

# \*\*\*Yovel\*\*\*

14th issue / December 2020

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"When once the existence of God  
guaranteed the existence of Israel,  
today the continued existence  
of the people Israel guarantees the  
existence of God."  
Emil Fackenheim



IN THIS ISSUE:  
AS THOUGH  
HIDING HIS FACE  
SIGNS OF THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH  
Part X

A sunset on top of mount Morganmaras at Lemmenjoki, Lapland. Photo: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

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"Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan."

(Lev. 25:9-10)

In Hebrew the fiftieth year is called **Yovel**, a celebration year, jubilee. It is the year of the blowing of the ram's horn. Thus Yovel got its name from the shofar announcing the beginning of the year.

The sound of the Yovel declares the beginning of a new era, the era of God's favour towards Israel. In Hebrew the word yovel can be read in two ways. Either "yovel", which means a ram or a ram's

horn like a shofar, or in passive voice "yuval", is led or was led, like in Isaiah 53: "he was led like a lamb to the slaughter... for the transgression of my people he was punished."

Like a lamb which has a desire to follow its shepherd humbly, to be led, "yuval".

The three names of the shofar are like a road signs on our salvation path: **Keren**, which is the name including the personal calling, rose up in smoke with the sacrificed ram instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:13). On Mount Sinai the Israelites heard the sound of that horn, **Shofar**, for the first time when it called the people to make the change, a turn a round, teshuva.

The nation learned the sound of the shofar when The Lord himself blew the horn (Ex. 19:16).

From that point on the Israelites

were commanded to blow themselves on the shofar (Lev. 25:9), until The Sovereign Lord himself blows it, this time the shofar called **Yovel** (Zech. 9:14).

Then He will announce freedom, liberation, a jubilee to all nations, to all of those who will hear His voice.

Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus Christ, started his ministry in the synagogue declaring with the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, release from darkness for the prisoners and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor.

Proclaiming the jubilee, which is The Messiah himself.

In Him is the heritage restored, the one we lost in the garden of Eden. In Him is the essence of Yovel. (<http://torah-art.net>)

**Markus Nurmesniemi**



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# Editorial

## "Go and Do Likewise"

An expert in the law gets up and wants to test God, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah. Yeshua knows his hidden motives but shows him mercy and love. The man doesn't know with whom he is talking. He literally gets up and stands, which is a sign of defiance; disciples were supposed to remain sitting while their rabbi was teaching them.

Yeshua answers the man's question, what one should do to inherit eternal life, that he should love the Lord God with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength, and love his neighbour as himself.

When Yeshua brought up these two greatest commandments, which sum up all commandments, he confirmed the mainstream Jewish way of thinking. These two greatest commandments summarize the Law; how to express love towards God and how to express love towards another human being, created as the image of God.

But the expert in the law wanted to show that he was righteous, and asked therefore Yeshua: "And who is my neighbour?" He may have thought in his heart that only the Jews were his neighbours. This question leads to one of the most famous stories and parables, the Good Samaritan.

A man had left the holy city of Jerusalem that is the symbol of God's presence. He was walking down the road towards Jerico. This infamous town carried the stigma of sin. The road connecting Jerusalem and Jerico was known to be rough and dangerous. It was stony and hot, and it was called "the bloody road", because blood was often shed there, because it was good ground for highway robbers. This travelling man was stripped off everything. He was beaten until he bled, his clothes were taken, his belongings were taken, his identity was crushed, there was nothing else waiting for the man but death. The enemy has come only to steal, to destroy, and to kill.

There was a priest and a Levite who took the same road on their way from Jerusalem and from the Temple, heading for Jerico. They had already performed their duties in the Temple.

The fact that they pass the man lying by the road side without stopping is a clear picture of their legalism. They use the law as an excuse not to stop to help the poor man; one was not to touch a bleeding body. The spirit of the law remains unfulfilled. We do not see love for one's neighbour on the hot and cruel road to Jerico. Instead, the law is observed literally. Is it an excuse, cowardness, hypocrisy, pride, or sincere desire to obey the law?

The contradiction is evident. The duties and tasks that God had trusted the Levites during many centuries had become vain rituals. They had no place in man's heart to remind of God's mercy and goodness.

A person who believes in Yeshua, knows that only the Spirit gives life.

Now we come to the shocking part of the story, where the way of thinking of the Jewish man of law really gets shaken. As of rule the Jews and the Samaritans hated and despised each other. The Jews considered Samaritans a people of foreign origin, who had taken over and settled in the land of their fathers. This Samaritan, however, stops to help the Jew who is hurt.

Yeshua told this parable to answer the question, who is the neighbour one should love according to the law. Yeshua chose deliberately to present a Samaritan in a positive light to shock his audience. As for the Samaritans, they, too, hated the Jews.

But in this story the Samaritan shows selfless compassion. Not only does he give first aid and go his way, but he fulfills all the signs of loving one's neighbour down to the last detail. He lifts a man upon his donkey. He literally lifts up the man, this bruised lamb lying on the ground, upon the back of his donkey, and takes the man to the inn and nurses him there.

If we imagine ourselves in his situation, how many of us would have willingly stayed to nurse the man, even all through the night, and even after having already taken the man to the inn for others to look after, to other



people's responsibility? And this is not all, yet.

The Samaritan had stopped, given his time and his money, changed his travelling plans and taken the man to the inn, paid for the man to stay there promising to pay any extra costs at his return.

How many of us would go and do the same? Especially to our enemies? Or to a person, who belongs to an ethnic group or nation, against whom we may have prejudices we are not even aware of until we face a similar situation where we have to choose?

Yeshua's words pierce our hearts. It leads us to the cross, source of mercy and grace, to Yeshua, to ask for mercy for our own hardness and indifference we too easily fall into in the storms of this fallen world.

"Jesus told him: 'Go and do likewise'" (Luke 10:37).

**With blessings,  
Markus Nurmesniemi, editor**

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# As Though Hiding His Face



At the top of Mount Morganmaras in Lemmenjoki, Lapland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

**Written by: Julia Blum**

(This text is extracted from Julia Blum's book *As Though Hiding His Face* with the permission from the author.)

## THE ROAD TO EMMAUS - IT IS FINISHED!

### The end or the beginning?

And behold, two of them were going that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about seven miles (Luke 24:13)

On that same day, one of the most amazing stories in the whole Bible begins. You will remember, of course, this beautiful story of two disciples from the last chapter of Luke's Gospel. Remember,

how on the first day of the week, on that very same incredible Yom Rishon – Sunday -- which began with the astounding tale by the women about how they had not found Jesus' body – the tale that nobody actually believed – on the same very day, but at a later hour, two of them were traveling ... to a village called Emmaus (in Hebrew it is Ammaus -- עמאוס), which was 60 furlongs (about seven miles) from Jerusalem.

At first glance, the words "that same day" seem to be a mere technical description, just to let us know exactly when they were going to Emmaus. However, there is so much pain and despair in these simple words, and for many of us they ring so familiar a sound. Most of us know this pain, the pain

of that same day; many of us have been there and have experienced days like this: when we come to the very end of ourselves; when we feel as though a big, and scary in its finality, period marks our life as a finished sentence; when it seems as though everything is finished indeed and there is nothing left to hope for and to believe—It is finished!

Just two days earlier, the confused and terrified talmidim (disciples) of Jesus were gathered around the cross. Speechless, stunned by horror and disbelief, they were watching the agony of their Rabbi. Have you ever thought of how they must have felt when they heard their Rabbi wheezing from the cross in a small and weak voice: "It is finished"!

Oh, it's so easy for us to comprehend the absolutely glorious meaning of these words now – now that we know that they referred to His bloody sacrifice only, which was completed, accomplished, finished with His death; now that we know that these words actually marked, not the end, but the opposite, the beginning of a new era.

It's so easy for us to know all of it now, but at that very moment, those standing around the cross desperately watching His horrible agony and hearing these words as the very last words of their Rabbi before his death, gasped desperately as they took in their plain meaning: it is finished! "All our hopes are gone! It's finished!" I suppose, up till that very moment they had still



been hoping, still been believing for a miracle – not only those who mocked him, but much more His disciples had waited for Him to come down from the cross, to deliver Himself and the whole Israel and thus to prove that He indeed was the Son of God.

They had waited and believed till the very last moment. However, not only it did not happen, but He Himself said that everything was finished! Astonished, they kept staring at one another: Did you hear that? He Himself just said it, these were His very last words: it is finished! Everything we hoped for, everything we believed in – everything is finished! There is nothing more to hope for, nothing more to wait for.

Not only was our Rabbi and Teacher taken and crucified, not only did He die a horrible, cruel, humiliating death on a Roman cross, but before He died he had made sure we would not hold onto any false expectations: it is finished!

My heart breaks as I try to imagine how these two must have felt as they left Jerusalem and went down. Scripture doesn't tell us the reason why they are going to Emmaus – perhaps one of them (or even both) were born in Emmaus and still had a family there. It is so much more though, than just going home. It is, in fact, a theological statement: It is finished! We are going back to our old lives! We are going back because everything we have hoped for these past three years, everything we

have believed in, everything we had left our old lives for, just didn't work. It is finished!

The miracle didn't happen; the One we thought to be the Savior – died. Let us face it friends, it is finished, so let us not continue to build our lives on empty expectations. He is not what we thought He would be, He is gone, and our lives now are now more desperate than ever before. We are going back.

And so they are now going back – back to where they had been, before they met Him; back to what they had once left in order to follow Him. Actually, it seemed as though it didn't even matter anymore, where they went. For three years, they had thought and felt that God's face had been shining upon them, but now God hid His face again, and complete darkness covered their souls. It is finished! There is nothing left for them here. It's time to go from Jerusalem – to go down.

#### **Down from Jerusalem**

You probably know how symbolic and how meaningful these Hebrew words are: in Hebrew, to go to Jerusalem is always to go up, *laalot*, while to go from Jerusalem is always to go down, *laredet*. Of course, there is also a topographical explanation for these verbs: Jerusalem is "a city on a hill" and technically speaking, going to Jerusalem is indeed, going up.

However, there is no doubt that the true meaning of the-

se "up" and "down" reaches far beyond topography. These two go down from Jerusalem because they are depressed and confused, disappointed and bitter; because they have lost all hope and are now desperate; because they are indeed going down.

We can't even begin to comprehend their pain and their disappointment. They didn't start hoping yesterday, or even three years ago. Like everybody in Israel, they grew up with this Messianic hope; with this permanent drive beyond; with this constant look into the future and hope that one day it will become present.

For centuries, the people of Israel had been hoping and waiting for Messiah to come and to deliver, but now, when the hand of Rome was so heavy upon God's people, when the nation could hardly carry the yoke which Rome and the High Priest had placed upon them, no wonder everybody was talking concerning the coming of Messiah, hoping and believing that the footsteps of the deliverer had been heard already.

When, in the beginning of Luke's Gospel, along with Joseph and Miriam, we enter the Women Court of the Temple in Jerusalem to present the baby to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice for their firstborn according to the Torah of Moshe, we find there righteous and devout people waiting for the consolation of Israel (*Mechakei lenechamat Israel*) like Shimon, and those

that looked for redemption in Jerusalem (*Mechakei legeula belrushalaim*), like Anna. Would they not be waiting every moment for the Messiah to come and to save Israel? They certainly would not recognize God's "salvation, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" in this tiny baby.

When Jesus stepped into the world of His people, this waiting for the consolation of Israel and looking for redemption were indeed the main characteristics of this world! Almost everyone in Israel was waiting and hoping in those days.

So, these men whom we see going down from Jerusalem, had known this hope their whole lives, like everyone else in Israel, and once they met Jesus they just knew: that was it! He was the One! They had found "the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote".

Now, finally, all their hopes would be fulfilled. They were confident and positive; they knew in their hearts that He "was the one to redeem Israel!" From that moment on, they had been together with Jesus for three wonderful years, and all this time all their hopes had rested on Him – only to be crushed and humiliated two days ago.

"The things which happened" in Jerusalem two days ago, proved that they were deceived and misled again, that their hopes had been in vain –

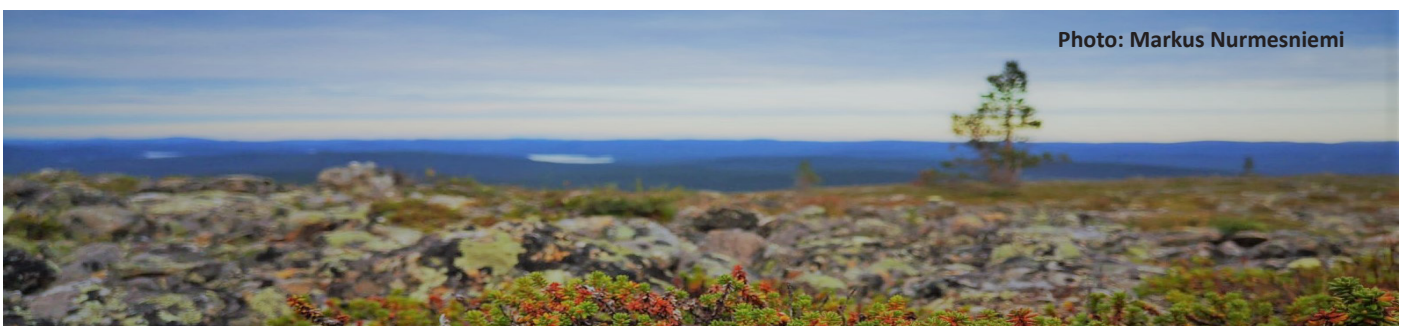


Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

and now they feel more hopeless and desperate than ever before.

This is the true reason why they go down from Jerusalem – not only with “their faces downcast”, but their hearts downcast as well, heavily and slowly they wound their way down: down and away from Jerusalem; down and away from this deceiving place of lies and false hopes; down to their old, practical life, without empty expectations carrying with them painful and bitter disappointments. The miracle didn’t happen, the Teacher didn’t come down from the cross, the Messiah didn’t show up... After all, has God indeed promised that the Messiah would ever come? Has God indeed said that? ...

#### **Has God indeed said?**

For years, I had been thinking of and praying for this book. However, God didn’t allow me even to start it, until I experienced firsthand this going down from Jerusalem. I left Jerusalem in completely different circumstances, I knew that God Himself was bringing me out and that I was just following Him; but it seems that, such is the nature of going from Jerusalem, even when God Himself is taking you down this road. It is always a challenge, always a test because, by very definition, it is always going down.

Before I knew it, I was down indeed: petrified and terrified by my worst fears, I found myself listening helplessly and endlessly to the vile, whining voice inside of me whispering day after day, hour after hour, that God was done with me, that He had left me, that He was no longer walking with me, and that in fact, He had never brought me here in the first place.

For the first time in all my years

of walking with the Lord, I found myself outside of Jerusalem, and it was so frightening that I thought I was also “outside of God”—and you know what? During this very difficult season I realized a very simple thing that I imagine many people have discovered before me: we can endure almost everything while we believe that God is with us, while we believe that all our trials are part of His plan, however once we give in to this lying voice, once we start to believe that God has abandoned us, that all the trials and hardships we are enduring are sure and doubtless signs of Him having left us, of Him being finished with us, of Him no longer being in control of our life and our circumstances—once we decide that, it is finished for us indeed.

It sounds almost incredible: no sound believer would seriously believe that God had abandoned them, or that He was not in control of their lives—or would they? Indeed, no sound believer would seriously believe this... concerning anyone else. It is completely different, however, when it comes to ourselves.

Somehow, it is much easier for us to trust God for others and to see God’s love, mercy and faithfulness to them, but it is very difficult for us to be as confident in His love, mercy and faithfulness to ourselves. We doubt His faithfulness to us; we doubt His mercy and patience with us; we doubt Him being ready to continue with us, and we doubt it for a good reason: who knows better than we ourselves, how many times we have violated His patience and how much we deserve to be left, to be done with.

I would fully understand if indeed He decided to finish with me; if indeed, He said to me: I will not go with you ... for you

are stiff-necked. The deepest fear I have in my heart is that He would abandon me; and yet, the deepest hope I have in my heart is that He would never leave nor forsake me, despite all my sins and weaknesses.

I suppose I am not alone in feeling this way, therefore, each time we go through some trial, our first question is: God, are you still with me? Why is it happening? Why are you hiding your face? Have you, indeed, decided to finally give up on me?

These were the thoughts and the doubts that I had to deal with when God took me out of Jerusalem. Was it indeed God who brought me here? Has He indeed told me to go? You may remember who once asked this question: Has God indeed said?

Many troubles came into this world because the woman listened to this voice and gave in to this question. Many troubles come into our lives when we listen to this voice and give in to this question. Thus, all the doubts begin, and before we know it, we find ourselves down this “road to Emmaus”: bitter, disappointed, convinced that ‘it is finished,’ that the Lord has let us down, that He is no longer walking with us.

I went down this road. I know how it feels when you think that God is not with you, that He has given up on you; that He has just given you over to your own fears and feelings and doesn’t really care what happens to you anymore. I know how heavy and dark my heart was, and how much I needed His light to lighten up this darkness. It is finished, I thought.

While I was wondering whether any hope was left for me, I knew I needed a miracle. I

knew that only His miracle – the Miracle – could revive my heart.

#### **RETELLING THE STORY**

##### **The Miracle**

I love that famous story of the paralyzed man who was let down to Jesus through the roof. Yeshua is asking there: Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you’ or ‘Get up and walk?’ This is an incredibly profound question: Where does God’s power manifest itself more, in the visible stories of healing and miracles, or in the invisible transformation of heart?

These thoughts are always with me while reading the story of Emmaus also. There are many narratives in the Bible where we find much more action: the sick are healed, the dead are resurrected, the blind see and the lame walk, chains fall off and prisoners are set free - all wonderful stories where we can see God visibly manifesting His might and power.

However, I cannot think of a miracle more impressive than the one we witness in Luke 24: the miracle of the transformation of the hearts. There is virtually no action in these verses, and by the end of the story nothing, absolutely nothing, is changed in the visible circumstances of these two men, and yet, everything about them is totally and completely transformed!

They left Jerusalem that morning utterly sad and disappointed: faces downcast, shoulders stooped, and with the great difficulty they made their way along the dusty meandering road winding down through the Jerusalem hills, but by the end of that same day they are almost running back, up to Jerusalem (and trust me, one must be



full of energy and motivation in order to be able to make this “aliya”, this ascent, this climb onto the hills of Jerusalem right after one has come down). What has happened to them? Where did such transformation come from?

The story tells us that Yeshua met them on the way and before they even recognized Him He explained to them the things concerning Himself: “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” .

We have to realize, however, that His explanation was not only concerning Himself, it was not only His story: He took them through the Scriptures, through Tanach, through the story of Israel, and in this sense, He took them through their own story.

Before they recognized Him – to enable them to recognize and see Him – He retold them their own story. And, despite what they had thought, in this new story they were not abandoned – He was still with them! Somehow it changed everything; the moment they knew that God was still with them, they were both completely restored and revived and were ready to return.

Instead of going back to their old lives, outside of God’s will, outside of Jerusalem, they returned at once to Jerusalem and to God!

We know that once they recognized Yeshua He became invisible to them: “Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight” . This means that by the end of their journey to Emmaus, there were again only two of them, just as

at the beginning of their journey; once again, nothing, absolutely nothing, had changed in their visible circumstances. The profound difference, however, was that now they knew, without any shadow of doubt, that He was still with them, that He was not hiding His face from them—even though they no longer saw Him—and this knowledge changed everything!

Their eyes were opened to the truth: with a piercing and indeed eye-opening clarity they realized that He had never abandoned them, and the moment they realized that, their hearts were revived! And though nothing was changed in their visible circumstances, yet everything had been changed in their hearts and in their lives by this incredible meeting and by the retelling of the story.

### Retelling the Story

What happens to us when we have an encounter with God? Not only do we see Him, but we see ourselves and our whole life in a completely different light... All of a sudden, our perception changes and we understand all that we had previously not understood: the suffering, the embarrassing situations, the painful losses, suddenly we see it all in a completely different light—the light of God.

It is like this when we meet Him for the first time, and it is the same, sometimes even more powerful, when we see His face when we haven’t seen it for some time—after He as though hid His face from us; after we felt lost and abandoned – like the disciples on the Emmaus road. When we have an encounter with God, He is retelling us our story, and the



At the top of Mount Morganmaras in Lemmenjoki, Lapland. Photo: Jasmina Nurmesniemi





An old railway bridge in Central Finland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

most important part of this re-told story is Him, Himself. Despite all we may have thought and felt, in this new story we are not alone – He is and has always been with us!

I went down this road - the road that begins with the words: It is finished – and I know how much I needed to hear Him retelling me my story; how much I needed to realize that He had always been with me, that He had never left me, even for a moment.

That, to me, was His promise: My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest – and this promise He never broke!

And this is exactly what God is doing today. To me and to you, He wants to retell our stories. He wants us to open the Bible and to find there our hope. He wants us to realize that even though there are many as though things in our lives, all these as though things are not only parts of His plan, but are parts of His love. He is as

though hiding his face from us.

There is something more, however, that you are going to learn from this book. Not only to me or to you, but to my people as well, God wants to retell their story. So many lies have been told over centuries—both to Israel and about Israel.

The time has now come for God Himself to retell Israel her story.

We want and we need that: like in a doubly-exposed roll of film with its images overlapping, we want to begin seeing God's reality show through our visible circumstances.

It happened once on the road to Emmaus – can it also happen to us? Can it also be our road? Are we on the Emmaus way?

On that same day, says Scripture, utterly confused and disappointed, the disciples

started their sad and hopeless journey to Emmaus. What happened to them on this road, what they learned about Israel, about Messiah and about themselves, changed their lives forever.

You might be utterly confused and disappointed today, you might feel sad and hopeless – but, as we begin this journey together, I hope and pray that Yeshua Himself will walk with you on this road, and that from Him you will learn things about Israel, about Messiah, and about yourself, that will change your life forever.

#### **FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH: HIDDEN MESSIAH IN JEWISH THOUGHT**

#### **REDEFINING THE TERMS**

There is a common idea that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the messianic prophecies of TANACH and that the Jewish people's failure to recognize Him could only be understood as blindness on their part.

The main accusation of the Christian world against Israel, the accusation lying at the foundation of all other reproaches and rebukes, is that the Jewish people did not recognize their Messiah and rejected and crucified Him. For two thousand years, Israel has been blamed for this.

The time has come for us to have an Emmaus experience—the time has come for Israel to hear her story retold.

Yes, when we read the Gospels and see the gracious person of Jesus of Nazareth proclaiming the Kingdom of God to his own people, we wonder how it was possible for Israel to miss the Messiah who was given to them in such an "obvious" way.

However, when we begin to see the coming of Jesus and the birth of Christianity against the background of Jewish society at the beginning of the first century; when we begin to study the messianic



expectations of the people of Israel while comparing them with the ministry of the Nazarene, we begin to understand that it was by no means as overwhelmingly easy as it seems to us today, to recognize the One who indeed was the Way and Truth, among the many others also claiming to know the way and the truth. We begin to understand that our people could not recognize Jesus as Messiah, and those who did recognize Him were able to do so only because it was revealed to them by the Father Himself: "Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

There has been a growing re-

cognition of this fact among scholars in recent decades. In this sense, the retelling of the story of Israel and Messiah has already begun. However, there is more to this retold story: there is still a huge disparity between how God sees our story, and how the people around us see this story.

My humble hope is that this book might make a small step towards resolving this disparity—that it would become a small piece of our retold story. In this book, we will see that not only could our people not recognize Him, but they were not supposed to recognize Him.

It was not because of their blindness that Israel did not recognize Jesus, but because

His hiddenness from Israel was part of God's original design for Israel and Messiah. His plan was that Israel should not recognize the Messiah—save for a remnant, to whom, as Paul writes, "It pleased God ... to reveal His Son".

In complete harmony with this plan, Jesus came in such a way that our people would not be able to recognize Him as the Messiah—as though hiding His face from us.

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All biblical quotations are taken from the NKJV, unless otherwise indicated.

You can find Julia's books on Amazon. There is also link to the books at the end of her introductory of her blog:

<https://blog.israelbiblicalstudies.com/julia-blum/>



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# Christian Fruit, Jewish Root



A moment of worshipping the God of Israel by the lake in Finland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

**Written by:**  
**John D. Garr, Ph.D.**

**Victorious Christian Living  
Empowered by Hebraic  
Insight**

One of the most fundamental axioms of biblical understanding is this: every authentic Christian practice or experience has a biblically Hebraic foundation. Simply stated, for every Christian fruit, there is a Jewish root! Christianity is—and always has been—a Jewish religion, and it will never cease to be a Jewish religion.

Neither Jesus nor his disciples ever intended to start a new religion called “Christianity” in order to replace a failed religion called “Judaism.” Indeed, we have Jesus’ own

personal word on it: “Don’t even begin to think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

Since the “law and prophets” were the core of biblical Judaism, the religion practiced by the Jewish people from the time of Ezra, and the foundation of second-Temple Judaism—the system in which Jesus and the apostles expressed their faith—it is absurd to assert that God designed Christianity to replace Judaism.

Christian theologians, pastors, teachers, and laypeople—from the heretic Marcion to today’s academicians and pulpiteers—have attempted to contort the words from Jesus’ mouth to have him mean just

the opposite of what he said. What Jesus said has continued to echo across the corridors of time to this day: “Until heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law until all is fulfilled.” Since heaven and earth still stand today, we can only conclude that any faith that Jesus would recognize and approve has to be a Jewish faith founded on the Hebrew Scriptures.

## JESUS, THE REFORMER

Jesus was not an innovator or a supersessionist: he was a reformer and a restorationist.

In his own words, he fulfilled Judaism by filling it full—bringing it to its logical completion through his own life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Simply stated, Jesus was a Jew, his religion was Judaism,

and he never changed either his ethnicity or his religion. He knew full well that “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22), and he admitted that he was “sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

Jesus did not even start a new religion when his death on the cross opened the door of salvation to all the nations and peoples of the world.

Instead, he began to “bring also” the “other sheep” that were not of the fold of Israel (John 10:16). He did not destroy the house of Israel and create a new people of God. He rather grafted wild olive branches into God’s family tree of salvation and covenant relationship (Romans 11). He did not terminate

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God's covenant with the nation of Israel and create one with the Gentile nations. He rather made provision to include Gentiles in the commonwealth of Israel through a process of spiritual naturalization so that those who were "without God in the world" became "fellowcitizens with the saints" and "of the same body" (Ephesians 2:19; 3:6).

True Christian faith, therefore, is but an expansion, not a replacement, of the faith of Abraham and of the Jewish people. Jesus was the reformer who restored Judaism to its original foundations and purpose (Hebrews 9:10).

He advocated a radical return to fulfilling the spirit of the Torah, the easy yoke of obedience in faith, rather than being bound to the letter of the Torah by traditions of punctilious performance of prescribed ritual.

#### **CHRISTIANITY'S JEWISH ROOTS**

The four most important things in the Christian faith and in the lives of all Christians are direct products of Judaism. Christianity owes its understanding of God, the Bible, the Messiah, and salvation to the Jewish people. No

one can deny this fundamental truth: for every Christian fruit there is a Jewish root, a fundamental principle that continues and must be applied to every aspect of Christian life and experience.

All those who truly believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior should, therefore, freely recognize, understand, and practice the Jewishness of their faith by "searching the Scriptures," as both Jesus and Paul instructed (John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15-16) to see how they should live in faith and obedience before the living God.

Every Christian in history should have been given the liberty to share in the rich heritage of the faith of Jesus by drawing from the roots of God's family tree the rich nourishment of divine self-disclosure (revelation) manifest in the Hebrew Scriptures so that their lives could have been established in the most holy faith of Jesus and the apostles.

#### **THE GOD OF THE JEWS**

Christians are privileged to worship the God of the Jews. Gentiles today would still be worshipping trees, statues,

planets, stars, and—even worse—emperors and kings if it were not for the understanding of the one God that they received through the divine revelation given to Hebrew prophets and sages.

The very fact that Christians understand that there is only one God and that God is a person who can be engaged in faith and relationship is the foundational truth that is encapsulated in the most fundamental of all Jewish statements of faith, the Shema: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Face it: the Gentile world still is largely a polytheistic world, and it would be entirely so if it were not for the fact that Israel, through her prophets and eventually through the Messiah Jesus, fulfilled God's commandment to be a "light to the Gentiles and for salvation to the ends of the earth" (Deuteronomy 27:2-3; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6).

The fact that Christians worship the one true God is entirely dependent upon the transmission of that fundamental knowledge from the Jewish people. Christian fruit: Jewish root!

#### **THE BIBLE OF THE JEWS**

The Bible is a Jewish book from Genesis to maps! (Yes, even the maps in the back of many Bibles are Jewish maps.)

It is a simple historical and theological fact that the very Scriptures which give Christians a hope of eternal life were written by Jewish authors across the span of centuries.

The coordinated and consistent message of the Hebrew Scriptures presents one continuing theme: the one and only God of the universe chose to create human beings in his own image and likeness and to establish and maintain relationship with the human race, even sacrificing himself in the person of his Son Jesus in order to redeem the fallen human race and restore human beings to fellowship with him through the Holy Spirit.

God gave his Word in the form of the Hebrew Scriptures to confirm this divine truth, and he gave it to the Jewish people as a sacred trust so that they could be stewards of his mysteries and could convey that understanding to the rest of the world. Christian fruit: Jewish root!



The Messiah Gate on the inside of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi



The harvest is ripe for reaping. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

### THE MESSIAH OF THE JEWS

The one whom millions of Christians across the centuries of time and in the present world recognize as the Messiah is a Jew. Jesus was born a Jew, he lived a Jew, he died a Jew, he resurrected a Jew, he ascended to heaven a Jew, he sits at the right hand of the Father a Jew, and he will return to earth a Jew. The Messiah lived, died, rose, ascended, and is coming again: but only as a Jew.

Though many Christians believe Jesus was the first Christian, the truth is that he was a Jew.

He was not a Baptist, even though we know for certain that his cousin John was a Baptist! He was not a Catholic or a Protestant. He was a Jew.

The fact that he was born of a Jewish woman confirmed his Jewishness (Hebrews 7:14). Jesus was recognized as a Jew throughout his life (John 4:9). When he was executed by the Romans, he was legally proclaimed to be a Jew (Luke 23:38). When he resurrected,

he was still a real Jew, not an apparition (John 20:25). In heaven, he is still a Jew, the Melchizedek high priest of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:12-13). When he returns, Jesus will still be a Jew (Acts 1:11).

Christianity owes its understanding of the Messiah and its experience of the Messiah to the Jewish people. The Messiah is a Jew. Christian fruit: Jewish root!

### SALVATION FROM THE JEWS

“Salvation is from the Jews.” Jesus said it without equivocation (John 4:22). How could this be? Salvation is first a person, the person of God’s Son, Jesus. Since the Savior was from the Jews, salvation is from the Jews. That’s simple enough!

Salvation is also a concept and an experience which is entirely Jewish. Judaism and Christianity—which was birthed from its matrix—are the only religions in the world that teach the concept of sin and atonement, the theological truths that are the foundation of the idea and experience of

salvation.

Face it: if it were not for the Jewish people and the Jewish Messiah, the masses of people in the world would have known nothing about salvation much less experienced it.

The fact that millions of Gentiles have been saved by grace through faith in the Messiah is fundamentally the response to a Jewish person and a Jewish understanding. Christian fruit: Jewish root!

### CHRISTIANITY IS A JEWISH FAITH

Every major foundation of Christian faith and practice—the God of the Jews, the Bible of the Jews, the Messiah of the Jews, and salvation from the Jews—is Jewish. Each Christian fruit has a Jewish root!

One might expect, then, that everything else that is authentic in Christian faith and experience also has a Jewish foundation. And so it is!

### THE CHURCH IS JEWISH

The church itself is a Jewish entity. The idea for “church” was not an innovation introduced by Christians in the first century. Indeed, the church was born on the day of Pentecost, but not in Acts 2.

The church was born on the day of Pentecost at Sinai when God summoned Israel to his presence to enter into a covenant to become his “congregation” or “community.”

So, the church was “born again” on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and given a renewed commission to take the good news of God’s kingdom into all the world with Holy Spirit empowerment.

The earliest church merely continued in continuity with the community of Israel as God himself had set it forth at Sinai. It also continued the synagogue model in which Jesus and the apostles had been reared.

The ekklesia of Apostolic Scripture was a continuation of the kahal of the Hebrew Scriptures. Acts 2:32 proves that the church operated in perfect



continuity with the synagogue tradition of Judaism, for its daily life maintained the three functions of the synagogue:

1) a Beit Kneset (House of Meeting) wherein believers “continued steadfast in the apostles’ fellowship,”

2) a Beit Midrash (House of Study) wherein they continued in the “apostles’ teaching,” and

3) a Beit Tefillah (House of Prayer) wherein they continued in “the prayers” of the Jewish faith. Then, decades after the resurrection of Jesus, James still referred to the gatherings of the Christians as “synagogues” (James 2:2).

The church, therefore, was, is, and will ever be a Jewish entity. Christian fruit: Jewish root!

#### **FAITH AND GRACE ARE JEWISH**

Faith is not an exclusively Christian idea that originated in the first century. If anything, it originated with the father of faith, Abraham who “believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness” (Ro-

mans 4:3). If, as some Christians have suggested, there was no faith before Christianity was born, why is it that the one passage of Christian Scripture that is often called the “Roll Call of Faith” does not mention one Christian name?

Everyone cronicled in Hebrews 11 is a Hebrew. Faith, then, is from the Jews.

Christian fruit: Jewish root!

Grace, too, is a Jewish concept. Noah found grace in God’s eyes. Everyone who is saved today is saved in precisely the same manner in which Abraham was saved: by grace through faith.

God’s chesed is a major theme of the entire Hebrew Scriptures. God’s grace manifest in loving kindness is well documented first in the Hebrew Scriptures, then in the lives of believers.

Christian fruit: Jewish root!

#### **LOVE IS JEWISH**

Love is a Hebraic experience. It is the essence of God, the

ahavah of the Almighty, and it pervades every dimension of human life. While the Greeks imagined a trichotomized love as eros (sexual love), phileo (love of humankind), and agape (divine love), for the Hebrews, there was only one ahavah, true divine love that was manifest in love for God, love for humanity, and love for one’s mate.

Christianity is a religion of love, but it is founded on a Jewish idea.

Christian fruit: Jewish root!

#### **PEACE IS JEWISH**

Peace.

Now there’s an all-encompassing Jewish idea. It’s not just the absence of warfare. It’s health, security, wholeness. It’s shalom that comes from the Sar Shalom, the Prince of Peace. It’s the shalom from the one whose name is Shalom. The peace that the world is always seeking while waging war is the peace that passes understanding, the peace of God. The peace that the God of the Jews gives is his everlasting shalom, the final word

in God’s own benediction for human beings (Numbers 6:24). Peace for Christians is a Jewish idea too!

Christian fruit: Jewish root!

#### **BACK TO OUR ROOTS**

Everything we Christians have that is of value to us we owe to the Jewish people. It is high time that all Christians recognize this fundamental truth that Jesus himself continually taught and practiced.

It’s time for us to return to the biblically Hebraic foundations of our Christian faith so that we can be even more productive in our devotion to God as we follow the example that Jesus himself established for us.

It’s our Christian fruit, but it has a Jewish root!

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Finnish and Israeli flags were waving together at the March of Life in Tampere, Finland in August 2019. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi



# Belonging to the Messiah

Written by:  
John D. Garr, Ph.D.

The first official apostolate to the Gentile nations featured the ministry of Paul, the Pharisee, a student of Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel the Great, one of Israel's finest sages. He was proud of his pedigree and of the fact that concerning the Torah (law) he was blameless.

He was an impassioned defender of mainstream Judaism of his day. Despite a Hillelian education in pluriformity and tolerance, his zeal for the Torah and for rabbinic tradition had been fanned into a rage of violent confrontation with the talmidim (disciples) of Jesus.

Having just supervised the execution of one of the Jesus

movement's leading apologists, he was on his way to Damascus of Syria to further efforts at suppressing this emerging sect that was challenging Pharisaic control over doctrine and practice in Jewish society. Suddenly he was blinded by a profound light that left him virtually paralyzed, able to whisper only a feeble, "Who are you, Lord?"

The reply was just as stunning as his condition: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

In Paul, God found a man of unbridled zeal and fervor for the Word of God, a man who needed only a reorientation to become one of the greatest witnesses to the good news of the emerging Kingdom of God.

When the Holy Spirit that knocked him off his high horse had finished with him, Paul would be a "new creation."

Suddenly, Paul was "in Messiah," and Messiah was in him by the Holy Spirit. Instantly, everything changed as he experienced a paradigm shift of cosmic proportions.

All that he had aspired to be in the loudaismos (Judaism) of his ancestors suddenly paled in comparison to the radiance of the One who was the Sun of Righteousness. All his training in Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim, and Mishnah took on new meaning as he beheld the wonder of their very essence—the living, incarnate Word himself.

He never discarded his Juda-

ic heritage, but he channeled all of his erudition into proclaiming the Good News that the God of the universe has become incarnate, suffered and died for the sins of mankind, ascended in glory, and will come again to establish his Kingdom.

This Pauline lesson is one that should be learned by all believers in Jesus, particularly those who seek to recover the Hebrew foundations of the Christian faith. "If any man be in Messiah, he is a new creation and everything has become new" (I Corinthians 5:17).

Paul summed up this revolutionary understanding: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ



Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi



Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Race, color, ethnicity, nationality, gender, stature, handicap simply do not matter anymore after one is "in Messiah." The only thing that is important is "the new creation."

Despite this profoundly obvious truth that is central to Christian faith, there have always been those in Christian circles who somehow have not felt that it was adequate simply to be among the Notzrim, the Messians or the Christians.

Something more is required!

For some Gentiles, it has been conversion to Judaism, even obviating the sacrifice of Jesus in their quest for self-identity.

For others, it has been the siren song of esoteric knowledge that sends them on a neo-Gnostic ego trip. For still others, it has been an often convoluted attempt to establish some genetic, genealogical link with the people of the first covenant. This thirteenth tribe, the Wannabes, has emerged to claim for themselves special status.

More often than not this subtle, soulish exaltation of flesh manifests itself in separatism, exclusivity, and elitism, which are little more than idolatry.

While God still maintains his irrevocable covenant with the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, the New Covenant has renewed and extended that Abrahamic covenant to "eve-

ry creature," on equal terms; therefore, it is of no consequence whether one is of Judah, Benjamin, Levi, Ephraim, Manasseh, Simeon, Cherokee, Apache, Zulu, Mossai, Hunan, Hindi, Sammari, or Aborigine.

The real truth is that everyone on earth likely has some trace of Abraham's DNA. But, even that is of no consequence.

This is why Paul warned not to engage themselves in "endless genealogies," and engage in logomachy to no profit. These exercises offer no advantages, but they do pose grave dangers both to the believer and to the body of Messiah.

One needs look only as far back as the Third Reich to see what the spirit of elitist idolatry can produce. Anglo-

Israelites, Black Jews, and others are honest in their desire to identify themselves with the People of the Book, and they may well find some oblique connection; however, their efforts, though often full of sound and fury, signify nothing. The case is closed.

The verdict is in: In Messiah is the new creation. Who could—or would want to—improve on that!

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# People wander about as in the fog

**Written by:**  
**Keijo Lindeman**

"For we know in part and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9)

"Behold, the Day of the LORD is coming - cruel, with fury and burning anger- to make the earth a desolation and to destroy the sinners within it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light.

The rising sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.

I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity.

I will end the haughtiness of the arrogant and lay low the pride of the ruthless.

I will make man scarcer than pure gold, and mankind rarer than the gold of Ophir.

Therefore I will make the hea-

vens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the wrath of the LORD of Hosts on the day of His burning anger"(Isaiah 13:9-13).

The prophet Isaiah speaks about the day of the Lord, the day when God judges godlessness and sin in the world. Several other prophets of the Old Covenant also speak about the events and judgments of the day of the Lord, as do the writings of the New Covenant as well. The judgments of the Day of the Lord will cause shakings not only on the earth but also in the heavens. The Day of the Lord will also be the day when the Lord comes and believers are gathered up to the Lord in rapture (1 Thes. 2:1-3; Mat. 24:3, 20-22, 29-31).

On the Day of the Lord people will wander about in thick fog

and darkness

"The great Day of the LORD is near—near and coming quickly. Listen, the Day of the LORD! Then the cry of the mighty will be bitter. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness ( Hebrew OT araphel = thick fog) , a day of horn blast and battle cry against the fortified cities, and against the high corner towers. I will bring such distress on mankind that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver (Hebrew OT keseph = silver, money) nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the Day of the LORD's wrath. The whole earth will be con-

sumed by the fire of His jealousy." (Zephaniah 1:14-18).

The Day of the Lord is not a single event; several things will be happening on that day according to God's timing and order. A common interpretation is to consider the time of tribulation as one single event or time, when everything happens. However, when we study what the Bible says about the happenings of the Day of the Lord, there are many diverse happenings going on, as the prophet Zephaniah says, for instance. According to Zephaniah the Day of the Lord contains e.g. following events, which will be accomplished according to the order and timetable set by God.

- The Day of the Lord will be the day of wrath (from which the church will be rescued; (1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9).



Stillness of a swamp in the midst of mist in Northern Finland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi



- The Day of the Lord will be a day of trouble and distress (the church will go through great distress, Mat. 24:20-22, 29-31; Dan. 12:1-3; Rev. 7:9-17).
- The Day of the Lord will be the day of destruction and desolation.
- The Day of the Lord will be the day of darkness and gloom.
- The Day of the Lord will be the day of cloud and thick fog.
- The Day of the Lord will be the day of trumpet blast and war cry against fortified cities and high corner towers.
- On the Day of the Lord gold, silver and money will lose their value (they will be replaced by an anti-christian system, Rev. 13:16-18).

The Bible gives plenty of information about all these happenings of the Day of the Lord, but we will focus here mainly on the day of the thick fog. We will briefly look into the economic slump that occurs on the Day of the Lord. On the Day of the Lord a thick fog will cover the earth; people wander about like blind men, anguished, not knowing what lies ahead.

The on-going coronavirus pandemic has made it hard for us to perceive the future. There is no certainty about the length of time this pandemic will continue its course, or what scars it will leave in the world's economy, employment, business world, politics, and sports, etc. Moreover, there is no knowledge of the behaviour and mutation of the virus, or if there will be a second and possibly a third wave of the pandemic. People and nations hope that a vaccine will resolve the problems caused by this pandemic. This fog the coronavirus pandemic has created gives foretaste of what will happen in the future, when the events of the Lord's Day start surging over the world.

#### Isaiah's message about dark-



**Stillness of a swamp in the midst of mist in Northern Finland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi**

#### ness and fog

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness (Hebrew OT araphel= thick fog) is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you" (Isaiah 60:1-2).

Along Zephaniah, the prophet Isaiah also speaks about the time, when darkness covers the earth and a thick fog the peoples, and there is no certainty about the future. A thick fog will cover the whole earth, and Israel, too, will suffer because of it. The darkness Isaiah speaks about means first of all spiritual darkness and turning away from the faith (Mat. 24:3, 12:2; 2 Thes.2:1-3).

Time has come when the Bible, or the Word of God, is not much appreciated among people of the world, and the

same is sadly true about the body of Christ, as well. Biblical values and principles are trampled on. Believers, who seek to follow the word of God, are being oppressed and persecuted.

We are approaching the time when the quilt of blindness, which has covered the eyes of the Israelis, is taken away, and they will see the glory of the Messiah (Eze. 39: 28-29). As the world is heading for spiritual darkness, glory will be increasing in Israel, and more and more Israelis will accept Yeshua the Messiah as their Saviour and King.

#### The Day of the Lord and financial collapse

"Every hand will go limp, and every knee will turn to water. They will put on sackcloth, and terror will overwhelm them. Shame will cover all their faces, and all their heads will be shaved. They will throw their silver (Hebrew OT

keseeph=silver, money) into the streets, and their gold will seem unclean. Their silver and gold cannot save them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their appetites or fill their stomachs with wealth, for it became the stumbling block that brought their iniquity" (Ezekiel 7:17-19).

"Come now, you who are rich, weep and wail over the misery to come upon you. Your riches (Hebrew OT keseeph=silver, money) have rotted and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and consume your flesh like fire. You have hoarded treasure in the last days. Look, the wages you withheld from the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous, who did not resist you. Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer awaits the precious fruit of the soil—how patient he is for the fall and spring rains. You, too, be patient and strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near. Do not complain about one another, brothers, so that you will not be judged. Look, the Judge is standing at the door" (James 5:1-9).

One of the events of the Day of the Lord will be economic slump. There will be a time when normal economic systems, and social systems in general, will collapse. Gold, silver, and money lose their value. All this will happen on the Day of the Lord, when the Messiah's coming is near. The apostle Paul admonishes us to put our trust on God instead of uncertain wealth, for God

will give us all we need (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Paul encourages the wealthy to be generous in good days, in order to be provided for in the future.

It is comforting to know that God will take care of his own even in difficult times, when normal social arrangements for security and provision fall apart.

Believers do well in preparing themselves for those coming difficult days. When social networks built to maintain

security fall apart, believers should support each other and take care of the rest of God's children, the way they used to do in the days of the early church (Apt. 2:37-47, 4:32-37). In James' letter there is a beautiful promise about rains of the Spirit and a spiritual harvest, or the revival on the eve of the Lord's coming.

God's Word is the light for the believers' path in the darkness and fog of the End time.

"Your word is a lamp to my

feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

It is reassuring to know that believers won't wander in darkness or fog, for God's prophetic word will shine on their way in the middle of the

End time gloom, while they are waiting for the morning star to rise (Ps. 119:105; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16).

God is in control, and everything will be accomplished according to His word and will, and He will take care of His own, those who believe in Yeshua, until the end.

When the events of the Lord's Day begin, we can rely completely on the protection and care of the Holy One of Israel.

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Stillness of a swamp in the midst of mist in Northern Finland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

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# Prophetical Perspectives

## Signs of the Messiah's Coming - Part X

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**Written by:**  
**Keijo Lindeman**

"For we know in part and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9)

### **The Messiah's coming and the court of justice for the nations**

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are

blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?' And the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of

Mine, you did for Me.' Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' And they too will reply, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then the King will answer, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.' And they will go away into eternal punish-

ment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew. 25:31-46)

"Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (Isaiah 9:7).

"Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you, hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the Lord is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon



A moment in prayer by the lake in Finland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

her; she will conceal her slain no longer" (Isaiah 26:20-21).

When Yeshua was born into this world, the angel Gabriel made the declaration that He would be the King over the house of Jacob (Israel) on the throne of David forever (Luke 1:31-33).

When Yeshua the Messiah comes to establish His kingdom on earth and sits and reigns on the throne of David, it will happen through judgments and in righteousness.

The time for this promise to be fulfilled will come ultimately, when Yeshua haMashiah comes with His angels and His raptured ecclesia on the Mount of Olives in the middle of a very difficult and harrowing time; the time when enemy forces are besieging Israel and Jerusalem in order to destroy them (Zech.12:1-14:15).

We learn from the Book of Revelation that all anti-Christian powers of the earth will then be gathered there to make war – not only against Israel but against the Messiah and His army (Rev. 19:11-21). God allows all this happen; through anguish caused by the siege of the enemy, the Lord will make the stiff-necked Israel humble herself to cry out to God and to welcome her Messiah (Zech. 12:9-13, 13:8-9, Dan. 12:1).

God will also gather all the enemies of Israel and of the God of Israel to the valley of Jehoshaphat to be judged before the court of the nations (Joel 3; Micah. 4:11-13; this is where the nations will be judged; the last judgment won't be until after the Millennial Kingdom, Rev. 20).

When the Messiah is seated on His glorious throne, Gentile nations will be judged before Him according to how they have treated the least brot-

hers. This refers, among other things, to a general biblical principle: How have we treated our human brothers who have been in great distress and need (Luke 10:29-37)? Have we shown kindness and mercy and given help, or have we been selfish, indifferent, and hard-hearted, in which case we will be judged mercilessly (James 2:13)? We ought to do good to all people but especially to believers (Gal. 6:9-10).

The Messiah's least brothers refers, however, first of all to the Jews (Matt. 25:31-46, 28:10; Acts 3:22-26). Nations that have shown antagonism towards Israel, God's own people, and have divided the land promised by God to Israel, and even tried to destroy her, will all be judged in the court of the nations before the Lord. All those powerful troops of the enemy that gather against Israel and the Messiah will be destroyed as casualties of war and in the judgments that will meet them.

The Holy One of Israel will not permit His unrepenting enemies in their sinfulness and ungodliness to enter the Messianic Kingdom of Peace; they will be judged and meet end before the court of the nations (Zech. 14; Joel 3). The proud and the arrogant will fall, and the surviving remnant, who have entered the Kingdom of Peace, will fear and tremble in front of God's power and holiness (Isa.13:9-13; Ezek. 38:18-23, 39:1-7; Micah. 7:15-17).

How individuals and nations will be judged, depends also on how much innocent blood they have shed in their wickedness, especially blood of believers and Jews among the nations (Rev. 16:4-7; Zech. 2:6-8). Many nations will be judged heavily, because they are guilty of bloodshed. It may be that they will be wiped off

from among the nations, and they will have no right to exist in the Messianic Thousand-year Kingdom (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 19:10; Prov. 6:16-17; Joel 3:19).

### **The nations will be judged on the basis of their attitude towards Israel**

"Yes, in those days and at that time, when I restore Judah and Jerusalem from captivity, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning My people, My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations as they divided up My land. They cast lots for My people; they bartered a boy for a prostitute and sold a girl for wine to drink. Now what do you have against Me, O Tyre, Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering against Me a recompense? If you retaliate against Me, I will swiftly and speedily return your recompense upon your heads..

Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war (jihad)! Rouse the warriors! Let the fighting men draw near and attack...Let the nations be roused and advance to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit down to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full; the wine vats overflow because their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem, the earth and the sky will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will

foreigners invade her" (Joel 3:1-4, 9, 12-17).

Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, with authority over the fire, came from the altar and called out in a loud voice to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Swing your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the vine of the earth, because its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the grapes of the earth, and he threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and the blood that flowed from it rose as high as the bridles of the horses for a distance of 1,600 stadia" (Revelation 14:17-20).

When the age of the church is drawing towards end, and the Messiah's coming is near, good and evil will each grow to the maximum (Rev. 22:11-12). Revelation 14 tells us that as the Son of Man comes upon the clouds, He will send His sickle and the ripe harvest of righteousness of the earth will be reaped during the short and powerful revival preceding the Messiah's coming (Rev. 14:14-16).

The same vision also describes another harvesting, that of judgment, which follows the last revival of the age. Evil has reached its maximum on earth; it is time for the sickle of God's judgments to reap.

Nations will be gathered to be judged, when the Messiah comes. According to the prophet Joel, this will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat. This name in Hebrew means "Adonai judges", and it is the symbol of the judgment of the ungodly all over the world. According to Joel's vision, God will judge nations on the grounds of each nation's attitude towards God's cove-



nant people Israel and Jerusalem. One major reason for the nations to turn against Israel will be the controversy over Palestinian areas (Joel 3:4). After the Bar Kochba rebellion, the Roman Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD) gave, out of pure spite, the Jewish state the name of Philistine. By giving Israel the name of their ancient archenemy, the Philistines, the Emperor wanted to humiliate the Jews, who had dared rebel against the Roman empire.

In different languages of today the name of Philistine has taken the form of Palestine, which has become a tough bone of contention in these end times before the Messiah's coming. Hadrian also gave Jerusalem a new name, Aelia Capitolina, after the second name of the Emperor.

Everything will culminate in a dispute about Jerusalem, when hostile nations gather to besiege Jerusalem (Zech. 12:1-3). The Lord allows all this happen in order to be able to judge the nations for their wickedness and ungod-

liness, and demonstrate His holiness and majesty among Israel and all nations (Ezek. 39:21-29).

In the middle of this tribulation, the remnant of Israelis accept Yeshua and cry out to Him (Zech. 12:9-13). That is when Israel's Messiah comes to judge the enemies of God and of Israel, and He will trample the grapes in the winepress of God's wrath. God will show the nations that in spite of her mistakes Israel is the apple of His eye, and whoever touches her with evil in their hearts is going to be judged in the court of nations (Zech. 2:6-8; Obad.12-15).

The Lord will also let the Gentile nations, who have divided Israel's territory, know that He has promised this land on oath to His covenant people Israel, and whoever tries to declare null and void God's promise will eventually have to answer for it (Gen. 15:18, 17:8; Deut. 34:1-4; Ezek. 36:24-28).

### **The Messiah will come to the Mount of Olives to save Israel**

"A day of the Lord is coming

when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him"(Zechariah 14:1-5).

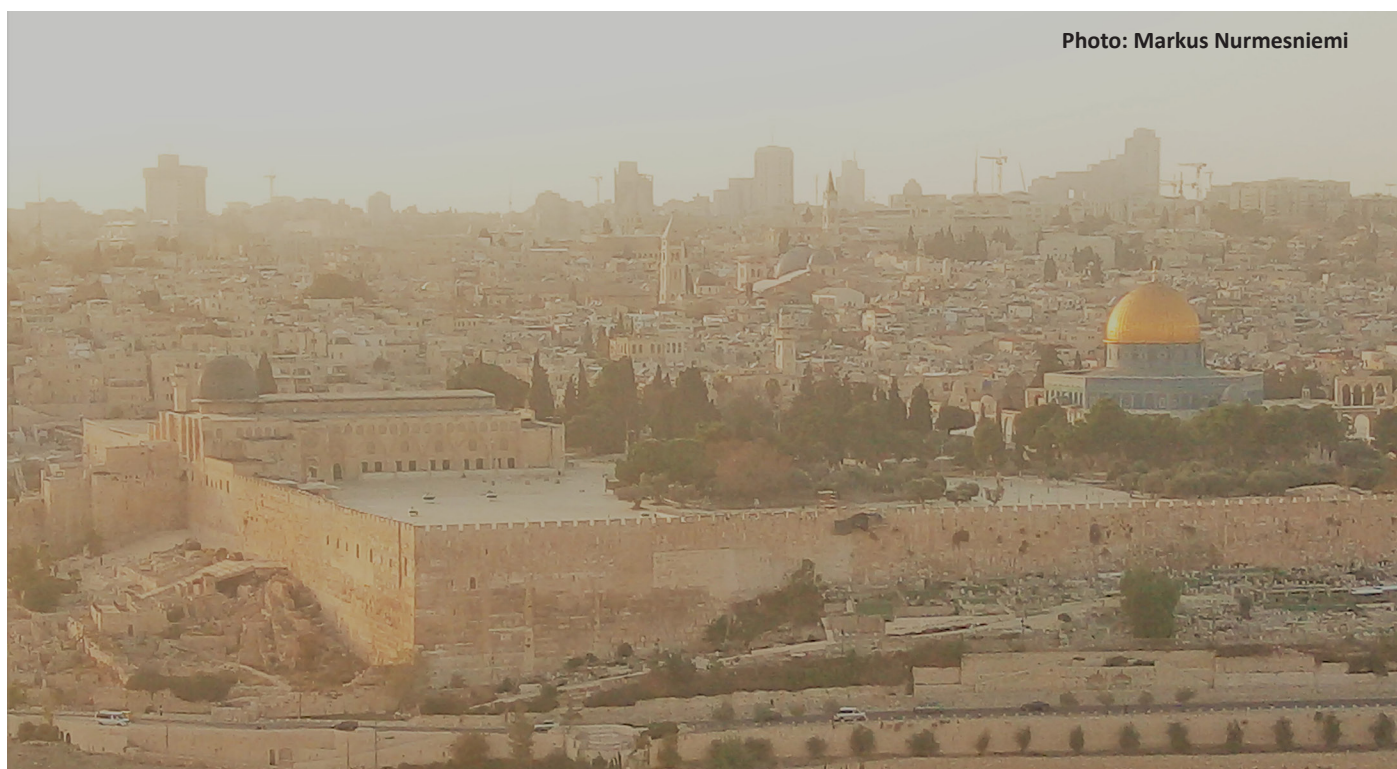
The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and of the people of Jerusalem may not be greater than that of Judah. On that day the LORD will defend the people of Jerusalem, so that the weakest

among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD going before them. So on that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (Zechariah 12:7-9).

And this will be the plague with which the LORD strikes all the peoples who have warred against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. On that day a great panic from the LORD will come upon them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of one will rise against the other. Judah will also fight at Jerusalem, and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be collected—gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. And a similar plague will strike the horses and mules, camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps (Zechariah 14:12-15).

"...For the LORD of Hosts attends to His flock, the house of Judah; He will make them like His royal steed in battle. The

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cornerstone will come from Judah, the tent peg from him, as well as the battle bow and every ruler together. They will be like mighty men in battle, trampling the enemy in the mire of the streets. They will fight because the LORD is with them, and they will put the horsemen to shame" (Zechariah 10:3-5).

"But now many nations have assembled against you, saying, 'Let her be defiled, and let us feast our eyes on Zion.' But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD or understand His plan, for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor. Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion, for I will give you horns of iron and hooves of bronze to break to pieces many peoples. Then you will devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth" (Micah 4:11-13).

Behold, I have created the craftsman who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its task; and I have created the destroyer to wreak havoc. No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from me, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 54:16-17).

"If only My people would listen to Me, if Israel would follow My ways, how soon I would subdue their enemies and turn My hand against their foes! Those who hate the LORD would feign obedience, and their doom would last forever. But I would feed you the finest wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you" (Psalm 81:14-16).

Acts chapter one describes how the Messiah went into heaven from the Mount of Olives on a cloud. While the disciples were still looking into the sky after their Master, two men dressed in white ap-

peared to them and told them that Yeshua would be coming back in the same way He went into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). It was from the Mount of Olives that the Messiah went into heaven, and He will return to the Mount of Olives, when the enemy has taken Jerusalem, and Israel is in great distress and on the brink of destruction (Zech. 12:9-13).

In their distress the remnant of the people of Israel will call out to God and their Messiah, and Israel will be saved (Zech. 12:9-13). This is the moment the Lord has been longing for – that He could have mercy on Israel (Isa. 30:18-20). When the Messiah has put Israel "on the right course" and back to Him, away from the ways of apostasy, He will quickly deal with the enemies of God and Israel.

God uses Israel also as an instrument to gather all hostile Gentiles for judgment. The Lord will pour upon the believing remnant of Israel such supernatural power that they will crush under their feet the hostile nations that attack them. God also gives Israel wisdom and power to develop such weapons that make the weapons of the enemy inefficient.

Atomic weapons will be used, too, particularly neutron bombs whose radiation will cause all human and animal tissue burn and rot on the spot. It is interesting that among those who developed nuclear weapons there was a Jew, Oppenheimer, under whose supervision the U.S.A. built the first nuclear bomb (1945). Neutron bomb, as well, was developed by a Jew, Samuel Cohen.

The Bible seems to indicate that in the area of Golan (Bassan) especially, the attacking enemy will be destroyed by Israel's neutron bombs, and the surrounding hostile neigh-

bours will have their share in these events of the end time judgments (Ezek. 38:22; 39:1-7, 17-20). Israel will have huge spoils of war after the war (Ezek. 39:8-10).

### **Resurrected believers will judge the nations**

"Enoch, the seventh from Adam, also prophesied about them: Behold, the Lord is coming with myriads of His holy ones to execute judgment on everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of every ungodly act of wickedness and every harsh word spoken against Him by ungodly sinners" (Jude 14-15).

"On that day the LORD will defend the people of Jerusalem, so that the weakest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD going before them. So on that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem" (Zechariah 12:8-9).

"But those who are considered worthy to share in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In fact, they can no longer die, because they are like the angels. And since they are sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God" (Luke 20:35-36).

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no-one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven, dressed in fine linen, white and pure, follow Him on white horses. And from His mouth proceeds a sharp sword with which to

strike down the nations, and He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:11-16).

When the Messiah comes to judge the nations, He will come with all His angels, who will take care of the execution of the judgments (Matt. 25:31; 2 Thes. 1:6-10).

The risen saints will also be there to judge with the Lord. When the Messiah comes to the Mount of Olives, He has with Him all the holy ones in their resurrection bodies, according to Zechariah 14:4-5.

That royal clergy of the new covenant in their white linen robes, like angels of the Lord in their resurrection bodies, will take part in the execution of the judgments, in the army of the King of kings, riding on white horses (Rev. 1:4-6; Lev. 6:10; 2 Chron. 5:12).

People often think that what follows after the Lord's coming and the resurrection of believers is the heavenly wedding party of the Lamb, "a feast of harp playing", so to say, while on the earth, at the same time, the anti-Christian time of wrath is raging.

Thus the holy ones would not come and reign on the earth until the time of blessings and the Kingdom of Peace.

The Bible is very clear, however, that the church that has been taken up will judge the nations with the Lord and the holy angels, and contribute to the establishing of the Messianic Millennial Kingdom.

Anti-Christian troops of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, which fight against Israel and the God of Israel, will then be judged



and will meet their end (Rev. 19:11-21).

Only the godfearing remnant from nations will have the right to start a new life in the Messiah's Kingdom of Peace, which evil-doers have no way of entering into (Isa. 13:9-13; 24:1-6; 29:17-21; 66:15-24; Micah 7:15-17).

**The survivors of Gentile nations will go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord**

"Then all the survivors from the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Taberna-

cles. And should any of the families of the earth not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, then the rain will not fall on them. And if the people of Egypt will not go up and enter in, then the rain will not fall on them; this will be the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16-19).

In the Thousand-year Kingdom of the Messiah, the survivors of those Gentile nations

which have attacked Jerusalem will go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and worship the Lord Almighty, Yeshua the Messiah, who reigns on the throne of David.

Only a remnant is left from these "goat" nations, and it may be that some nations have been totally wiped off from among the nations. "Sheep" nations, who have blessed God's people Israel and helped the least brothers, will have the Messiah's blessing.

May the Holy One of Israel grant that our nation be part of these "sheep" nations, so

that we, as a nation, would inherit blessings and receive a blessed part in the Messiah's Kingdom.

May the Holy One of Israel also grant us grace that we would be faithful followers of the Messiah, so that we would get to be with the Messiah, when He returns to the Mount of Olives.

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Photo: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

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”...that all of them may be one (echad)...” Joh. 17:21

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