



CELEBRATE
MESSIAH

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HANUKKAH AND THE *Gospel*

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THE *Gospel* ACCORDING TO HANUKKAH



Shalom dear friend,

It was my older brother Alan who was the first in our family to become a believer in Jesus. Even though my family was not especially religious, this news hit my parents like a sledgehammer. I remember a very heated and emotional argument ensued resulting in my father crying and my brother vowing to forget this “Jesus thing.”

However, when we moved to Australia a year later, my brother couldn’t put his spiritual quest aside. Through studying the Scriptures and seeking the truth, he came to a very strong and committed faith in Jesus (Yeshua) as the Messiah. We may not have been orthodox Jews, but my parents raised us up in a traditional Jewish home being proud of our Jewish identity. My brother believing in Jesus was a definite step in the wrong direction as far as my parents were concerned.

My parents thought that it was just a phase that he was going through. I guess 32 years later, he is still going through that “phase.” Alan has gone on to be an incredibly inspired motivator of missions, thinker and author who has written several books on the subject of missiology, and is known internationally.

I thought that my brother had lost his mind when he became a believer in Jesus and that he had betrayed his Jewish upbringing. Yet, I always respected his opinions. I remember the many nights we sat opening up the Bible together. He shared with me that he had not given up on his Jewish identity but had simply come to believe that Jesus was our Jewish Messiah predicted in the Scriptures.

Of course, he began sharing the Messiah with me from the *Tenach* — what is commonly called the Old Testament. We looked at the many prophecies that predicted the first coming of the Messiah; prophecies like Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 22 and others.

But perhaps the two prophecies that really stood out to me were Jeremiah 31:31-34, the promise of a New Covenant and also Isaiah 53, the

prediction that the Messiah would come as a Suffering Servant.

I couldn't deny that these passages were speaking of the Messiah and I started opening up my heart to faith in Yeshua. It was at this time I started to read the New Testament. I have to be honest, I had never read the New Testament before. It was a closed book for us as Jews. I had assumed it was full of anti-Semitism and lies, and all about the blond haired and blue-eyed Jesus.

I was so wrong!

I was amazed how the story was all about us, the Jewish people. About our forefathers, our prophets, our Scriptures, our traditions, and our history. And I was so amazed at the Jewishness of Jesus. He celebrated all the Jewish holidays and even quoted the most important confession of the Jewish faith, the Shema, and said it was the most important commandment, and that the second was like it: love your neighbour as yourself. (Matt 22:37-40)

I began to realise, more and more as I read, that the Gospel is Jewish and that Yeshua had come in the fullness of time as the true Messiah of Israel. I knew that my decision to believe in Him wouldn't go down well with my family and friends, but I had to make that choice nonetheless.

He gave me so much peace in my heart when I finally confessed faith in Him on the 24th of March, 1984. That year, the Jewish holidays took on a whole new meaning. Celebrating Passover, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur as a new believer in Yeshua was truly amazing and life-changing.

Then came the Festival of Hanukkah.

Even though I knew about the Festival of Hanukkah, we had never really celebrated it as a family because it always fell during my father's busiest time of the year – December (my father was a hotelier). By the way, as Jews we never celebrated Christmas either, so to make it up to me, my parents bought me a nice big present every year.

But approaching Hanukkah as a new believer in Yeshua was a revelation.



I didn't know that the only time Hanukkah is mentioned in the Bible is in the New Testament. It is not mentioned in any of the Hebrew Scriptures. After reading John 10 and studying the passage, I finally understood that the Gospel and Hanukkah were intertwined...it was really the Gospel according to Hanukkah!

One of the greatest statements Yeshua ever made about Himself was during the feast of Hanukkah. As you will read in this newsletter, Hanukkah is a post-Old Testament holiday that developed during the centuries immediately prior to Yeshua's birth.

I believe that Hanukkah is all about the Gospel. Please take a moment and read this text!

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My

hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand (John 10:22-29).

The above statement is simply incredible! To think that the Messiah said this during the great festival of Hanukkah is astounding to me, having grown up in a Jewish home. But Yeshua did not stop there as He continued to infuse new meaning to the traditional festival of lights and redemption, by showing the linkage between Himself and the Father.

The Apostle John records Yeshua saying, *I and the Father are one* (John 10:30).

Believe me, the Jewish people of the day knew exactly what He was saying and His statement was not well received!

Look at what happens next, *The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him* (John 10:31).

The idea that a man would claim to be God is understandably offensive to the Jewish people who are taught that God cannot take on human form. I was taught this as well, growing up in a Jewish home. And ordinarily this would be true. But, this perfect man would be the Messiah who died for our sins.

Dear friend, this is the Gospel according to Hanukkah. God sent His only Son as His greatest gift to you and me — better than any Hanukkah or Christmas present by far! And through this divine Messiah we have true spiritual freedom that will endure forever.

So, may the Lord bless you abundantly this Season — may the Lord fill your home with His light and joy.

Your brother in the Messiah,

Lawrence



Lawrence Hirsch
Executive Director
of Celebrate
Messiah Australia



Messiah in Prophecy

"...just as the scriptures foretold..."

Messiah: the Son of Abraham and Blessing to the Nations

Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).

It is obvious from the Old Testament that God chose Abraham to begin a heritage that would ultimately be a blessing, not only to Israel, but to the entire earth. Specifically, we know from Isaiah 42:1-8 that the way in which God would bless the Gentile nations of the earth was through His servant, the Messiah. Therefore, whoever claimed to be the Messiah of Israel must be one who was descended from Abraham, and whose ministry included not only the nation of Israel, but the Gentiles as well.

Matthew clearly records in the genealogy of Yeshua that He is a descendant of Abraham. Yeshua obviously ministered to Jewish people during His earthly life, but also to Gentiles (Mt. 15:21-28; 8:5-13). He sent out 70 of His followers to preach the Gospel, a number that many believe parallels the list of nations in Genesis 10. Finally, when Yeshua called Saul of Tarsus to be an apostle, His specific commission to Saul (or as he was known in the Roman world, "Paul") was to "bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:5,15).

Messiah Would Be Born in Bethlehem

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity (Micah 5:2).

Bethlehem Ephrathah was in the territory of the tribe of Judah, five miles south of Jerusalem (Ruth 1:2). There was another Bethlehem just northwest of Nazareth, but the birthplace of the King was to be Bethlehem of Judah — and so it was (Mt. 2:1 and Lk. 2:4-7). It is clear that the Jews knew that the Messiah could not come from Nazareth, but that He would come from Bethlehem, the city of David (Jn. 7:42).

The One born there was to be Ruler in Israel. When Pontius Pilate asked Yeshua if He was the King of the Jews, He affirmed the title (Lk. 23:3). But just claiming to be an earthly king alone would not qualify Yeshua as the Messiah, for the Messiah must be from everlasting (literally, from "days of eternity"). When Yeshua declared that "before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn. 8:58), the Jewish people understood Him to be saying that He was from eternity. By His statement "I AM" (not "I was") He identified Himself with the God of Israel, who also called Himself "I AM" (Ex. 3:14).

Messiah Would Be Born of a Jewish Virgin

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (Is. 7:14).

This passage, which should be carefully studied in context, is a direct prophecy of the virgin birth of the Messiah (Lk. 1:26-27). The translators of the Jewish Bible use the word "young woman" instead of "virgin" — but culturally, the Hebrew word *almah*

almost always referred to an unmarried young woman, which in Isaiah's day implied virginity. In addition, the authors of the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament completed before Yeshua's birth, translated this word as "virgin," which was its meaning in biblical Hebrew. Given the very explicit reference to this verse by Matthew (1:22-23), there can be no question that Miriam, the virgin mother of Yeshua, unquestionably fulfilled this prophecy about the birth of Messiah.

Messiah Would Be Born of a Woman

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel (Gen. 3:15).

This prophecy is the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible. God Himself speaks to the serpent, Satan, who had successfully tempted Eve into disobeying Him. In prophesying the ultimate demise of Satan, God said that the woman would bring forth a seed (a descendant) that would be at enmity with Satan. In addition to Galatians 4:4, the narratives concerning Yeshua's birth give ample evidence that He was born to Miriam (Mary), the wife of Joseph of Nazareth.

As to enmity with Satan, the most notable of the confrontations between Satan and Yeshua occurred in the wilderness at the beginning of Yeshua's ministry (Lk. 4:1-12). Their enmity resulted in the death of the Messiah, but just as Genesis 3:15 predicted, Messiah's wounding was not a final wound, since He rose from the dead — as He Himself predicted (Mt. 27:63).

Finally, the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is fulfilled in the ultimate destruction of Satan and his works by Yeshua. Revelation 20:10 depicts the final victory of Yeshua, the Seed of the woman, over the serpent.

A Son of David

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

This prophecy, spoken to David, traces the Messianic line to one of his descendants. It refers in part to David's son, King Solomon, but there is a Messianic fulfillment beyond Solomon. Messiah would have to be a person from the tribe of Judah and from the House of David. This perpetual dynasty of the House of David — and Yeshua's fulfillment of these promises — is one of the best-attested Messianic relationships in all of the Bible (Ps. 89:30-38; Isa. 9:1-7; Mt. 1:1; Lk. 1:31-33, 69; Acts 2:30; 13:23; Rom. 1:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 3:7; 22:16).

The Lion from the Tribe of Judah

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples (Gen. 49:10).

From the first prophecy given to Abraham, the line of promise progressed through Isaac and then through Isaac's son, Jacob. On his deathbed, Jacob prophesied over his twelve sons, telling them what would happen to them in days to come (Gen. 49:1).

Jacob predicted that the descendants of Judah would be the tribe through whom kingship will pass. Therefore, the Messiah must be a descendant of Judah, which He was, as the New Testament affirms (Mt. 1:2-3, 16; Lk. 3:33).

The Messiah Would Be God in the Flesh

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this (Is. 9:6-7).

These all-important names given to Messiah in Isaiah 9 reveal His deity. Traditional Judaism does not teach that Messiah will be God, but this idea is clearly presented in the Hebrew Scriptures. The four names given to Messiah in Isaiah 9 bring us to the conclusion that this eternal ruler is God Himself. In fact, many Jewish versions of the Bible do not even translate the names, but rather transliterate them so that their meaning is not obviously seen!

If these references to the Mighty God and Everlasting Father are not enough to demonstrate that Messiah is God, John tells us that Yeshua is God who became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:1). Having already established that Yeshua is the descendant of Abraham and David, it is easy to see that this One who is Wonderful Counselor and the Prince of Peace is Yeshua, from Isaiah's words in Isaiah 11:1-5. There, the "stump of Jesse" (David's father) is said to possess wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, justice and righteousness.

Who else but Jesus could have fulfilled all of these prophecies? He is the Jewish Messiah for all and God's greatest gift of love for mankind. As the first verse of the New Testament claims:

The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Mt. 1:1).

HANUKKAH AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

IMAGINE THE SCENE:

The blasphemous king ascends the steps of the Temple in Jerusalem. He has conquered the nation of Israel and now wants to eradicate the Jews by eradicating Judaism. The king enters the Temple, declares himself to be God manifest on earth, and then sacrifices a pig upon the holy altar. He follows up this abominable act by requiring every Jew to present copies of the Bible for burning.

If you are thinking that this is describing the coming of the antichrist, you are only partially correct. The king is actually Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a pagan king who conquered Israel in the 2nd century BC. He desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem and used his full political force to destroy the Jewishness of the Jewish people. None of this took God by surprise; in fact, it was actually prophesied by the prophet Daniel hundreds of years before. Daniel 11:31 speaks of a coming king who would set up an “abomination of desolation” in the Temple and would do blasphemous things, and most interpreters agree that this is a reference to Antiochus.

But this section of Daniel is often confusing to believers. Many of the things in chapters 11 and 12 were not accomplished during the reign of Antiochus, not least of all the tribulation and the resurrection of the dead! In addition to this, there are several other references in Daniel that refer to the “abomination of desolation” (Dan. 9:27, 12:11, cf. 8:13) without a clear picture of how they

match up. How can all of this refer to Antiochus?

The Jewish authors of 1 Maccabees (in the *Apocrypha* — biblical writings not part of the accepted canon of Scripture) believed that Antiochus’ actions in the Temple were the “abomination of desolation” prophesied by Daniel (1 Mac. 1:54). This act of sacrilege left the Temple defiled, requiring that the Temple be purified and rededicated to God. After God enabled the Jewish people to defeat Antiochus, they purified the Temple and decided to enact a new celebration to remember the Temple’s restoration: The Feast of Dedication, as it is called in John 10:22, or Hanukkah, as it is called today.

Yet, as we should expect from the Lord, Yeshua takes the common Jewish understanding of Daniel in a whole new direction. He refers to the “abomination of desolation” several times (Mt. 24:15, Mk. 13:14, cf. Lk. 21:20), but always speaks of it in the future tense. Instead of referring the phrase *back* to Antiochus, Yeshua has His listeners look *ahead*. One day, a

king even greater, and even worse, than Antiochus will stand in the Temple of God — the antichrist. Yeshua does not deny that Daniel 11:31 refers to Antiochus; rather, for Yeshua, Antiochus is merely a foreshadowing, or a type, of the greatest enemy of God’s people.

This should not be a cause for despair, especially during this Hanukkah season. The sovereign hand of God enabled the Jewish people to rise up and defeat Antiochus, and we celebrate Hanukkah still to this day because of it. Think of it — thousands of years later, and still we celebrate! How much *more* will we celebrate when God brings His great and awesome deliverance from the antichrist through His Messiah? That battle will be over before it begins (2 Thes. 2).

If Antiochus is merely a foreshadowing of the antichrist, then the joy of Hanukkah is a foreshadowing of Yeshua returning and bringing the full deliverance of His kingdom! During this holiday season, *that* is something to look forward to!



PRAYER WALK PROMPTS HOLY SPIRIT POWER

Prayer walking around the perimeter of the main Jewish community in Melbourne, the Eruv, has again proved a powerful means of bringing unsaved Jewish people to the Lord. In the lead up to the High Holidays members of the Beit HaMashiach congregation walked in groups around the 33km boundary of the Eruv and prayed for people, homes, schools, businesses, synagogues and other places of worship. On the following Saturday, three new not-yet-believing Jewish people came to the Shabbat worship service, and one has since received Yeshua as his personal savior. Please pray for continuing strength and courage for Max* as well as for Vera* and Tanya* that they will have a full life-changing encounter with the Prince of Peace.

VOLUNTEERS SET ASAF ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Our Tikkun Olam co-ordinator in Brisbane, Fraser, was catching up with a volunteer Phyl at the local train station to give her a food hamper to distribute to a local Jewish businessman. As they chatted about current events in Israel, a young man approached and said he'd overheard some of their conversation and wondered if they were for, or against, Israel. This opened up a great opportunity for Fraser and Phyl to share with this young Israeli traveler, Asaf. They talked about Israel, her people, world events and the world's attitude towards Israel and the Jewish people. They exchanged email addresses before giving Asaf directions to the local synagogue. Please pray that the seed sown with Asaf will grow, and that he'll continue to have encounters with believers, and soon have a personal encounter with Yeshua, the Messiah of both Jew and Gentile.

PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALING IN GERMANY

Vladimir Pikman, who leads the Chosen People Ministries Messianic congregation in Germany, reported that a Jewish member of the congregation became seriously ill and fell into a coma with the expectation that she would soon die. Her daughter, Ilena,* came from California to say goodbye to her. The mother was praying for Ilena and had been sharing the Gospel with her for a number of years, but Ilena was not interested. Because of the circumstances of her mother's illness, Ilena decided to attend the Yom Kippur services at the congregation.

While the congregation was praying and worshipping, the Spirit of God touched Ilena's heart, and she decided to pray. God instantly responded to her, filling her soul with

joy, light, love, and the understanding that she is forgiven! She could not stop talking about new life with Yeshua! And, at that very moment as the congregation prayed with her for her mother at the service, her mother opened her eyes and woke up from the coma! She left the critical care unit and was taken to a regular room. The doctors could not believe what they saw — but we can!

ISRAELI JOURNALIST FEELS LOVE OF CHRISTIANS

Scott Brown shares an encouraging story from New Zealand and the work at the Zula Lodge: "God's blessings continue to overflow in our backpacking ministry. Eitan,* an Israeli journalist, was so moved by the free accommodation and loving hospitality that he experienced that he is writing an article about the Zula Lodge. He asked me dozens of questions about my faith as a Jewish believer in Jesus, which gives evidence of his own seeking heart," Scott said.

Eitan was particularly moved by the love of the Christians in New Zealand. He wrote in his article:

"As an Israeli, I was very surprised to see the amazing love and support I was given by the [Christians in NZ who host Israelis in their homes]. It was incredible to see that in the place which is the furthest away from Israel — the other side of the world, literally! — We are so loved, while in other Christian countries, such as in Europe, we are not treated in a similar way, and sometimes even treated in the opposite way! How do you explain the fact that in New Zealand [there are so many] Israeli-loving Christians?"

Eitan is one of many thousands of Israelis whom God is touching in the uttermost parts of the earth. Pray for him that he finds Messiah Jesus."

*Names changed for privacy

See Israel & Jordan through Jewish Eyes

Visit Israel 10 May - 27 May 2016 and you'll never be the same again.

The Holy Land is a place where the past meets the present and the words of Scripture come alive to embrace them both. Visiting the land of Israel is an experience that can transform the life of a believer in Yeshua. A trip to Israel will draw you closer to the Lord and give you a whole new perspective on your walk with God.



Your hosts will be Lawrence and Louise Hirsch. Lawrence and Louise have led several tours to Israel and are involved in ministry in Israel. Together with a qualified messianic Jewish tour guide, their knowledge of the Land will give you a unique and unforgettable experience. You will study the Scriptures in the Land where they were written, and see the Bible through Jewish eyes.



For **cost** and **details** visit our website at: www.celebratemessiah.com.au
To **register**, email holyland@iff.net.au

Mark these dates on your calendar for our 2016 Community Messianic Passover events:

24 March	Sunshine Coast
21 April	Sydney
23 April	Melbourne
24 April	Canberra
30 April	Adelaide

more details in the New year

"We would like to remember Celebrate Messiah in our will, but we are not sure how to go about it."

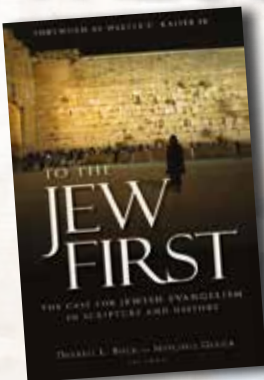


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When you remember Celebrate Messiah in your Will, you become a partner in our life-changing work amongst God's Chosen People world-wide as we await the Messiah's return.

If you would like to speak to a Christian solicitor about including Celebrate Messiah in your Will, please call our office on 61 3 9563 5544 for more information.

MESSIANIC RESOURCES



To The Jew First

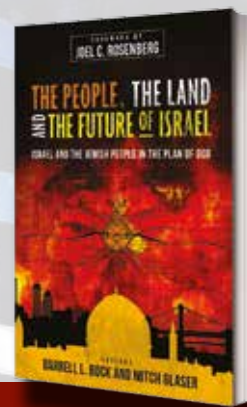
Based upon the biblical mandate to take the Gospel "to the Jew first," this comprehensive resource looks at the historical, theological, and biblical context for Jewish evangelism, and provides encouragement for Christians and Messianic Jews engaged in this task. *To the Jew First* includes contributions by Richard Averbeck, Craig Blasing, Walter Kaiser, Richard Pratt, Jr. and ten other evangelical scholars.

price: \$25 + p&h

The People, the Land and the Future of Israel

This book contains the messages from the dynamic historic event, The People, the Land and the Future of Israel conference, presented by great speakers including Joel C. Rosenberg, Dr Mitch Glaser, Dr Darrell Bock and Dr Michael Brown.

price: \$25 + p&h



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CELEBRATE MESSIAH

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