

HANUKKAH BEGINS THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 19TH THIS YEAR!

Blessings in the Messiah Yeshua,

Better than Mistletoe, Kisses from God!

Once a year "mistletoe" appears in stores around our country and following an old pagan Druid custom, people receive kisses beneath it. God has a better idea—a **much** better idea: kisses from Him! Those of you who have been a part of this ministry for very long know what a kiss from God is: a living word from God's lips, a "rhema word," God speaking directly, prophetically to His people. We should live by the kisses from God's mouth. Deuteronomy 8:3 expresses this truth as follows "...man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."

Although we have already celebrated the birth of the Messiah (October, Tabernacles), this is the month that the scriptures recounting His birth receive the greatest attention. We'd like to focus on them as well, in hopes that God might kiss you as you meditate on them. Take time in December to read all the verses of the birth narrative: Luke 1:5-80; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-38; Matthew 2. Remember: The God of all creation chose to come and dwell among sinful men as a Jewish baby in a Jewish land. He had a Jewish mother (Miriam) and a Jewish name (Yeshua).

Kisses from Matthew

Wise men from the East came seeking the One born "King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2). After they found Him, *"They departed into their own country **another way**"* (Matthew 2:12, emphasis ours). Once we find Yeshua, the "King of the Jews," our lives are never the same. We make *t'shuva* (repentance) which literally means to turn around and go another way. That is why the Bible says that *"If anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). If you are wise, you too will seek Him, turn from your own ways and go God's way!

"Now after Yeshua was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him' ." (Matthew 2:1,2)

It is somewhat unusual that the Gospel of Matthew, being the "most Jewish" of the four gospels is the only one which records the celestial phenomenon that took place at the birth of the Messiah. Why? Because the Jews were forbidden to worship the moon and the stars. We see astrologers and stargazers denounced in passages such as Isaiah 47:13. Gentiles are referred to in Rabbinic literature as "worshippers of fortune and the stars." Nevertheless, Matthew looked back to certain biblical prophecies in the Tenach in which Jewish Messianic expectation was connected with stars.

1.) Numbers 24:17: the vision of Balaam the prophet concerning "days to come": *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."*

The Jews connected the coming of the Messiah with the seeing of a star based on this verse

from the Book of Numbers. When Rabbi Akiva (rebellion of 132-135 A.D.) proclaimed Simon Bar Kochba ('son of a star') as the Messiah, he made reference to this prophecy.

2.) It is believed by many scientists that a celestial phenomenon occurred at the time of the birth of Messiah: a conjunction of the planets Jupiter (considered by the ancients to be the star of David) and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces. This occurs only once in 800 years. In addition, there was a double conjunction of Venus & Jupiter in 3 and 2 B.C., leading some scholars to conclude that Messiah may have been born in the autumn of 2 B.C., with the Magi coming during Hanukkah (on December 25), having seen Jupiter in its "retrograde motion" stopping over Bethlehem.

3.) Alfred Edersheim mentions a 15th century Rabbi (Yitshak Ben Yehuda Abrabanel) who wrote that the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Pisces has a special significance for Israel. He prophesied that both the birth of the Messiah and Israel's final redemption would be foreshadowed by parallel phenomenon.

Additionally, a collection of Rabbinic writings (*Midrashim*) says that a star "will appear from the East," and will be the "Messiah's star." This and other fascinating facts for the scientific minded can be found in **The Messiah in the New Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings** by Risto Santala.

"And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh." (Matthew 2:11)

Part of Messianic expectation at the time of Yeshua was that the Messiah would be given gifts. This is generally linked to a phrase in Jacob's blessing of his son Judah: *"Until he (Shiloh) comes."* The Rabbis traditionally read *shi loh* as "gifts for him." A verse in Psalm 45, (a song concerning the King), spoke of gifts to be given to the Messiah: *"The Daughter of Tyre will come with a gift, men of wealth will seek your favour"* (vs. 12). Psalm 68:29 says that *"Kings will bring you gifts."* This also had a Messianic interpretation as did Psalm 72 which says: *"The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. All kings will bow down to him..."* (vs. 10-11).

Isaiah 60, defined as Messianic in character in Rabbinic literature, includes the following: *"The wealth of the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of nations will come...And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD."* The gifts brought by the Magi: gold, frankincense and myrrh are often related to Messiah's offices of king, priest and prophet. They can also symbolize Yeshua's royalty, divinity and humanity. What can we bring the Messiah today? A humble, contrite, thankful heart and our love and praises.

Kisses from Luke

"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes..." (Luke 2:7). *"And this shall be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger"* (Luke 2:12). Why would swaddling cloths be a sign? Was this something unusual? Yes! Swaddling cloth here refers to burial cloths. As soon as Yeshua entered the world, He was wrapped with the same kind of cloths that would cover His body in death. Yeshua was born to die...for the sins of the entire world. For your sins. For our sins. Jews and Gentiles alike.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of

David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child." (Luke 2:4,5)

"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

It was common knowledge at the time of Yeshua that the Messiah was to come from the house of David. The genealogies of Matthew and Luke show that Yeshua was, both on his mother's side and on his foster father's side, legally recognized as a descendent of David. Since both Mary and Joseph were of the house of David, their family property, in Jewish law untransferable to another tribe, would lie in the vicinity of Bethlehem. That is why they had to leave Nazereth and go to the "city of David" for taxation purposes.

"Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?'" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:34-35)

Many Jewish people believe that the idea of an immaculate conception is foreign to Jewish belief. This is not entirely accurate. In **Jonathan's Tagum**, a traditional Jewish book, it says that God will one day raise up a second Moses "through the Holy Spirit."

The idea that the Messiah will be God is also found in ancient Jewish sources. Rabbi David Qimhi, a 13th century rabbi, is quoted as saying that the Messiah will be called by the name El, meaning "God," because his origins are from of old, from ancient times." Yeshua Himself said it: *"Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).*

"For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32)

These words, spoken by Simeon, a just and devout Jew upon whom the Holy Spirit rested, were uttered as the parents of baby Yeshua brought him into the temple on the 40th day of his life in accordance with Jewish law. They are a direct fulfillment of two prophecies in the Tenach.

Isaiah 9:2 *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."*

Isaiah 42:6 *"I the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles..."*

Yeshua would be a light to the gentiles because they had no light, no Torah to guide them. To the Jews He would be a "covenant," and His glory would dwell amongst them. Romans 9:4 expounds upon this idea when it says, *"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the **glory**, and the **covenants**, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises."*

The good news for "Gentiles" is that once they see "the Light," get the revelation, and receive the Jewish Messiah, they become part of the commonwealth of Israel and heirs to the **glory**, the **covenants**, **promises**, etc. as well.

A Kiss from Jamie

Jamie will be giving a message entitled "Let every Heart Prepare Him Room" to a women's group in Orlando, Fl. this month. She will be sharing how we, like Miriam, the mother of the Messiah, need to prepare our hearts for His coming—for His birth in us, for a new and deeper spiritual encounter with Him, and for His soon return to take away His Bride.

A glimpse of Miriam's heart shows us a heart prepared to receive Yeshua.

Miriam's heart

Scripture references

humble	Luke 1:38; Psalm 10:17
pure	Matthew 5:8; Jeremiah 24:7
filled with songs of praise	Luke 1:46-55; Ephesians 5:19
love of God	Luke 1:49-50
faith in the Word of God	Luke 1:45
fear of the Lord	Luke 1:38
ascribing strength to God	Luke 1:51-52
knowledge of and obedience to God's Law	Luke 1:38; 54-55
spiritual orientation (looking up)	Luke 1:48; Colossians 3:2
God's Word hidden in the heart	Luke 2:19
Jewish heart	Romans 2:28-29

A Kiss A Day: Un Beso Para Cada Dia

We are thrilled to announce that Jamie's devotional commentary, **A Kiss A Day**, is now available in **Spanish. Un Beso Para Cada Dia** contains the same 77 days in the Love of God from the Song of Songs as the English original. The cover has been changed (no roses) to make the book more acceptable to men. (God wants to kiss the "machos" among us!)

A Kiss A Day is a great way to begin a new year. If you have never read this devotional, we think you'll be blessed by it. Following are some of the comments we have received.

From a woman via email: *"It is with great delight that I write to tell you that I am familiar with your ministry thru your book **A Kiss A Day**. I have read & re-read it. It is a kiss from God to me. I have also purchased many copies and take great pleasure giving them as gifts and telling them that I pray it is a kiss from God to them as it was me!"* – Mary Ellen B.

From a man via email: *"I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your book **A Kiss A Day** and was sorry when I was finished today. Are you writing a second one (I pray) for it was life changing to know the depth to which you took the scriptures in Song with all the meanings of the Hebrew words. WOW, I was so blessed studying the Song along with your book. There is so much meaning hidden in the Scriptures and I love to dig deep."* – Jacques

From a female prisoner in Pennsylvania: *"...I saw your book **A Kiss A Day** in the chapel library. I did not read the back cover or anything about the book, but just picked it up because I felt "drawn" to it. When I returned to my room and began to read it my spirit soared within me! This was the God and Yeshua I yearned to know! Thank you for this beautiful book."* – D'Layne M.

From a woman in North Carolina: *"Having just finished your book, **A Kiss A Day**, I am left in awe and wonder—truly "starry-eyed" for our Savior. I thank the Lord with all my heart for bringing me this truth and I also want to thank you for your obedience and faithfulness to Him, allowing Him to share His truth through you. You are an inspirational example of His boundless affection when a heart is surrendered in faith... You are truly one of the many jewels adorning the Bride!"* – Ingrid C.

May He kiss you continually with the kisses of His mouth, for His love indeed is better than wine (Song of Songs 1:2)! May **this** be your focus during the month of December. **Let every heart prepare Him room!**

Much Love,

Neil & Jamie

P.S. The ladies in Lima, Peru loved the teachings from **A Kiss A Day**. It's finally available in Spanish. We'll be sending them some soon. Order a copy for a Spanish speaking friend.

P.P.S. **God, The Rabbis and the Virgin Birth** by Messianic teacher Dan Gruber is a wonderful kiss from God for serious students of the Word! Order your copy this month!