

September 2010



High Holy Day Greetings in Yeshua,

Erev Yom Teruah (Rosh HaShana)

Wednesday, September 8, 2010

Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)

Saturday, September 18, 2010

Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles)

From September 22-30, 2010

A Many-Faceted Jewel

The seventh month on the Hebrew/biblical calendar, Tishrei, comes early this year. It is considered the holiest month of the year since the "High Holy Days" occur at this time. Holy: sanctified, set apart, *kadosh*. Days can be holy to God. People can be holy to God. But only one Book is holy to God: The Holy Bible—His *Torah*. This Book is no ordinary book. It contains words of Life. It is the Word of God. The ancient rabbis called it a "many-faceted jewel." Our nation, and our world, desperately need to return to the Word of God, because rampant "lawlessness" (Matt. 24:12) has left us spiritually bankrupt, and ripe for divine judgment.

We need to return to the Holy Scriptures as our guidebook, and standard for daily living! Fathers and mothers should routinely include the D'var Adonai (Word of the Lord) in conversation around the dinner table (See Deut. 6:7.), and should read the Bible aloud to their little ones.

It is our great pleasure this month to present a brand new translation of the Bible—a Messianic Jewish version, called the **Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible**. A diverse community of Messianic Jewish and Christian scholars is collaborating in the production of this new translation which families can enjoy reading together. Yeshua, the Tree of Life, is presented in His original Hebraic context, making Him recognizable to His Jewish people, and richer and fuller to both Jew and Gentile alike.

Jewels From John

The first book of the Bible to be released as part of the **Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible** project is the Book of John—our offer to you this month. This eyewitness account of Yeshua's life, as told by His most beloved disciple, has often been seen as the least Jewish of all the Gospel accounts. As you will see from this new Messianic Jewish translation, it is actually one of the most Jewish! To quote the editors of the **Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible (TLV)**: "As you read this Book of John... you will see how Yeshua observed Shabbat, Passover, and Sukkot (Tabernacles) with His people, and even Hanukkah (the Feast of Dedication) in Jerusalem. Yeshua teaches directly from the Torah—referenced for you in the footnotes. You can show any Jewish friend exactly what Yeshua teaches from the Hebrew Bible."

The Messianic Jewish theologians who translated this new version of the fourth Gospel, or *Besorah*, concluded that John's audience in writing his account was largely Jewish. We noted with interest that John's goals appear to be the same as the goals of our *Jewish Jewels* ministry: **to encourage those who already believe in Yeshua, and to lead to faith those who do not yet put their trust in Him.**

Jewel #1: The Word Became Flesh

"In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." (John 1:1-2) The **TLV** connects John 1:1 with Genesis 1:1 and Proverbs 8:23. Jewish readers encountering the words "In the beginning," in Hebrew *b'resheet*... would automatically connect with the first book of the Torah, *B'resheet* (Genesis) and the creation of the world. The book

of Proverbs, speaking about wisdom, says: "I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was even an earth."

Wisdom pre-existed. A Word pre-existed. All creation came about as the result of an All-Wise God speaking. He "said"—A creative Word (*Logos*) spoke—and things came into being. The "Word" is a "He," and is also God. He is the Messiah who pre-existed. This is the Word that became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:14): Yeshua, the Son of God.

There is a Jewish concept of a creative word of God that existed before the creation. This concept, called the "*Memra*," is repeated 596 times in the Jewish Targums. Although the word *Memra* is the exact counterpart of the word *Logos*, when Christian *Logos* interpretation began to spread, the Rabbis avoided using the word *Memra* [Risto Santala, **The Messiah in the New Testament**], especially since the *Memra* was often identified in rabbinic discussions as the Messiah, or as God. So, when John said that Yeshua was the Word with God in the beginning, he was connecting Him with the *Memra*. To quote Santala: "It would appear that the whole *Logos* theology is related to this ancient Jewish interpretation. John does, then, exemplify Jewish rather than Hellenistic thought."

Jewel #2: Welcoming Yeshua

"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him; but the world did not know Him. He came to His own, but His own did not welcome Him." (John 1:10-11) Who "welcomed" Yeshua at His first coming? All Jews, but primarily the common man, the "multitudes," as opposed to the religious leaders and those in power. The humble welcomed Yeshua, those who in their meekness sensed their great need of God. When Yeshua ate at a Pharisee's house, a woman who was a sinner was the one who welcomed Him by observing the Jewish hospitality practices of washing, kissing, and anointing—the Messiah's feet—which greatly moved Him (Luke 7:44-46). Before His final Passover, when Yeshua entered Jerusalem on a donkey, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, a huge crowd welcomed Him. "So they took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, '*Hoshia-na!* Blessed is He who comes in the name of Adonai! The King of Israel!'" (John 12:13)

It is interesting to note that Yeshua will be welcomed back with these same words: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" In Hebrew: *Baruch HaBa B'Shem Adonai*. Could this be the year that He returns as the shofar sounds at Yom Teruah or Yom Kippur? Do you have your spiritual welcome mat out? Would Yeshua feel welcome in your home or congregation TODAY?

As we contemplate the Akedah, the Binding of Isaac, at Yom Teruah this year, we are reminded of a traditional rabbinic teaching that the "shofar of Mashiach" will be the right horn of Abraham's ram, the great shofar (שופר גדול), that will summon all to the mountain of God (Mount Moriah = Calvary!).

Jewel #3: "Amen!"

"Yeshua answered him, 'Amen! Amen! I tell you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' " (John 3:3) We are used to seeing "Verily, verily," or "Most assuredly" instead of Amen! at the beginning of this familiar verse in the Gospel of John. This is one of the unique Hebrew-roots features of this new translation. The glossary of the **TLV** explains the use of "Amen" as follows: "At the end of a sentence, this word means, 'Let it be so,' indicating that the readers or listeners agree with what was just said. At the start of a phrase, it means, 'This is a truth you can believe and live by'."

"Amen" is a Hebrew word. Its spelling in Hebrew is identical to its three letter root "aman" אמן which means to confirm, support, be faithful or certain. The root aman has many other derivatives related to the word "Amen," that help us see the depth behind this word: *emet* (truth), *ne'eman* (faithful), *omnam* (truly), *emunah* (faithfulness) among others. Thus, when Yeshua opens a sentence with Amen! Amen!, He is expressing a rock solid truth that you can trust in, be sure of, and base your life upon. *Ken* (Yes!), you must be born again!

Some might wonder: "Is being born again a 'Jewish' concept?" Consider the following quote from **Waters of Eden** by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, a traditional Jewish rabbi, as he explains the concept of Mikvah, or ritual immersion in Judaism: "...The Mikvah represents the womb. When an individual enters the Mikvah, he is re-entering the womb, and when he emerges, he is as if born anew."

Jewel #4: Trust vs. Believe

In Hebrew thought, believing is not mere intellectual assent. To believe involves action as well as thought. Yeshua's fellow Jews knew this. "For example, when Yeshua commends people for their faith, He wasn't simply interested in what they thought about Him. After all, even the demons of satan recognized that Yeshua is Ben-Elohim, and screamed in fear! Yeshua was—and is—looking for disciples who put their trust in Him and follow Him without looking back." (TLV Foreword)

"Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do to perform the works of God?' Yeshua answered them, 'This is the work of God, to trust [rather than "believe"] in the One He sent'." (John 6:28-29) When we truly trust God, we live according to His Word. We obey Him radically. We don't lean on our own understanding. We accept His rule and sovereignty over our lives. We see everything that comes into our lives as filtered first through His loving fingers. We allow God to take control. Recently, an older Jewish man told Jamie that he was struggling to accept Yeshua because he was not yet ready to give up control of his life. He was counting the cost! Pray for Barry—to put his trust in Yeshua before it's too late. May he, as well as many Jewish people, both here in South Florida and around the world, welcome Yeshua as their Messiah, Savior and Lord during the High Holy Days. May their names be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, not for one year, but for all eternity.

Jewel #5: God's Seal on Yeshua!

"Don't work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him, God the Father has put the seal of approval." (John 6:27) The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has declared Yeshua "Kosher." He has put His seal upon Him! When John, the Beloved Disciple, wrote his Book, to seal something was to stamp it with a signet or private mark for security or preservation. A seal was also a mark of genuineness. Our Father God was saying to the world, in today's vernacular: Yeshua is the "real deal." He is the promised Messiah (There were over 40 who claimed to be the Messiah in Yeshua's lifetime!). According to the Talmud, "the seal of the Holy One, blessed be He, is *emet*, truth." (Sandhedrin 64a) Yeshua is....the way, the TRUTH, and the life (John 14:6)!

Yeshua was sealed by God. We have been sealed by God. One hundred forty-four thousand Jews will be sealed by God in the future. The word seal is found 10 times from Matthew to Yehuda (Jude) and 22 times in the Book of Revelation. It is a concept whose prophetic time has come.

Our Jewish Bridegroom, Sealed by God, is returning SOON for the Bride He purchased with His own blood. Atonement has already been made for us. We fast on Yom Kippur as we await the return of our Bridegroom, praying for the salvation of the entire House of Israel, who God longs to see enter into the New (Marriage) Covenant. *"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."* (Ephesians 1:13-14) Your security is in Yeshua. Live like the "real deal."

Jewel #6: Jews or Judeans?

"After these events, Yeshua was walking about in the Galilee. He didn't want to walk in Judea, because the Judean leaders wanted to kill Him. Now the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near." (John 7:1-2) Most Bible translations say, "...because the Jews sought to kill Him." The words *hoi Ioudaioi* in Greek occur seventy-one times in John's Gospel. It was up to the translators of the King James Version or other previous versions to decide whether to translate these Greek words as

"the Jews," "the Judeans," or "the Judean leaders." John 7:1 is a classic example of mis-translation that has helped fuel the fires of anti-Semitism throughout the centuries, with "the Jews" appearing to always be "the enemy." In John 7:1 it is clear that John is referring to the Judeans, inhabitants of Judea, as opposed to the Galileans, inhabitants of the Galilee. All were "Jews," but Jews from different regions. In this passage, it is actually specific Jews who are referred to—Jewish religious leaders—as is the case in many of the verses in John, i.e., John 9:13,18, 22.

The use of the word "Jews" in the Gospel of John has caused many traditional Jews to view this very Jewish book as one that demonizes them. The **Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible** has sought to rectify this, replacing "the Jews" with "the Judeans" or "the Judean leaders" where appropriate, so that the term *hoi Ioudaioi* does not refer to the nation as a whole, in a way that can be called racially anti-Semitic.

John's Gospel is NOT anti-Jewish. Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22). Yeshua of Natzeret is "The King of the Jews" (John 19:19). The **TLV** says that, "Many Judeans read this sign, because the place where Yeshua was executed was near the city..." (John 19:20).

In **Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus**, Dr. Michael L. Brown points out that many of John's negative statements about "the Jews" are limited to specific groups of leaders. Even these statements, however, are no more anti-Semitic than the Hebrew Scriptures, where both God and the prophets call the people of Israel stiff-necked and obstinate. Dr. Brown also points out that the term "the Jews" in the Hebrew Scriptures, *haYehudim*, can also be used in several different ways, sometimes meaning only "the Judeans," the inhabitants of Judea (Neh. 2:16). The negative comments in the Gospel of John against "the Jews" are not meant to apply to all Jewish people.

Jewel #7: That's YOU! Shine for Yeshua this month.

May you experience the joy of Messiah's presence during the High Holy Days.

Love in Him, *Neil & Jamie*

P.S. Order your copy of the **Tree of Life Gospel of John**, and consider ordering one to share—especially with Jewish pre-believers. Allow John the Beloved to introduce them to the love of their Messiah, and to that Wisdom, which is a Tree of Life.

P.P.S. Jeremy Storch's latest CD, **All Rise**, includes 14 original, anointed Messianic songs.

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| SUN 2:30 PM | FL | Tampa/St. Pete. | WCLF TV 22 |
| THU 11:30 AM | FL | Miami/Ft. Laud. | WHFT TV 45 |
| SUN 1:30 PM | FL | Tallahassee | WVUP TV 45 |
| SAT 10:30 PM | FL | West Palm Beach | WFGC TV 61 |
| SUN 2:30 PM | GA | Columbus | WYBU TV 16 |
| SUN 1:30 PM | IA | Dubuque | KFXB TV 40 |
| SUN 1:30 PM | MO | New Bloomfield | KNLJ TV 25 |
| SUN 4:00 PM | NJ/NY | NYC/New Jersey | WMBC TV 63 |
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