


Yovel

15th issue/ July 2021



"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

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(Ps. 137:6)

SIGNS OF THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH
Part XI

Sunset at a swamp in Northern Kainuu area, Finland. Photo: Markus 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

Who May Ascend the Hill of the Lord?

I quote the words of Mauri Vilponen from his book *Revival on the Hebrides 1949-1952* (2nd ed. 2020): "As Christians we tend to follow the media, news coverage, and politicians, and complain about the moral situation and spiritual decay of our country. While doing so we fill ourselves with negativity that will eventually tinge every encounter and gathering. Isn't that the wrong track Satan wants to put the Christians on – away from the front line where the real battles are fought?"

After the 2nd World War a powerful, life-changing move of God swept through The Hebrides, a small group of islands off the west coast of Scotland. God's awesome power and presence were so overwhelming that no human words suffice to describe it. God Himself descended on those remote islands, and nothing was the same any more. And, dear friends, it was undeniably true. It was not just a momentary outburst of joy and gladness here and there, singing and dancing, a few souls being saved. When God tears away the veil between the visible and the invisible and gets down to work, even the most hardened of men will be overcome by the holiness and fear of the Lord. He may be sitting in the darkest pub surrounded by the atmosphere of evil with no knowledge whatever of the ongoing intercession prayer warriors have yielded themselves to. When God steps down, He takes control over whole areas, cities, buildings, groups of people, individuals. It is God's work, not man's.

We must not despise the day of small things (Zech 4:10). Yes, we all know this verse, but have we really embraced it?

The Hebrides Revival began when two sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, both over 80 years old, received in prayer a promise from the Lord: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground (Isaiah 44:3). The two sisters started praying without pausing. Very soon seven members in charge of the congregation joined them in weekly prayer nights. These people kept on praying unrelentingly. They took hold of God's promise without letting go. They refused to see anything else but this promise of God. God expected them to take the challenge, and they

did.

This went on for about six weeks two-three nights a week until one member of the prayer team had in her heart a word from the Lord which became the key of the revival:

"Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false" (Psalm 24:3-5).

God filled the prayer team with extremely deep remorse. "Are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?"

Revival always starts by filling people with strong remorse, sense of sinfulness. Revival relates to God's holiness; He comes in our midst. His awesome power and divinity work in us causing us to see our sinfulness. The prayer warriors were convinced that the wake-up call of the thirsty ones would be heard when it was true thirst. They had the permission to challenge God to fulfil His promises as the God of covenant, but they had to be prepared to sanctify themselves, too.

Finally the revival broke out in powerful waves of remorse that swept over the place. When the intercessors came out of the cowshed where they gathered to pray, they "saw men and women kneeling down by the roadside crying out for God's mercy. Every house was lit. The knowledge of God's presence was so powerful that no one could sleep."

The revival spread out to every island, every place. People didn't spread it nor carry it further, it was God who made it. Even people with no interest in religious matters were overcome with remorse: communists, atheists, alcoholics, and criminals. Many were saved without another person's intervention. They were found everywhere: in boats, on the shores, on the hills, by the roadsides, in dancing places and pubs, lying on the ground and weeping for remorse and crying for God's mercy. A crowd of people confessing their sins and crimes gathered around the police station.

This went on for many years.

And now I ask myself: Are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?



Do we desire to see a change in our beloved home country, Finland, where darkness is increasing? The intercessors pulled the revival down to the Hebrides. When the revival came, the fear and holiness of God first touched the intercessors who in that light saw the condition of their own hearts. They searched and prayed for the cleansing of their hands and hearts, holiness, without which "no-one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12.14).

Dear friends, in Mauri Vilponen's words I ask all of you together and personally: is there anything that can save Finland except a revival like the Hebrides Revival? A revival which brings deep remorse and sense of sinfulness, and starts with us Christians and touches all people regardless their backgrounds?

The grace of Yeshua, Jesus, be with all of us,
M Markus Nurmesniemi
 Editor-in-chief

(Quotations from Mauri Vilponen, *Revival on the Hebrides in 1949-1952*, 2nd edition, 2020)

Jerusalem

Above My Greatest Joy



Scenery from Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

Written by:
the director of Sabra
Foundation
Mordechai Ben Ya'akov

"Jerusalem above my greatest joy" (Ps.137:6)

This year marks the fifty-four years of the reunification of Jerusalem. And after these years, there are still those who want to destroy her, to change her history... and failing that, to at least re-divide her or place her under international control. They ask what they think is a rhetorical question: what right do the Jews have to this city anyway?

But we remember when King David, from the tribe of Judah (the source of the word "Jew"), established that right.

David decided to conduct a census of the people in order to know how large its army was. He was warned not to do it (II Sam.24:3), and when he had finished he realized his sin. He confessed it before the Creator, and He who listens to our prayers sent a prophet to David, telling him to choose the punishment for the census. The destroying angel passed through Israel and caused many to fall, but when he stood over Jerusalem, the LORD stopped him.

David witnessed this intervention taking place on the mountain where the future Temple would be built. After he took on himself the guilt, asking God to spare the people and punish him, the prophet instructed David to offer a sacrifice on the threshing floor of

the Jebusite Araunah (called Ornan in II Chron.21), which was on the summit of that mountain.

David already knew the mountain as the site where Abraham had offered up Isaac (Gen.22:2). In David's day the windy mountaintop was being used as a place to separate wheat from chaff (an interesting image of spiritual judgment and purification). The revelation of the Angel of the LORD (II Chron.21:16) marked it as a gateway to Heaven, a meeting point for men to approach the living God. Araunah wanted to donate everything, from the oxen to the wood, and he made the offer with sincerity (II Sam.24:22-23).

But David insisted on buying

both the sacrificial elements and the property at its full commercial price.

This transaction has significance for us, as the people of Israel or as people from the nations who belong to the God of Israel:

1. It removes all doubt as to ownership of the Temple Mount; it was officially purchased for the nation of Israel 3000 years ago and was never resold.
2. King David was not interested in atoning for his sin at someone else's expense - a righteous model for us.
3. **The LORD** Himself through His prophet directed David to build an altar on that mountain, showing that the choice of this spot was not the impulse of a man but the will of the

Almighty.

The name of Jerusalem also has significance. Scripture tells us that this city was originally ruled by the mysterious priest Melchizedek (Gen.14:18) and in Hebrew it was called "Shalem", which means the "perfect" or "complete" city.

It's a peculiar fact that throughout Scripture Jerusalem retains this ending of shalem, yet it is always pronounced as "yeru-shalayim" - as though it had a double yud... when actually the Biblical Hebrew spells it without even one yud. Even modern Hebrew only inserts one yud while pronouncing two. What does this ancient tradition mean?

A double yud in Hebrew grammar refers to a pair of something, resulting in one word for "two days", "two hands", or "two eyes". Is there a pair of "Jerusalems"? Indeed there is. Isaiah 65 gives us a hint of a future Jerusalem, which the LORD will "create" as part of "new heavens and a new earth" (v.17-18).

Unlike the Jerusalem of the

past and present, which was/is destroyed and defiled repeatedly, this other Jerusalem will be holy. Unlike the past or present city, which has seen no end of sorrow, this Jerusalem will not bring crying, premature death or calamity to the Jewish people (v.19-23). In contrast to today, no Jerusalem neighborhood will hold dangers for either Jews or non-Jews: "they shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain, says the LORD." (v.25)

The enemy is trying everything in his power to break the connection between the Creator and the people of Israel which revolves around today's Jerusalem. Its destiny is already foretold: a source of true Torah and a magnet for all the nations who love God and want to meet with Him (Isa.2:2-4).

Having failed to keep the city a heap of ruins, and having failed to keep it under the rule of Israel's enemies, his latest strategy (via the UN) is to try to discredit a united Israeli-ruled Jerusalem as a Jewish invention born of racism. Not

surprisingly, the lies are thick-est around the Temple Mount. In the liberation of Jerusalem by the IDF in 1967, the whole city returned to its rightful heirs for the first time in more than 2000 years. And Israel's first act as its ruler was to open the city to the nations.

For the last 54 years, all peoples of the world have been enjoying the privilege of saying, "Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!" They are admiring how the city is "compact together" (Ps.122:2-3) without the barriers, snipers and no-man's land that marred it under Jordanian occupation.

The 54th anniversary of that blessed event is a good time to visit the city which is the twin of the new Jerusalem. "Walk about Zion and go around her; count her towers. Consider her ramparts; go through her palaces, that you may tell it to the next generation. For this is God - our God, forever and ever." (Ps.48:12-14)

The past, present and future are all here. Explore the excavated streets and dwellings

that date back to our Biblical forefathers.

Experience the modern revived Jerusalem, imperfect but inspiring in many its beautiful faces. Listen to the prayer of the Jewish people, repeated three times a day, for the arrival of the future "perfect" city, where the royal house of David will rule in justice and peace forever: "And may our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy. Blessed are You, O LORD, who returns His glory to Zion!"

We hope to meet you in the Land of Israel, in united Jerusalem.

With love,
the director of Sabra
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Many nations are swarming to Jerusalem and its old city's Western Wall at the Temple Mount. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

Miracles of Life in the Desert



Painting by: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

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

After the Israelites passed through the walled-up waters of the Red Sea and then watched as Pharaoh's armies drowned when those same waters came crashing down upon them, the Chosen People set out for the mountain of the Lord and an already prepared meeting with divine destiny.

They had heard Moses speak of the fire that he had seen on the mountain and of the tongues of fire that had spoken directly to him from the burning bush. Now, it was their opportunity to see, hear, and feel for themselves the fiery presence of the Eternal God on Mt. Sinai as the divine words of thunder echoed from that mountain. They had been summoned by God's voice to come to his mountain

and there to enter into a covenant that would make them God's nation, a kingdom of priests, and would transform them into the community (congregation) and the nation of the Chosen People.

Standing at Sinai: The Birth of Life and Freedom

In the march from the Red Sea to Sinai, the Israelites made the transition from a liberated but disorganized throng into a corporate assembly that could walk in unity and discipline. When the two million finally reached Sinai, the Hebrew text affirms that Israel (plural) camped (singular).

The disparate people, which included many non-Israelites, was finally in one accord and in one place anticipating the experience for which God had liberated them from Egyptian bondage. They had overcome

previous divisions among themselves, and they stood unified at the foot of Sinai. All they awaited then was the appearance of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And they would not be disappointed.

"Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently." God, their God, had appeared on the mountain in an utterly shocking display of might. Not only did he appear, but he also thundered to the Israelites these immortal words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Having confirmed his identity and his mission, God continued to outline the briefest

possible synopsis of his own instructions for humanity: the Ten Commandments. This was not, however, a simple statement of divine preferences posted on a bulletin board for Israel to consider. These were fiery words of infallible and uncompromisable divine truth that the Israelites not only heard but also saw. As a matter of fact, the text literally says, "And all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the noise of the shofar, and the mountain smoking."

How does one see voices? Apparently, God's voice emerged from the flames as tongues of fire that the people could see the words that he spoke as well as hearing them! Shortly before the time of Jesus, Philo of Alexandria described the phenomenon in this way: "From the fire . . . there sounded . . . a voice, for the flame became articulate speech . . .

so clearly were the words formed . . . that they seemed to see them rather than to hear them.” Rabbi Yohanan also explained that every fiery word was divided into seventy languages because God said, “Is not my word like fire . . . and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” This was done, the sages said, so that the nations of the earth also heard the Ten Commandments in their own languages. Only Israel, however, responded positively to God’s offer of the Torah.

When Israel had heard all the terms of the covenant, they answered with one voice, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!”

Later, the people made this affirmation in a slightly different and more powerful way. This text quotes the Israelites as saying, “Kol asher diber YHWH na’aseh v’nishmah,” which is literally translated this way: “All that the LORD has said, we will do, and we will understand.”

In effect, the people declared that they would simply do whatever God commanded them even before they could understand it. These Israelites had learned a valuable lesson: some of God’s ways are ineffable; they cannot be understood unless they are first done. And this is the level of commitment that God required from his Chosen People.

Because they loved him and would be joined to him in a covenant, they would do what he commanded them even if they did not understand it.

When God invited the Israelites to come near, however, they demurred because they were terrified at the awesome presence of God. They knew that “it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

So, they begged Moses to be their agent—to hear from God and report his findings to them. The difference between Moses and the people was that in the forty years

that Moses had spent in the desert, God had purged all of Egypt from the prophet. He, therefore, was not hesitant to go boldly into God’s presence. Israel, however, had not yet experienced the forty-year purging that was even then on God’s agenda for them; therefore, they were not prepared for the utter holiness of the living God, and they shrank in horror from direct contact with the Lord.

God continued to outline details of the covenant that he was making with the Israelites—in effect, expanding and amending the covenant that he had made with their father Abraham centuries earlier.

The Sinai covenant was not to be a new covenant. It was rather to be a renewed covenant, the Abrahamic covenant amended. In the midst of all the spectacles that seemed threatening to human life—fire, earthquakes, supernatural shofar blasts, and the like—Moses and the children of Israel were actually en-

sed in a haven of peace and tranquility with God. They were in a wedding chamber as it were, drawn together in the intimacy of divine love.

Under the chuppah of the cloud of divine glory, Israel said a corporate “I do” and was joined with the God of the universe in a perpetual covenant that would never be abolished. God himself had made this unequivocal promise to Abraham:

“I will keep my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations. . . .

It will continue between me and your offspring forever.”

It was on the basis of this covenant that God himself assured Israel centuries later:

“I am YHWH your God; therefore, you children of Jacob are not consumed.”

No wonder Paul exclaimed regarding the inviolability of God’s covenant with Israel: “The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable.” The God of Israel is forever faithful to



Painting by: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

keep his covenant with his Chosen People.

In the context of his covenant, God set forth before the Israelites life and death, blessings and curses, and he exhorted them to “choose life.”

While death lurked at every corner, life reigned for those who would yield to God’s Word. The distance between death and life was simply the thickness of indelible ink on parchment. “Keep my commands,” God said, “and you will live.” And, death was also readily at hand, for “the wages of sin is death.”

Since Sinai, the options have been clear: life or death, blessing or curse. And God still implores everyone, as he did all the Israelites of that day: “Choose life.”

When Israel was joined to God in covenant, the first truly free nation in human history was birthed. This was a people whose divinely accorded free will had enabled them to choose to follow God’s commandments and to walk in his ways all the days of their lives.

At Sinai, they found the freedom that they and their ancestors had diligently sought through all the years of Egyptian bondage. They were truly free when they were joined to God and fully submitted to his Word and will.

Bread from Heaven

In order to reinforce his Word and make possible the fulfillment of its provisions, God wrought miracles among the Children of Israel during their sojourn in the Sinai desert.

His divine intervention was often necessary in order to ensure the very survival of the people with whom he had made covenant. It was truly a life-or-death matter, for the

enemies of life were everywhere in the desert. Only a faithful God could keep Israel in the midst of the yawning jaws of death and destruction that were all around them.

Only the Lord of life could keep his people from death, and only he could bring forth life from the dead by healing the infirm and extending life to the dying.

Virtually from the beginning of the Israelites’ trek over the desert sands toward Canaan, it became clear that two million people could not possibly survive on what meager food could be found in the wilderness. Tons of food would be required each day. Israel would have needed a daily convoy of food supplies to sustain themselves. An alternative plan, therefore, had to be developed, and it would have to be a miracle.

As the Israelites cried out for food to save them from hunger and death, God said, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you.”

The bread that God provided for the Israelites took a form that looked like coriander seeds with the color of bdellium and the taste of honey. It was called simply “manna.” Friedrich Bodenheimer has suggested that the manna could have been similar to the tamarisk manna that is not uncommon in that area.

“We have seen that all the eye-witness reports of the Bible can be taken as literal descriptions of the tamarisk manna of Sinai,” he maintains, for “thousands of kilograms [of tamarisk manna] are collected every year by the Kurds in northern Iraq.”

Whatever the case, it is certain that God himself produced the quantity of manna that was needed to sustain

the Israelites, and he did so without fail for forty years: “The Israelites ate manna forty years . . . until they reached the border of Canaan.”

And, to confirm the fact that this was a divine miracle, no manna ever fell on the Sabbath day, yet a double portion always fell on the day before the Sabbath!

The connection between the actual food that the Israelites ate and its spiritual connotations was great. The Psalmist declared that “human beings ate the bread of angels; [God] gave them all the food they could eat.” This “angels’ food” was the very “glow of God’s presence,” says Joseph Lieberman, a meaning that was further extrapolated by Yehuda Lieb when he noted that “the generation of the wilderness were sustained truly by Torah itself, food from heaven.”

In effect, the Israelites were consuming the very Word of God that had become materialized in edible substance. One can never underestimate, therefore, the extent to which God will go to ensure the life of his people—not only their mere survival but also their prosperity.

The God of Israel is El Shaddai, the Almighty, whose power is always manifest in sustaining his Chosen People. He is always “more than enough” for those who believe in him because the very essence of his gevurot is life—sustaining life, renewing life, even restoring life.

Water from Solid Rock

On another occasion, the children of Israel faced the prospect of agonizing death because of a water shortage. When their journey through the desert brought them to Rephidim, they discovered

that “there was no water for the people to drink.”

Some of the weaker, faithless members of the community began to repeat what had by then become a common declaration of unbelief when they chided Moses, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt . . . to make us die?”

Once again, God had the solution to the dilemma of life and death. “Go out in front of the people,” he told Moses, “I will stand before you by the rock of Horeb.” Moses was then specifically instructed by God, “Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.”

Now, the water that issued from the rock was no mere trickle, but a fountain of life as it were. In order to slake the thirst of the two million, a veritable river of water would have had to spring forth. The scene, therefore, was almost unimaginable. Right in the middle of the desert, a rock produced a superabundance of living water to sustain the lives of the Chosen People.

What a God the Israelites served! Not only could he rain down bread from heaven itself, he could also unleash a river of water from an utterly desiccated desert rock. Whenever the lives of the Chosen People were on the line, God proved that he could move both heaven and earth to ensure their survival and their blessing. His power was unlimited, and he did not hesitate to use it to maintain his eternal determination: Am Yisrael Chai.

Life in a Snake Pit

When Moses led the Hebrews through the “great and terrible wilderness,” they found that this place had an abundance of “fiery serpents and scorpions.” Benjamin Baus-

man observed that, in many places in the wilderness, the very ground is “alive with serpents and large lizards, some a foot or more in length, with skins that shine like pearls.” He wondered whether or not these “shining, dazzling reptiles” might have been the “fiery serpents” with which the Lord scourged the Hebrews.

A particularly disastrous instance of serpent infestation occurred as a result of the judgment which God brought upon the people of Israel because of their unending complaints.

When they repeated the whining refrain of unbelief, “Wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” and then added this charge: “[for] there is no bread, neither is there

any water, and our soul loathes this light bread [manna],” God had heard quite enough of their grumbling. In response, therefore, he “sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many of the people of Israel died.”

After death had taken its toll, even upon many of the innocent, God devised a plan which would save the rest of the Israelites from the venomous bites of the fiery serpents. The Lord commanded Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.”

When Moses followed the divine instruction and constructed a bronze serpent, put it on a pole, and elevated

it above the camp of Israel, those who beheld the bronze serpent lived.

Judgment upon evildoers is necessary, for God cannot overlook evil, much less condone it. Even God’s divine judgment, however, has always been tempered with divine mercy.

As a matter of fact, judgment and mercy are merely opposite sides of the same divine attribute, for even when divine justice demands death, God is always ready to extend life to those who will lift up their eyes to behold him and receive from him the dispensation of his grace.

God, in his gevurot, can bring either death or life, for he is sovereign over both; however, the overwhelming divine

emphasis has always been on life, even life from the dead, wherein those who are dying (even because of their sins) are given the merciful invitation to look upon the Lord of life and from him to have life restored to their dying bodies.

The Unending Battle for Life

Not only were the Israelites challenged by hunger, thirst, and dangerous natural forces as they journeyed in the desert, they also discovered that the inhabitants of the lands through which they were traveling were often inimical to their cause.

This was the case with the Amalekites who attacked the Israelites while they were camped at Rephidim. These Amalekites were famous for avoiding frontal military con-



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frontations while attacking the perimeters, picking off the weak and infirm and the women and children.

Obviously, nothing has changed about the sinister strategies of evil men who, in a revival of the spirit of Amalek, continue to mount campaigns of terror against civilians while avoiding direct conflict with trained warriors. The end of such cowardice and evil is certain however: God will “blot out their name from under heaven,” and they will find themselves in the dustbins of history.

After the Amalekites had attacked, Moses directed Joshua to mount a counterattack against them, promising that he would stand upon the top of the hill, hold up the “rod of God,” and oversee the battlefield.

The narrative observes that as long as Moses held the rod aloft in his hands, the Israelites maintained a winning position in the battle; however, when his hands grew tired and lowered, the tide of battle turned in favor of the Amalekites. Finally, a stone was moved forward on which Moses could sit, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands—and the rod of God—until sunset, thereby ensuring a complete victory for Joshua and his forces.

It was at this point that God made a startling declaration when he commanded Moses: “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.”

Then Moses constructed an altar which he named “YHWH Nissi” (“the LORD my Banner”), and he made this prediction: “Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will be at

war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.”

The conflict between good and evil is inevitable, and it will continue unabated until the end of the age in the time when universal peace will finally be established in the everlasting kingdom of Messiah.

In this one incident, God made it clear that there would always be a transgenerational conflict between the Israelites and the forces that would align themselves against God (personified in Amalek).

The battle would feature unbelievably evil attacks of terror against the weakest members of the Israelite community, but it would also be characterized by the unequivocal commitment of God to the battles that would be fought for the survival of the Chosen People.

And the pages of history have been littered with the remains of nations and people who have dared to exalt themselves against the Lord and his people and have been utterly destroyed because of their audacity.

Evil has always been—and will always be—the enemy of good. Nothing can change that dynamic.

Because the Chosen People exist as an entity that points to the existence of the God of Scripture and to his unequivocal demands for justice and truth, the Hebrew community throughout history has always had to bear the brunt of attacks of personified evil against the one true God, and this will never change until the coming of the Messiah.

While the hatred and vitriol have been and continue to be directed against the peop-

le who are separated unto God, the real target is the God who summoned the people and made them his chosen representatives in the earth. Evil forces cannot attack God directly, so they mount their terror against the people who represent him.

It is but another reason for the continuing manifestation of God’s *gevurot*, his powers over death and life.

From the time of Amalek forward, God has made certain that conflict will take place between the forces that align themselves against the God of Scripture and those who stand unreservedly for him and his will.

Pitched battles have been waged “from generation to generation” and will continue to be waged “forever,” but God will always remain the king of death and life. He will forever move heaven and earth to preserve his people even in the midst of war, famine, and pestilence. Whatever circumstance or situation could arise, YHWH will always ensure that ultimately the Chosen People will live before him and especially so in the limitless time of the World to Come.

Human Infidelity and Divine Fidelity

Sadly, the wilderness journeys of the Chosen People, as well as their lives for centuries after the exodus, were replete with examples of human infidelity.

The people whom God had summoned out of Egypt and had joined to himself in a covenant of incontrovertible commitment to divine truth continually failed their God and came up short on their pledge of faithfulness to him.

No more striking example of this unfortunate human trend

could be cited than the incident with the golden calf. The Israelites had seen the awesome display of divine glory as they had stood before Mount Sinai.

They had heard and even seen the fiery words of divine instruction that were outlined in the Ten Commandments. They had made the commitment, “Whatever you have said, we will do.”

When Moses left them to spend forty days on Sinai with God, however, the awesomeness of the moment gradually dissipated so that finally, they were overcome with the fear that Moses had somehow died on the mountain and would not return to the camp of Israel. They, therefore, began to make plans to return to Egypt, saying, “It’s better to be slaves in Egypt than to die in this desert.”

The people brought some of the gold that they had gained in “spoiling the Egyptians” and implored Aaron to construct a golden calf that they could use to seek the favor of the Egyptians. Then, the very same people who had stood in awe of the presence of God began to dance before Apis, the god of Egypt, and to engage in abominable acts that violated the terms of the covenant that they had just made with God.

When Moses finally came down from the mountain, he was furious with the people. He shattered the two tablets of the Torah on the rocks, and God brought immediate and severe judgment upon the idolaters. There was death in the camp.

As had always been the case—and would always be the case—the righteous in the camp prevailed, and God’s anger was removed from Israel. Regardless as to how

perverted some of the people would become, God would always have a remnant of the faithful to whom he could turn to reform, restore, and renew the faith of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The incident with the golden calf was but one of countless examples of human infidelity that would be manifest when the people were consumed by doubt and failed to stand on the security of divine promises. A virtual litany of examples of human failure could be cited, beginning with the bitter disappointment at Sinai.

Human infidelity, however, has never obviated divine fidelity. Despite all the human failure, God has always been and will always be faithful.

As Jacob Neusner says, "God

has a heavy stake in Israel's well-being. He relates to Israel perpetually. Israel is a unique nation on earth, consecrated and separate from the nations of the earth and from their abominations."

When God's Chosen People carry out God's will "the nations have no power over them; when Israel sins, the nations are empowered. Sin, specifically abandoning the teachings of the Torah, causes the enemy to come against Israel. When Israel lacks merit of religious duties, then the enemy comes."

The God of Scripture, however, is the unchanging one, the one who cannot lie and who cannot fail. The gevurot of this God are the powers that manifest his faithfulness—his undying commitment to heal

the sick and revive the dead.

This is a God who can be trusted implicitly to do precisely what he has promised. Even when humans are faithless, he is faithful, and he will keep faith with his Chosen People even when they are sleeping in the dust of the earth. The omnipotent God will ever exercise his gevurot, even when his children are utterly impotent, lying lifeless in the cold, hard ground of the earth.

This is what the Jewish people affirm in the Gevurot of the Amidah. It is God's "fidelity or faithfulness" to the dead and dying. The God of Scripture "can be trusted to keep faith even with the dead."

This means "that God has, in fact, made a promise to the

dead and can be trusted to keep it."

According to Kevin Madigan and Jon Levenson, the important implication of the Gevurot benediction is not "to the believer's faith in God, but to God's faithfulness to raise to life" those who "sleep in the dust of the earth."

This is the magnificent gevurot of the living God: he brings forth life from the dead.

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Painting by: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

The Red Sea Experience

- Life from the Dead



Painting by: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

Written by:
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The Hebrew descendants of Abraham had finally been delivered from onerous Egyptian slavery when Pharaoh had commanded them to leave that land.

The cumulative effect of the unrelenting plagues had finally taken its toll. When he had

seen the lifeless form of his own firstborn son, the result of God's tenth and final plague upon Egypt, Pharaoh had submitted to the command that God had continually given him: "Let my people go."

It was not long, however, before Pharaoh had second thoughts. "What have we done?" he said, "We have let the Israelites go and have

lost their services!" Then the Egyptian king initiated hot pursuit of the two million escaping Israelite slaves. Blinded by anger and thirst for vengeance, he gathered his armies and followed the trail of those Israelites, the enormous resource that he had just let slip through his hands.

He purposed either to drag them all back to Egypt and

enslave them again or to annihilate them in the process.

God, however, had already prepared Moses for this eventuality, telling him, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue [the Israelites]."

God knew what Pharaoh was thinking: "The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the

desert.”

So God had another plan that rested on very specific instructions that he gave to Moses: “Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi haHiro, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon.”

The very place where God told the Israelites to make camp bespoke God’s plan for freedom, for the name Pi haHiro literally means, “the mouth of freedom.” God himself had positioned the Israelite nation, with all its hopes for life and prosperity, directly in front of an impassable body of water, the Red Sea, but that place was the entrance into freedom! What seemed impossible to them was a golden opportunity for God.

Israel’s journey toward the Promised Land was to be replete with miracles that would confirm God’s will for his people to go into the desert to worship him and receive his Torah; however, the greatest of these miracles was going to be the event that would occur at the Red Sea. With impass-

sable waters in front of them and Pharaoh’s armies behind them, the Chosen People again faced a life-and-death situation as their ancestors had done in their past.

This time, the danger to them was far greater than anything that they had experienced before, for Pharaoh’s armies were staging for yet another final solution to the Hebrew problem.

For the Israelites, the options facing them were very bleak. In front of them was death by drowning; behind them was either death by military slaughter or the virtual death of being forced to return to slavery. None of these options was acceptable.

In the midst of the swirling emotions of impending doom, however, Moses relayed God’s simple word to his people: “Stand still and see the salvation of God.”

Then, as Moses obeyed God’s command and stretched out his rod, the Rod of God, over the Red Sea, an east wind arose and parted the waters,

inviting the children of Israel to use a newly-opened public highway of safety and freedom that led directly to the Red Sea’s eastern shore.

Death was clearly in the air. At that point in time, God’s word to the Israelites could not have been more clear or simple. “Move on!” he shouted through Moses.

When the people heard that word and responded to it, every single individual Israelite rose up in faith to walk with God through the swirling waters that threatened them with certain death and to continue walking into the new life that awaited them on the other side of the sea.

They replicated the crossing-over experience that had defined their father Abraham as a “Hebrew” when he had “crossed over” the River Euphrates into the Promised Land centuries before that time.

Six hundred thousand men, plus women and children, began the march between walls of water that menaced them

from both sides. What a terrifying undertaking that must have been!

In order to begin such a walk, each Israelite had to have had profound faith in God’s Word and in the word of the prophet whom God had sent to them. They had escaped the death of their firstborn by sacrificing family lambs, and they had left Egypt because Pharaoh had commanded it.

Now, they walked into the Red Sea because each of them individually chose to believe that God would save them from the turbid waters that towered above them.

The extent of the faith which the Israelites were required to manifest is graphically underscored by the fact that shortly after the last of their number had passed between the waters, Pharaoh’s entire army rushed after them only to drown in the same place where Israel had just crossed unharmed.

The same walled-up waters that had retreated in order to clear a path to life and free-



Towards the unknown winter. A scenery from a Finnish lake in Fall. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

dom for the Israelites suddenly rushed in upon the Egyptians and swallowed them up in death and destruction! What only moments before had completely delivered the Israelites from bondage immediately destroyed the entire Egyptian army, drowning men and horses in its turbid waters.

The waters that vindicated the faith of the Israelites by letting them pass through brought judgment upon Pharaoh by destroying his army.

Israel's Corporate Immersion

Something spectacular happened when the Chosen People passed through the waters of the Red Sea. The crossing was both a physical reality and a spiritual experience.

It was not until the first century AD that the full spiritual implications of the events at the Red Sea came to be understood fully. At that time, Paul, the Jewish rabbi and Christian apostle, compared the Red Sea crossing with baptism, underscoring the fact that both this and Israel's subsequent actions were spiritual events that transcended

physical reality.

"Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Paul's declaration cannot be minimized: he clearly taught that all of the Israelites were actually immersed or baptized in the Red Sea.

Paul was not, however, simply trying to say that the Israelites' Red Sea experience was an act of Christian baptism. Being a Jew, he knew that the Red Sea was a mikveh, a "gathering" of waters.

Paul used the term baptism to point out that the immersion rituals of Jewish life in that day were parallel with the spiritual aspects of what had occurred at the Red Sea.

The Red Sea, as Witness Lee observed, "was created by God as a baptistry for the children of Israel." The immersion of the Israelites in the sea represented a transition into a new life, a rebirth as it were. They were no longer Egyptian slaves; they were free Israelites!

Israel had been physically de-

livered from bondage when YHWH "passed over" the Israelite families after he had seen the blood circling the entries to their dwellings.

Then, just a few short days later, all the Israelites and the "mixed multitude" that accompanied them were baptized through the Red Sea. The Israelites who had just been spared the death of their first-born and had escaped Egyptian slavery were placed by God's hand in a circumstance where each one of them was immersed in the cloudy mist of the sea.

This immersion was, in effect, a spiritual experience of death, burial, and resurrection.

When they walked down the western slopes of the Red Sea into the sea's bottom, they surrendered their lives to the authority and will of God.

They died to self. Then, they willingly buried themselves for a time between the walls of water. Finally, they were resurrected to a new life of freedom from Pharaoh's pursuing armies when they climbed up the eastern shore of the Red Sea. They were no longer their own; they had surrendered their lives to the will and

good pleasure of God, and they had received their lives again as God's precious gift of freedom.

The timing of the Red Sea event coincided with what would later be identified as the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Could it be that God was using this exercise to begin the removal of the leaven of Egypt from the lives of the Israelites at the same time that he was physically removing them from Egypt?

It could well be that this event actually occurred at the time of what would later become the Festival of Firstfruits.

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, their spiritual death-burial-and-resurrection immersion may well have prophetically prefigured in firstfruits form the coming climactic event of the ages when the righteous dead will be resurrected!

In a very real sense, Israel had been reborn. Now, they were ready to journey to the mountain of God, where they would enter into a covenant to become God's bride. When YHWH thundered from Sinai in a voice that shook the

Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi



earth and was heard around the globe in the languages of all the nations, it was only those Israelites who had been reborn in the waters of Red Sea baptism who responded to God's commandments by promising, "All that you have said, we will do."

The moment they agreed to accept and to do God's Torah, their Passover experience was validated and complete. Then and only then were they truly free, delivered from spiritual bondage.

The sages were correct when they declared that "only one who is involved in Torah is truly free."

For the first time since Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, humanity was offered the choice of life or death, blessings or curses. Whereas before that time sin and death had reigned over all men, at that time some could choose to live by following God's instructions and walking with him in faith.

They would then be able to drink the water of life that God would cause to spring forth from the rock in the desert.

Christians and the Concept

of Immersion

The concept and practice of immersion that was very common in Second Temple Judaism in pre-Christian times came to be encapsulated in the word baptism which is frequently used in apostolic Scripture.

To be baptized is to be immersed in something, whether it be in repentance, in sanctification, in the Holy Spirit, in the Messiah, in suffering, in death, or in water. In whatever form it may be manifest, baptism represents a complete surrender to the will of God. Baptism was not, however, a Christian invention.

It was established in the long-standing Jewish immersion tradition that preceded it and was, in fact, the antecedent of Christian baptism.

John the Baptizer did not simply invent the idea of baptism out of whole cloth! Both he and the believers who followed his example after him were simply continuing a Jewish tradition that had long preceded John's day.

This tradition developed when the Jewish people came to believe that the requirement for ritual purity that was

incumbent upon the priesthood was important for all the Israelite people. Hence, any change in status or any purification from ceremonial uncleanness was accompanied or completed by the believer's immersion in water. The vehicle for the immersion was called a mikveh.

Though a mikveh could be any body of living water, immersions were generally accomplished in a ceremonial immersion pool, to which the name mikveh (pl. mikvot) was applied.

Mikvot were often constructed in such a way that those who used them could walk down seven steps on one side, then immerse themselves in the water, and finally walk up seven steps on the other side. The mikveh was filled with what was termed "living water" because it came either from a fountain or a continually flowing stream or from flowing rain water.

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish people had come to believe that a non-Jewish person could be converted to the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by fulfilling four requirements:

1) circumcision, 2) sacrifice, 3)

Torah study, and 4) immersion in water.

Each of these steps was important; however, the final step had come to be recognized as the event that transformed a non-Jew into a member of the commonwealth of Israel.

It was believed that at the moment when a non-Jewish convert broke the plane of the water after having immersed himself completely in the mikveh, a forensic change occurred so that he was no longer a Gentile but was fully a Jew, a member of the covenant community of the Israelite nation.

By the time of John the Baptizer, many Jewish teachers had come to characterize immersion in the mikveh as a death-burial-and-resurrection experience. The sages even considered mikveh immersion to be an experience in which one could figuratively reenter the waters of the womb and be reborn or be born again.

Through the mikveh experience, a Gentile convert spiritually died to a life of rebellion against God, was buried in the water, and then was resurrected to a new life as he emerged from the waters. Just as the Israelites had been

En Ged Desert. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi



delivered from Egypt by the blood of the paschal lamb, so Gentiles who were converted to Judaism were initiated into Jewish faith by circumcision.

Just as the Israelites were commanded by God to make sacrifices to atone for their sins, so the converts themselves made sacrifices. Then, just as Israel came before Sinai to receive God's law, converted believers were taught the same Torah. Finally, just as Israel had been immersed in the waters of the Red Sea, so proselytes were immersed in the waters of the mikveh. The process of immersion finalized the proselyte's conversion just as Israel's "baptism" in the Red Sea had completed their liberation from Egyptian bondage.

Paul's use of these metaphors is more clearly understood when they are returned to the Hebrew matrix from which they came. Believers in Jesus were considered to have been immersed into his death. They were buried with him in baptism so that they could be raised in a newness of life. They were born again (from above). This was the me-

taphor that Nicodemus, the Jewish rabbi, readily understood when the concept was applied to proselytes' being born again by accepting the Torah and being circumcised. He could not, however, comprehend the application of this concept to Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God in which he said that all people, whether Jew or Gentile, needed to be born again in order to enter God's dominion.

The nature of the early Christian initiatory baptismal rite was very similar to that of their Israelite ancestors at the Red Sea and of the mikveh tradition. It was not for the removal of physical uncleanness, but for the answer of a good conscience before God. Anyone who did not repent from sins entered the water a dry sinner and came out a wet sinner! As John had said, water baptism was efficacious only if the heart had already been immersed in the Godly sorrow of repentance.

Each time a new believer is initiated into Christian faith through the baptism of repentance, he actually participates in the long-standing

mikveh tradition that the church inherited from Second Temple Judaism. Through the waters of baptism the believer demonstrates to the sinful world—just as Israel demonstrated to Pharaoh and the Egyptians—that the God of the Bible is a deliverer, one who helps his Chosen People pass from the curse of death into the promise of everlasting life by being translated from the darkness of this world into the kingdom of God.

Baptism is a rite of passage, the outward demonstration of an inward transformation from a life of sin to a life of faithfulness to the Eternal God through the gift of grace and salvation. In the moment of faith, the believer who was dead in trespasses and sin is resurrected unto eternal life, truly experiencing life from the dead!

A Tradition of Life Expanded at the Red Sea

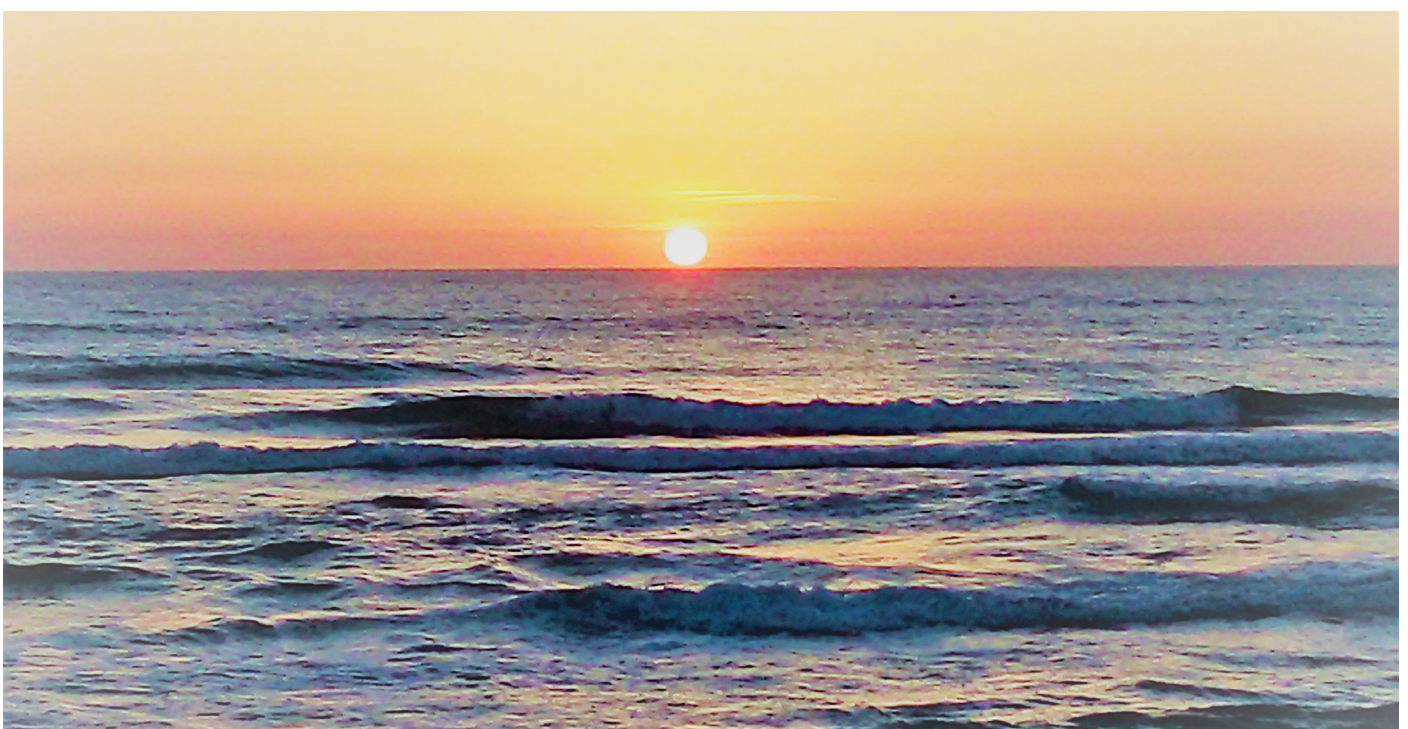
At the momentous and miraculous Red Sea event, the miracle of life from the dead was established clearly and unmistakably for all the Israelites and for all subsequent

believers in the God of Scripture. The events that unfolded when God delivered the Chosen People from Egyptian slavery and bought them through the death, burial, and resurrection experience of mikveh at the Red Sea established a paradigm not only of victory over oppression but also of life from the dead.

At the Red Sea, two million believers passed from certain death into life because they obeyed God's command to "Move on!" When they traversed through the watery grave of the Red Sea on dry ground, they had proof positive of God's *gevurot*, his amazing ability to deliver the oppressed from the edge of the sword and bring those who face certain death into the joy of life in the presence of God, truly giving them life from the dead.

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Sunset at Haifa Beach, Israel. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

Prophetical Perspectives

Signs of the Messiah's Coming - Part XI



Written by:
Keijo Lindeman

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

Eternal life in the new world

"Peter said to him: 'We have left everything to follow you!' I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."
(Mark 10:28-30, NIV).

The thousand year kingdom of peace will be a kingdom of overwhelming beauty and harmony where peace, blessing, and righteousness reign on earth, however, it will not be the ultimate goal of God's plans, because men will still be subject to death and sin in their imperfect condition.

(Resurrected saints who reign with the Messiah no longer live in their carnal bodies of sin and death; however, during the thousand-year kingdom of the Messiah, there are people on the earth who live in their carnal bodies of sin and death, Rev. 20; Isa. 65:19-28). It is God's purpose to create an entirely new world, new heavens and a new earth, where everything will be finally perfect and death and sin will be no more
(Isa. 25:8).

The last world war

"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be

tormented day and night for ever and ever"
(Revelation 20:7-10, NIV).

Before the creation of the new earth God will settle the accounts with the enemy of our souls and his allies. Satan and his fallen angels will be released from the abyss, where they have been kept prisoners during the entire thousand-year kingdom
(Isa. 24:21-23).

Satan will immediately go and deceive people all over the earth who hate God and God's people inciting them to attack Jerusalem. A multitude of nations, who will be called Gog and Magog, will decla-

re war against Jerusalem on earth and against the heavenly Jerusalem, the camp of the saints. This will be the last world war on the earth and also in the heavens.

This war should not be mixed up with the war of Gog that precedes the establishing of the kingdom of peace (Ezekiel 38-39).

There are commentators of biblical prophecies who explain that the war of Gog Ezekiel writes about is the same as the war of Gog and Magog in the book of Revelation. However, the majority of interpreters of prophetic word disagree with this interpretation and see these as two separate wars of Gog.

The first is the one in Ezekiel's prophecy which will occur before the thousand-year kingdom of peace when, from the far north (north of Israel), Gog (Russia and its mainly Islamic allies such as Iran, Turkey, Libya, Sudan, etc.) attack Israel - and the whole world will be involved in this war - but Gog's army will fall on the hills of Israel.

The Book of Revelation speaks about another war of Gog which will be fought after the thousand-year kingdom of peace. Gog and Magog, from the four corners of the earth, will then be led by Satan to attack both the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem.

What is similar between the two wars of Gog is that the enemies of the God of Israel and of Israel will attack the people of God and Jerusalem



Painting by: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

trying to thwart God's plans. If Satan succeeds in destroying Israel and Jerusalem, God's plans couldn't be fulfilled, and Satan wouldn't have to go to his final place of torment. That is why Satan's rage and fury with Israel is so intense, and he tries everything in his power to thwart God's plans.

This so called second war of Gog is a space war, a real war of stars. When the Messiah establishes his thousand-year kingdom, he will declare peace over the nations, and they lay down their arms and turn them into instruments of peace (Isa. 2:1-4).

When the thousand years have passed and Satan is released, he will urge the nations, which are hostile towards Israel and the God of Israel, to make weapons of war again. During the kingdom of peace science and technology have made huge progress, from which arms industry will also benefit to make arms we can now have no idea of.

The armies of the enemy will not only attack the earthly Jerusalem but they will mount up to heavens and attack the heavenly Jerusalem and the camp of the saints. It will be a real "Star Wars".

But the enemy's efforts will be in vain even this time; fire comes down from heaven and totally consumes the enemy and the earth as well. The prime instigator of rebellion, Satan, is thrown to the lake of burning sulphur, hell, which was made for Satan and his fallen angels to begin with, but it will also be the destiny of all those who want to follow Satan instead of God (Matt. 25:41).

Why then does God allow Satan to come and incite people

to rebellion?

Wouldn't it be better let Satan stay imprisoned, and bring forth the new earth without the last rebellion?

This may seem a good idea to man; God's ideas, however, are far superior. God usually lets both angels and men see the consequences of the fall in order to teach them.

When Satan is released from his thousand-year-long imprisonment, a large number of people are immediately ready to join Satan and rebel under his lead against God.

This proves that although humanity has spent a thousand years in a world of pure blessing and harmony, part of humanity has been quiet only because the King Messiah has been reigning with iron sceptre, and sin and ungodliness have been given no chance to interfere.

But when the thousand-year period is over, and Satan with his army is released, these people, whose hearts have not really turned to God, are ready to rebellion under the orders of Satan. God allows this to happen and shows the absurdity of sin and of the rebellion of an unrepented heart. God sends fire from heaven and it consumes them.

The end of the world and the resurrection of condemnation

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" (Revela-

tion 20:11,12,NIV)

"By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13,NIV).

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:28, 29, NIV).

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2, NIV).

"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29, NIV).

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28, NIV).

People often talk scornfully and falsely about the end of the world and those who prophesy about the end of the world. Indeed there are some religious groups and individuals who have prophesied even the dates of the end, and, naturally, their prophecies have been wrong. The end of the world does not come until after the thousand-year Messianic kingdom, when the dead will also be summoned before the throne to be judged. We learn from Peter's letter that this present earth and present heavens are reserved for fire. This prophecy includes the atom war which will take place in the end time, around the time of Yeshua's coming and the taking-up of the church, but it will have its ultimate prophetic fulfillment after the thousand-year Messianic kingdom of peace, when God sends fire to destroy the old world and creates a new earth. That will be a moment when heavens and earth will flee from His face without finding a place to go until God creates new heavens and a new earth. It will be the end of this present world.

All carnal and worldly life, such as we know it now, will naturally end, and all the dead will be gathered before the throne for the last judgment. That is the moment when ungodly people rise from the dead; they rise to be condemned to everlasting contempt. The Bible does not actually tell us anything precise about the condition of the risen body of the ungodly. Several Bible scholars presume that just like believers will have a glorified resurrection body when they rise from the dead, also the ungodly will have a dark resurrection body. Their argument is that the ungodly will be thrown into the fires of hell body and soul. As people

don't have any normal earthly body after they have died, it must be, they conclude, a dark resurrection body of condemnation, in which man is condemned to hell, to the lake of fire.

When the ungodly are condemned in the resurrection of judgment following the Messianic kingdom, believers of the time of the kingdom of peace will also be gathered before the throne.

The thousand-year Messianic kingdom of peace will be a time when the believing remnant of the people of Israel will preach the gospel to all nations as a people of priests, and a huge number of people will accept Yeshua as their Lord and Saviour. It is only natural that these dead and buried believers from the time of the kingdom of peace will be resurrected and brought before the throne in connection with the last judgment.

Naturally they will not be condemned to hell; they will be saved by their faith. (Some Bible scholars suggest that they wouldn't get a resurrection body like the one believers have in the first resurrection, but that they would live as spirit beings in the eternal life. The Bible does not speak about these people's resurrection body. We will see, when we get there. (Rev. 20:1-6).

The last judgment

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done"

(Revelation 20:12,13, NIV).

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in the creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:12,13, NIV).

"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken" (Matthew 12:36, NIV).

"Moreover, the Father judges no-one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father, who sent him" (John 5:22,23, NIV).

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1,2, NIV).

"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things in this life" (1 Corinthians 6:2,3), NIV.

"Anyone then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (James 4:17, NIV).

"The servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:47,48, NIV).

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3.1, NIV).

"For God does not show favouritism. All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now defending them.

This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares" (Romans 2:11-16, NIV).

All people of all times who have died unsaved will rise to be judged before the white throne at the last judgment. They will be judged according to what has been written in the books. God's heavenly bookkeeping is precise; all the deeds, words, and thoughts of every single person on earth have been written in the books, and everyone will be judged righteously, justly, and impartially (1 Peter 1:17, Ps. 75:3).

Here on earth we can often hide our deeds from other people and make believe we

are innocent, but before the divine court everything is naked and bare in his sight, who knows what we think in our hearts and judges everyone according to his own holy Word.

The judge seated on the white throne is Yeshua the Messiah, to whom God the Father has given all power to judge the living and the dead, so that everyone would honour the Son as they honour the Father.

The resurrected saints will sit with Yeshua and judge with him as "lay members" of the court. Believers of the church of the Lord will not appear before this court of the last judgment, because they have repented while they were still living on earth, and their sins have been forgiven because of Yeshua's atoning blood, for he was condemned and crucified for them.

There is no condemnation for the resurrected saints; together with their Lord they will judge the world and even the angels.

The sentence is not the same for all; the severity of the sentence depends on many things. First, on how much knowledge we have had about what is right and what is wrong according to the Word and commandments of God. Those who have had only little knowledge will get a lighter sentence for their evil deeds.

As for those who have had knowledge of God's Word and the Torah but have not obeyed, they will get a more severe sentence.

Teachers of the Word who have misled the sheep with their false teaching (2 Cor. 11:13-15; 2 Pet. 2:1-3) have the greatest responsibility as well the hottest fire of hell.

In Finland as in all countries where Christian faith has been preached, the sentence that

ungodly people are going to hear will be very severe, because in these countries virtually everyone has had the possibility to read and hear the gospel of Yeshua. If they have chosen to ignore God's Word they have abundantly within reach, there is nothing they can say to defend themselves.

What about so called pagans who have had no chance to hear or read the Word of God? What will their destiny be?

Though we cannot give an exhaustive answer to this question, we understand from apostle Paul's writings that these people who have had no possibility to hear or read the Word of God or the Torah, will be judged without law (Torah) based on the law of conscience we all have within us, if we don't harden ourselves by doing continually what is wrong (John 8:9; Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 1 Cor. 10:29; 1 Tim. 4:2; 2 Tim. 1:3, Tite 1:15).

These people will be judged much lighter than those who have had the possibility to hear or read God's word. There are Bible scholars who believe that although the eternal destiny of these so called pagans would not be quite the same as that of the resurrected church of saints, many of them would get to the heavenly joy by obeying the voice of their conscience.

Although we cannot know with certainty everything that relates to the destiny of these people, we do know that the Judge of the universe will judge them righteously and justly.

The fiery lake of hell – the second death

"Then the death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name

was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14,15, NIV).

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death" (Revelation 21:8, NIV).

"A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: 'If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name'" (Revelation 14:9-11, NIV).

"And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell. Everyone will be salted with fire" (Mark 9:47,48, NIV).

The Bible teaches us that all those who have died ungodly, without having repented, must go down to Hades (Hebrew sheol, Greek hades), the place of torment, which is like a pretrial detention before the last judgment (Luke 16:19-31).

At the last judgment they are brought from Hades in front of the throne, and they will be judged according to what they have done in life and what has been written in the heavenly book of deeds. All will

be checked from the Lamb's book of life, and if the name is not found there (there are no mistakes in heavenly book-keeping), the person is condemned into hell's unquenchable lake of fire, which is the second death, where the condemned will be tormented day and night and for ever and for ever in front of the holy angels and the Lamb (Rev. 21:27).

Hell, the lake of fire, is the final place of punishment of the devil and his fallen angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10; Matt. 8:28-29).

What, then, is actually hell, the second death?

We know only what we can learn from the Bible. The concept of hell is derived from the Hebrew word ge'hinnom (Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom). It was the valley south of Jerusalem, a place of sacrifice to idols (Josh. 15:8; 2 Kings 23:10; Topheth).

During the reigns of the kings Ahas and Manasse they burnt there children as sacrifice to idols (2 Chro. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31-33; 19:2-13). King Josiah desecrated the place (2 Kings 23:10). God had told his Old Testament prophets that it would be the place where people would be punished; and so ge'hinnom (Topheth) came to represent the place of punishment, a furnace (Jer. 7:32; 19:6,7, 12,13; Isa. 31:9; 66:24).

Later Yeshua, while he was teaching his disciples and the people, talked many times about the future judgment, hell (ge'hinnom) and its fire, which would be the destiny of the ungodly who do not repent (Matt. 5:22, 29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33, Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5).

The final place of torment will not be the valley of Hinnom, which is only a foreshadow. A

place has been prepared for the fire of God's wrath, where the ungodly will be tormented (Isa. 30:33; 66:24).

Throughout centuries Christians have had different ideas about hell, damnation. We will discuss here briefly a couple of the main interpretations, to be aware of and, at the same time, to learn to avoid heretical concepts on this matter.

1. Doctrine of Restoration.

One of the most famous false interpretations is the so called Gnostic doctrine of restoration, which teaches that God's influence is felt in hell, too, so that eventually all humans created in God's image will repent and be saved through the atoning work of Christ.

This gnostic heresy is justified by a faulty interpretation of Acts 3:21, among others, and also by the fact that the loving God can not torment man for ever in hell's fire. This heresy has made many people take a negative attitude towards the true biblical concept of restoration, although this heresy has nothing to do with biblical restoration of all things.

Furthermore, this heretical theory claims that if a part of people is in hell in everlasting torment, then God is not all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). This theory seeks to validate itself by distorting the Word of God, but by the light of comprehensive interpretation of God's Word it is clearly heresy. What makes this heresy so dangerous is that it gives people false hope of entering the kingdom of God without repentance and faith in Yeshua.

2. Annihilationism, which has two main trends. One teaches that when an unbeliever dies, he disappears completely, and there is no life for him after death. There are no grounds for this theory in the Bible, as many Bible texts prove that

even the life and existence of the ungodly continues after death, and all the ungodly will be eventually called before the throne to be judged. (Luke 16:19-31; 20:38; Heb. 9:27; Dan. 12:2, Rev. 20:11-15).

3. The second trend of annihilationism accepts the teaching of resurrection of condemnation; according to it, however, it teaches that the torment of the ungodly in hell's fire or damnation is not everlasting.

After a certain time they would be annihilated, and their existence would cease (Mal. 4:1-3).

The time a person would have to be tormented in damnation would depend on how ungodly their life has been on earth.

To support this teaching they take the Hebrew word *olam* (=eternity, era, world) as well the Greek word *aion* (= era,

period, age, eternity; plur. World), which are used in the Bible to describe eternity, and argue that these words do not necessarily mean eternity as an unending time but rather as a period of time.

The late Finnish professor Aapeli Saarisalo translates Revelation 14:11 in his translation of the NT: "The smoke of their torment rises from age to age..." Adherents also point out that the Bible does not teach immortality of soul as such (they say that the doctrine of the soul's immortality has been made up by the Catholic church), but that man achieves immortality only with God through Christ. (Ez.18:4; 1 Tim. 6:15,16; John 5:26).

Moreover, this doctrine bases its beliefs on certain Bible texts that speak about damnation (Greek *apoleia*=destruction,

damnatio;; *apollymi*= destruct, disappear, lose) in which the words of the original text may be interpreted as meaning destruction, which according to annihilationism means that man's soul, that is existence, is destroyed in the second death, in the fiery lake of hell (Matt. 7:13, Acts 8:20; Fil. 3:19; 2 Thes. 2:3; Heb. 10:39; 2 Pet. 3:7; Rev. 17:8, 11).

They make the comparison that just like Christ is the divine root and believers are the branches, Satan is the root of evil and the ungodly are the branches, and according to Malachi the ungodly will be burnt so that no root nor branch remains (which means that Satan and his troops and the ungodly who have followed him, will be destroyed in the fire of hell; (Mal. 4:1-3; John 15:1-6).

4. The traditional Christian belief is that hell's lake of fire, or damnation, does not destroy the ungodly completely.

This is evidenced by the fact that the beast and the false prophet have not been destroyed after having spent a thousand years in the fiery lake (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

According to the traditional Christian understanding God has placed eternity in people's hearts, and a person's soul is consequently immortal. It is not in God's nature to destroy completely a soul he has created (Ecc. 3:11).

Neither does the traditional Christian concept of hell accept the doctrine of periods of time, after which the ungodly would be destroyed. The strongest Hebrew expression for eternity in the Bible is *le olamei olamin*, and the cor-



Painting by: Jasmina Nurmesniemi

responding Greek *eis tus aionas ton aionon*, which mean for ever and for ever. This expression is used to refer to God, who lives forever (Rev. 4:9,10; 10:6; 15:7) and to the Messiah (Rev. 1:18), to the Messiah's reigning with the Father (Rev. 11:15), and to the bliss of believers (Rev. 22:5).

The same expression is used when talking about the eternal punishment of the beast, the false prophet, and the devil, and the ungodly (Rev. 20:10; 14:11; 19:3).

In other words, according to the traditional Christian concept of hell, the torment in hell is as everlasting as the eternity of God, of the Messiah and of the saints in heavens.

New heavens and a new earth

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17, NIV).

"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure" (Isaiah 66:22, NIV).

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea" (Revelation 21:1, NIV).

"By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Peter 3:7, 12,13, NIV).

When the last World war and the last judgment are over, God will create new heavens and a new earth, and old things do not come to any saint's mind who lives in the new world. When the Lord creates a new earth, there will be no sea.

The conditions will, however, be so perfectly wonderful that our imagination and understanding are still far too limited to grasp it. Certain Bible scholars assume that God will completely destroy the old universe and create again ex nihilo a new heaven and a new earth.

There are others who think that Peter's letter lets us understand that God will renew the old universe through fire.

Be it as it may, it is certain that this new world will endure before God's face, and righteousness will reign there. Interestingly, Peter speaks

about righteousness living in the new heaven, too. The promise God made to Abraham that he would have descendants as many as there are stars in the sky has provoked some scholars to conclude that believers, who are the descendants of Abraham, will have each one star (planet) to reign in the new world, when God enlarges the domain of righteousness from the earth up to the stars in the sky (Gen. 15:5,6; Rom. 4:11,12,16; Gal 3:7-9).

Eternity will show if this idea is right or wrong, in any case it is an interesting idea.

In connection with the creation of new heavens and a new earth, the prophetic foreshadows of the last - the seventh - biblical feast, the feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot, will come to fulfillment.

The feast of Tabernacles lasts 7 days + 1 day. The actual feast is 7 days, but after these days there is still the eighth day, a feast sabbath (Hebrew OT: *shemini atzeret, shabbaton*; Lev. 23:33-36, 39).

This eighth day is celebrated in Israel under the name of Simchat Torah, that is Rejoicing in the Law (in commemoration of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai on that day). Although this eighth day is a separate holiday, it is also seen as connected to the feast of Tabernacles.

The seven-day feast of Sukkot foreshadows the Messiah's

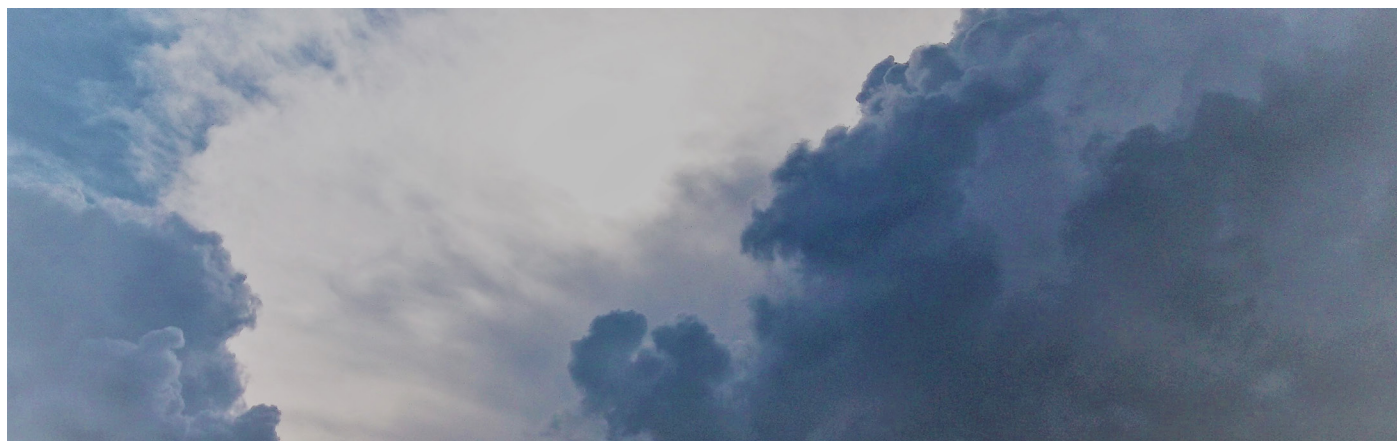
thousand-year kingdom of peace, as we have said above (Zech. 14:16-19).

The separate eighth day connected to Sukkot is a new beginning, a continuation to the Messiah's thousand-year kingdom. It is a picture of the age of new heavens and new earth that will come after the thousand-year kingdom and the last judgment, the age that is really an eternal continuation to the Messiah's thousand-year kingdom (Dan. 7:26,27).

New Jerusalem – eternal administrative centre of the new world

"O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. All your sons will be taught by the Lord and great will be your children's peace" (Isaiah 54:11-13, NIV).

"I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. 'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,' and there will be no



more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away."

And the One seated on the throne said, "Behold I make all things new." Then He said, "Write this down, for these words are faithful and true." And He told me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give freely from the spring of the water of life.

The one who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son. But to the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the second death.

Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, shining with the glory of God. Its radiance was like a most precious jewel, like a jasper, as clear as crystal.

The city had a great and high wall with twelve gates inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve angels at the gates. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west.

The wall of the city had twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who spoke with me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city and its gates and walls.

The city lies foursquare, with its width the same as its length. And he measured the city with the rod, and all its dimensions were equal—12,000

stadia in length and width and height.

And he measured its wall to be 144 cubits, by the human measure the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city itself of pure gold, as pure as glass.

The foundations of the city walls were adorned with every kind of precious stone: The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, with each gate consisting of a single pearl.

The main street of the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. But I saw no temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, because the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its lamp.

By its light the nations will walk, and into it the kings of the earth will bring their glory. Its gates will never be shut at the end of the day, because there will be no night there. And into the city will be brought the glory and honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who practices an abomination or a lie, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Then the angel showed me a river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the main street of the city. On either side of the river stood a tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit and yielding a fresh crop for each month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the na-

tions. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be within the city, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night in the city, and they will have no need for the light of a lamp or of the sun. For the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 21.2 – 22.5, BSB).

"In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:7,8, NIV).

The prophet Isaiah was already informed about the magnificence and splendour of the new heavenly Jerusalem (Isa. 54:11-13).

The prophets of the old covenant, however, did not see clearly the difference between the thousand-year messianic kingdom and the ultimate new world. Thus also Isaiah's visions include visions of the thousand-year kingdom and of the final new world.

The same goes for the prophet Ezekiel, when he was shown the splendour of Jerusalem and the temple when the Lord himself would live among his people. The visions point most of all to the thousand-year messianic kingdom with the Messiah living among his people Israel, but there are also glimpses of the new world and of the new Jerusalem, where Abraham, our forefather in faith, longed to enter (Ezek. 40-48; Hebr.11:8-10; 13:14).

While the apostle John was on the island of Patmos he was given a tremendous revelation which depicts rather in detail the splendour of the new

heavenly Jerusalem.

When the Lord creates new heavens and a new earth, the new Jerusalem will descend from heavens on the earth, and it will be the eternal administrative centre of the new world.

The new Jerusalem will be enormous in size, for its length, width, and height will be 12.000 stadia, that is 2.304 km. The area of the new Jerusalem will be 5.308.416 km², which is almost 16 times Finland's present area (337.000 km²).

The cubic contents of the city will be huge; there will be plenty of place for the bride of the Messiah. Before he was taken to the heaven from the Mount of Olives, Yeshua promised he would go to the house of his Father to prepare place for his own (John 14:1-6).

The new earth must be much bigger than this present earth in order to have room enough for the new Jerusalem.

Both the length, the width, and the height of the new Jerusalem are the same (2.304 km), which implies that it must be in the shape of either a cube or a pyramid. Some interpreters of prophetic word assume the new Jerusalem to be in the shape of a cube, others opt for the pyramid with probably three levels.

It is possible that the Egyptian pyramids, which were sepulchers of Pharaohs and rich people, are reflections of a pyramid-shaped heavenly Jerusalem. We will see, once we get there.

The glory of God and of the Lamb shines throughout the crystal clear city; there is no need for the light of the sun or of the moon. Cherubim are at the four corners of the throne and seraphs are standing

around the throne (Isa.6:1-3; Ezek. 1:1-28; 10:1-22; Rev. 4:5-8).

The twenty-four elders dressed in white robes sit around the throne (Rev. 4:4, 9-11). The Bible does not reveal us the identity of these elders, but it is possible that they represent the church of Israel of the old covenant and the church of the new covenant.

According to one interpretation they are the twelve sons of Jacob, or Israel, and the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Yeshua's words seem to support this explanation; he promised his apostles that they would sit on the twelve thrones and judge; and the Book of Revelation offers further support: the names of Jacob's twelve sons are written on the gates of the new Jerusalem and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are written on the twelve foundations made of precious jewel (Matt. 19:27-28).

When the angel showed John the city, he said he would show him the bride of the Lamb. This means that the new heavenly Jerusalem is the bride of the Lamb, because Yeshua's church bride lives there.

Or we could also say that God's Israel of the old covenant and of the new covenant will live in the new Jerusalem, and everyone who belongs to the Lord will one day enter the city through the gate of his own spiritual "family".

It is impossible to enter the city and live in the heavenly Jerusalem unless one has been grafted by faith in the root of the olive tree of Israel here on earth and unless true love for Israel fills our hearts already here while we live in our earthly bodies (Rom. 11:17-29; Eph. 2:11-22; Isa. 14:1).

It is impossible for those who

hate Israel to live in this city of God, where all God's own will live in a place corresponding their splendour.

Those who through their service and faithfulness are considered worthy of the splendour of the sun in their resurrection bodies, will live closest to the glorious throne of God and of the Lamb, whereas stars with less splendour will live farther away (1 Cor. 15:34-42; Dan. 12:2,3; Matt. 13:43).

Every one will have a great time, however, because in that city there is no envy, sorrow, pain, hunger, thirst, tears, sickness, nor death. At the last judgment the last of the enemies, death and Hades, will be thrown into the lake of fire, and so there will be no death nor curse in the new world (Isa. 25:6; 1 Cor. 15:50-55). It will be perfect bliss.

People often ask how we can rejoice in the bliss of heaven when we know that our loved ones must suffer the pains and torments of hell.

We should keep in mind that fleshly ties are valid only on the earth. Here we have grief and anguish in our hearts because of our loved ones and their salvation. Here we grieve and intercede for them so that they would repent and believe in Yeshua for their salvation (Rom. 9:1-3).

We may also conclude from Yeshua's words that anguish we feel because of unsaved family members seems to torment the ungodly also in hell in addition to the torments of hell (Luke 16:19-31).

In our heavenly state it is not so, however. When people die, all their earthly family relations in flesh are cut, because flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50-55). In the new world our relatives by the spi-

rit are those who have done the will of God according to His Word, while they were living on the earth (Matt. 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21).

There is only one big family of God in the heavenly Jerusalem; our God is the heavenly Father, Yeshua, who died for our sins, is the elder brother and we all are God's children in Yeshua the Messiah. Earthly families and relatives are there together if they have believed the Word and been saved on earth, but we won't have any sorrow nor pain for our unsaved relatives, because in the spirit they are no longer our relatives.

All memories of the old world will be wiped away completely, and they will not come to mind nor do they bother the perfect happiness and peace of the saints.

Who then will inhabit the new earth and the new heavens, where righteousness will live (2 Pet. 3:13)? Who are the nations that will live on the new earth, go up to the new Jerusalem and bring there their treasures and riches?

The Bible does not give a clear and unambiguous answer. Things that relate to a distant past and a distant future are mainly shrouded in mystery and God has but only slightly lifted the veil that covers the coming ages (1 Thes. 5.1).

We only know that God will probably go on creating, and righteous, immortal people will live on that new earth, and according to Peter, even perhaps inhabit the new heavens. We also know that the heavenly new Jerusalem will be the eternal administrative centre of the new world.

There will be the throne of God and of the Lamb, and His saints in their resurrection state will serve the Lord and rule the future world eternally

with the Lamb.

Everything will be restored - definitively

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ the firstfruits; then at His coming, those who belong to Him. Then the end will come, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put everything under His feet."

Now when it says that everything has been put under Him, this clearly does not include the One who put everything under Him. And when all things have been subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:22-28, BSB).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the Beloved One.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ. In Him we

were also chosen as God's own, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything by the counsel of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, would be for the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:3-12, BSB).

It was God's plan already before the creation of the world to bring all things in heavens and on earth together in Yeshua the Messiah, so that we would be for the praise of his glory.

This is the goal of God's gracious plan.

This plan will come to fulfillment after the end of the world, the last judgment, and the creation of the new world, when the Messiah, after having destroyed all rulers, principalities, and powers, and after having reigned with his saints in his thousand-year kingdom, hands the kingdom over to God the Father and submits to the Father in the new Jerusalem, where the throne of God and of the Lamb is.

That is when all things will be brought together in the Messiah, under the dominion of one God, the Almighty Father, and God will be all in all.

That is when everything will be restored completely in heavens and on earth – definitively.

Every one will have only one credo – the one given to Israel through Moses: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4).

This series of articles about the Signs of the Messiah's coming ends here. The Yovel Magazine thanks Keijo Lindeman for his years long work on this. We look forward to, God willing, to see articles of other topics from him.

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

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