

January 2010

The letter ח in Hebrew signifies
"New" as well as "Life."



Actual size



חדש

Dear Mispochah in Yeshua,

2010: A "New" Year

A new year begins on January 1, 2010 according to the Gregorian or solar calendar used by most of the modern world. A new year is for many the opportunity for new beginnings. For most people, the word "new" has positive connotations. Newborn babies. Newlyweds. New home. New car. New job. New Walmart in town. New cure. "New" has emotional overtones of freshness and life.

The primary Hebrew word for new is חדש, *chadash*, pronounced cha—DASH with the initial guttural ch sound. The root includes both the ideas of new and renew. The first letter of the word *chadash* is the letter *chet* ח, the same letter that signifies "life" in Hebrew. The numerical value of *chet* is eight, the biblical number of new beginnings. Like the octave in a musical scale that goes to a higher level, ח symbolizes in Jewish thinking man's ability to reach beyond the natural realm to the supernatural, connecting with the Creator. We all need this *kesher* (connection) in 2010. We hear the voice of our Messiah whispering a glorious truth from Revelation 21:5, "...Behold, I make all things new..." In Hebrew that would be, "...הנני עושה הכל חדש..."

The New Moon

The phrase "new year" does not appear in the Holy Scriptures. The civil year on the Hebrew calendar that begins in the fall is known as *Rosh Hashana*, literally the head of the year. The concept of newness in the Hebrew reckoning of time is related to the month, not the year. The Hebrew calendar is a lunar calendar based on the moon's circuit around the earth. The new moon became extremely important to the early Hebrews because it enabled them to determine when to celebrate the feasts and festivals of the Lord.

The Hebrew word *chodesh*, חודש, is a word which means new, but only as it refers to the "new moon." *Chodesh* is the period of time from one new moon to the next, and therefore, the Hebrew word for "month." *Rosh Chodesh* is the term used for "head of the month." It is also known as "sanctification of the month." It is interesting to note that many times in the Hebrew Scriptures the Lord describes the New Moon as a day on par with the other festivals, requiring the blowing of trumpets and special sacrifices. For example: *"Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God"* (Numbers 10:10). When King Solomon determined to build a temple for God, he expressed his desire in a letter to Hiram, king of Tyre: *"Behold, I am building a temple for the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to Him, to burn before Him sweet incense, for the continual showbread, for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, on the New Moons, and on the set feasts of the Lord our God. This is an ordinance forever to Israel"* (2 Chronicles 2:4).

In Temple times (and until the year 359 CE) on the last day of the month, people in Jerusalem would watch for the appearance of the new moon. When the head of the Sanhedrin and the elders

were informed of the first notice of the crescent in the sky, the shofar was blown and the beginning of the month announced. That night, torches and bonfires were lit on the tops of mountains throughout the country to announce to surrounding towns and villages that the new moon had been officially declared. The following day (or two days outside of Israel) was celebrated as the New Moon festival.

What about today? *Rosh Chodesh*, the New Moon, is still a monthly holiday in Judaism. It is a way of sanctifying time monthly, just as the *Shabbat* sanctifies time weekly. The New Moon is announced in synagogues on the preceding *Sabbath* in a special ceremony. The ceremony often includes supplication for national redemption and prayers for a prosperous month. The day preceding *Rosh Chodesh* is called *Yom Kippur Katan* (little *Yom Kippur* or a minor Day of Atonement), a day to repent before the beginning of a new month. The major theme of New Moon celebrations in Judaism today is "renewal." Joy and song are associated with this day which is also called "The Day of Good Beginnings," and is considered an appropriate day for housewarmings, dedications and other *simchas*. In 2010, *Rosh Chodesh* occurs on January 16, February 15, March 16, April 15, May 14, June 13, July 12, August 11, September 9, October 9, November 8 and December 8.

We have often thought of incorporating the New Moon celebration into our Messianic Jewish lifestyle since it definitely is scriptural. Perhaps this year! We could gather around the "King's Table" as was the custom in Bible times. *"And David said to Jonathan, 'Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. ...' "* (1 Samuel 20:5) In our case, the "table" would be the Communion (Lord's Seder) Table of the bride in the Song of Songs who proclaims: *"While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance"* (Song of Songs 1:12). Yeshua is the King of Kings. His table is spread with everything we need, and even things we desire. The New Moon points us to Him who is the *Alef* (Alpha), **The** Beginning (Revelation 1:8). *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ [Messiah]."* (Colossians 2:16)

We, the Bride of the King, are like the moon. We have no light of our own, but only that which is reflected from the sun. Yet our Messiah King says that we are *"fair as the moon"* (Song of Songs 6:10). May each of us reflect the Light of Yeshua each month of 2010. May this be a year when we all sanctify time, considering our days as holy to the Lord!

A New Spirit

New spirit in Hebrew is *ruach hadasha*, רוח חדשה. This "new" spirit comes from God. It is a priceless treasure, the answer to our deepest needs and desires. Veiled references to this new spirit are found throughout the Holy Scriptures. When Samuel anointed Saul, king of Israel (1 Samuel 10), he told Saul that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him when he met a group of prophets, and Saul would be turned into another (new) man. We read in 1 Samuel 10:9 that as Samuel finished speaking with Saul, God gave him another (new) heart.

The prophets of Israel looked toward the day when the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would put His Spirit on the **inside** of mortal men, making it possible to live a life—a new life—pleasing to God, in keeping with His commandments. The Lord said to the house of Israel through the prophet Ezekiel, *"...Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, says the Lord God. Therefore turn and live!"* (Ezekiel 18:30-32). Ezekiel continues elaborating on God's plan: 1) to sanctify His name which Israel profaned among the nations, and 2) to do a new thing in the heart of His people Israel: *"For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you*

a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:24-27).

Did God keep this promise? Yes. Reports come to us monthly about Israelis receiving new hearts and new spirits as they receive Yeshua as Messiah, Savior and Lord. But God, in His mercy, extended the promise of a new heart and new spirit to "whosoever will"—not just Jews in the land of Israel, but all people in all nations of the world. Nevertheless, the concept of a new birth is originally a Jewish concept. Risto Santala in **The Messiah in the New Testament** makes the following comment: "And is the idea of being 'born again' foreign to the Jew? The Sidur, prayer-book, mentions it when speaking of the Coming of the Messiah, using the term *briah hadashah*, or 'new creation.' " The Talmud teaches that a convert who embraces Judaism is like a newborn child. This change in status occurs following immersion in the *mikveh* (baptism) which represents the womb. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan in **Waters of Eden** writes: "When an individual enters the mikveh he is re-entering the womb, and when he emerges he is as if born anew."

Yeshua made the New Birth a prerequisite for entrance into the Kingdom of God. He explained this to a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews as recorded in the *B'rit Hadasha* in John 3:3-5: " *'...Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'* Nicodemus said to Him, *'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'* Jesus answered, *'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'* "

A new birth. A new life. Purification and renewal. Rabbi Saul (Paul) also spoke of these facets of being born again: " *...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us abundantly through Yeshua HaMashiach [Jesus Christ] our Savior...* " (Titus 3:5-6).

The "new creation" that the ancient rabbis associated with the Coming of the Messiah is a reality in the lives of all those who experience the new birth. " *Therefore, if anyone is in Messiah [Christ], he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* " (2 Corinthians 5:17) When a new believer is immersed (enters the *mikveh*), he is proclaiming publicly that his old, sinful self is dead and his new man is alive to righteousness. (See Romans 6:4.)

New Birth Realities

Richard Wurmbrand, a Jewish believer and true saint of God, who endured more than fourteen years of Fascist and Communist imprisonment and torture in his homeland of Romania, expressed the truth of the new birth in deep, powerful ways in **The Oracles of God**: "Nothing except the new birth can enable us to get to Heaven. No amount of religiosity can cleanse us of our sins. No good intention helps. If a person has ink on his fingers, his decision to wash himself will not make him clean. Only the act of washing removes the stain. We need the washing of the new birth." Wurmbrand stresses the importance of becoming an entirely new creature who yields up all his self-will. This, of course, is only possible through the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit. May we follow our Messiah in 2010 in praying, " *...not as I will, but as You will* " (Matthew 26:39).

Pastor Wurmbrand continues with, "God's great gift is the possibility of being born again. The newborn man begins to live and act as if he had seen paradise before his eyes. Then slowly the baptism of action drives away the dark clouds that veil Heaven, and as clearly as he sees material things, he gains the intuition of invisible powers because this invisible world will become real. A newborn man is a man who has found God, and all at once the vague, distant notion of the Godhead is exchanged for a personal, sensible, present, and living reality."

You can be born anew: Repent! Make t'shuvah. Give Yeshua your sin, your sadness, your sickness, your life—and receive His forgiveness, joy, healing and new birth!

New Wine

The phrase "new wine" is found 21 times in the Holy Scriptures, the same number of times as "new moon." The prophet Isaiah tells us that there is a blessing in new wine (Isaiah 65:8). It was an offering to the Lord, part of the tithe. In the *B'rit Hadasha* (New Covenant), a parable dealing with new wine is found in Matthew 9, Mark 2 and Luke 5. The Matthew version reads, *"No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved"* (Matthew 9:16-17). Yeshua uses a rabbinic style of teaching here in which a statement is verified by using two examples i.e., two witnesses to verify a truth.

The talmidim (disciples) on the day of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) were accused of being filled (drunk) with new wine (Acts 2:13). In reality, they were filled with the Spirit of God. The new wineskin ordained by God to hold the new wine was the disciples themselves. Their bodies had become temples of the *Ruach HaKodesh*. The Temple with its sacrificial system, priesthood and procedures for becoming right with God were the old wineskin. The Messiah had ushered in a new and living way—a way to enter the Holy of Holies through the blood of His sacrifice.

The *Torah* did not become old or invalid, but rather expanded, stretched, and made full through the Messiah. Can you picture the wineskin expanding when Yeshua said, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matthew 5:27-28).

Yeshua came to fulfill the Law, not to destroy it. The fulfillment of the promise of His Spirit on the inside brought with it the new wineskin of the Body of Believers, also known as the "temple of God": *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16). Through this Spirit, the *Torah* is written on the hearts of Messiah's followers in fulfillment of the promise of a *B'rit Hadashah*, a New Covenant, (Jeremiah 31:31) which will be the topic of next month's newsletter. This New Covenant merits an entire letter because of the love that birthed and sustains it.

A New Song

"Sing to the Lord a new song..." This phrase is found many times in the Psalms of David. The new song, *shir hadash*, שִׁיר חָדָשׁ, is always a song of praise since there is always a new reason to give God glory. A final new song in the Book of Revelation is directed to the Lamb, Yeshua, in reverence and worship: *"...You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth"* (Revelation 5:9-10).

May the Lord put a new song in your mouth continually throughout 2010.

God bless you for giving us new reasons to thank and praise Him each month!

Love in Yeshua,



P.S. An interesting fact about Nicodemus: He was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, and his full name was Nakdimon Ben Gurion. This "Son of Gurion" was one of the three richest nobles in Jerusalem at the time of Yeshua. His family was so distinguished that the former Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, took his Hebrew name from the family of Nicodemus. If you go with us next Hanukkah to Israel on our 2010 Mercy Mission, you will land at Ben Gurion International Airport!