

The Chosen People

SEPTEMBER 1989 ISSN 0164 - 5323

HOW TO SHARE THE MESSIAH WITH YOUR JEWISH FRIENDS DURING **THE JEWISH HOLY DAYS**





SIMCHA!

CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES invites you to rejoice with us at a special gathering of believers in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) October 20-22, 1989.



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Director
Chosen People Ministries
Pastor, Olive Tree Cong.,
Plainview, NY



MARTY GOETZ
Recording Artist
"More Than a Watchman"

SIMCHA! (JOY!) From Friday Shabbat dinner through Sunday lunch, you'll enjoy the teaching, fellowship and relaxation as we lift up the name of Yeshua. Study the Bible from a uniquely Jewish perspective surrounded by an Alpine forest in the beautiful San Bernadino Mountains.

LOCATION Forest Home Conference Center is the perfect setting for SIMCHA! Forest Home provides excellent accommodations, great food, and a wide range of recreational activities. You can relax by the lake or go on a hike. You can play miniature golf or participate in softball, volleyball, football, etc. There is also a heated pool and much more!

PROGRAM The theme for SIMCHA! is Rejoicing in Kingdom Living (The Beatitudes). Speakers will address the following: How To Find True Riches In A Material World, How To Have Victory In An Antagonistic World, How To Be Holy In An Unholy World, When Worlds

Collide—The Blessings And Challenges Of Inter-marriage, Giving A Defense In A Defiant World, and Is The Kingdom Now? Plus two dance workshops! There will also be a full children's program.

COST The cost of SIMCHA! includes all of your accommodations and meals from Friday dinner to Sunday lunch. Each adult, \$125.00, ages 9-14 years \$90.00, ages 3-8 years \$65.00, infants-2 years \$15.00.



"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12).

SIMCHA!

CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES
1300 CROSS BEAM DR.
CHARLOTTE, NC 28217-2800

Please send me more information on your special conference SIMCHA! Oct. 20-22, 1989 at Forest Home Conference Center.

NAME _____

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The Chosen People

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MEMBER  EMANUELLICAL PRESS ASSOCIATION



From the President

On September 29, Erev Rosh Hashanah (the eve of the New Year) synagogues and temples will be filled with Jewish people reading the Torah and praying in preparation for the beginning of the Jewish New Year 5750.

Jewish tradition tells us that the Jewish calendar dates from the creation of the world and that it is on this day God opens the Book of Life, to see whose names have been inscribed — or conversely, whose names should be blotted out.

Prayer, repentance and good deeds, the rabbis tell the Jewish community, will insure one's name being inscribed in God's Book of Life. But this is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible tells us that the only way people can be sure of having their name inscribed in God's Book of Life is by accepting Yeshua (Jesus) as their personal Lord and Savior.

The Bible makes it very clear that salvation is not based upon our merit, or our good deeds. Salvation is a free gift. It is based solely upon God's grace. It can only be obtained through faith — faith in the completed work of our Messiah Yeshua at Calvary. This is why the Gospel, the message of the death, burial and resurrection of our Messiah is called the Good News.

God has given us the gift of eternal life — the gift of sin forgiven — the gift of a personal relationship with Him as our Heavenly Father. Since it is a gift it cannot be purchased, it cannot be earned. It can only be received or rejected.

Thus, thousands upon thousands of Jewish people will flock to the synagogues and temples, hoping that somehow through their prayers, repentance and deeds, God will write their names in His Book of Life. All of their efforts are in vain.

At the same time thousands of other Jewish believers will be flocking to our Messianic congregations, to our meetings. They come, rejoicing in the fact that they know, with full assurance based upon God's infallible Word, that their names have been inscribed in God's Book of Life. They come, as believers in Messiah, the Lord Yeshua (Jesus). They have accepted Him as their personal Savior.

It is this message of God's grace and salvation through faith in the Messiah Yeshua that we need to bring to the Jewish people. They need to hear the Gospel. They need to understand that righteousness does not come by good deeds; that righteousness can only be obtained through faith in the Messiah, the Lord Yeshua.

As you read through this issue of the *Chosen People*, I'm sure you'll rejoice with me over those Jewish people who have found faith in the Messiah — who know that their names have been inscribed in God's Book of Life.

How many more Jewish people need to hear...how many more need to respond to the message of salvation!

In Messiah,

HAROLD A. SEVENER

Bring Your Jewish Friends and Relatives to a Holy Day Worship Service Near You.

JEWISH HOLY DAY WORSHIP SERVICES



NEXT MONTH

Special Evangelistic Issue of the Chosen People Magazine.

October of each year brings our annual Special Evangelistic Issue of THE CHOSEN PEOPLE magazine.

For the last two years, Gentile and Jewish believers have found this special issue an excellent way to present the Gospel to Jewish friends and relatives.

The issue is especially written and designed with the Jewish unbeliever in mind. Packed with testimonies and a step-by-step explanation of salvation, it has a more popular tone than the CHOSEN PEOPLE magazine. Hopefully, it is eye-catching enough to prompt someone to take it off a coffee table and settle down for a good read.

As in previous years, this special issue has a *second* cover that you tear off and retain. You present the resulting magazine with its own cover to your friend or place it in a "strategic" location like a doctor or dentist's office.

Be thinking of where and whom you'd like to give this important magazine to. And pray for the success of this once-a-year special issue!



YONKERS, NY Light of Israel Congregation, (contact Debbie Linton 914-964-1820 between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.). Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 8:00 p.m. Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 6:30 p.m. Succoth: Oct. 13, 8:00 p.m.

PLAINVIEW, LI., NY Olive Tree Congregation, Michael Rydelnik (516) 939-2277. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 8:00 p.m.; Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 7:00 p.m.; Succoth: Oct. 13, 8:00 p.m.

LIVINGSTON, NJ Beth Messiah Congregation, Larry Feldman (201) 535-3954. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 8:00 p.m., Sept. 30, 10:30 a.m. Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 8:00 p.m., Oct. 9, 10:30 a.m. Succoth: Oct. 13, 8:00 p.m.

FAIRFIELD/NEW HAVEN, CT Joy of Israel Congregation, Stewart Weinisch, (203) 732-8291. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 8:00 p.m., Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 6:30 p.m., Succoth: Oct. 13, 8:00 p.m.

SHARON, MA Beth El Shaddai Congregation, Gary Derechinsky (617) 784-3204. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 7:30 p.m., Sept. 30, 11:00 a.m. Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 7:30 p.m., Oct. 9, 11:00 a.m.

BRISTOL, PA Beth Sar Shalom, Mitch Triestman (215) 943-9189. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 8:00 p.m., Yom Kippur: Oct. 9, 10:00 a.m. Succoth, Oct. 14, 10:00 a.m.

ROCKVILLE, MD Son of David Fellowship, Scott Brown (301) 989-2532. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 8:00 p.m., Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 8:00 p.m.

BOCA RATON, FL Beth Sar Shalom, Jim Bates (407) 395-7417. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 7:45 p.m., Yom Kippur: Oct. 6, 7:45 p.m.

CHICAGO, IL Light of Israel Fellowship, Roy Schwarcz, (312) 338-5959. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 7:30 p.m. Yom Kippur: Oct. 6, 7:30 p.m.

AKRON, OH Beth Sar Shalom, Michael Campo/Wayne Kaipainen (216) 836-0540. Yom Kippur: Oct. 7, 7:00 p.m.

COLUMBUS, OH Beth Sar Shalom, Michael Campo/Mrs. Koch (614) 885-8546. Yom Kippur: Oct. 9, 7:30 p.m.

LOS ANGELES, CA Shepherd of Israel Congregation, Howard Silverman, (818) 884-8245. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 29, 7:30 p.m., Sept. 30, 10:00 a.m. Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 7:30 p.m., Oct. 9, 10:00 a.m. Succoth: Oct. 15, 10:30 a.m.

LONG BEACH, CA Beth Sar Shalom, Sid Stern (213) 635-8531. Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur & Succoth: Oct. 16, 7:30 p.m.

REDONDO BEACH, CA Beth Sar Shalom, Sid Stern, (213) 635-8531. Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succoth: Oct. 19, 7:30 p.m.

SACRAMENTO, CA Chosen People Fellowship, Artis Clotfelter, (916) 722-6615, Yom Kippur: Oct. 6, 7:00 p.m.

SAN DIEGO, CA Chosen People Fellowship, Irv Rifkin (619) 583-3336. Rosh Hashana & Yom Kippur: Sept. 29, 7:30 p.m. Succoth: Oct. 13, 7:30 p.m.

DENVER, CO Beth Sar Shalom, Eliezer Urbach, (303) 320-0899. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 30, 10:00 a.m., Yom Kippur: Oct. 9, 7:00 p.m.

MONTREAL, CANADA Chosen People Fellowship, Winnie Marriner (514) 483-4079. Rosh Hashana: Oct. 6, 8:00 p.m.

TORONTO, CANADA Olive Tree Congregation, Ben Volman (416) 665-4695. Rosh Hashana: Sept. 30, 10:15 a.m., Yom Kippur: Oct. 8, 7:30 p.m.

HOW TO SHARE THE MESSIAH WITH YOUR JEWISH FRIENDS DURING THE JEWISH HOLY DAYS

By SCOTT BROWN CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES, WASHINGTON, DC

Bound with twine, the rooster stops its struggling and lies quiet. The young Jewish man grasps the bird with his left hand, places his right hand on its head, and three times whirls the fowl around his own head while chanting in Hebrew:

*"This is my atonement,
this is my ransom,
this is offered in exchange for me.
This chicken will be put to death,
and I will go instead
to meet a good, long and
peaceful life."*

The befuddled bird is immediately handed to the shokhet (ritual slaughterer) who, with halef (slaughtering knife) in hand, chants a benediction, strategically plucks several feathers from the neck, then slices the skin until the windpipe is severed.

The young man, an Orthodox Jew, watches the shokhet cast the chicken to the ground, its life passing quickly

as blood pours from its neck. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood..." Those words from the Torah never seemed so real to him as they did now.

He is surprised by the strange blend of emotions he feels. Though horrified and disgusted by the sight of the suffering "ransom," a more intimate burden is lifted. For according to rabbinic tenets, he has obtained that which he so determinedly sought: atonement.

THE RITUAL PLAY described above,

Few principles are more conspicuous in Scripture than those relating to exchange of life and blood atonement. Yet, rabbinic Judaism's reference to these principles is obscure at best.



called *kapores schlogen* (killing an atonement), is still practiced by many Orthodox Jews on the most solemn day of the Jewish year: Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. But what is atonement?

Atonement (*kaphar* in Hebrew) is an ancient term which is packed with meaning for contemporary man. Like the ritual slaughter described above, atonement suggests:

Ransom — the paid release of one held captive

Substitution — exchange of a life for a life

Propitiation — appeasement of God's wrath

Reconciliation — by means of shed blood

Identification — of a guilty party with an innocent

In Messiah Jesus, God has perfected atonement, having provided the ultimate:

Ransom

"The Son of man [came]...to give his

Memory verses do not a witness make, but genuine, active love directed toward the individual. Acknowledge and accept him as a Jewish person. Ask questions about him and his beliefs... Jesus did it constantly!

life a ransom for many." (Mk. 10:45)

Substitution

"But he was wounded for our transgressions..." (Isa. 53:5a)

Propitiation

"And he is the propitiation for our sins..." (1 Jn. 2:2a)

Reconciliation

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ..." (2 Cor. 5:18a)

Identification

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall

be also in the likeness of his resurrection..." (Rom. 6:5)

"So, what does all this have to do with Reuben, my Jewish neighbor?"

...Well, to quote a brilliant rabbi from bygone days: "Much, in every way!" (Rom. 3:2a).

Here are a few hints (not a formula!) for sharing Messiah's atonement with the Reuben in *your* neighborhood or workplace:

1) **Pray** that God will create a divine appointment with him, then anticipate that appointment. The Lord delights in answering such prayers (1 Pet. 3:15).

2) **Be sensitive and sympathetic** toward your Jewish friend (1 Cor. 9:19-22; 10:23, 32). Memory verses do not a witness make, but genuine, active love directed toward the individual. Acknowledge and accept him as a Jewish person. Ask questions about him and his beliefs... Jesus did it constantly!

When broaching the subject of atonement, be aware of the fact that most Jewish people assume they have a correct standing before God by virtue of their heritage. I confess to having once maintained the not-so-scholarly opinion that heaven contained a "kosher corner" where we Jews were destined to enjoy an everlasting brunch.

What I desperately needed was someone to lovingly present the facts: No atonement, no brunch... a Jew must "choose to be chosen!"

3) **Focus on the Hebrew Scriptures** (Old Testament) when discussing principles of atonement. If your Jewish friend regards the Bible as neither infallible nor authoritative (as is commonly the case), don't be discouraged; he has probably borrowed that opinion to conceal his own lack of familiarity with the Scriptures!

Ask his permission to read several verses from the "Jewish Bible" (the Old Testament) in the interest of generating a discussion, not a sermon! And in the course of your dis-



cussion, reveal these fundamental principles of Biblical atonement:

a) OUR NEED FOR ATONEMENT: ISAIAH 59:1, 2

So lucid are the prophet's words in this portion that there is no mistaking its message: We have a problem. We are suffering from a condition which has caused our holy God to distance Himself from us.

Recently, I read this portion to a Jewish woman who is considered "religious" by her peers. Her response was typical: "Is that from our Bible??" On another occasion, after relating these verses to a Jewish man, I asked, "Lou, what do you believe will reconcile us to God?"

His answer might have been my own ten years earlier: "I...attend shule (synagogue) on the High Holy Days...I come from an Orthodox background... To tell you the truth, no one ever asked me that question before!"

b) GOD'S MEANS FOR ATONEMENT: LEVITICUS 17:11



c) GOD'S MAN FOR ATONEMENT:
ISAIAH 53:1-12

There is no overstating the impact this vivid portrait of the suffering Messiah has made on the lives of countless Jewish people. I have read it often to individuals and groups, always adding the simple question, "Of whom does the Scripture speak?" Whether accompanied by shame or disdain, the answer to date has always been "Jesus."

Steve was a Jewish man from New York with whom I had opportunity to speak on the phone. When our conversation evolved to spiritual matters, Steve became guarded and curt. I read Isaiah 53 to him and asked my usual question. His answer was as convincing as a crocodile's tears:

"I don't know!"

"No? Well, let me just highlight it for you, and see if you can't discover His identity. "He was despised, and we did not esteem him... But he was wounded for our transgressions... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth... he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." If you're not sure who this is, can you think of any individual in history who resembles this description?"

After a lengthy pause, Steve answered almost fearfully, "I think it's Jesus Christ."

"Steve, I agree with you completely. Isaiah was describing a Jew who would face rejection by His own people; the consummate sin-bearer who, by His innocence, would provide the ultimate atoning sacrifice. This and other Biblical prophecies point to the person of Jesus."

The change in Steve's tone of voice was so dramatic that it startled me. "I knew it; I just *knew* it!! For years I suspected it was so, but was afraid to say anything... But now I see; He is the Messiah! Say, if I come over to your office, could we talk a little more about this?"

...

My wife and I rose to our feet with the rest of the congregation as the rabbi instructed all to read corporately from the prayer book. It was the Day of Atonement, 1983 (a few years before I became a believer). The prayer went something like this:

*"Here we stand, priestly
and privileged,
inheritors of the past, makers of the
future..."*

*Yet here we stand, burdened with sin,
guilt and shame..."*

*And the prayer ended with a solitary
question:*

"...who shall save us now?"

I could not withhold my tears. This was the day to which my ancient forebears looked with passionate longing; the day when not merely one man, the Jewish high priest, could enter God's presence by the blood of an animal sin offering, but when ALL might be qualified to "...draw near with a true heart in full assurance of

Here are God's terms stated with crystal clarity! Atonement for a guilty party demands the life of an innocent. Life is identified in the blood.

Few principles are more conspicuous in Scripture than those relating to exchange of life and blood atonement. Yet, rabbinic Judaism's reference to these principles is obscure at best.

For example, it is widely known that Jewish people fast on the Day of Atonement. But do you know why they fast? According to rabbinic antiquities, the fast is an effort to satisfy God's demand for blood. Our bodies manufacture a smaller volume of blood when we abstain from eating, the rabbis explain, and this "sacrifice of blood" will atone for the sins of the worshipper.

But God requires the blood of an innocent, and no man has proven himself innocent (Ps. 143:2; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 64:6). No man, that is, except One.

When broaching the subject of atonement, be aware of the fact that most Jewish people assume they have a correct standing before God by virtue of their heritage.

faith," having "...boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us..." (Heb. 10:19, 20, 22).

xxx

God has provided the ultimate Atonement! Why aren't the Jewish people rejoicing? Messiah has come! Why are they fasting, offering their own blood, or the blood of chickens? God has overruled sin and death by the offering of Jesus! Why are Jewish voices asking, "Who shall save us now?"

Perhaps they haven't heard... 🙏

The Jewish Holy

At our congregation, many will try to bring out their families for the special services: grandparents, parents, reluctant spouses and even adult children are compelled to come.

By BEN VOLMAN

As evening falls, the golden light of autumn slips away with the passing of the old year. There is a quiet hush as the ancient prayers of Israel ascend before God.

How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! In your abundant love have I come into your house, O Lord.

I look around at our congregation. More than anything, the High Holydays are about people.

We are Jews and Gentiles together, a *mishpochah*, a family of faith united in the Lord on the Biblical feast of trumpets, the traditional day

of Creation. The Jewish people number their calendar years from "the beginning" of the world. This *erev* (evening) is thought to mark the evening of the very first day.

Three great themes will be repeated tonight. The first theme is God's sovereignty (*malchuyot*), His kingship over Israel and the nations. The next theme is remembrance (*zichronot*), the pleas for God to remember His covenant people with love, even as they are commanded to remember Him. The call of the shofar (*shofarot*) is the last theme. The shofar, the curved trumpet of ram's horn, is a symbol of revela-



Days Are About People

tion, the call to action, and the return of Israel to God.

God's Sovereignty

Preparing to dwell on God's sovereignty, I remember that I am in the

congregation because of God's sovereign call on my life. After I had come to faith in Messiah and was baptized, I joined a small house fellowship of young men, many of whom were Jewish and around my age. The excitement of those early

days gave way to difficulty and division. The house group folded and we followed our pastor into a congregation where I worked on the executive committee.

I began to realize that to serve the Lord effectively I had to be better equipped. As I sought God's direction for my life through regular prayer and fasting, I would kneel beside my bed with the Bible open in front of me. Over time I came to believe He was calling me to go to school.



But I would not go against my parents' will.

One evening after supper I announced my plans. My parents looked at each other over a table covered with the evening paper. They nodded and my father said, "Ok. That's fine."

This was the one reaction I hadn't expected.

"I don't think you understand. I'm going to a school where people become ministers."

There was a pause.

"We understand fine," my mother said. "We think it's wonderful that you're going to continue your education." I lived at home in Toronto during the years at school.

God constantly showed me His sovereign hand, especially in the area of finances. During my second year I felt the Lord directing me to take special courses in Jewish ministry that were offered only in Chicago. I made plans to obey, not knowing how the extra funds would come.

That summer no taxes were taken off my pay. I cannot explain why. Normally, they would have been refunded the next spring. It had never happened before, but my needs were met almost exactly.

At Rosh Hashanah I remember God's sovereign control over my life and His sovereign call to reach my own people with the Gospel.

Remembrance

Remembrance is the second great theme of the New Year service. We remember first of all our families and departed loved ones. In the weeks before Rosh Hashanah, Jewish families visit cemeteries to remember their parents and grandparents who faithfully passed on the precious spark of Jewish identity.



In the weeks before Rosh Hashanah, Jewish families visit cemeteries to remember their parents and grandparents who faithfully passed on the precious spark of Jewish identity.

At our congregation, many will try to bring out their families for the special services: grandparents, parents, reluctant spouses and even adult children are compelled to come. We hope that tradition, the fellowship of believers and our open identification with Israel will draw these families closer to the Gospel. Tonight I remember how effective this can be, in fact, how important it was for the

witness to my own family.

At first I thought my new faith was having no great noticeable effect on my life, except on the inside. But one day my mother turned to me while she was washing the dishes.

"What's got into you?"

"Mom," I said, careful to use Messianic language that would not offend her, "I believe that Messiah has come."

"The way you've changed," she shot back, "maybe He *has* come."

I often got a ride to congregational services with a sweet, elderly woman of prayer, Jean Reid. She began a very special relationship with my mother.

Jean has a deep love for people, especially Jewish people. She has literally prayed people into the kingdom. And she has a way of making the Gospel so simple.

One day Mom said to me, "Do you know God loves me?" She had never said anything like that before. Jewish people rarely think of God as One who loves individuals. Mom would soon need every ounce of that love.

One evening I came home to a fearful tension hanging in the air. My mother had been diagnosed as having cancer. Within a year, despite surgery and all our prayers, she was experiencing severe pain that would not let up.

I moved to Chicago only a few weeks after she was hospitalized again. Her condition grew worse, and I rushed back to Toronto. She died the next day, a few days after New Year.

Some time later, Ed and Nora Brotsky, faithful missionaries to our people, told me that they had prayed with my mother to receive the Lord. Yes, at Rosh Hashanah I remember

We hope the fellowship of believers and our open identification with Israel will draw these families closer to the Gospel. Tonight I remember how effective this can be, in fact, how important it was for the witness to my own family.

and have cause to praise Messiah.

During the Holydays, thoughts of eternity and God's absolute justice are also called to everyone's remembrance. How can anyone meet the standard of righteousness of the Book of Life? Only by being clothed in the righteousness of our Messiah. That is why to me as a Messianic pastor, the Gospel is central to our service.

Some in the congregation are new believers. Others have recently been baptized. As I look into the congregation, I know these new believers are surrounded by faithful brothers and sisters who will one day stand with the great cloud of witnesses who continued through every difficulty "to walk and not faint." Together we remember God's righteousness:

Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love... Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me (Ps. 25:6, 7).

Shofar's Call

Our worship concludes with the trumpeting of the shofar. This is the last great theme of the New Year service, the call of Israel back to God.

The piercing cry of the ram's horn recalls the power of God displayed

at Sinai, and it reminds believers that their redemption will come with Messiah at the sound of the last trumpet. But right now, it is a call to live for the Lord today, to answer His call with obedience.

Just a few years ago I was an interim superintendent of a small Jewish mission. As my term ended two churches suggested I might be called to preach. I had also been approached by Chosen People Ministries to

One day Mom said to me, "Do you know God loves me?" She had never said anything like that before. Jewish people rarely think of God as One who loves individuals. Mom would soon need every ounce of that love.

Ben Vollman, Pastor of Chosen People Ministries' Olive Tree Congregation, Toronto



return to Toronto and become involved with the Olive Tree Congregation. No promises, just a possible opportunity.

It was near Rosh Hashanah, and once again I knelt with the Bible open in front of me. "Lord, there are others more capable than I am. You know my weaknesses and how hard Jewish ministry can be." As I prayed, the answer formed in my mind. I am not called because of my abilities, but because of the need.

My wife and I headed back to Toronto. God called us to serve Him. To live for Him.

The congregation rises together to receive the benediction. Each one has their own story telling of God's sovereignty, their own remembrances, their own special call to answer.

As we gather in the back of our sanctuary, my wife, Sue, hands out packages of apples and honey. Tonight we will dip slices of apple into the honey and recite this hope: "May it be Thy will, O Lord, to renew unto us a good and sweet year."

As we leave, we wish one another a Happy New Year: "L'shanah tovah, tikatevu (a happy New Year. May your name be inscribed in the Book of Life)."

There is a lesson the Lord teaches us with each new year. His promise does not depend on our strengths or weaknesses. When the disciples came boasting to Jesus about their spiritual victories, He told them instead to "rejoice that their names are inscribed in heaven" (Lk. 10:20).

Rejoice that God has placed His sovereign hand upon you and that He has remembered you and has an upward call for your life.

Because for Him, the High Holydays are about people. 

THE PROPHET DANIEL

BY HAROLD A. SEVENER

Last month: Refusing to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's image, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego gave testimony to their belief and trust in the God of Israel: "The God we serve is able to save us from it [the blazing furnace]...but even if he does not...we will not serve your gods..." This confession infuriated Nebuchadnezzar.

Selfishness, greed and pride have a way of blinding one's heart and eyes to the truth of God. Self-righteousness is the worst kind of sin. Self-righteousness results in a religious pride that will not allow one to back down. It was this religious pride that Jesus was up against when He came to the religious leaders of Israel. They could not recognize their own sin. In their self-righteousness and pride they rejected the Lord Jesus.

So Nebuchadnezzar rejected God and the testimony of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The king ordered that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. He then commanded that the strongest of soldiers tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and cast them alive into the blazing furnace. And so, still clothed in their royal robes with their trousers and turbans, the Jewish men were bound and tossed alive into the fiery furnace.

The Scriptures tell us that the flames were so hot that they killed the men who cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the furnace (Dan. 3:22, 23). Evidently the king wanted to make an exhibition of this. He wanted to demonstrate to the whole of Babylon what would happen to those who would not fall down and worship him. He must have made a great procession, for we find that he himself was present at the furnace. He was down below looking into the opening where the bodies were viewed during the process of cremation.

Nebuchadnezzar Amazed

In verse 24 we read that King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, "Wasn't it three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" And their response was, "Certainly, O king." In verse 25 we read, "Look, I see four men walking in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the

fourth looks like a son of the gods."

What god would be able to rescue Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar? The God who will never leave us nor forsake us. The God who would become a Man so that He might redeem us. Although Nebuchadnezzar in his pagan way stated that he saw one as the son of the gods, we know that he saw the Son of God, a theophany.

Nebuchadnezzar had challenged the King of kings and Lord of lords. He lost the challenge. God revealed Himself in a way that Nebuchadnezzar could not challenge. The king had placed three men into the



fiery furnace, and now he saw four. The presence of the fourth man was not only a challenge to Nebuchadnezzar. God was there to comfort Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Notice that God did not remove them from the fire, nor did He put the fire out. He was with them through the experience. His presence was manifested to them. He unshackled them, releasing them from bondage, while allowing them to go unharmed through the searing heat of the fiery furnace.

So God often deals with each one of us. He doesn't always remove us from times of affliction, but He gives to us the freedom of His grace to go through the afflictions in order to refine our faith. He verifies to us over and over again that His promise is true — He will never leave us nor forsake us and that He indeed is a faithful friend who sticks closer than a brother. He is faithful to the end.

Are you going through affliction today? Do you have problems that seem insurmountable? Remember that if you have claimed the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, He will always be with you. He'll give you the strength to overcome *any* obstacle!

The picture of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, along with the presence of the Son of God, is a beautiful picture that symbolizes the nation of Israel as they are scattered amongst the nations of the world.

The purpose of the Babylonian captivity was for chastisement. They were removed from their land because of sin and disobedience. God told Moses that they would find no rest for the sole of their feet amongst the nations of the world; their lives would hang in the balance (cf. Deut. 28-30).

But God also promised that the nation of Israel would never be completely destroyed. In Jeremiah 31: 31-37 God declares that as long as there is the sun, the moon, and the stars the nation of Israel will exist before Him forever. All attempts to eradicate the Jewish people will fail. All attempts to destroy the nation of Israel will utterly fail.

As God preserved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, He will also preserve the nation of Israel as they pass through the fiery furnace of judgment — whether it is among the nations of the world or whether it is in the Great Tribulation. God will not allow Israel to cease from being a nation.

How marvelous is the truth of God's Word. Because God preserved Israel, despite their sin and disobedience (not allowing the nation to be completely destroyed) so likewise God keeps His promises to each one of us who have placed our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we are called upon to go through the fires of affliction the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will be

When we are called upon to go through the fires of affliction the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will be sufficient to see us through that testing and trial. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there is the fourth person — the Son of the living God — unshackling our hands and our feet, giving us freedom in God's grace.

sufficient to see us through that testing and trial. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there is the fourth person — the Son of the living God — unshackling our hands and our feet, giving us freedom in God's grace. We have the promise of God that indeed all things do work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Thus, seeing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego alive in the fiery furnace Nebuchadnezzar now approaches the opening. We read in Daniel 3:26, "Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, come here.'"

What a change took place in Nebuchadnezzar. Remember, before they were placed in the furnace Nebuchadnezzar pronounced sentence upon them saying, "What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

Remember, this is the same Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel had spoken to — revealing to him that it was the God of heaven who was the revealer of secrets and mysteries. Now it is this same Nebuchadnezzar who shouts to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, "Servants of the Most High God, come out, come here."

Nebuchadnezzar's attitude toward God changed as a result of the miracle he had seen. In chapter three, verse 28 Daniel writes, "Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants. They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.'"

The word translated "angel" is the word normally translated "messenger." In other words the king recognize that the God of heaven had sent His messenger both to protect and to rescue the three Jewish men.

Are you going through affliction today? Do you have problems that seem insurmountable? Remember that if you have claimed the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, He will always be with you. He'll give you the strength to overcome any obstacle!

Notice another difference in Nebuchadnezzar. When he saw that fourth man walking in the furnace he declared him to be the son of the gods. This is a plural. He did not say the Son of God, but the son of the gods. But now, after the miracle had happened, Nebuchadnezzar now talks in terms of one God — the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The One who had sent His messenger, His angel, to deliver His servants.

He recognizes the sovereignty of Almighty God that indeed He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and he also recognizes the piety and obedience of these three men which was honored by their God who has given them the victory.

Now Nebuchadnezzar does a most amazing thing. He declares that anyone who speaks against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego will be cut into pieces, their houses will be turned into piles of rubble, for he notes, "No other God can save in this way" (Dan. 3:29). Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to high positions within the provinces of Babylon.

From just a cursory reading of this text one might be led to the conclusion that Nebuchadnezzar was a believer. He had seen the miracles, he had listened to the prophets, he had declared God's sovereignty. In fact, he'd even gone so far as to issue a decree that no one could speak against the God of Israel.

In chapter 4:2-3 Nebuchadnezzar publishes to the then-known world his decree concerning God. Notice his words, "It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are His signs. How mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation."

In the Masoretic text the Jewish scholars have placed these words, chapter four verses 2 through 3, at the conclusion of chapter three. I believe that this is correct and that it demonstrates the conclusion of Nebuchadnezzar that he finally came to faith in the Almighty God.

I believe that Nebuchadnezzar became a believer through the experiences and the witness of Daniel and his three friends. These two verses in chapter four along with verse 37 of chapter four lead me to this conclusion.

In verse 37 Nebuchadnezzar says, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. Those who walk in pride he is able to humble."

No longer is the God of Daniel, the God of Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego a god above other gods. Nebuchadnezzar now states that He alone is God — He alone does righteously. Notice that Nebuchadnezzar states that His Kingdom (that is, God's Kingdom) is an eternal kingdom, His dominion from generation to generation.

These are no longer the words of unbelief, but the words of a believer in Almighty God. What caused the change? In Job 33:14-17 we read how God may speak once or twice, He may speak in a dream or in a vision, He will work with man to change his heart from sin to righteousness.

God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar not just once but three times. He spoke to him in the great image, signifying the Times of the Gentiles which Daniel interpreted for him. He spoke to him the second time as the Son of God walking in the midst of the fiery furnace, protecting and saving His three faithful servants.

Now God speaks a third time to Nebuchadnezzar, once again in a dream — describing for him the humiliating experience that he must go through in order to recognize the Lord of lords and King of kings.

Friends, we must always remember that God is long-suffering. He is not willing that any should perish. How many times did God speak to you before you finally professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? What circumstances did He use in your life to make you aware of your sin, of your pride, of your self-righteousness?

The Holy Spirit convicts us not only of our sin and of God's coming judgment, but also of the fact that Jesus came to bring us righteousness. Nebuchadnezzar was brought to that point where he recognized his sin of pride, of self-righteousness, of rebellion. God had brought Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar's palace in order that Nebuchadnezzar might be saved.

Perhaps like Daniel, God has placed you as a believer in that special place of service — whether it be on the job, at home, in school — so that you might be a witness for Him and lead others to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. 

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