Bethlehem is rejected. Therefore, we can see that the "Judge of Israel" who receives "a blow of contempt and disgust" in Micah 4:14 must also be the "Ruler of Israel" in Micah 5:1, the King Messiah whom Rashi points out is rejected, just as the biblical text reveals.

Chapter 3

Messiah and Bethlehem

All commentators see a connection between the city of Bethlehem and Messiah. The question is, "What is this relationship?"

Micah 5:1 opens,

"And you, O Bethlehem, Efratah (too) insignificant to be among the thousands of Judah (but) from you of Me shall go forth (One) (Who is) to be Ruler in Israel. And His origin is from before the days of old." ~ Micah 5:1 (5:2 in English translations)

All commentators agree that there is a connection between this verse and Messiah. But, what is this connection? Metzudat David, an 18th century Jewish biblical commentary, says,

"...there is no intent to say that the king himself will be born in Bethlehem, but only his origin will be from Bethlehem, (this origin) is from an earlier time period, from the days of King David, the father of the family; in other words, the location of the Messianic lineage is Bethlehem, (but the Messiah) Himself will not be born there."

Certainly the foundation of the Messianic lineage is Bethlehem as the story of Ruth and the establishment of the Davidic lineage reveal. But is it unreasonable to maintain that Messiah Himself is born there? Why do commentators emphasize the point that He could not have been born in Bethlehem so strongly? Where is the proof for this position from the biblical text itself? Further study of the biblical texts shows a very different conclusion.

Bethlehem is mentioned in chapters 35 and 48 in the book of Genesis:

"And Rachel died and was buried on the road to Efratah, this is Bethlehem." ~Genesis 35:19

"And I, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died upon me in the land of Canaan, on the road when there was still a distance to come to Efratah, I buried her there on the road of Efrat, this is Bethlehem." ~ Genesis 48:7

How are these verses relevant to this issue? The prophet Jeremiah gives the answer:

"Thus said the L-rd, a voice on high is heard, bitter weeping, Rachel is crying for her children. She refuses to be comforted concerning her children, for they are no more. Thus said the L-rd, Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tear(s) for there is a reward for your labor, says the L-rd. You shall return from the land of your enemy. There is hope for your latter (days) says the L-rd. Your sons shall return to their border." ~ Jeremiah 31:14-16

Jeremiah clarifies that the place Rachel died (Bethlehem) will be a source of hope for the future, that is, the final redemption. And who will bring this redemption?

Messiah Himself. It is most logical to think that Messiah's relationship with Bethlehem is not just through the lineage of the house of David, but that He is also connected to Bethlehem in a personal way. The text itself of Micah 5:1 opens the possibility that Messiah may actually be born in Bethlehem, and it in no way precludes implicitly or otherwise the possibility that Messiah may actually be born in Bethlehem. This indeed is the significance of the words, *"from you (Bethlehem)"* in Micah 5:1.

Concluding from the text itself that Messiah is from and may very well be born in Bethlehem, the rest of Micah 5:1 continues to address the issue of Messiah's origins:

*"...from you **of Me** shall go forth (One) (Who is) to be Ruler in Israel."*

What does the word *"of Me"* reveal? There are two possible interpretations which are both relevant in understanding Micah 5:1:

(1) For Me, or in my behalf. This signifies that Messiah will perform the work of HaShem (G-d's Agent) in order to complete the L-rd's desire, i.e. redemption.

(2) Of Me, i.e., of G-d Himself. This means that there is a special relationship between Messiah and G-d.

There is no doubt that Messiah is sent by G-d, but the rest of 5:1 supports the interpretation that there is a special relationship between Messiah and G-d. The same

Hebrew root is used to express what is translated in English as "**shall go forth**" and "**His origin**":

*"...from you of Me **shall go forth** (One) (Who is) to be Ruler in Israel. **And His origin** is from before the days of old."*

All commentators insist that the usage of the phrase "**and His origin**" refers to the lineage of the house of David. However, the same word root used to imply origin earlier in the verse establishes that the origin spoken about is from G-d: **of Me shall go forth**. The fact that the same Hebrew root is employed in the phrase "**And His origin**" forces one to conclude that the origin of Messiah is indeed G-d Himself.

Rashi comments on this part of Micah 5:1, saying,

"Before the sun (was created), His name (Messiah) existed." ~Rashi, quoting Psalms 72:17

Rashi understood that there is something very special about Messiah. That is, that the origin of Messiah is before the creation of the world. The Talmud agrees and says,

"Seven things were created before the creation of the world. These are they: the Torah and repentance, the Garden of Eden and Hell, the throne of glory and the Temple, and the name of Messiah." ~ Talmud Pesachim 54a

The Talmud declares that the Messiah was created. But, Micah 5:1 emphasizes that although Messiah is born in Bethlehem, He Himself **comes from G-d in a unique manner**.

Chapter 4

Messiah and Isaiah 7:14

The main part of the synagogue service is the prayer "Shemone Esre", considered the most important prayer of the synagogue service. It is also called the "Amida" because worshippers stand while reciting it. In the midst of the "Amida" we ask the L-rd to send the Redeemer of Israel, i.e., the Messiah. What is the role of Messiah? His role is to bring full redemption to the world. One needs to understand the basic idea of redemption in order to fully understand the role of Messiah. The following verse from Leviticus describes what redemption is all about:

"And I will walk in your midst, and will be for you G-d, and you shall be for Me a people." ~Leviticus 26:12

This passage reveals the purpose of redemption—peace between the L-rd and mankind. This verse reveals that G-d wants to dwell with man in a manner most similar to the conditions that existed in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, because of sin, there is a need for mankind to be redeemed. Rabbis call the Exodus from Egypt the "first redemption". Therefore, it is no surprise that after stating the purpose of redemption in Lev. 26:12, G-d would highlight the means of redemption in verse 13:

"I am the L-rd your G-d, Who brought you from the land of Egypt, being for them slaves; and I broke the bands of your yoke, and made you walk upright. ~Leviticus 26:13

Though this verse speaks about a physical slavery, it also points to a spiritual slavery to sin: the people of Israel were in Egypt because of the sins of Joseph's brothers. It was sin that brought them to Egypt and only redemption could bring them out of it. For that reason, Passover is also referred to as the "Festival of Redemption". Therefore, only G-d can redeem people from the bondage of sin just as He redeemed Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt.

Keeping in mind that the L-rd desires an intimate connection with mankind, to dwell with man the way He did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, it is interesting

to note that Isaiah 7:14 speaks about the birth of a special child who will be given the name "*Immanuel*" meaning "*God with us*":

"Therefore the L-rd Himself will give you a sign; Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and will call His name Immanuel." ~Isaiah 7:14

The question is then, "Is there a connection between the child in Isaiah 7:14 and God's desire to redeem mankind so that He can dwell with men?" In order to interpret this verse correctly, paying attention to the context will reveal deeper insights into this verse. Isaiah chapter six opens with Isaiah seeing a vision of G-d and His holiness. In this vision, the prophet hears the Seraphim calling one to another saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the L-rd G-d of Hosts, the whole world is filled with His glory." When Isaiah hears that the world will be filled with the holiness of G-d and His glory, he is terrified:

"And I said, 'Woe is me! For I am incomplete; for a man of unclean lips am I, and in the midst of a people with unclean lips I dwell: for the King, the L-rd of hosts, my eyes have seen.'" ~ Isaiah 6:5

The prophet is afraid because he sees the holiness of G-d and hears from the Seraphim that this holiness will fill the whole world. Why would this terrify Isaiah? Isaiah knows man's sinful condition and concludes that if the whole world were filled with G-d's glory, then mankind in his present condition would be destroyed. The next two verses reveal that G-d does not want to destroy mankind; on the contrary, He wants to redeem man:

"And flew to me one of the Seraphim, and in his hand a live ember, with tongs he took from above the altar: And he touched my mouth, and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and removed your iniquity and has made atonement for your sin.'" ~ Isaiah 6:6-7

The rest of the sixth chapter deals with Isaiah receiving his call to become a prophet to Israel: In verse 6:9, G-d tells Isaiah he is supposed to tell the people that the L-rd is going to give them over to their refusal to respond to His word:

"Make fat the heart of this people, and his ears heavy, and his eyes shut; lest he sees with his eyes, and with his ears should hear, and his heart shall understand and he will repent and be healed."

And I said, 'How long, L-rd?' And He said, 'Until the cities are lifted up and be without inhabitant, and the houses without an occupant and the land shall be lifted up desolate and the L-rd shall remove the man, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.'" ~ Isaiah 6:10-12

Although the people will continue in their hard-heartedness and spiritual dullness for a long time, bringing about the destruction of their cities and ultimately exile, a remnant of the Jewish people will survive and ultimately be redeemed in the latter days. The next verse speaks of this remnant of the Jewish people that will survive (Note that Israel is being likened to a tree and is referred to by the feminine pronoun):

"And in her (will be) a tenth but she shall regress and shall be burned as a elm tree even as an oak tree when she loses her leaves, (but) the stump will remain with them, the Holy Seed is her stump" ~Isaiah 6:13

This verse has two primary interpretations: the first says that the word for "tenth" actually refers to the ten additional kings who would reign over Judah before the Babylonian captivity. Even though a remnant would return, Israel would not have another king until ultimately Messiah, i.e., the Holy Seed, would come and initiate the Kingdom. The second interpretation maintains that the "tenth" is the remnant of the people who remain hopeful in the promises of HaShem. Even though Israel will go into exile and resemble a tree that was chopped down with only a stump remaining, this stump, which may appear dead and defeated, will produce the Messiah, the Holy Seed, who will return Israel to her former glory by means of the final redemption.

Although it is true that there were exactly ten additional kings to rule over Judah before the Babylonian captivity, it is the second interpretation that captures more of

the intent of the prophet. The exile to which this verse refers is not only the Babylonian exile but also encompasses the entire period that Israel would be without a king. Hence, it also includes the Roman exile which continues to this day, despite the existence of the modern State of Israel, and will not conclude until Israel has a King and a Temple. In other words, the last exile will conclude with the Messianic Age.

In order to understand the prophecy of the child called Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14, it's important to understand the context of the verse properly. Isaiah delivers the word of the L-rd to King Ahaz and makes use of Ahaz's spiritual condition and events in his life to highlight the intent of the prophecy. King Ahaz was a wicked king:

*"In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, **Ahaz** the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not do that which was right in the sight of the L-rd his G-d, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and also made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the gentiles, whom the L-rd cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." ~ II Kings 16:1-4*

Just like the Northern Kingdom, King Ahaz had turned from the G-d of Israel and His ways and worshipped pagan gods, even unto sacrificing his own children to Molech. It is in the context of Ahaz's life of idolatry that Rezin and Pekah threaten war against Jerusalem:

"And it came about in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram, went up and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, to Jerusalem to make war against her, but was not able to make war against her." ~ Isaiah 7:1

G-d wanted to capture the attention of Ahaz and his people; because they were totally outmatched, they faced utter annihilation. However, through the prophet Isaiah, G-d said that this war would not even take place:

"And you shall say unto him, 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear, nor shall your heart be dismayed from these two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Aram, and of the son of Remaliah... Thus says the L-rd G-d, 'It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass '" ~ Isaiah 7:4 & 7:7

One would think that Ahaz would rejoice with the news that the L-rd would not allow these two kings to make war against the Kingdom of Judah. This deliverance from the enemy ultimately symbolizes the future victory that will bring about the kingdom of Messiah. However, Ahaz did not believe the Word of G-d. Therefore, the L-rd permitted Ahaz to ask for a sign in order to confirm the truth of this promise:

"Ask for yourself a sign from the L-rd your G-d; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above." ~ Isaiah 7:11

Ahaz's response reveals that he did not want to believe the Word of G-d:

"And Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, and I will not test the L-rd.'" ~ Isaiah 7:12

This is the problem with many people. They do not want to know what the Word of G-d reveals. Nevertheless, G-d said that He would provide a sign to confirm His Word but that the sign would not be given to King Ahaz. G-d instead addresses the sign to the House of David. Even though Ahaz is a part of the house of David physically, the sign is not addressed to him because of his faithlessness:

"And he said, 'Listen please O house of David..." ~ Isaiah 7:13

The concept of the "House of David" has special significance. The "House of David" represents those who will be redeemed and will enter into the Kingdom of G-d; in other words, those who believe in the promise of the Son of David, i.e., the Messiah. The "House of David" is those who will respond to the Word of G-d in faith and inherit a spiritual lineage grounded in belief, not like King Ahaz who refused to believe and would not even ask for a sign of confirmation. Isaiah 7:14 is given in order to help faithful people recognize the Redeemer of Israel:

"Therefore the L-rd Himself will give you a sign; Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and will call His name Immanuel." ~Isaiah 7:14

Even though Ahaz has refused to seek a sign, the L-rd has given a sign. It is important that the verse was written in the special manner that it was. The use of the intensive pronoun "the L-rd *Himself*" is meant to emphasize specifically that G-d will perform this sign, signifying clearly that it will be supernatural in nature. Therefore, this prophecy speaks about a supernatural event G-d would perform in order to confirm His promise:

"Behold, the virgin (almah), she conceived and bears a Son..."

This verse says that a conception takes place. Women conceive every day. Why would this conception be considered a supernatural event? The woman who conceived is an "almah", a virgin. Christianity and Judaism have argued about the significance of the word almah for 2,000 years. Christianity says that the word almah means virgin, and Judaism says that it simply means "young woman". However, it is completely illogical to conclude that the word almah in this usage simply means "young woman" because we have already established that the L-rd went out of His way to highlight that He Himself was going to give a sign. There is nothing supernatural about a young woman giving birth; it is a natural process that happens countless times daily. However, if a virgin were to conceive and give birth, it would be a different story altogether. It would indeed be supernatural. If Isaiah did not intend to convey to the reader that this young woman was a virgin, then the text would lack the proper context necessary for a supernatural event to occur. I personally believe that the Hebrew word "almah" speaks of a young woman of high moral character; in other words, a righteous woman. Obviously if the woman was not married, and she was moral and righteous, she would be a virgin.

The rest of this verse reveals that a child is born called Immanuel. Why is it a son and not a daughter? What is the significance of the name Immanuel? Next we will answer these questions.

Chapter 5

Immanuel

The prophet Isaiah promised that a virgin will bear a son and His name shall be called *Immanuel* (Isaiah 7:14). The concept of "son" has implications that the concept of "daughter" does not imply. In this article, we will first examine biblical passages to highlight the different implications of the concept of "son". Secondly, we will explore the meaning of the name *Immanuel*.

In Hebrew thought, the concept of son implies one of three meanings. The first is the most common: a son is a male child, for example:

"For a child is born to us, a Son is given to us, and the government shall be upon His shoulders..." ~Isaiah 9:5

Another example of son from the scripture means a male offspring:

"And she made a vow and said, 'O L-rd of Hosts, if you look upon the affliction of your maidservant, and remember me, and do not forget your maidservant, but give to your maidservant a male (child), I will give him to the L-rd all the days of his life and a razor shall not go up upon his head.'" ~I Samuel 1:11

This usage highlights the meaning of child or offspring with the difference between a son and daughter signified only by gender. This usage is the most frequently used.

The second possible implied meaning of son is "a faithful servant":

"And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha..." ~II Kings 6:1

In this example, "the sons of the prophets" are not literally the prophets' children but men who learn and study with Elijah and other prophetic leaders and serve them faithfully.

The third implied meaning of the word son is that of an "heir":

"I was watching in night visions and I saw in the clouds of heaven One like the Son of Man and He came to the Ancient of Days and they brought Him before Him and He was given dominion, honor and kingship so that all people, nations, and languages should worship Him, and His dominion would be an everlasting dominion that should never pass away and His kingdom shall never be destroyed." ~Daniel 7:13-14

This clearly Messianic verse points out the relationship between the concepts of being a servant and an heir: Messiah, who is the Servant/Son of Man, also serves G-d in bringing about the fulfillment of G-d's plan of redemption and serves human beings in being the actual Redeemer of humanity. Because He's a Son, He also inherits the eternal kingdom of G-d, as the verse points out. Messiah, who is fully man and fully G-d, is called the Son of G-d because He has two primary roles: the first is to serve His Father faithfully/obediently in achieving redemption for mankind, and the second is to inherit His Father's kingdom and rule the universe for eternity. In Daniel 7:13-14, the "Son of Man" comes before the Ancient of Days (G-d). For what purpose does He approach the L-rd? In order to inherit dominion, honor and the kingdom which belong to the L-rd G-d Almighty.

The Talmud, Sanhedrin 98A, discusses this passage from Daniel and states that the Son of Man is the Messiah. This means that Messiah will inherit the dominion, honor and kingdom that rightly belong to G-d. It is this fact that has led the rabbis to refer to Messiah as King Messiah. In continuing this verse, we find it written,

"....so that all people, nations, and languages should worship Him, and His dominion would be an everlasting dominion that should never pass away and His kingdom shall never be destroyed." ~Daniel 7:14

These verses are very important in order to understand the true identity of Messiah. There is no argument in Judaism that Messiah is a human being. The problem is that Daniel states that all people, nations and languages shall worship Him (Messiah). If Messiah is only flesh and blood, then would it not be idolatry to worship Him? The rabbinical sages of the past and present state that one should not translate the Aramaic word in Daniel as "worship", but "serve", as subjects serve an earthly king. Is this rabbinical assertion correct? The Aramaic word appears several times within the book of Daniel, and each time it always has the meaning of "worship". For example:

*"...your gods they do not **worship** and to the golden statue they do not prostrate themselves." ~Daniel 3:12*

*"...that you do not **worship** my gods and that you do not prostrate yourselves to the golden statue that I have set up." ~Daniel 3:14*

*"Behold our G-d, Whom we **worship**, is able to save us; He will rescue us from the fiery, burning furnace and from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you O king, that we do not **worship** your god and the golden statue that you have set up, we shall not prostrate ourselves." ~Daniel 3:17-18*

For the rabbinical sages to assert that the Aramaic word only has a meaning of service and not worship is clearly a failure in basic hermeneutical methods. The first rule in arriving at the meaning of a word is to thoroughly study the usage of the word throughout the book in which it appears. Had the rabbis done this, there is no way they could have made such an assertion. Now, returning to the question at hand, "How can human beings worship a Messiah who is just a man?" The answer is that the Son of Man of whom Daniel speaks is the same one whom Isaiah tells us is born of a virgin and called Immanuel. Hence, He is not just a Son of Man (a human being), but He is also the Son of G-d. The name Immanuel means literally, "G-d with us." This fact explains why it was a virgin who conceived a son supernaturally and not a woman who conceived by natural means.

Messiah, Who is fully man and fully G-d, has two primary roles as the Son of G-d: the first is to serve His Father in achieving redemption, i.e., reconciliation between mankind and G-d, and secondly, to inherit His Father's kingdom and rule for eternity.

Such a concept as the Son of G-d is quite foreign to Judaism today. But the question that must be asked is, "Is this concept biblically justified?" We will continue our study of the significance of the term *Immanuel* and how it is used in the eighth chapter of Isaiah. Is the prophet referring to Messiah or is he referring to, as the rabbis state, either the son of Isaiah or King Hezekiah? We will also use Isaiah 9:5-6 as additional proof for the assertion that Messiah is the Son of G-d.

Chapter 6

Immanuel Continued

In the previous chapter we explored the significance of Isaiah 7:14:

"...behold the virgin conceived and bore a son and called His name Immanuel."

As discussed earlier, Isaiah gave this prophesy to King Ahaz in order to confirm the victory of the house of David over its enemies. Isaiah prophesied to the house of David that Rezin, King of Aram, and Pekah, King of Israel, would not be able to carry out their plans to make war against Judah since the kingdom of Assyria would take control of the north before they could attack. Not long after this prophesy was given, King Ahaz died, and his son, Hezekiah, who was righteous and followed the ways of the L-rd, took the throne. After ascending to the throne, Hezekiah decided to cease paying the tribute to the Assyrians that they had imposed upon his father. Sennacherib, King of Assyria, then decided to attack Judah for Hezekiah's refusal to pay tribute. G-d, however, would deliver Judah.

"And Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, prayed because of this, and cried to heaven. And the L-rd sent an angel, who cut off every mighty man of valor, and the prince and captain, in the camp of the king of Assyria. And he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels killed him there with the sword. Thus the L-rd saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all, and guided them on every side."

~II Chronicles 32:20-22

Because this victory occurred during the time of King Hezekiah, there are those, like the famous biblical commentator, Radak, who say that King Hezekiah is the child of whom Isaiah 7:14 speaks. There are others, like Rashi, who do not agree with this interpretation. They say that Isaiah 7:14 actually speaks about the son of the prophet Isaiah and cite the following verses as proof:

"And I came near to the prophetess; and she conceived, and bore a son. Then said the L-rd unto me: 'Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz; for before the youth will have the knowledge to cry 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off before the king of Assyria.'" ~Isaiah 8:3-4

After the child of the prophet Isaiah is mentioned here, the name "Immanuel" appears again in verses 8 and 10:

*"And he shall pass through Judah overflowing as he passes through, he shall reach even to the neck; and it shall come about that his wings should stretch forth and shall fill the breadth of your land, **O Immanuel**. Shout, O peoples, and you shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all you of far countries; gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand, **O Immanuel**. ~Isaiah 8:8-10*

What is the meaning of the appearance of the name "Immanuel" again in chapter 8 after chapter 7 speaks of the miraculous birth of a child also named Immanuel? Some commentators assume that *this* Immanuel in verses 8 and 10 is actually Isaiah's son and believe it to be the fulfillment of the prophesized birth of a child named Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14. However, this interpretation proves problematic. In the previous chapter, we discussed that Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy that the L-rd gave in order to be a supernatural "**sign**"; the L-rd goes out of His way to state that He Himself will perform the sign, making this "sign" nothing less than a miraculous event. Therefore, even though the Hebrew word "almah" refers to a righteous young woman of high moral character, one should understand the word "almah" in the context of Isaiah 7:14 to mean virgin. Isaiah 7:3 clearly reveals that Isaiah's wife had already given birth to at least one child called Shear-Yashuv before she conceived the child who, according to Rashi and other commentators, fulfills the prophesy of Isaiah 7:14:

And the L-rd said to Isaiah: 'Go forth now to meet Ahaz, you, and Shear-Yashuv your son, at the end of the canal of the upper pool, in the pathway of the launderers' field; ~Isaiah 7:3

Since Isaiah's wife was not a virgin, where is the supernatural aspect of her conceiving another child? Simply stated, there is none. The rabbinical objection for "almah" being translated "virgin" should be discussed. Rabbinical scholars point out that when the word "almah" appears in Proverbs 30:18-20, it does not mean virgin according to their view. As previously stated, the technical meaning of "almah" is not virgin but rather refers to a young virtuous woman. It is only the textual clues within Isaiah 7:13-14 that bring one to the conclusion that Isaiah is indeed speaking of a virgin. Nevertheless, careful consideration of Proverbs 30:18-20 proves that "virgin" is a very likely translation of "almah".

Proverbs 30:18-20 speaks about four situations:

*"There are three things which are too wonderful for me, and four I have not known them: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the heart of the sea; and the way of a man with an **almah**. So is the way of an adulterous woman; she eats, and wipes her mouth, and says: 'I have done no wickedness.'"*

These verses describe three wonderful images and a fourth which words cannot express. The first is an eagle flying in the sky; what a beautiful thing to see eagles soar. They are able to fly for long periods of time without any evidence of effort or movement. The second is the way that a snake slithers with grace and agility, defying explanation. The third is a boat sailing upon the sea. All would agree that these are three beautiful spectacles taking place in the sky, upon land, and upon the sea. The fourth, however, is superior to these three. Agur, the writer of this section of Proverbs, is speaking about the way of a man with an almah as something inexpressible. Where the first three are of a physical nature, the fourth has a spiritual dimension. The rabbis emphasize that there is no trace left by an eagle flying in the sky or a snake slithering on the ground or a boat sailing upon the sea. In the same way, an almah, a woman of high modesty, conceals her sexuality from all public expressions. Notice that this is in sharp contrast to the adulterous woman whose sinful sexual behavior is as public as one eating a meal, wiping one's mouth with a napkin and brazenly saying "this behavior is not wicked".

There is a similar but different interpretation which needs to be offered. This passage may be speaking of *the very first time* a man is with a woman who is a virgin. According to Jewish law, the most spiritual and highest level of marriage is when a man marries a virgin. The Jewish wedding contract lists whether a woman is a widow, divorced, virgin or "other". This fourth definition obviously speaks of one who is neither a widow, a virgin, nor has been divorced. This means that she has had sexual activity outside of marriage. Commentary on the reason why a woman's status is written on a ketubah (marriage contract) makes it clear that a woman's sexual status is an important subject. The simple interpretation of Proverbs 30:18-20 is that Agur offers three beautiful images all of a natural occurrence. The fourth is greater than the previous three. This fourth one is when a man experiences intimacy with a righteous, modest woman *for the very first time*. Therefore, it is proper to translate this section of Proverbs as follows:

*"There are three things which are too wonderful for me, and four I have not known them: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the heart of the sea; and the way of a man with an **almah**."*

Finally, Agur contrasts the fourth image, which is the primary idea he is speaking of, with an adulterous woman whose sexual behavior is no more special or concealed than eating a meal.

The book of Isaiah clearly mentions two sons of Isaiah: Shear Yashuv and Maher-Shalal-hash-baz. Isaiah 8:18 speaks of children whom the L-rd gives to Isaiah to be signs and wonders in Israel:

"Behold, I and the children whom the L-rd hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the L-rd of Hosts, Who dwells in mount Zion."

When this verse states "the children whom the L-rd has given" him, the implication is what the L-rd has revealed prophetically to Isaiah. This verse calls to mind the two children whose births the book of Isaiah describes as "signs". The first child is Immanuel from 7:14 whose name means "G-d with us", and whose birth signifies a deliverance from Israel's enemies. The first child born to Isaiah is called "Shear Yashuv". Shear Yashuv was with his father when Isaiah delivered this prophecy to

King Ahaz. (Isaiah 7:14). Could this child be one of the children of whom Isaiah 8:18 speaks? Since Shear Yashuv is present to hear this prophecy he cannot be the one to whom the prophecy of 7:14 refers. The child Immanuel born of a virgin in Isaiah 7:14 cannot be Isaiah's biological child because Isaiah's wife could not have been the mother of this child (since the prophecy speaks of a virgin), since she already bore at least one child. So, who exactly are these children to whom Isaiah 8:18 refers as signs and wonders? As mentioned earlier, Isaiah 8:3-4 says that the birth of Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-hash-baz, is to be a sign of a victory over Assyria. Therefore, we can conclude that the two children to whom Isaiah 8:18 refers are Immanuel from Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah's second son, Maher-Shalal-hash-baz. The purpose for the appearance of the name Immanuel in Isaiah 8:8 and 8:10 is simply to confirm that the birth of Immanuel points to a future deliverance for the House of Israel, just as the birth of Maher-Shalal-hash-baz was a sign of deliverance from Judah's enemies. In other words, the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Maher-Shalal-hash-baz would cause people to be encouraged and expectant of the glorious promise of Isaiah 7:14.

The phrase in Isaiah 8:18 which refers to G-d as "the L-rd of Hosts who dwells on Mount Zion" is seen by all commentators as having messianic and redemptive qualities. Mount Zion is understood as a term that has Messianic kingdom connotations. Hence, one should understand the Isaiah prophecy as eschatological. Both Immanuel and Maher-Shalal-hash-baz confirm a victory for the House of David. The first victory is over Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who attacks Judah, and the second victory will be at the end of the age, the ultimate victory which Messiah will bring about. There is an additional reason to believe that the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is messianic in nature. In the 9th chapter of Isaiah there appears a passage which speaks of G-d sending His salvation:

"For a Child is born for us, a Son is given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty G-d, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there is no end. Upon the throne of David and on His kingdom to establish it and to sustain it with justice and with righteousness from now and forevermore, the zeal of the L-rd of Hosts will do this." ~Isaiah 9:5-6

These verses undoubtedly refer to Messiah. In the same way that Isaiah 7:14 speaks of a child born as Immanuel—G-d with us—in a divine manner, so too does Isaiah 9:5 refer to a child of divine origin who is called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Hence Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:5 are referring to the same child—Messiah. There are those (Rashi for example) who say that it is wrong to think that the child in Isaiah 9:5 is called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty G-d, or Everlasting Father". They maintain that it is G-d who is "the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty G-d, and Everlasting Father" while only the title "Prince of Peace" refers to the Messiah. Such an interpretation is not grammatically sound and rejected by the Talmud (see Tractate Sanhedrin 94a).

Once again there is evidence to support that Messiah, who will sit upon the throne of David, is G-d incarnate, who entered this world being conceived by the Spirit of G-d in the womb of a virgin. Why a virgin? In the next section we will investigate this question and give additional attention to how Isaiah chapters 7-9 relate to Isaiah chapters 10-12.

Chapter 7

Immanuel Final

In the first chapter, we saw through the story of Ruth and Boaz that the character of Messiah is expressed by observing commandments of the Torah. In other words, Messiah will perfectly observe the Torah and be a living example of righteousness. We shall see that this fact is inherently tied to His role as Redeemer. Although Messiah is from the lineage of David, Isaiah records that there is a divine aspect to Messiah. This aspect relates not only to His behavior, that He would live a righteous, holy, sinless life, but also to His identity. Isaiah uses the name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) not only to show a connection with G-d, but to proclaim that Messiah is actually G-d in a physical body. How is it possible for Almighty G-d to dwell in a human body? Those who ask this question make the incorrect assumption that if G-d enters into a human body, He ceases to be omnipresent. Such is not the case. The Bible records that G-d resided in the Temple (within the Holy of Holies) but He did not cease to be in the heavens. No one even ponders this. Scholars have rightly pointed out that the Temple (the House of G-d) had a unique status, but did not infringe upon the omnipresence of G-d. In this same manner, Messiah, who is called not only Immanuel, but also the Mighty G-d, and Everlasting Father by Isaiah, has the status of being Divine. In no way does this concept attack the fact that G-d is One. No one has ever proposed a multiple aspect of G-d because G-d dwelt in the Temple and in the heavens at the same time. Therefore, one should not attack the unity of G-d because of Messiah's divinity.

Isaiah 7:14 speaks **not** of a miraculous birth, but of a supernatural conception, i.e. the virgin birth. Why was it necessary for Messiah to enter into the world by means of a virgin conceiving a child by means of the Holy Spirit? Jeremiah chapter 22 offers an interesting answer. In this chapter, Jeremiah is speaking about Jehoiachin, king of Judah. This man was an evil ruler whom Jeremiah prophesied would not produce an heir to sit upon the throne of David (Jeremiah 22:28-30). King Nebuchadnezzar sent and had Jehoiachin brought to Babylon with some of the articles from the Temple in Jerusalem and made his brother Zedekiah king (II Chronicles 36:10). Zedekiah was Judah's last king, and so no descendent of Jehoiachin reigned upon David's throne. But what about Israel's next king, King Messiah? According to Jewish law, not just

any descendent of David can qualify to be Messiah, but one in the royal lineage. This poses a serious problem for a messianic candidate. How is it possible to be of royal lineage and not be a descendent of Jehoiachin? The solution is that Messiah is from the royal lineage, being a legal descendent of King David, but not by blood—i.e., the need for the virgin birth. This means that the child's lineage (determined by the father) is royal, because Joseph, Yeshua's legal father, was of Davidic lineage, Yeshua was conceived without human seed, i.e. by means of the Holy Spirit. This is the sign that Isaiah's prophecy demands (see Isaiah 7:14). This would also explain how the child could be called the Mighty G-d and Everlasting Father.

Isaiah 9:5-6 confirms a great victory for Israel by means of Messiah whereby an eternal kingdom is established. The prophet confirms this promise of the Messianic Age through the two children who are mentioned in Isaiah chapters 7 and 8. The first child, Immanuel, who is also spoken of in Isaiah 9:5-6, is the one who will bring about Israel's ultimate victory over her enemies, both spiritual and physical. The second son, mentioned in chapter eight, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, is attached to a different prophecy. In the same way that history proved that the prophecy concerning Isaiah's son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, was true, so too should Israel trust that in the last days G-d would fulfill the prophecy concerning Immanuel:

“For a child is born for us, a son is given to us and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And His name is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty G-d, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Concerning the multiplication of His government and peace, there is no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to establish it and to support it with justice and righteousness from now and forever, the zeal of the L-rd of Hosts shall accomplish this.” ~Isaiah 9:5-6

Jeremiah 30:7 speaks of a period when Israel will go through a difficult time of hardship and sorrow by means of intense persecution. In the end, Israel will return to G-d through repentance. This period will leave the once glorious nation, likened to a flourishing tree, as no more than a stump (Isaiah 6:13). But through a shoot which will sprout forth from the stump, Israel will return to G-d:

"And there shall come forth a Twig from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from His roots shall sprout. The Spirit of the L-rd shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom

and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the L-rd." ~Isaiah 11:1-2

There is no debate in Judaism that Isaiah 11:1 speaks of the Messiah. Also, after the prophet Jeremiah prophesies that none of Jehoiachin's descendents will ever rule on the Davidic throne, he prophesies about the Messiah and calls Him the L-rd of Righteousness:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the L-rd, and I will establish for David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and He will make justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell in safety: and this is His name which He will be called, THE L-RD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." ~Jeremiah 23:5-6

In the passage immediately thereafter, Jeremiah speaks of the final Exodus; that is, the Final Redemption:

"Therefore, behold, the days are coming,' says the L-rd, 'that they shall no longer say, The L-rd lives, which brought up the children of Israel from of the land of Egypt; But rather, the L-rd lives, which brought up and which lifted up and which brought the seed of the house of Israel from the north land, and from all the lands which I have scattered them there; and they shall dwell in their land.'" ~Jeremiah 23:7-8

Jeremiah reveals that it is Messiah's work of redemption that will bring about our righteousness.

What are some of the character traits of Messiah? What are some of the outcomes of redemption? These issues will be delved into next, as well as revealing the relationship between Isaiah chapters 11 and 12.

Chapter 8

Messiah and the Spirit of G-d

The story of the Exodus from Egypt makes it clear that man is unable to redeem himself; only G-d can be the Redeemer. This is why the children of Israel cried out to G-d (Ex. 2:23-24) during their oppression. G-d heard their cries and raised up Moses to bring about the physical redemption of the Hebrews. The Exodus from Egypt serves as an example for the final redemption. That is, one can learn many of the foundational principles of redemption by studying what took place in Egypt and how G-d brought about these changes. However, while the first redemption did have a spiritual dimension to it, it did not bring about a change to the world itself. Hence, the first redemption was primarily physical in nature, that is, the Israelites physical exodus from Egypt, while the final redemption will be vastly spiritual in nature. This later redemption by Messiah will also bring about a total change to the world in which man resides.

Isaiah chapter 11 describes the Messiah and what He will accomplish. With the first verse, one is reminded that the Messiah must be from the house of Judah and a descendant of Jesse according to the lineage in the book of Ruth which was discussed in the first chapter. The wording of Isaiah 11:1 is exact as it says, "*A twig will emerge from the stump of Jesse....*" Isaiah refers to the House of Jesse, that is, the Davidic kingdom, as a stump because there has not been a king from the line of David in Israel since the time of the Babylonian exile more than 2,500 years ago. Isaiah 11:1 describes Israel's next king, King Messiah. In the latter half of the verse, instead of referring to the Messiah as a twig, the Hebrew word meaning "branch" is used which shares the same root as the name of the Galilean village Nazareth. This fact may well indeed hint to the fact that Messiah will somehow be connected to the village of Nazareth.

Next Isaiah tells that the Spirit of G-d will rest upon Messiah. This Spirit reveals many attributes: wisdom and understanding, counsel and strength, knowledge and the fear of the L-rd. By means of these attributes, Messiah will bring divine justice into the world and solve the problem of evil. Beginning in verse six the prophet says:

"The wolf will dwell with the sheep and the tiger with the young goat will lie down and the calf and the young lion and the fatling will be together, a youth will lead them. And a cow and a bear will graze together and their offspring will lie down, a lion like cattle will eat hay. A nursing child will play by the viper's hole, and over an adder's lair a newly weaned child will place his hand. They will not do any harm or destruction in all my Holy Mountain because the earth will be full of the knowledge of the L-rd as water covers the sea." ~Isaiah 11:6-9

Rambam sees this passage as metaphorical and understands it as relating to Israel and the nations. He says that gentiles will finally recognize Israel's leadership during the days of Messiah and no longer rebel and persecute Israel, but will submit to Torah law and even assist the Jewish people in their calling. Others take the passage more literally. Although Rambam describes something that will take place, this passage from Isaiah does not relate to this. This section accurately describes a change from the world in which man presently resides to a new reality similar to the Garden of Eden where both man and beast coexisted peacefully and were herbivores. In the Garden of Eden, animals were in perfect subjection to man, not harming human beings or fighting among themselves. In essence, Messiah's rule will bring about righteousness, justice and peace, physically as well as spiritually. What is it about Messiah's reign that brings these wonderful transformations? The end of Isaiah 6:9 answers this question:

"... the earth will be full of the knowledge of the L-rd as water covers the sea."

Many have rightly said the knowledge of G-d is based in truth. It is the truth of the Word of G-d that is going to fill the world and will cause righteousness, justice and peace to prevail. Not only Messiah teaching and enforcing truth will influence the condition of the world, but He Himself will possess ALL truth. As has been shown in previous articles, Messiah, although a man, is also divine.

In Isaiah 11:10, the reader is informed that Messiah will have a resting place that is glorious:

"And it shall come about on that day, the root of Jesse who stands for a 'banner' of the people, unto Him gentiles (nations) shall seek and it shall be that His resting place is glorious."

This means that Messiah will rule over His kingdom from a glorious location. Because the presence of G-d dwelt over the Ark of the Covenant, I believe that Messiah will rule sitting upon the kapporet, the solid gold covering for the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:8-22). Isaiah 11:10 reveals several important facts. First, the word translated here as "banner" is usually translated as "miracle". An interesting occurrence of this word is found in Numbers 21:8:

"And the L-rd said to Moses you make fiery (serpent) and put it upon a pole (same word translated 'banner') and it shall be all who are bitten and will look upon it shall live".

Language experts reveal two important aspects of the Hebrew word translated here as "banner": they say that the word contains two elements—victory/deliverance and that which is miraculous. Hence, it is Messiah who will stand before the people as the one who gave to not just Israel, but the Gentiles also, a miraculous victory—the final redemption. Israel displayed a lack of faith in G-d in the wilderness, and a lack of faith leads to sin, which in turn leads to death (the reason why G-d sent the serpents into the camp). The only solution was for the people to demonstrate faith. Many have asked why Moses was commanded to make the fiery serpent the solution to the problem rather than asking G-d to simply remove the serpents altogether. The reason is that the fiery serpent that Moses made provided a choice for the people. Once bitten, they had to decide to trust G-d and respond by faith to His provision of deliverance or remain in faithlessness and die. So, too, in the days of Messiah, each person must decide whether to accept Messiah and His miraculous work of redemption for sin, or reject Him and perish from the coming kingdom.

The book of Daniel also speaks of Messiah's appearance on the earth and reveals that He will descend from the heavens:

"I was watching in a night vision and behold with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days and they brought Him before Him and to Him shall be given rule and honor and kingship and all the peoples and nations and languages shall worship Him; His rule is an everlasting rule that shall never pass and His kingdom shall never be destroyed." ~Daniel 7:13-14

Daniel reveals Messiah coming in the clouds of heaven to establish His kingdom while the prophet Zechariah informs the reader that Messiah will arrive on the Mt. of Olives:

"And the L-rd will go out and He will make war against those nations (all nations who attack Jerusalem), as He waged war on the day of battle. And His feet shall stand on that day on the Mt. of Olives which faces Jerusalem on the east...." ~Zechariah 14:3-4

After Messiah lands on the Mt. of Olives, He will enter the Temple area, and, as Isaiah prophesies, *"...the descendant of Jesse who stands as a banner for the peoples, nations will seek Him and His resting place will be glorious."* As mentioned earlier, this resting place is located in the Holy of Holies. It is when Messiah takes His seat on the very place from which Moses heard the voice of G-d speaking (Num. 7:89) that G-d's Kingdom will be established on earth. The prophet Isaiah writes concerning that day in Isaiah 12.

Isaiah 12 opens with thanksgiving that the anger of G-d subsided through the work of Messiah. Verses 2 and 3 boldly proclaim that G-d Himself is salvation. It is important to note that these opening verses are recited in the Havdalah prayer service that concludes the Sabbath. Judaism sees a connection between the Sabbath and the Kingdom of G-d. Isaiah 12 continues with a description of the Kingdom of Messiah, saying that faith and not fear will characterize the rule of Messiah, but that peace will be experienced by the Kingdom's inhabitants. When righteousness and justice and peace are established, people will have no obstacles in worshiping the L-rd. At the end of Isaiah 12, music and praise are mentioned as a natural response to the knowledge of the L-rd that will fill the world. Jerusalem is called Zion, a kingdom term for Jerusalem in her redemptive state. Finally, Isaiah 12 admonished the inhabitants of the earth to exult and shout for joy for the Holy One, i.e. G-d (Messiah), is in the midst of the peoples.

Chapter 9

Rashi and Isaiah Chapter 53

Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaqi, was a famous rabbinical commentator from France. He lived in the 11th century and authored commentaries on the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud. He is considered one of the top Jewish scholars, and his works are revered today as foundational for understanding the proper interpretations of the written and oral Torah.

The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is a critical passage in understanding the work of Messiah. All scholars agree that Messiah is the Redeemer, but a redeemer in what sense? Messiah will redeem Israel and those from the nations that turn to Him in faith. In a similar manner, just as the Hebrews trusted in the Passover lamb in Egypt to bring about Israel's physical redemption from slavery, so too will Messiah provide redemption for sins, transgressions, and iniquity. Just how will Messiah do this?

Isaiah speaks about a suffering servant in the latter half of Isaiah 53. The identity of this suffering servant is a debated issue. Since Isaiah 53 is one of the best known passages dealing with the concept of the suffering servant, so shouldn't one just check to see what Rashi says about Isaiah 53 to settle the issue? The answer is not that simple: Rashi's commentary on the book of Isaiah declares that the suffering servant is Israel (the Jewish people). However, Rashi then contradicts himself on the issue of Isaiah in his commentary of the Talmud. In the section called Sanhedrin, he says that Isaiah is indeed talking about the Messiah in the 53rd chapter. It is worthwhile to note that not only does Rashi see Isaiah 53 as talking about Messiah in his commentary on Meseket Sanhedrin, but the Talmud itself uses Isaiah 53 to assist in understanding the work and nature of Messiah.

Before we study the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, let us deal with the question, "Why would Rashi disagree with Rashi?" It must be pointed out that Isaiah 53 has been seen as a Messianic passage by most scholars down through the ages. In the book of Acts, a Jewish man who is returning to Ethiopia after coming to Jerusalem to celebrate a

festival was seen by Philip reading scripture as he traveled. Philip approached him and found that the man was reading Isaiah chapter 53. The man did not know about whom the prophet was speaking. In fact, he asked Philip the following question:

"...of whom does the prophet speak—of himself or of some other man?" ~Acts 8:34

It is significant that the Jewish man from Ethiopia never considered the possibility that the prophet could have been speaking about Israel as the suffering servant. Philip answered the man by showing many other scriptures that the prophet was indeed speaking about Messiah. So, for more than a thousand years prior to Rashi, scholars, especially Christian, saw this chapter as discussing the Messiah. Rashi might have felt pressure to find some other interpretation for this section when he wrote his commentary on the book of Isaiah. Rashi knew that to interpret this passage as speaking about Messiah would be problematic in the debating against those who see this passage describes the suffering of Jesus. Therefore Rashi offered a different interpretation, one that differed from other Jewish commentators and from the authority of the Talmud.

It is interesting that today Judaism as a whole is quick to follow Rashi's interpretation from his commentary on the book of Isaiah and to ignore what Rashi himself also wrote in his commentary in the Talmud. Although this tendency serves the desire of Judaism as a whole to reject the possibility that Jesus is the Messiah, there is a major problem with accepting Rashi's view that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is Israel. As has been previously stated, the Talmud is not a commentary of scripture; it is seen in Orthodox Judaism as scripture itself and therefore the views of the Talmud are binding. Hence, those who ascribe to Orthodox Judaism are not free to disagree with the Talmud. What does the Talmud (Meseket Sanhedrin) exactly say about Messiah in relationship to Isaiah 53?

In a certain section, the Talmud begins to discuss the name of Messiah, not with the goal of figuring out the literal name of Messiah, but rather to present terms that describe Him and help the reader understand His character and work (page 98 side "b" Sanhedrin, the Gamara). In this discussion, five names are provided, and, in keeping with the rules for interpreting the Talmud, all five names are relevant in

assisting the reader to understand Messiah. For our purposes, however, we will only deal with the fifth name. The text says that Rabanan offers the name "Kheevahrah" as the name of Messiah which means to be pale skinned. The text actually says:

"Rabanan says, Pale in the house of Rabbi is His name (Messiah) for it is written,..."

The Talmud then quotes Isaiah 53:4:

"Surely our diseases He did bear, and our pains He suffered them; and we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of G-d, and afflicted."

Rashi believed that this section describes the Messiah as stricken with leprosy, and hence Rabanan uses the name Kheevahrah (pale or white) to relate this fact to the reader. It is important that the Talmud relates three crucial points which Orthodox Judaism cannot reject or even debate. Rather, every Orthodox Jew must accept these points:

1. Isaiah chapter 53 relates not to Israel but to the Messiah.
2. Messiah suffers for sin for the purpose of bringing redemption.
3. It was G-d's plan to afflict Messiah to accomplish this purpose.

Now that it has been properly asserted that according to Orthodox Judaism Isaiah 53 is about Messiah, let us study these verses more closely.

In this chapter we will lay the foundation for a proper understanding of Isaiah 53 by setting the context provided by Isaiah 52:7-10. These few verses provide an interesting look at the subject of our discussion. Isaiah 52:7 begins revealing to the reader that it is G-d's plan to reign on earth personally. The verse opens by making a statement that Messiah's coming will bring about a significant change in the world. Messiah, who is the light of the world, will come during a period of spiritual darkness. Prior to Messiah's coming, the world will be in turmoil and suffering hardship. To this point, scholars refer to Jeremiah 30:7:

"Woe! For great is that day, there is none like it; and a time of trouble it is for

Jacob, but out of it, shall he (Israel) be saved."

Who will be doing the work of salvation? Messiah! Isaiah speaks of this change from trouble, hardship, and suffering to that of "pleasantness":

"How pleasant upon the mountains are feet that proclaim good news (which) cause to be heard peace, (which) proclaims goodness, which cause to be heard salvation; (that) says to Zion: 'Your G-d reigns!'" ~Isaiah 52:7

Why does the prophet speak of this pleasantness upon the mountains? In prophetic writings mountains are often related to seats of governments. Hence what is being said in this verse is that Messiah will not just reign in Israel, but He will bring His righteous rule to every nation. Notice that this verse ends with the proclamation to Zion that, "Your G-d reigns". When discussing G-d reigning in Zion, it is significant that the next verse says:

"The voice of watchmen, they lift up (their) voice together, they shout that every eye shall see the return of the L-rd to Zion." ~Isaiah 52:8

The context is clear in this verse. Isaiah is not speaking of the Shekinah (the dwelling presence of G-d), but Messiah beginning His kingdom rule and taking His seat upon the throne of David. This event is not only joyful, but involves a spiritual change in the people, a change that is the focus of the next verse:

"Burst forth, shout together, O ruins of Jerusalem, for the L-rd has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem." ~Isaiah 52:9

This verse is speaking about the work of redemption that Messiah has accomplished. Obviously redemption centers on dealing with sin. Whereas Isaiah 53 reveals how this redemption will be achieved, the prophet wants to announce the identity of Messiah in chapter 52:

"The L-rd has revealed His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our G-d." ~Isaiah 52:10

It is most significant that this verse describes a revelation. What is being revealed? The identity of Messiah. How is Messiah revealed? He is revealed as the "holy arm of the L-rd". The term "arm" is a vital word for assisting the reader in understanding the identity of Messiah. As has been addressed many times previously, Hebrew words come from root words that provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the particular word being used. In this case the word "arm" comes from the root word that means "to sow a seed". Hence the noun would be "seed". In I Samuel chapter 1, Hannah (a barren wife) prays to the L-rd for a son:

*"And she vowed a vow, and said: 'O L-rd of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Your handmaid, but will give unto Your handmaid a **son** (the word is "seed" in a masculine form), then I will give him unto the L-rd all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.'" ~I Samuel 1:11*

Notice that the word normally translated "seed" is here translated as "son". What is the connection between the word "seed" and the word "son"? In the same way that a seed comes from plant or tree, so too, does a child come from his parents. Essentially, a son is an extension of his father. This idea of "extension" is also expressed in the Hebrew word for "arm" which comes from the word root "seed": just as the son is an extension of the father, so is the arm an extension of the body.

Isaiah speaks of Messiah as the "holy arm of the L-rd" to emphasize another aspect that fits the context of Messiah's work of redemption. What is this aspect? The actual word that is translated "arm" refers to an upper portion of the arm. This portion of the arm was seen as the choice portion of the animal that was sacrificed to the L-rd in the Temple service. On the Passover platter, the shank bone that represents the Passover lamb is called by the same word that Isaiah used in 52:10 to describe "His holy arm". It is also significant that the lamb was offered to spare the first born son of the family, again linking beautifully the concepts of son and sacrifice to the Hebrew word Isaiah employs to mean "arm". Isaiah clearly wants to reveal to the reader that Messiah is the Son of G-d who will be sacrificed to bring about Israel's redemption.

Chapter 10

Messiah and Isaiah 53

There is no doubt that Isaiah chapter 53 speaks of Israel's Suffering Servant as the passage immediately preceding chapter 53 says,

"Behold My Servant will be successful, He will be exalted and lifted up and be very high. Just as many will be astonished over Him, thus His appearance is too marred to be a man's, and His description to be a human's. Thus many nations shall gaze upon Him, and kings will shut their mouths, because that which has never been told to them they will see, and that which they have never heard they will perceive." ~Isaiah 52:13-15

According to the Talmud and Rashi's commentary on the Talmud (Sanhedrin 98), Isaiah 53 speaks about the Messiah. Therefore what does the reader learn about Messiah from this chapter? The chapter opens up with a call to be faithful to the proclamation that has been heard:

"Who has believed our report and unto whom has the Arm/Seed/Son (see the previous chapter for discussion of this word) of the L-rd been revealed?" ~Isaiah 53:1

The subject of this verse, "the arm of the L-rd", appears several places in the prophecies of Isaiah (see Isa. 40:10, 51:5, 51:9, 52:10, 59:16, 63.5). From these passages it is clear that the "arm of the L-rd" is the instrument that G-d uses to bring salvation, redemption, and the kingdom to His people Israel. This is exactly what the Messiah will do; hence, there is an inherent relationship between the "Arm of the L-rd" and the Messiah. Although Isaiah uses different language in 53:2, the idea is the same as stated in Isaiah 11:1—that a shoot will come forth from the stump of Jesse:

"He will rise as a sapling before Him, and as a root from arid land; He had neither form nor splendor, we saw Him, but (He did) not have an appearance that we should desire Him." ~Isaiah 53:2

The primary message of this verse is that Messiah is not going to be an individual who draws others to Him by some beauty that He possesses. In fact, the next verse tells how thoroughly Messiah will be rejected:

"He was despised and separated from men, a man of pains and someone who experienced sickness; (to the extent) one would hide his face from Him; He was despised and we did not give to Him any consideration. (Literally we did not consider Him) ~Isaiah 53:2

Hence, Messiah will not only suffer, but His suffering will be to the extent that it will cause Israel to reject Him and not afford to Him any consideration or significance. It is important to point out that not only is Messiah rejected, but twice the text uses the word "despised": Israel will have total contempt for Messiah. Isaiah makes it clear in the beginning of the next verse that such contempt is not the proper response to Messiah's suffering, but rather part of G-d's plan of redemption. Isaiah writes in 53:4:

*"Indeed our sicknesses He bore our pains He did suffer, but we considered Him stricken- **struck by G-d and afflicted.**"*

As stated previously, Rashi disagrees with himself as to whom this chapter refers. When writing about Isaiah 53:4 from its use in the Talmud, Rashi states clearly that this chapter is about Messiah. However, when he comes to this chapter in his own commentary of Isaiah, he states that Israel (the Jewish people) is the subject. It is rather odd that Judaism, for the most part, adheres to Rashi's view from his Isaiah commentary rather than to assert the binding assertion of the Talmud (as the Talmud is considered to be Holy Scripture for Orthodox Judaism). Rashi's view that Israel is the subject is without foundation; the personal pronouns of Isaiah 53 make Rashi's interpretation problematic: "bore **our** sickness and **our** pains". One needs only to ask the question, "To whom does the word **our** refer?" The obvious answer is Israel. Therefore, how could Israel be the subject and the object of the verse as well?

The first word of Isaiah 53:4 is important in helping the reader understand the proper context of the verse. After stating the error of the people in not esteeming Messiah properly and even rejecting and despising Him, verse 4 opens up with the word that

the *Stone Edition* of the Hebrew Bible translates, "*But in truth*". This phrase captures the intent of Isaiah. He wants to show how the previous two verses reveal an incorrect response of the people, a response of failing to believe the truth of the prophets. Verse 4 emphasizes the fact that Messiah's uncomely appearance was due to the suffering that He endured for Israel. It is significant that Isaiah 53:4 tells us that Messiah was "stricken and afflicted by G-d". This means that Messiah's being the "Suffering Servant" is part of G-d's plan to bring about Israel's redemption. The Talmud also emphasizes the point that Messiah must suffer and be afflicted in order to pay the price for our sins. This is also mentioned in the next verse of our text:

"He was profaned because of our transgressions and bruised because of our iniquities, the chastisement (for) our peace is upon Him and by His wounds we are healed." ~Isaiah 53:5

I translated the Hebrew word at the beginning of the verse as "profaned" because the Hebrew word implies a sense of desecration. Isaiah 53:5 reveals that Messiah became sin for us: He who never sinned and is totally righteous was afflicted and stricken by G-d because the sins of mankind were laid upon Him so that we could find redemption and peace with G-d (a spiritual healing). Isaiah 53:6 continues to emphasize that due to man's sin and guilt before G-d Messiah endured a divine punishment:

"We are all like sheep and have erred, we have turned each man to his own way; and the L-rd inflicted upon Him the iniquity of all of us." ~Isaiah 53:6

There can be no debate that Messiah suffered vicariously for humanity. Another significant fact is that Messiah did all of this willfully and without any complaining or self-justification, a fact Isaiah beautifully relates with the following verse (it is noteworthy that sacrificial animals are used in this analogy):

"He was oppressed and afflicted and He did not open His mouth, as a sheep is led before the slaughter and as a ewe before the shearers is silent, He did not open His mouth." ~Isaiah 53:7

In the next verse Isaiah reveals that the punishment and suffering finally ended and that He (Messiah) was taken away (died). The prophet also tells us that this event was something those of His generation could not have even discussed; that is, a suffering Messiah was too painful to even be considered. Such sentiments are exactly what the disciple Peter voiced when Jesus revealed G-d's plan for Him to go to Jerusalem to lay down His life there (see Mt. 16:21-22). Isaiah 53:8 concludes with yet another statement that Messiah suffered on behalf of His people:

"From imprisonment and judgment He was taken, His generation could not have even discussed for He was cut off from the land of the living because of the transgression of My people; an affliction for them." ~Isaiah 53:8

Isaiah 53:9 asserts once again His innocence and His willingness to submit to the punishment of sin. This is not His sin, but as has already been discussed, the sins of mankind. This verse is rather difficult to translate if one does not utilize the laws of Hebrew poetry and possess a competent understanding of Hebrew parallelism. In order to assist in a proper translation, I will lay out the verse in a manner that shows the parallels.

It was given	among the wicked (plural)	His tomb (singular)
XXXXXX	before a rich one (singular)	His death (plural)
Concerning	no violence	He did
XXXXXX	no deception (was)	in His mouth

The first phrase *"His tomb was among the wicked ones"* shows that despite His sinlessness, Messiah suffered the punishment for all sinners and died and was buried. The second phrase *"He submitted before a ruler His death"* is important to understand because it does not contain the *"It was given/ He submitted"* wording. However, it is understood that those words needed to be added in order to complete the idea of the parallel section. Rabbinical commentators point out that the word translated "rich" is better understood as a ruler who was rich. Hence, it was one certain ruler who gave to Messiah a death sentence. The end of the second phrase has the plural form of "death" which does not make any sense until one understands that in Messiah's death many died. For it says in I Corinthians 5:14b-15:

*"...that since One (Messiah) **DIED** for all, then were all dead:
And that He **DIED** for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto
themselves, but unto Him which **DIED** for them, and rose again."*

A smoother English translation for Isaiah 53:9 would be:

*"His tomb was among the dead and He was sentenced to death by one ruler. He did
no violent act nor was there any deception in His mouth."*

Isaiah 53:10 reiterates that it was G-d's desire to bring the punishment of sin (death) for all humanity upon the Messiah. It also reveals that even though Messiah endured shame, part of which would be the rejection of His own people, that eventually the "seed" (Israel) would understand this truth and be blessed. The L-rd desired this for His people, and, because of the outcome of redemption, He delighted in afflicting the Messiah. The verse ends with a statement that Messiah will successfully complete His work

*"The L-rd wanted His crushing-He (The L-rd) afflicted (Him)! Since you place guilt
on His soul, (the) seed (Israel) will see, he will lengthen days, the delight of the L-rd is
in His hand-He (Messiah) will succeed"! ~Isaiah 53:10*

The phrase for having one's days lengthened is an idiom for being blessed. The prophet then makes a statement that the L-rd will see the labor of Messiah and be pleased with it. How will Messiah do this? Verse 11 says boldly:

*"The labor of His soul He (The L-rd) will see, He will be satisfied with the knowledge
(Lit. His knowledge) that My Servant will justify many, **for He suffered their
iniquity.**" ~Isaiah 53:11*

The chapter ends with the following verse,

*"Therefore I will divide to Him among the multitudes, He will divide the spoils of the
mighty in return for having poured out His soul to death, He was numbered among
the transgressors, and He carried the sin of many and for transgressors He will be
afflicted." ~Isaiah 53:12*

This verse points out that Messiah's reward will be distributed among those who receive Him. In other words, those who accept the truth concerning Messiah will find themselves as recipients of salvation. Careful attention to this verse also reveals that salvation was obtained by means of His death. Even though Messiah was considered a transgressor by those who did not understand the purposes of the plan of G-d, His death actually was the means by which the sins of many will be atoned. The phrase "the spoils of the mighty" seems to be the remuneration for His death. Hence, through the sacrificial death of Messiah, the outcome of G-d's plan of redemption is fulfilled in the life of those who accept Messiah's death as the payment for their transgressions. Although oftentimes Israel figures prominently as the object of Messiah's work, the language of this passage, such as "multitudes", "many", and "transgressors" includes those from among the Gentiles who respond in a like manner.

In conclusion, it is amazing that in the twelve verses of Isaiah chapter fifty-three, the prophet tells the reader multiple times that Messiah must suffer for sin, yet Judaism fails to convey this most important truth.

Chapter 11

Zechariah and the Messiah

The prophet Zechariah reveals a great deal about the person and the work of the Messiah. All too often Judaism takes a "wait and see" attitude concerning Messiah. That is, Judaism would prefer to remain diligent in the belief that the Messiah is coming, but tends to refrain from offering too much information about Him. The result is that most people who adhere to Judaism know very little about the identity of Messiah, what exactly He will accomplish, and how He will bring these things about. Zechariah, on the other hand, offers much information about these issues, and one should learn from his prophecy so as to be prepared for Messiah's coming. The Talmud, in Meseket Sanhedrin 98b, enters into a discussion on whether Messiah is from the living or from the dead; that is, whether Messiah is from among the living, alive on earth and then revealed as the Messiah. If Messiah is from the dead, He will be one who previously lived, was neither recognized as the Messiah nor completed all the work of the Messiah; it will not be until His return when He establishes His kingdom that He will be recognized as, indeed, the Son of David.

Zechariah's prophecy points to the fact that the Messiah, who will defeat the enemies of Israel, is from the dead. That is to say, when Messiah comes to establish His kingdom and fulfill the work of redemption, this will not be His first time upon the earth. What exactly is the Messiah suppose to do? According to Rambam's well-known work entitled, "Mishneh Torah" in the section dealing with the laws for the kings of Israel, he addresses the work of Messiah. According to Rambam, Messiah will do the following:

1. Reestablish the Davidic kingdom
2. Build the Temple in Jerusalem
3. Gather the exiles and return them to the land of Israel
4. Rule over the world and enforce Torah obedience
5. Fight the wars of G-d, delivering the Jewish people from their enemies

Zechariah speaks to most of these issues and reveals some vital information about the one who will accomplish these things. The basic message of Zechariah is simple to discern: G-d will remember His covenant with Israel and redeem His people. The name "Zechariah" actually means "G-d remembers". In this chapter, we will primarily look at Zechariah 12 and bring in some other verses from his prophecy to further understand the character and work of the Messiah. Zechariah 12:1 opens saying:

"The burden of the word of the L-rd concerning Israel..."

This chapter speaks of a difficult time for Israel which the nations will cause the Jewish people. The term "burden of the L-rd" simply reveals that this difficult period for Israel is part of G-d's redemptive work in the last days. Even though the burden that is spoken of here is against Israel, we will find in this chapter and also in chapter 14 that because the source of the burden is the nations which will come against the Jewish people in their attempt to wage war against Jerusalem, it will actually be those nations that will ultimately suffer G-d's judgment. It's important to understand that there are two aspects to judgment: condemnation and vindication. Hence, G-d's judgment will serve to condemn and destroy those who will not enter into a covenant with Him, but obviously will bring a great victory to those who will enter into His covenant. Part of Messiah's redemptive work is to bring both Jew and Gentile into such a relationship. It is only by means of faith in Messiah as G-d's Redeemer, as described by the prophets, that one can enter into a covenant relationship with G-d. It is not enough just to believe that Messiah will do these things, but one must also recognize who the Messiah is and invite Him by name into one's life.

One cannot over emphasize the benefits of a covenant relationship. Scripture declares that it was because of Israel's covenant with G-d that He acted to redeem them from bondage in Egypt:

*"And G-d heard their groaning and **G-d remembered His covenant** with Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaacov."* ~Exodus 2:24

Zechariah 12:1 continues with remembering G-d as creator of the world:

"...He stretches out the heavens and establishes the earth and forms the spirit of man within him."

This verse utilizes language similar to the language for the creation of the world. However, the context for most of the book of Zechariah, especially the latter chapters, is the events which will bring about world redemption. Zechariah employs phrases relating to creation because redemption will bring about transformative changes to the world. Jerusalem is the focus of Zechariah 12:2 and serves to inform the reader that Jerusalem is foundational in G-d's plan to bring redemption to the world:

"Behold I am making Jerusalem a cup of poison for all the peoples around and also concerning Judah there will be a siege of Jerusalem." ~Zechariah 12:2

Zechariah 14:2 gives insight to what chapter 12 is referring—a war for Jerusalem.

"Behold the day of the L-rd is coming...and I (the L-rd) will gather all the nations against Jerusalem for war..." ~Zechariah 14: 1-2

It has already been discussed that Messiah will rule from the Holy of Holies, sitting upon the covering of the Ark of the Covenant. The war Zechariah mentions will take place because the nations will oppose Messiah's righteous rule. Zechariah 14:2 clearly states that all nations will join to make war and attack Jerusalem. Zechariah 12:2 calls Jerusalem a "cup of poison". There is actually another possible meaning for the Hebrew word translated "cup". It can also mean a "threshold". The point is that not only will those who attack Jerusalem be as those who drink poison, but attacking Jerusalem is like crossing a line that defines one's allegiance; that is, whether one is part of G-d's family or is G-d's enemy. The next verse describes Jerusalem as a heavy stone that will crush those who try to move it:

"And it shall come about on that day that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone to all the people, to all who burden her (Jerusalem); they will cut (themselves) and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered unto her (Jerusalem)." ~Zechariah 12:3

Not only will those nations who attack Jerusalem be crushed, but the nations will actually be cut to pieces by doing so. The phrase "they will cut themselves" may have an additional meaning as well. There are other instances in the Bible, as we discussed

in chapter 2, that describe the pagan practice of cutting oneself in an act of worship to a false god or as an expression of mourning and deep sorrow. This is similar to the practice in Judaism of "Kriah"—cutting or tearing one's garment as a sign of remorse or mourning for close relatives. Hence, Zechariah may be saying that those nations that attack Jerusalem in the last days are driven by a false god, and eventually they will realize their mistake and express deep sorrow and remorse.

In describing the war that will take place for Jerusalem, Zechariah reveals that G-d will intervene in a miraculous manner by striking the horses with blindness and their riders with madness. This may allude to causing the enemy's military armament to malfunction and those who operate it to act irrationally. Zechariah 12:4 also contains a most interesting statement:

*"On that day says the L-rd, I will strike every horse with madness and its rider with craziness **and concerning the House of Judah I will open My eyes** and every horse of the peoples (gentile nations) I will strike with blindness."* ~Zechariah 12:4

What is the significance of the phrase, "and concerning the House of Judah I (G-d) will open My eyes"? Israel has been in exile since the destruction of the Second Temple and, even though one can see G-d's hand moving in the life of the Jewish people in the establishment of the modern state of Israel and providing victory in the War of Independence, The Six Days War, and Yom Kippur War, G-d will move in the last days to deliver the Jewish people in a mighty and profound way. He will bring redemption and establish His kingdom in such a great way that it will seem as though G-d's eyes were shut to the plight of His people for the last 2000 plus years.

In Zechariah 12:5-8, we see G-d strengthening the Jewish people and Jerusalem returning to its former status of glory that will greatly exceed her former splendor. Although G-d does indeed make Israel like fire and her enemies like straw, G-d Himself will defend His people in a personal way:

"And the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, the inhabitants of Jerusalem (will also say) my strength is in the L-rd of Hosts (Who is) their G-d. On that day I will make the leaders of Judah as a basis of fire against the trees and as a torch of fire against sheaves; and they will devour to the right and to the left- all the peoples round

and Jerusalem will sit once more in her place in Jerusalem. The L-rd will save the tents of Judah as in the former times, so that the splendor of the house of David and the inhabitant of Jerusalem shall not exceed Judah. On that day the L-rd will defend the inhabitant of Jerusalem and it shall be that the failure (the weak one) among them on that day (shall be) like David and the house of David (shall be) as G-d—even as the Angel of the L-rd is before them." ~Zechariah 12:5-8

It is most clear from the following verse, that there will be many nations that will join together in opposition to Messiah's plan of establishing Jerusalem as the capital city for His kingdom:

"And it shall come about on that day I (HaShem) will seek to destroy all the nations coming against Jerusalem." ~Zechariah 12:9

Zechariah 14:2 speaks of Jerusalem being divided as does Revelation 11:2. There are also similar statements about Jerusalem going through a period of intense persecution and suffering but, in the end, G-d Himself will destroy all the nations who come against the Jewish people and attack Jerusalem.

The Hebrew word translated "destroy" in Zechariah 12:9 is a powerful word which describes an utter annihilation; it is basically the fulfillment of what G-d promised Abraham in Genesis chapter twelve:

"I will bless those who bless you, but curse those who curse you..." ~Genesis 12:3

Those nations that will come to make war against Jerusalem will ultimately find themselves fighting against the Living G-d. Because they will be committing open rebellion and enmity toward G-d, their fate will be utter destruction. In the end-time battle for Jerusalem, the people of Israel will go through a dark and difficult hour, but through it the L-rd will be bringing about a significant spiritual change in them.

Zechariah 12:10 reveals that G-d will pour out His Spirit on a certain group of the Jewish people in that time and reveal the one whom the Gemara calls Messiah Ben Yoseph:

"I will pour out upon the House of David and upon the inhabitant of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication and they will look upon Me whom they have pierced

and they will lament Him as the lamentation for a firstborn son and the bitterness for Him is as the bitterness for (the death) of a firstborn son." ~Zechariah 12:10

There are two groups of people mentioned in this verse: the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Just who is being referred by these descriptions? The "House of David" refers to those who have faith in G-d's promises to send a Redeemer in the last days. It is clear that the first part of Zechariah 12:10 is describing the same event as Isaiah 59:20-21:

"And a Redeemer shall come to Zion and to those who repent (from) sin of Jacob says the L-rd. And this is My covenant with them said the L-rd, My spirit (will be) upon you...." ~Isaiah 59:20-21

In the last days G-d will move in a unique and powerful manner and will pour out His Spirit upon those who repent of sin. When Zechariah mentions the "the Spirit of grace and supplication", to what is he referring? The word translated from the Hebrew as "grace" is similar in meaning to the words "mercy" or "forgiveness". There is, however, one important difference. The Hebrew word translated "grace" has a specific purpose attached to it. This purpose is to establish a bond or a relationship. Notice that Isaiah uses the word "covenant" in Isaiah 59:20-21. The prophet is reminding us of G-d's ultimate goal for redemption: His desire to enter into a new covenant relationship with the Jewish people. To this end He will pour out His grace upon them. The Hebrew word translated "supplication" is derived from the same word as grace. Hence, this verse in Isaiah also shows us that not only does G-d provide what is necessary to forgive the people of their sin (mercy), but He does so because of His great desire to have a new covenant relationship with them and even creates in them the desire (the spirit of supplication) to have such a relationship with Him.

As previously stated, the phrase "House of David" refers to those who have faith in a coming Messiah. The term "the inhabitant of Jerusalem" speaks about those who will inherit redemption. In essence, the terms "House of David" and "inhabitant of Jerusalem" are not speaking about two distinct groups of people, but revealing two aspects concerning these individuals. Because the term "David" refers to the promise of redemption that G-d made to David concerning Messiah, "The House of David"

speaks of those who will be redeemed and thereby given the right to enter into the Messianic Kingdom. The term "inhabitant of Jerusalem" speaks of those who will inherit the full outcome of redemption with all the rights and privileges pertaining to it. How can this be derived from the term "inhabitant of Jerusalem"? Obviously, the word inhabitant refers to one dwelling in or connected to. Hence, the "inhabitant of Jerusalem" speaks of one who is connected to Jerusalem. The key to understanding this term is found in the meaning of the word Jerusalem. Jerusalem is composed of two Hebrew words, the first meaning "to inherit" and the second meaning "peace". Hence Jerusalem speaks of those who will inherit peace. The term peace does not speak necessarily of a situation absent of conflict and wars, but rather the term shalom (peace) is derived from a word which means "to complete" or "to fulfill". For example, in Modern Hebrew if one has a debt, he must fulfill his obligation, that is to complete that which is missing. When he pays his debt, he is making peace. In fact, the Modern Hebrew word for "to pay" is derived from this same word from which "peace/shalom" comes. Therefore, the term "Jerusalem" means "those who inherit the completion or the fulfillment of G-d's will. What is it that G-d desires? One only needs to return to the book of Genesis to find in chapter 12 that G-d's purpose for bringing Israel into existence was to use the Jewish people as an instrument to bless all the families of the earth. (See Genesis 12:3).

The second half of Zechariah 12:10 deals with the means by which these things are accomplished, i.e., the fulfillment of redemption. When the text says, "*They will look upon Me...*", to whom is the text referring? It is clear from the context that G-d is speaking because He speaks in first person of pouring out His Spirit. Interestingly, among Jewish and Christian commentators there is a consensus that Zechariah 12:10 refers to the Messiah.

Judaism teaches that there are two Messiahs: Messiah Ben David and Messiah Ben Yoseph. Messiah Ben David is the Messiah who will defeat the enemies of Israel and bring about the kingdom of G-d. Messiah Ben Yoseph is seen as an assistant to Messiah Ben David and suffers. Some have stated that it is Messiah Ben Yoseph to whom the suffering servant passages in the latter chapters of Isaiah speak. The Talmud (Gemara, Meseket Sukah) says that the Messiah who appears in Zechariah 12:10 is Messiah Ben Yoseph. There is also an alternate view within this same

portion of the Talmud which disagrees with this interpretation and asserts that the text is referring to man's evil inclination. Rabbi Dosa, who is quoted in this section of the Gemara, is the proponent for interpreting Zechariah 12:10 as a lamentation for the Messiah called Ben Yoseph who was killed previously (see Meseket Sukah 52a). Such an interpretation poses a serious conflict for Judaism. It is clear from Zechariah 12:9 that G-d defeats those who will wage war against Jerusalem and the Jewish people at the end of the age. Rambam's view, which is embraced by Judaism as a whole, is that Messiah Ben David will fight Israel's enemies at the end of this age and bring about the final redemption. Therefore, it is problematic to assert that Zechariah 12:10 is speaking of Messiah Ben Yoseph instead of Messiah Ben David, according to the Gemara.

The fact that the "House of David" is mentioned in Zechariah 12:10, also hints that what is being done in this section of Zechariah is the work of Messiah Ben David. There is a desire among the rabbis to interpret the subject of Zechariah 12:10 as Messiah Ben Yoseph because he was stabbed / pierced. Both Jewish and Christian commentators interpret the wounds mentioned in Zechariah 12:10 as relating to Messiah's death, that is, Messiah Ben Yoseph's death according to Judaism. The problem is that the one who will bring Israel victory in the last days is Messiah Ben David according to all views. Hence, what about the wounds that Zechariah 12:10 mentions? These are the wounds that belong to Messiah Ben Yoseph.

Let us restate the problem. The Talmud says the subject of Zechariah 12:10 is Messiah Ben Yoseph, the suffering servant. However, the work that is being done in this section is clearly the work of Messiah Ben David (fighting Israel's enemies and establishing His kingdom on earth). Hence, both Messiahs of the Jewish tradition are alluded to in this section, but only one Messiah is present. This poses an irreconcilable dilemma for Judaism. There is, however, a simple solution. There are not two Messiahs, but one. This one Messiah has two distinct roles which He will accomplish at two distinct times. His first role is to accomplish the work of redemption for the world, and the second is to bring about the actual results of the work of redemption to Israel and the world; that is, the kingdom of G-d. Zechariah chapter three offers an interesting illustration that helps the reader understand the nature of Messiah's work of redemption.

In chapter three the prophet Zechariah has a vision of Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the L-rd with Satan standing on his right side to accuse him. As high priest, Joshua represents the whole house of Israel. Joshua stands before the L-rd clothed in soiled garments which represent the sins of the Jewish people. As Joshua stands there, the L-rd commands that his soiled garments be removed, representing the removal of sins. This is the work of redemption:

"And He (the L-rd) answered and said to the ones standing before Him saying, 'remove the soiled garments from upon him and clothe him with the festival garments". ~Zechariah 3:4

It is Messiah's role to pay the price of redemption for all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike. It is significant that later on in this heavenly scene, Zechariah 3:8 eight mentions *"My Servant (the) Branch"*. All commentators connect this phrase to the Messiah. Zechariah 3:9 then goes on to say:

"...I will remove the sin of that land in one day." ~Zechariah 3:9

The verse reveals that in one day G-d will do the work necessary to redeem Israel and the world. Furthermore the fact that the vision speaks of Joshua being clothed with soiled garments and then clean ones teaches a vicarious sacrifice. Because the high priest represents Israel before G-d, his soiled garments represent sin and his clean garments represent Israel's new status by means of the redemptive work of Messiah. It is Messiah, as we have discussed, who does the work of Messiah Ben Yoseph and suffers for the sins of Israel the world. In this passage, Joshua the high priest is faced with the message of Messiah who became sin for us so that His righteousness might be upon all those who receive Him personally. This is exactly what we learned in our study of Isaiah 53. The type of sacrifice the high priest makes for Israel on the Day of Atonement is vicarious: that is, the sins of the people he confesses upon the goat which then suffers the outcome of sin (death) while the people are forgiven. Zechariah chapter 3 reveals exactly that. One can read much more in depth about the vicarious sacrifice of Yom Kippur in Leviticus 16.

Similar to Zechariah 3:9, Messiah's work of redemption, i.e. His substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of Israel, was achieved in one day. Such a view is quite different

from what Judaism commonly teaches today—that Israel will merit her own redemption by doing good deeds. This was the teaching of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe who said that a certain number of good deeds must be done prior to Messiah being revealed, and therefore he encouraged people to do good deeds saying that "perhaps the good deed that you do will be the one that brings the final redemption." Zechariah three paints a different picture of redemption. It is clear that Israel cannot make itself clean, that it is not by merit that Israel will be redeemed, but by the sovereign plan of G-d who will simply give Messiah the word to complete the work of redemption on behalf of the people.

In closing, let's return to Zechariah 12:10 to observe a key piece of information in the verse. When the Messiah, Who has been pierced/stabbed appears, people will see Him and lament for Him. The verse in fact presents the image of a very unique lamentation:

"I will pour out upon the House of David and upon the inhabitant of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication and they will look upon Me whom they have pierced and they will lament Him as the lamentation for a firstborn son and the bitterness for Him is as the bitterness for (the death) of a firstborn son." ~Zechariah 12:10

In Judaism, when one mourns the death of a close family member, such as a son, a thirty-day mourning period is observed. It's clear that Zechariah is referring to this thirty-day mourning period, and Daniel offers some key information to help one understand the significance of this period. These issues will be discussed in the final chapters of our study.

Chapter 12

Zechariah and the Messiah Continued

The previous article discussed Israel's mourning the Messiah when He returns to deliver Israel from the nations which will gather against Jerusalem. This mourning is significant and reveals a vital clue concerning the identity of Messiah. Zechariah 12:11 says:

"On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be great as the mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megidon (Megiddo)."

What is the significance of this verse? The Talmud says in Meseket Moed Kattan 28b, that this verse alludes to two events. The first event is the death of King Ahab at the hand of whom the Gemara calls Hadad-Rimmon (see I Kings 22). The second event to which it refers is the death of King Josiah who was slain in the valley of Megiddo (see II Chronicles 35). What is important about this citation from the Talmud is that both references refer to two men, Ahab and Josiah, who both made a tragic mistake which cost them their lives. Why does the Talmud impose these interpretations upon the verse within the context of Messiah coming? Whether they know it or not, this Talmudic interpretation of Zechariah 12:11 reveals that when Messiah came the first time, Israel also committed a tragic error by not recognizing Him. This time when Messiah returns and Israel sees His wounds, they will recognize His identity and mourn His death which the nation did not do when He laid down His life to make redemption on Passover nearly 2,000 years ago.

The book of Revelation also mentions Megiddo (Armageddon) as the place where Messiah will fight the armies of the nations that will attack Jerusalem in the last days. This battle for Jerusalem is the subject of the first several verses of Zechariah 14 in which the prophet makes clear that all the nations will turn against the Jewish people and attack Jerusalem:

"I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for war and the city will be taken and the houses will be plundered and the women raped and half the city will go into exile, but the remainder of the people will not be cut off from the city." ~Zechariah 14:2

Even though Rambam says it is the work/role of Messiah Ben David to fight this war, Zechariah says it will be the L-rd Himself that will defend Israel.

"And the L-rd will go out and will fight those nations as in the day He wages war in the day of battle." ~Zechariah 14:3

The next verse in chapter 14 speaks of the feet of the L-rd Himself standing on the Mount of Olives. As we have discussed, Daniel 7:13 pictures Messiah coming in the clouds of heaven. Therefore it would seem that Messiah will come in the last days from the clouds of heaven to arrive on the Mount of Olives just east of the Temple area. Why does Zechariah say that this is G-d Himself while both Jewish and Christian commentators interpret the passage as relating to Messiah? The answer is to show that Messiah is actually G-d Himself and that He did indeed visit His people and redeem them in the person of Messiah Yeshua. When Messiah's feet shall indeed touch the Mount of Olives, it will cause a cataclysmic event:

"And His feet will stand on that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east and the Mount of Olives will split half to the east and half to the west; a very great valley (will appear) and half the mountain will be removed towards the north and its other half towards the south." ~Zechariah 14:4

The purpose of this great valley is twofold: Zechariah 14:2 tells us that half the residents of Jerusalem will go into exile, and therefore this valley will provide an exit for them:

"You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and the L-rd my G-d shall come (and) all the saints with you." ~Zechariah 14:5

Also in Revelation 12:6, we are told that Jewish residents of Jerusalem in the last days flee persecution to the wilderness to a refuge the L-rd has prepared for them. The second purpose for this great valley opening up is to allow for the waters which

Ezekiel the prophet says will flow in the last days from under the Temple towards the east to make their way to the Dead Sea at a place called En Gedi (see Ezekiel 47). Scholars see the Mount of Olives being split and the valley which will be created as providing the way for the water to flow to the Dead Sea. It is most interesting to note that if there were an opening in the Mount of Olives and water were to flow straight east from the Temple, it would flow directly to the Dead Sea at En Gedi, thus fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy perfectly.

Zechariah 14:6-7 speak about this time as being very unique:

"And it shall come about on that day the light will not be clear or thick. It shall be a unique day, it shall be known (only) to the L-rd; not day and not night, and it shall come about in the evening- there will be light."

What do these verses reveal? These verses reveal that the presence of G-d will return to earth in a manner that will reflect the holiness that was present during creation. Zechariah 14:6 emphasizes the concept of light; the light that will be present will not be ordinary light. Though the English states that it will be a "unique day", the Hebrew literally says it will be "one day", the same expression used in Genesis 1:5 to describe the first day of creation. The "highlight", of course, of the first day of creation was light. The fact that the text says that this day is only known to the L-rd may be a reference to the time before man was created. The verse goes on to reveal that even in the evening there will still be light. This piece of information informs the reader that the sun is not the source of light to which this passage is referring. What then is the source of this light? G-d Himself.

Zechariah reveals that with the coming of Messiah the world will begin to return to its former state when the presence of G-d was in the world in a unique way, the way G-d was in the world prior to the fall of man. In other words, Messiah's coming will bring a restoration not just to the house of Israel, but to the entire world. We already recalled the passage in Ezekiel 47 which describes water flowing from under the Temple and flowing eastward to the Dead Sea. Zechariah 14:8 also seems to refer to this:

"And it shall come about on that day that living water shall go out from Jerusalem; half to the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and half to the western sea (Mediterranean)- it shall be in summer and in winter."

Ezekiel informs the reader that these waters will bring healing, prosperity, and life to everything they touch. Zechariah 14:8 reveals that these waters will flow in the summer and winter. Since rain only falls in the Middle East in the winter, the prophet is saying that there will no longer be seasons like we now know, that there will be a total change in nature as we know it. The end of Ezekiel chapter 47 supports this by saying that each month trees will bear fruit, hence no more seasons. Once again the message to the reader is that with Messiah's coming everything will change. Not only does Messiah come, but He will rule as the King over all the earth and bring about a unity and holiness that is reflected in the Name of the L-rd:

"And the L-rd shall be King over all the earth on that day the L-rd shall be One and His Name One." ~Zechariah 14:9

With the return of the Shekinah Glory to earth through the rule of King Messiah, Israel will dwell in safety (Zechariah 14:11). Although Israel will turn to G-d and recognize her Redeemer, still many other nations will reject G-d's plan of salvation and will continue to make war with the Jewish people. In the last days, those nations will learn a harsh lesson: fighting the Jewish people is actually fighting against G-d. G-d will respond in a devastating manner to such nations:

"This shall be the plague which the L-rd will strike upon all the peoples which wage war against Jerusalem- and he who is standing on his feet his flesh shall melt and his eyes shall dissolve in their sockets and his tongue shall melt in his mouth."
~Zechariah 14:12

It is clear from this verse that no army will be able to defend itself from this plague that is clearly a divine punishment upon those peoples and nations that refuse to acknowledge and accept Israel's role in the last days. These individuals will choose to join a false messiah and come against the people of Israel in their attempt to take Jerusalem. Failure to support Israel and remaining indifferent during this period of time will be akin to making a decision for the false messiah, even if no overt activity

is committed. Even though a great number of individuals will die from every nation, there will be a remnant from these nations that comes to faith in the Messiah and accepts G-d's plan of salvation. Notice the change that will occur among the nations thereafter: instead of wanting to go up to Jerusalem to wage war, they will want to go up to Jerusalem to worship King Messiah.

"And it shall come about that all who remain from those nations that came against Jerusalem (to wage war) shall go up to Jerusalem each year to bow down before the King, the L-rd of Host and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles." ~Zechariah 14:16

As we all know, there are many festivals in Judaism. Why is it then that the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned in this verse rather than some other holiday? The answer is found in the central theme of this holiday: dependence and trust upon the L-rd. Israel's call as G-d's chosen people is based in Israel's call to actively demonstrate dependence on and trust in G-d. Finally in the last days, and especially in the Messianic Kingdom, Israel will take her role of leadership among the nations and will lead others to follow her example to worship the King of Kings and L-rd of L-rds.

These verses also make very clear that no matter what one's ethnicity or nationality may be, all people must respond to Messiah in the same manner, to trust and depend upon Him solely for redemption and salvation. If one refuses to do so during Messiah's rule, then G-d will punish him in two ways: first no rain will fall upon him. Rain is considered a blessing in the Bible, so the verse implies that G-d will withhold His blessings from that person. Zechariah 14:18 then says that G-d will afflict such a rebel with the very plague that he struck the nations that came up to Jerusalem for war. Zechariah chapter fourteen concludes the prophet's vision by describing G-d's holiness emanating from the Temple area to all of Jerusalem and Judea. The last verse of Zechariah says:

"...and there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the L-rd of Hosts on that day." ~Zechariah 14:21

This interesting sentence reveals that although Gentiles do not become Jews, faithful Gentiles do become part of Israel. What does this mean? 3,500 years ago there were a group of nations that were opposed to G-d's plan of bringing the Children of Israel

into the land of Canaan, and G-d destroyed those people. However, during the last days many of the nations will respond to Israel's leadership and will submit joyfully to G-d's plan. These nations/peoples will become part of G-d's family and will enjoy the same rights and privileges as the Jewish people who respond to G-d's plan. In this verse the term "Canaanite" is used to refer to one who opposes and rebels against the will of G-d. This phrase is really a play on words, as the root for Canaanite in Hebrew has to do with submission. That is, the Canaanites were called to submit to G-d's plan, but because they refused this call, they were not part of G-d's covenant family. Under Messiah's rule, no such people will exist, but all (Jew and Gentile alike) will submit to Messiah's righteous rule and be part of His family.

Chapter 13

Daniel and the Messiah

One of the most important prophecies in the Bible appears in Daniel 9:24-27. Daniel was among the nobility exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon where he gained favor with his prophetic abilities and rose to prominence in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Cyrus the Great. Daniel wrote his prophesy during the reign of Darius, who reigned before Cyrus. It was Cyrus the Great who issued the edict that the exiles were able to return to the land of Israel exactly 70 years after Nebuchadnezzar exiled the Jewish people to Babylon. This fact is written in the book of II Chronicles:

"And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, the word of the L-rd through the mouth of Jeremiah came to its end, the L-rd stirred the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he issued a proclamation in all his kingdom, and also in writing, saying: 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth has the L-rd, the God of heaven, given me; and He has charged me to build for Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever among you from all His people--the L-rd his G-d be with him--let him go up.'" ~II Chronicles 36:22-23

Daniel chapter nine opens up with Daniel trying to understand the prophecy of Jeremiah in which Jeremiah prophesied concerning the exiles who were taken from Judah to Babylon. Jeremiah says that the exiles would remain in Babylon for 70 years:

"Thus says the L-rd of hosts, the G-d of Israel, to every exile, which I have exiled from Jerusalem unto Babylon: Build houses, and dwell (in them), and plant gardens, and eat their fruit; take wives, and bear sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to men, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there, and be not a few. And seek the peace of the city where I have exiled you there, and pray for it (the city) unto the L-rd; for in her peace there will be peace for you. For thus says the L-rd of hosts, the G-d of Israel: Let not your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, deceive you, neither listen to your dreams which you dream. For in falsehood they prophesy to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the L-rd. For thus says the L-rd: that according to the fulfillment of the seventy

years of Babylon, I will visit you, and I will establish for concerning you My good word to return you to this place." ~Jeremiah 29:4-10

Daniel understood the prophecy from Jeremiah and knew therefore that the 70 years of exile were coming to an end. Instead of waiting passively for the prophecy to come true, Daniel prayed and fasted and asked G-d to fulfill His word to Jeremiah. In the midst of praying and fasting, Daniel was visited by an angel who gave him this important prophecy:

*"Seventy weeks have been determined concerning Your people and concerning Your holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to atone (for) iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal vision and prophet, and to anoint the holy of holies. Know and be wise, that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed prince, **(even though the word "messiah" is used here, it is not speaking of Israel's Messiah, but as is often the case, referring to a king, ruler, etc. The word simply means "one who has been anointed."** The time frame makes it clear that this could not be Messiah in the normal usage, for none of the commentators (Jewish or Christian) see this verse as referring to Israel's Redeemer.) there shall be seven weeks; and (an additional) sixty-two weeks shall return and be built, with broad place and moat, but in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself **(in this verse the Anointed One Who is referred to is indeed the Messiah)**; and the city and the sanctuary shall be destroyed, the people of the prince who is to come; and his end (will be like) a flood, and unto the end of war and desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week; but (after) half a week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease. And upon the wing of detestable things shall be that which cause destruction; until the end and the determination be decreed upon the desolation." ~Daniel 9:24-27*

This prophecy begins with the word "weeks". The interpretation of this word is indeed week, but not a week of seven days. It rather refers to a "week" of seven years. The main issue of the prophecy is that G-d will establish His kingdom after a certain period of time. At the end of this period, G-d will rule in His kingdom by means of Messiah who will administrate this Kingdom according to the Torah. (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3). According to the Daniel 9 prophecy, sin and transgression will

cease, and G-d will make atonement for iniquity, resulting in "everlasting righteousness". What is this everlasting righteousness? The Hebrew term translated "everlasting" not only refers to time but also place. Hence, there will be righteousness in the entire world for all of time. The verse concludes with the words:

"...and to seal vision and prophet, and to anoint the holy of holies".

This reveals that G-d will confirm this prophecy (vision) by means of the Messiah. Many English translations translate the Hebrew word "prophet" in verse 24 as "prophecy", but this is not correct. Daniel says and means prophet; he is referring to Messiah, just as Moses referred to Him:

"A prophet from your midst, from your brethren like me, the L-rd your G-d will establish for you, you shall listen to Him." ~Deuteronomy 18:15

There is a consensus among the commentators that the prophet to whom Moses is referring is Messiah. Hence, it is Messiah who will make atonement for iniquity and rule in G-d's kingdom to whom Daniel 9:24 alludes. Furthermore, it is the Messiah who will rule according to the Torah and thereby bring in everlasting righteousness. The Daniel 9 prophecy finishes with saying *"and to anoint the holy of holies"*, meaning that, in the midst of G-d's kingdom, the Temple will be established and will function according to biblical law, as the latter chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy states.

The Daniel 9 prophecy mentions specific periods of time and certain events. There is much debate about which historical events are being referred to and about the division of some of the periods of time in the prophecy and historical account. Instead of speculating on all of these periods and events, this chapter will only focus upon the period of time for which there is general consensus and those events that relate to Israel's Messiah. Daniel 9:25 says, *"Know and be wise, that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks"*. This verse informs the reader that there will be a period of 49 years which begins with a particular edict granting the exiles the right to return and rebuild Jerusalem. To which edict is being referred and to which ruler (anointed prince) does the prophecy refer? There are some that consider this edict to be Cyrus' edict allowing the exile in Babylon to return to the Land and support to rebuild the temple.

However, he was not the only king to make such an edict for the Jewish people. Others point out that king Darius (also known as Artaxerxes) also made a similar decree (see Nehemiah 2). For the purpose of this chapter, it is not necessary to debate all the implications of these 49 years. Verse 25 states that there is an additional 62 weeks (434 years), meaning that when we consider the time period from the proclamation to return and rebuild Jerusalem there is a period of 69 weeks (49 years + 434 years, or 483 years total). For our purposes, what is significant is that from the edict concerning Jerusalem to the event Daniel reveals in verse 26, there are 483 years.

Christian scholars favor the later edict which is Darius'/Artaxerxes'. These commentators try to fix the beginning of when to calculate this time period. Many want to establish when this period of 483 years begins because, if you know when this period ends, then one can know when to expect Messiah and the destruction of the Second Temple. Why is this? Because Daniel 9:26 says:

"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the city and sanctuary shall be destroyed, the people of the prince who is to come; and his end (will be like) a flood, and unto the end of war and desolations are determined."
~Daniel 9:26

Concerning the Messiah, one needs to understand that this verse is not speaking of the coming of Messiah to establish His Kingdom at the end of this age, but of His death (Messiah will be cut off). It is also significant that at the end of the verse there is a reference to the destruction of the Temple and the false messiah (anti-Christ).

According to the prophecy of Daniel, there are a several important events and dates.

1. The beginning of the Babylonian Exile
2. The destruction of the first Temple
3. King Cyrus ascending to power (it is important to remember that Cyrus decreed the edict concerning the end of the Babylonian Exile and that Jeremiah the prophet reveals that this took place in the first year of his reign).

4. Edict of King Darius the Persian/Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem.
5. Death of Jesus of Nazareth
6. Destruction of the Second temple

In regard to these dates and events, there are two traditions; the accepted historical one or the one according to the famed biblical commentator, Rashi. The reader must understand that the given dates for these events are not exact. There is a possibility of error from a few years to as many as ten years.

Table of Dates and Events

	Historical	Rashi
Start of Babylonian Exile	605 BC	441 BC
Destruction of First Temple	587 BC	423 BC
First year of King Cyrus	535 BC	370 BC
Darius' Edict	445 BC*	333 BC
Death of Jesus	30 AD	30 AD
Destruction of Second Temple	68 AD	68 AD

***Many Jewish historians cite that Cyrus' first year of reign was in the Jewish year 3393 and that the first year of the reign of Darius/Artaxerxes was 3442. However, Darius' edict was in the 20th year of his reign (3462). Hence, there were 69 years between Cyrus' edict, which we have learned occurred in his first year, and Darius' edict, which occurred in his 20th year. If one subtracts 69 years from the Gregorian year 535 BC, Darius' edict would have occurred in 466 BC. Therefore, there is an approximate 21 year variance among historians for Darius' decree.**

According to Rashi, the 70 years of exile in Babylon begins from the destruction of the Temple. This is an error. It is clear from the Bible that the Babylonian exile

ended in the first year of Cyrus' reign. Therefore, according to Rashi's reckoning, there are only 52 years and not the full 70 that the word of G-d demands. The prophet Ezra also proves that it was in Cyrus' first year that the exile ended:

"And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, the word of the L-rd through the mouth of Jeremiah came to its end, the L-rd stirred the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he issued a proclamation in all his kingdom, and also in writing, saying: 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth has the L-rd, the G-d of heaven, given me; and He has commanded me to build for Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever among you from all His people--the L-rd his G-d be with him--let him go up. Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and build the house of the L-rd, the G-d of Israel. He is G-d, which is in Jerusalem and everyone that remains in whatever places which he dwells there, let these ones, every one of his place raise up silver and gold and property and cattle with contributions for the house of G-d which is in Jerusalem. "~Ezra 1:1-4

Rashi erred in his calculations simply because he neglected to study Jeremiah's prophecy sufficiently. Had he studied Jeremiah, he would have known that the Babylonian exile did not begin with the destruction of the First Temple since Jeremiah says the Babylonian exile began when Nebuchadnezzar came up to Jerusalem in the fourth year of the reign of King Jehoiakim. King Jehoiakim continued to rule an additional seven years, after which his son, Jehoiachin, ruled for just three months. After Jehoiachin, King Zedekiah ruled for 11 years. This means that the Babylonian exile began 18 years prior to the destruction of the First Temple so that, according to the historical calculations, the exile began in 605 BC and ended in 535 BC. Since the Temple was destroyed 18 years after the beginning of the exile, the destruction would have occurred in 587 BC. Once again, these dates are not exact.

Let us return to our discussion of verse 26 and the period of 483 years. Even though one cannot be for certain when to begin the period or whether these 483 years are consecutive, there is a tendency among the majority of the commentators to believe that they are consecutive years. For our discussion, let's assume that Daniel was referring to the edict of King Darius/Artaxerxes. If one studies the first part of Nehemiah chapter 2, he will encounter the edict of King Darius/Artaxerxes. This

edict gave Nehemiah permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city and the Temple. It is important to note that this section ends with Nehemiah stating:

"...and the king granted me according to the good hand of my G-d upon me."

~Nehemiah 2:8

The date of this event, according to Christian historians, is 445 BC in the month of Nisan (remember Jewish historians place the date 21 years earlier). Most Christian commentators count 69 weeks (483 years) from this date to arrive at the future date that corresponds with the time Jesus was crucified. There are a couple of problems with their calculation (**It is important to remember that the aforementioned date of 445 BC is approximate.**). First and foremost, Daniel says "**after**" the 483 years Messiah will be cut off. The phrase "and after" is not exact. There is no way the reader can know with any certainty whether Daniel is referring to immediately after the 483 years or whether he is referring to a week, month, year or hundred years after. Nevertheless, there is a tendency among Christian commentators to say that it is immediately after the 483 years Daniel says Messiah will be "cut off", that is, crucified. The second problem that arises is that if you add 483 years to the date 445 BC you come out with the date of 38 AD, approximately 5-10 years too late for the date of Jesus' crucifixion. The Jewish date would be approximately 10-15 years too early. Once again, because these dates are only approximations, we can conclude that the time of Jesus' crucifixion falls within the intent of Daniel's prophecy when one considers the 21 year variance scholars have.

However, in an attempt to correct what many Christian commentators have seen as a discrepancy, they manufacture a flawed solution. They say that there is a difference between a lunar year and a solar year. Of course this is true, but they err in believing that the Jewish calendar is lunar-based. Although Jewish months do follow the lunar cycle, the Jewish years are indeed solar-based. How can this be? The Jewish calendar makes a correction so that when considering a period of more than a few years, there is the same number of days according to both calendars, Jewish and Gregorian. Although the solution that many Christian commentators offer is flawed, it is important that the reader understand it. The solution hinges on a supposition that one must convert the 483 years to days to account for the **assumed** discrepancy between the Jewish year and a Gregorian year. These Christian commentators

wrongly assume that a Jewish year has 360 days. Therefore, they say, Daniel is speaking about a period of 173,880 days (360 days x 483 years). The assumption of 360 days in a Jewish year is based upon 12 months of 30 days. This is not the case. Some Jewish months have 29 days and others have 30 days, because a regular Jewish year has 354 days.

Of course a solar year is 365.25 days. Therefore, the total amount of days in a 483 year period would be 176,416 days, creating a difference of 2,536 days. This would represent a difference of approximately 7 years that one would have to subtract from the 483 years. This would allow a period of time much closer to the time of Jesus' crucifixion, if in fact the 445BC starting date is accurate. Because most scholars see at least a couple of years leeway in knowing the exact year that Jesus was born, one could confidently assert that we are talking about a date for the crucifixion in the Spring in approximately 31 AD. The error that many Christians make, however, is that they fail to realize that the Jewish calendar has a leap year 7 times in every 19 years. Each leap year consists of an additional month of 30 days. Hence, a regular year has 354 days and a leap year has 384 days. As previously stated, there is no need to convert this time period into days rather than years because the premise of a different number of days between a Jewish year and a Gregorian year is not relevant for an extended period of time because of the correction of the additional month. Once again, the fact that the dates of Darius' proclamation are approximate as well as the birth of Messiah and therefore also His crucifixion, one can reasonably assert that there was at least 483 years from Darius' proclamation to Jesus' crucifixion without the need for any assertion in regard to the difference between a Jewish year and a Gregorian year for solving this prophecy.

The reason for this leap year is that, if it did not exist, the Jewish year would be short 11 days each year and after several years, holidays that were once in one season would find themselves shifting around the calendar. This is in conflict with the Bible, for scripture tells us that some of the holidays are connected to specific seasons of the year. For example: Passover must be in the Spring, for scripture tells us,

"Keep the month of Aviv (Spring) and you shall do the Passover to the Lord your God (in it), for in the month of Aviv the Lord your God brought you from Egypt at night."
~Deuteronomy 16:1

Understanding more the time frames the Daniel 9 prophecy uses, let's return to the discussion of Daniel 9:26. As the prophecy concludes, G-d gives Daniel some important instructions in regards to calculating the time of the events mentioned:

"And He (G-d) said to you, Daniel, for closed and sealed are (these) things unto the time of the end." ~Daniel 12:9

This verse may very well be revealing that even at the present time it is not possible to perform the calculations and discern the dates. It is possible, however, for one to make one very important conclusion: that is, after a period of 483 years **Messiah will be cut off**. The word used in Hebrew that is translated "to be cut off" is significant; the word is related to a covenant. In Hebrew, if one wants to make a covenant, one says, "to cut a covenant." Therefore, the Messiah will offer up His life (be cut off) in order to establish a covenant. Which covenant does Messiah being cut off establish? A covenant of peace—peace between G-d and humanity. One needs to remember that at the beginning of this prophecy, the reader is told that transgression, sin, and iniquity are going to be atoned for (See verse 24). This verse also tells us that a period of everlasting righteousness is going to be established, i.e., the Kingdom of G-d. Although Messiah's death is what makes these things possible, the reality of these things will not happen until the end of this prophecy. While Messiah's death came after 483 years, there is yet an additional "week" of 7 years for the fullness of Messiah's work of redemption to be realized.

Isaiah the prophet speaks about why humanity needs Messiah. Isaiah clearly teaches that it is Messiah Who will make peace between G-d and man; for he says,

"Behold, the hand of the L-rd is not so short that He cannot save, nor is His ear too heavy to be able to hear. Rather, your iniquities, they have separated you from your G-d and your sins have hidden (G-d's) Face from you from saving (you)." ~Isaiah 59:1-2

It is clear from this verse that man is in need of redemption; this is the reason why Isaiah proclaims at the end of this same chapter:

"And the Redeemer shall come to Zion to remove the sin from Jacob says the L-rd and as for Me, this is My covenant with them, says the L-rd. My Spirit which is upon you and My Word which I have set in your mouth and they shall not remove it from your mouth or from the mouth of your children or from the mouth of your children's children, says the L-rd from now and forevermore." ~Isaiah 59:20-21

The 26th verse of Daniel 9 says that Messiah's act of offering Himself as a sacrifice was *"not for Himself."* This means that He did not do it for any personal interest because Messiah Himself is not in need of redemption. Messiah must be One who is without sin and completely righteous. This fact reveals to the reader why rabbis call Him "Messiah our righteousness". In other words, it is only Messiah who is able to mediate righteousness upon the house of Israel.

Daniel 9:26 ends with the words:

"... and the city and sanctuary shall be destroyed, the people of the prince who is to come; and his end (will be like) a flood, and unto the end of war and desolations are determined."

From this sentence we learn the most important point in regard to the calculation of the timing of these events. The main conclusion which can be derived is that Messiah must come and redeem humanity by offering up His life *prior* to the destruction of the Second Temple. It has already been said that the Second Temple was destroyed in approximately 68 AD. Therefore, Daniel reveals that the Messiah Who offered up His life to do the work of redemption had to come and make this sacrifice prior to 68 AD. This work of redemption, as we have previously learned, is the work of Messiah Ben Yoseph, the suffering servant. It is Messiah Ben David who will come at the end of Daniel's 70th week to complete the work of redemption which will consummate the establishment of the Kingdom of G-d in Jerusalem. **Also, as we have learned from our study of Zechariah, there are not two messiahs. These designations of Messiah Ben Yoseph and Messiah Ben David simply differentiate between what Messiah has done prior to the destruction of the Second Temple and what He will do when He returns in the last days.**

In the next chapter, G-d willing, we will investigate the relationship between the second half of Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27.

Chapter 14

Daniel and the Messiah Continued

In the previous chapter we learned that the Messiah must come prior to the destruction of the Second Temple in 68 AD, that He would offer His life in atonement for sin and thereby establish a covenant through His blood. In this section we will see that after these events the false messiah will arise and establish his own covenant. However this covenant is not with G-d, but is more of an international agreement between the false messiah and world leaders. It will be the false messiah who secures the building of the Temple in Jerusalem and will restore the sacrifices there. He will also be the one who will abruptly bring an end to these sacrifices and, after being rejected by Israel, begin a time of persecution of the Jewish people. Let us take a look at these matters as they are recorded in the Scriptures.

Daniel says that after the true Messiah is cut off:

"... the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the city and the sanctuary shall be destroyed, the people of the prince who is to come; and his end (will be like) a flood, and unto the end of war and desolations are determined. ~Daniel 9:26

This verse is full of important information. We have already discussed the significance of Messiah being "cut off" and the city and sanctuary being destroyed; therefore let us focus in on the latter half of this verse. We are told that the *"people of the prince will come..."* This is of course a reference to Rome and Titus, the Roman emperor who was the general responsible for destroying the Temple. Rome represented a world empire, and Titus came in the spirit of the false messiah. Daniel 9:26 ends with the phrase, *"unto the end of war and desolations are determined."* revealing that these events are necessary in order to fulfill what we are told earlier in the prophecy—that G-d will bring an end to sin and iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness (see Daniel 9:24).

The next verse states that:

"And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week; but (after) half a week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease. And upon the wing of detestable

things shall be that which cause destruction; until the end and the determination be decreed upon the desolation." ~Daniel 9:27

Although the prince of the previous verse was Titus, the one who will forge a covenant (political agreement) with many for seven years will be the false messiah. Throughout the ages there have risen those whose sole desire was to destroy the Jewish people. Haman, Antiochus, and Hitler are just a few of the most famous of these satanic tyrants. In the same evil spirit as these, Titus made war with Israel and destroyed the Holy Temple. Titus is a typology who assists in understanding what the false messiah will do and be like.

We have seen in our study of the prophecy of Zechariah that Messiah will unite both Jews and Gentiles in the worship of the G-d of Israel. He will rule over a Kingdom that obeys the laws and commandments (Torah) of G-d. The false messiah will also bring about unity in the world for a brief moment. However, this unity will not be based in the laws of G-d, but in lawlessness. In the New Covenant, the false messiah is called the "man of lawlessness" (see the second Letter to the Thessalonians 2:3). This title shows his contempt and opposition to the Torah. Why does the false messiah hate the Torah so much? The Torah has several purposes, one of which is to reveal the character of G-d. The true Messiah walked in perfect obedience to the Torah, hence manifesting His Father's character in this world, while the false messiah will live and rule in a world empire that will set itself against the truth of G-d's laws.

In the same way that the true Messiah is G-d in human form, the false messiah will be the embodiment of Satan. The Bible teaches that Satan was the chief angelic being in charge of heavenly worship, but he rebelled against this and desired to be the one who was worshipped (see Isaiah 14:12-15). This fact plays an important role in understanding Daniel's prophecy. It is not first and foremost the Jewish people that Satan hates, but it is G-d whom he hates. Because the Jewish people are the ones that G-d has entrusted to lead the world in the worship of G-d, Satan desires to destroy them. But prior to waging war against Israel, Satan will offer the Jewish people a way to avoid death. What is this way? If the Jewish people will depart from the true living G-d and cease from worshipping Him and pledge their allegiance to Satan and worship him, then Satan will spare them; if not, then he will move to destroy the

Jewish people from the face of the earth. **The first half of Daniel's seventieth week will be Satan's attempt to court the Jewish people into worshipping him.**

Daniel says, "*And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week (seven years)...*" That is, the false messiah will establish this political agreement that will accomplish the following: prophecy reveals that the world will go through a time of great suffering and hardship. There will be social problems, natural disasters, wars, and a general sense of chaos. As a result of these serious problems, a world agency will be utilized or established in order to centralize the effort to combat these woes. Due to the intense social, economic, and political problems, nations will move quickly to empower this agency and make it into a world government. Individual nations will be forced into giving up their sovereignty. In an effort to bring about unity, tolerance and pluralism will be embraced as the foundational principles of this new world government.

There will soon be an agreement that religious extremism is one of the primary causes of conflicts in the world. One of the first acts that this new world government will do is move to establish a religious pluralism as a core value for the world, and this in essence will empty the Judeo-Christian religion of much of its value. It will be from within this world government that the false messiah will assume power. Because of a desire to court Israel into accepting him in the beginning and then worshipping him as the end goal, the false messiah will use his political power to provide Israel and the Jewish people with many things for which they have longed.

One can expect the false messiah to be a very charismatic figure who will use his influence to grant Israel security, bring peace to the region, and even allow the Temple to be rebuilt on its proper location. To the vast majority of the Jewish community throughout the world the false messiah will seem as a much needed friend and to some even the messiah. Despite the fact that he will make many concessions that religious pluralism demands, many of the rabbinical leaders will embrace him and his leadership. It is important to note that there will be a remnant of orthodox Jews and Bible believing Christians that will see through his deceit and reject both him and the one world government that he will head.

During the first half of his administration he will indeed bring about a temporary peace and prosperity in the world. This will cause the masses to embrace him. The small remnant that will see him for who he is and reject him will be persecuted by his government. They will be thrown in jail and even murdered. This tribulation upon believers was spoken about in the New Covenant in several places. For example, John informs the reader in the book of Revelations that many will be slain because of the word of G-d and the testimony they maintain (Rev. 6:9). John also says that in the last days Satan will persecute those who obey the commandments of G-d, i.e., the Torah, and hold to the testimony of Messiah Jesus (Rev. 12:17).

It is clear that many believers will give their life in martyrdom for their faith rather than unite with the anti-Torah values of the false messiah. The false messiah will nearly wipe out the believers as the half way point of the seventieth week approaches. This is a most significant juncture in the prophetic time table. It is vital to remember that when the final seven year period begins (a biblical week), the Temple will begin to function with its offerings and sacrifices. The persecutions will begin and increase up to the event that occurs at the half way point called the "Abomination of Desolations":

*"...but (after) half a week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease. And upon the wing of detestable things shall be that which cause destruction (the **Abomination of Desolation**)..." ~Daniel 9:27*

What is this "Abomination of Desolation"? This is when the false messiah, who has courted Israel for three and half years, places before Israel his real desire from them: that they respond to him as their god and worship him as they had worshipped G-d. It is only from the New Covenant that one learns the specifics of this event. Rav Shaul says:

"Concerning the coming of our L-rd Messiah Jesus and our gathering to Him: we beseech you my brothers do not lose your perspective or be fearful...thinking the Day of the L-rd has come (the gathering of believers in the clouds to meet the Messiah and remaining with Him in the heavens until His Second Coming). Do not allow any man to mislead you in any manner, because this will not occur until first there is a great falling away (apostasy) and the man who is against the Torah is revealed, the son of

destruction. Who will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called godly or holy, unto the extent that he will sit in the Holy of Holies and proclaim himself as the true G-d." ~II Thessalonians 2:1-4

These verses tell the reader that after three and a half years of courting the Jewish people, the false messiah will enter the Holy of Holies. Why this place? According to the Torah, the dwelling presence of G-d dwelt in the Holy of Holies upon the covering for the Ark of the Covenant:

"And when Moses came into the tent of meeting to speak with Him (G-d), he heard the voice (G-d) speaking to him from above the mercy seat (kapporet) which is upon the Ark of Testimony between the two cherubim and He spoke with him." ~Numbers 7:89

We have learned already that when Messiah returns to earth to establish His Kingdom, He will arrive from the clouds at the Mount of Olives. He will descend the mountain, much like when He entered Jerusalem (Forty years before the destruction of the Second Temple), a few days prior to laying down His life as the Passover sacrifice. This time He will enter the city through the eastern gate and then proceed to the Temple. The final proof that the true Messiah will give that He is the Son of G-d is that He will enter the Holy of Holies. Scripture forbids any man from entering the Holy of Holies except the High Priest, and he may only enter on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

Remember what we learned about Moses, that he entered the Holy of Holies even though he was not the High Priest. Moses was seen as the "first redeemer", and he entered the Holy of Holies in order to inaugurate the service of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Messiah will enter the Holy of Holies in order to inaugurate the Kingdom of G-d upon earth. He will not speak to G-d, but He will sit upon the covering of the Ark of the Covenant showing that He is indeed G-d in bodily form. This seat will be from where the Messiah will reign as King Messiah.

There is an interesting reference to this in the New Covenant. Once, Jesus was walking back and forth in the Temple area in a place called Solomon's hall. This place is very close to the Holy of Holies, and it was during Chanukah; which some

authorities see as an appropriate time for Messiah to reveal Himself and inaugurate the Kingdom. The text says:

"The Pharisees surrounded Him and said to Him, 'How long do you keep us in suspense; if you are the Messiah tell us clearly'." ~John 10:24

The Pharisees knew the tradition about Messiah entering the Holy of Holies and ruling from there. Therefore they asked Jesus to prove that He was the Messiah and enter into the sacred place. They knew that if He was not the Messiah and entered into the holy place, then He would die like the sons of Aaron—Nadav and Avihu (see Leviticus 10). So why did not Jesus give them this proof? It was not the proper time for Him to enter the Holy of Holies. This event is a Second Coming event and not to be done during the first time He was here; therefore He refused.

After the false messiah enters the Holy of Holies and commits the Abomination of Desolation, G-d will gather all believers to Messiah in the clouds:

"Then the L-rd Himself (Messiah) will descend from the heavens with the call of the commandment and the voice of the arch angel (Michael) and with the sound of the shofar of G-d and the dead who belong to Messiah will rise first and after that we who are still alive will be taken together with them in the clouds to meet the L-rd (Messiah) in the air and thus we will be with the L-rd forever." ~1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

It will be immediately after this event that an awful time of persecution will take place for the Jewish people. This intense time of tribulation upon Israel will be satanic retribution upon the Jewish people for refusing to worship the false messiah. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this time of tribulation and revealed that as horrible as the suffering will be, nevertheless Israel will be saved:

"Woe! For great is that day, and there is none like it! And a time of trouble it is for Jacob (the Jewish people), but out of it, he (the Jewish people) will be saved." ~Jeremiah 30:7

Let us review these events before we move on to more of Daniel's prophecy. We have said that there will be difficult times ahead for the world. These difficulties will be

political, economical, and social. In short, there will be a general chaos in the world that will give rise to a world government. From this world government a leader will emerge whose policies and leadership will bring a temporary time of economic prosperity and political stability. He (the false messiah) will be very interested in Israel and will at first seem to be a friend of the Jewish people. During his administration there will be an agreement between Israel and its neighbors, and the Temple will be rebuilt, and the sacrifices will resume. Although his policies will be against the teachings of Scripture, only a small minority of Christians and Jews will oppose him. During the first three and half years of this seven year agreement, this minority of believers and Biblically based Jews will be persecuted and killed. At the half way point the false messiah will commit what Daniel calls the "Abomination of Desolation", and, after the Jewish people refuse his call to worship him, a time of intense persecution of all Jews throughout the world will begin. Daniel offers much insight into this time in Daniel chapter twelve.

Daniel points out that although there is intense physical persecution during this time, one needs to understand the spiritual aspect of this battle. Daniel says:

"And at this time Michael, the great prince (Michael is the arch angel) will stand, he stands in behalf of the children of Your people (Jewish individuals) and there shall be a time of tribulation which there has never been since there has been a nation. But at that time Your people shall escape, all who are found written in the book." ~Daniel 12:1

The fact that the arch angel Michael is mentioned informs the reader that without G-d's intervention, the Jewish people would be defeated. It is most sad to note that this time of affliction for the Jewish people will be the worst that has ever occurred to them. This means even worse than the holocaust. The good news is that a remnant will escape and be saved / redeemed. The verse ends with an odd reference, "*written in the book*". What book is being referred to here? Moses also refers to this book in asking the L-rd to forgive the people when they sinned with the golden calf. Moses said:

*"And now please forgive their sin, and if not erase me now from **Your Book** which you have written." ~Exodus 32:32*

Most scholars see this book as the list of names of those individuals who will be in the Kingdom of G-d for eternity. The New Covenant also refers to this book several times in the book of Revelation:

*"The one who overcomes will put on white garments and I will not erase his name from the **book** of life."* ~Revelation 3:5

*"And all the inhabitants of the earth will worship her (the beast) whose names have not been in the **book** of life of the Lamb (Messiah) the One slain from the founding of the world."* ~Revelation 13:8

*"And I saw the dead, small and great standing before the throne (of G-d) and books were opened up and another **book** was opened, the **book** of life. And the dead were judged from the things written in the books, according to their deeds."* ~Revelation 20:12

*"And whoever was not found written in the **book** of life, was cast into the lake of fire."* ~Revelation 20:15

*"And no one shall enter into it (Kingdom of G-d) who is unclean or who does that which is shameful or false; but rather those who are written in the Lamb's **book** of life."* ~Revelation 21:27

These verses reveal that the people who will escape this intense time of tribulation and persecution known as "Jacob's Trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7) are those who have had their names inscribed in the book of life. Take note that this book is connected to the Lamb who was slain. This is a reference to Messiah, Who became not only Israel's Passover lamb, but the world's. We are told this was G-d's plan from before the founding of the world (see Rev. 13:8). Therefore, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are those who receive the message of redemption of Messiah Jesus, who was slain according to the will of G-d.

As Daniel continues to prophesy he speaks of the resurrection:

"And many from those who sleep in the ground: some of these will rise for everlasting life and others of these (shall rise) for disgrace and everlasting abhorrence." ~Daniel 12:2

Daniel received this prophecy nearly 2,500 years ago. He is told to seal up the prophecy because these matters are obscure, but in the future G-d will raise up individuals to clarify and refine these words, i.e. bring understanding and the proper interpretation (see Daniel 12:9-10). When the angel tells Daniel of the suffering that is prophesized for his people, the Jewish people, Daniel asks how long until the end? To this question the angel clothed in linen lifted his hands to the heavens and said:

"...And in the Life of the World (G-d) has sworn that for an allotted period of time, two allotted periods of time, and a half of an allotted period of time and according to the completion of the mighty (exploding) hand of the holy people, all these things shall be completed." ~Daniel 12:7

A period is one year, so this seventh verse is also referring to a three and a half year period of time. Therefore the period of Israel's suffering will be the second half of the seven year period, and then Messiah will return to earth to deliver Israel and establish His Kingdom. Daniel concludes his writings with some vital information. He tells the reader that the wicked will continue to behave wickedly, but the wise will understand (Daniel 12:10). What will the wise understand? The wise will see G-d moving according to the words of the prophets to establish His Kingdom, and they will quickly repent and prepare themselves for Messiah's reign on the earth. Daniel then gives some important clues that assist the reader in being prepared. We have already learned that the false messiah will allow the building of the Temple in Jerusalem and the offering of sacrifices. However, after he is rejected by the Jewish people, he will bring an end to the Temple service. Daniel informs the reader that,

"And from the time that the daily sacrifices are removed and the setting of the Abomination of Desolation there is 1,290 days." ~Daniel 12:11

In speaking about a period of three and a half years, the book of Revelation says:

"And the woman (Israel) will flee to the wilderness to a place that G-d has prepared for her, in order to sustain her there for 1,260 days." ~Revelation 12:6

There is a difference of thirty days. It may be that in the New Covenant that the author is speaking of this period in round numbers. That is, three and a half years is approximately 30 days multiplied by 42 months. Regardless of the intent of John (the author of the book of Revelation), there is still an additional thirty days. The reason for this additional period may be revealed in our previous study of Zechariah 12:10. The prophet says that when Israel will look upon the wounds of Messiah during the time that the Messiah is fighting the wars of the L-rd, *"they will mourn as the mourning of an only son...as a firstborn son."* In Judaism the first seven days after the funeral is strictly observed as a time of mourning. There is actually an additional 23 days (a total of 30 days) for mourning. Although many people are more relaxed during these additional 23 days, when it is one's only child—a firstborn son—then most tend to follow the strict rules of mourning for the full thirty days. This will be the case when Israel mourns for the Messiah Who was slain.

Israel will look upon their Deliverer and realize His true identity and set aside a full thirty days for mourning. Daniel then continues and says:

"Happy is the one who waits and arrives to 1,335 days." ~Daniel 12:13

This number represents an additional 45 days or a total of 75 days. What is the significance of this period? There are exactly 75 days between Yom Kippur and Chanukah. In the same way that the spring festivals of Passover, First Fruits, and Pentecost (Shavuot) played a major role in Jesus' first coming, so too will the fall festivals in His return. Although no man knows when Messiah will return, Zechariah points out that after Messiah returns a spring of water will be opened:

"On that day a spring (literally, a source of water) will be opened for the House of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." ~Zechariah 13:1

Scholars see this verse as referring to the Day of Atonement. This day is a national day of repentance and on the day prior to the Day of Atonement people immerse in a mikveh (ritual immersion pool) as a sign of repentance. Zechariah may in fact be

showing that beginning with Yom Kippur as a national day of immersion, Israel as a people will begin a 75 day period which will serve as preparation for the establishment of the Kingdom of G-d. It should not be surprising that on the festival of Chanukah, which commemorates a cleansing and a rededication of the Temple from the sacrilege that Antiochus committed, that the true Messiah will supervise a cleansing and rededication of the Temple in which the false messiah committed the Abomination of Desolation. Messiah will also supervise a world-wide time of spiritual preparation for the establishment of the Kingdom of G-d. In the same way that Chanukah began a new period for Israel, so too, after a period of 1,335 days, *"happy will be those people who wait and arrive..."* at this significant time in Israel's future.

The book of Daniel is vital in connecting the various prophecies of the last days. Although Daniel reveals tragic news about the extent of suffering that will befall the Jewish people immediately prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of G-d, Daniel affirms that there is a determined end for this awful period known as "Jacob's Trouble." Daniel also reveals details concerning Messiah, His work, and the timing of this work which confirms that only Jesus of Nazareth could be Israel's Messiah.