

A MESSIANIC JEWISH QUARTERLY VOLUME 65 NUMBER 4

The Shepherd of Israel



"May you be inscribed for a good year!" Jewish New Year's Day comes late this year, September 29th.

The Hebrew name of this holy day is Rosh Hashanah. Actually this name is used only once in the Scriptures. See Ezekiel 40:1, where it is translated, "in the beginning of the year." In all other passages the day is called "the Feast of Trumpets."

In rabbinical literature Rosh Hashanah is considered the second most solemn day of the year. The most important is the Day of Atonement, which will be on October 8th this year. The famous rabbi, Rabbi Akibah wrote, "On New Year's Day all men are judged; and the decree is sealed on the Day of Atonement; it is the 'Day of Judgment.'" Because of this, well-meaning Jews send greeting cards to each other on this day with the caption: "May you be inscribed for a good year!"

This is the day on which the inhabitants of the earth are supposed to pass before God for judgment, just as sheep pass before the shepherd. Three books are opened. The names of the righteous are immediately written in one, and

they are sealed "to live." The wicked "are blotted out of the book of the living" and not "written with the righteous"; their names are written in the second book. They are sealed "to death." In the third book the names of a third or intermediate class are written. They will be given a respite of ten days until the Day of Atonement to repent and become righteous.

On New Year's Day the synagogues will be full but the hearts of multitudes will continue to be empty. For the next ten days countless acts will be done to obtain merit. Many wrongs will be corrected but the peace of a forgiven heart will be absent. God has promised abundant forgiveness, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Is. 44:22).

The biblical name for this day is the Feast of Trumpets. "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation" (Lev. 23:24).

Empty Hearts In Crowded Synagogues

During biblical days trumpets were blown in Jerusalem all day long on Rosh Hashanah. These trumpets actually were the horns of animals. The Talmud states that the horns of any kind of animals could be used except those of oxen and calves. The rabbis declare that the reason for this prohibition is so God would not be reminded of the golden calf. The most favored horn was the bent horn of the ram. Tradition says that it was on Rosh Hashanah that Abraham prepared to offer up his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah when God Himself provided a "ram caught in a thicket by his horns" (Gen. 22:13). This horn is called the *shofar* which is:

"One of the earliest musical devices of mankind, a primitive ram's horn or shofar is the ritual horn of Israel. It was the voice of the shofar 'exceeding loud' which rang from the thick cloud upon Sinai when Moses 'brought forth the people to meet God.' The walls of Jericho fell at its sound. It echoed through the hill country of Ephraim the day Ehud slew the thousands of Moab. At En-Harod the shofar joined its blast in the night with the crash of pitchers and the battle cry of the valiant hundred. 'The sword for the Lord and for Gideon!'

"Throughout biblical times it resounded on the festival of the New Moon and on the First Day of Tishri, called "the memorial of blowing," as well as on the other solemn occasions. It gave the alarm in case of siege, flood, or pressing danger and figured, perhaps magically, in rain-making ceremonies. The Romans, it is easy to understand, were bewildered by its

frequent blowing and suspected its treasonable intent in a land of rebels. Later, other rebels, in the bitter moment of excommunication, trembled at its note." Philip Goodman, *The Rosh Hashanah Anthology*, p. 113.

We can easily see that there is a big difference between the modern "New Year's Day" and the biblical "Feast of Trumpets." This difference is an indication of the fact that Orthodox Judaism, not only liberal Judaism, has departed

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from the Scriptures. One of the definitive books on the Jewish Holy Days is published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; it is "The Jewish Festivals" by Hayyim Schauss, who tries to clarify the situation:

"The theme of the New Year of the Jews is a complex one. It is impossible to present it in clear and straightforward terms, in a minimum of words. There are many phases to discuss, and all are complicated.

"The first thing to be explained is the fact that in the Pentateuch, in which Jews are told to observe the first day of Tishri as a holiday, that day is not labeled Rosh Hashanah, the New Year; it is designated as the first day of the seventh month. Throughout the entire Bible there is no reference to that day as Rosh Hashanah. It is clear, therefore, that in biblical days there was no holiday by that name. It is curious, too, that according to the Pentateuch the New Year begins in

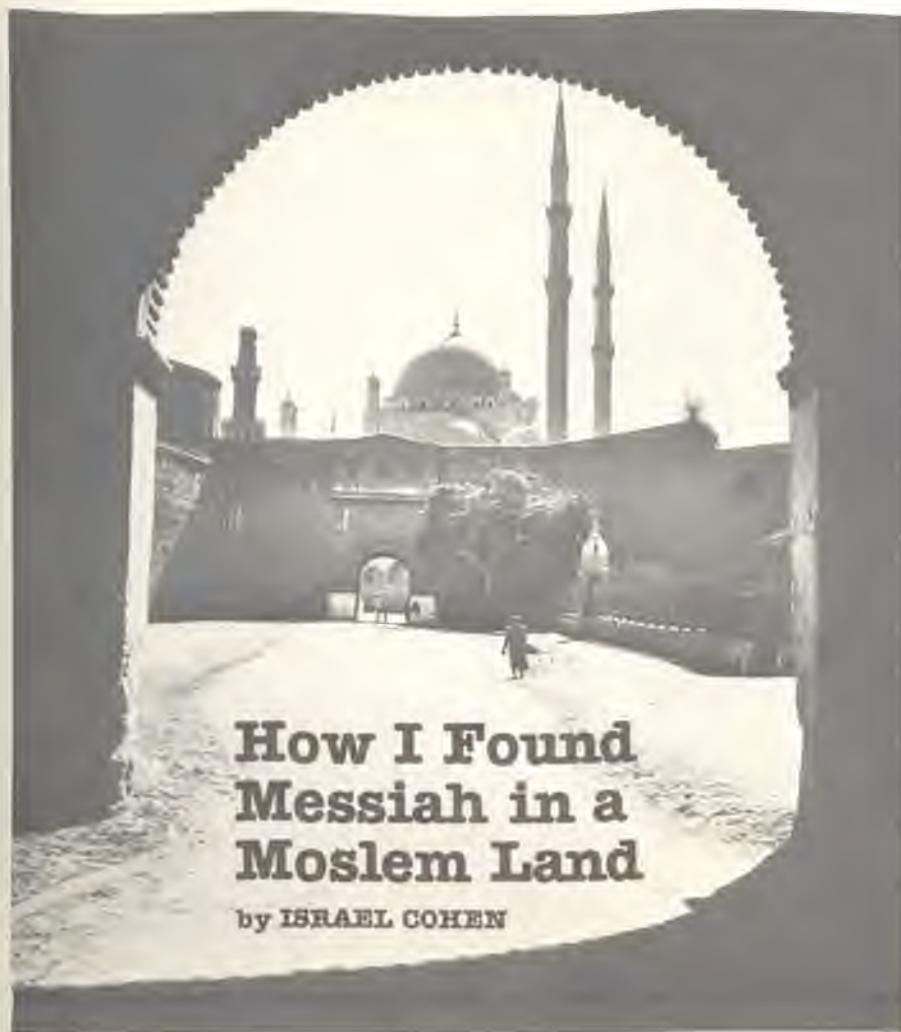
the seventh month. How is such a thing possible?

"To these and to similar questions there can be but one answer: Jews, in the days of old, before the Babylonian Exile, observed neither Rosh Hashanah nor Yom Kippur. In those days they observed only one festival at that time of the year, the Festival of the Ingathering of the fruits and grapes. That festival had many rites that are now associated with Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. It was only later, after the Babylonian Exile, that the autumn festival was divided into three separate holidays. For this reason Jews observe, in one season of the year, three festivals which are all actually New Year festivals."

We disagree with the learned author of this book on one important detail. We believe that it can be historically proven that in biblical days, the Feast of Trumpets was celebrated annually. However, we do agree that somewhere in our history somebody led us astray. It may not be of great importance as to what holiday the First Day of Tishri is called, but it is of eternal importance to realize that our Scriptures never teach that the countless acts of merit, or of wrongs made right, will ever forgive sins. It is only God who can forgive sin. The fact is, that in spite of all these splendid acts during this season, no one knows that his sins are forgiven! So we have a New Year's Day in the seventh month of the year,

continued on back cover





How I Found Messiah in a Moslem Land

by ISRAEL COHEN

"Teach me about being Jewish," the young sailor asked. I told him I'd be happy to . . . if I knew anything about the subject. He should have asked me about drinking—now that's something I knew alot about. I wasn't allowed to drink at home, but now in the navy, I had numerous opportunities to indulge in my new-found pastime.

Now that I was away from home, I had the opportunity to consider some ideas that I never could have thought about before—ideas like Jesus.

I was raised in a Conservative Jewish home in Philadelphia, but my family wasn't very religious. Occasionally, my father and I would attend synagogue together, particularly on the High Holy Days, but that didn't equip me to teach anyone about being Jewish.

Neither was my religious education sufficient for teaching. From the age of eight I went to Hebrew school every afternoon after public school. But after my Bar Mitzvah my religious education came to a halt. After all, my father wanted me to study hard so that

I would be accepted into college and become an electronics engineer.

I wasn't a very good student, however, and I wound up in the lowest quarter of my high school class. With grades like that you don't get into college, so I joined the navy. That seemed like the logical place to go, since there was a draft on and I didn't want to go into the army.

So in May of 1960 I found myself away from home for the first time. And of all places to get stationed, I ended up in Arabic Morocco.

One afternoon as I sat alone in the barracks, I wondered what I was doing there. Being sober for the first time in many days, I was deep in thought when a young Gentile sailor named Art came over to me and asked if I was Jewish. When I told him I was, he asked me to teach him about being Jewish.

As I said before, I didn't know much about the subject, but I started to tell him my general impressions.

"No," he interrupted, "can you get out your Bible and teach me about

"Can you get out your Bible and teach me about being Jewish from the Bible?" he asked.

being Jewish from the Bible?"

I got out my Jewish Bible but didn't know where to turn. We seldom read it in Hebrew school. So he asked me to turn to Isaiah. When he saw I was having trouble finding it, he found it for me and turned to the 53rd chapter.

"Read this aloud," he said, and I did. At first I thought I had the wrong Bible. It sounded so much like what my Gentile friends used to say about Jesus.

My confusion deepened when the young sailor took out his New Testament and had me read the third chapter of John. I read about a Jewish man talking with Jesus, and I couldn't figure out why a Jewish person would want to talk to Jesus the Gentile.

Art Hammers explained that Jesus was Jewish and that the New Testament was written by Jews and tells all about the Jewish Messiah. I had never heard such things before! There I was—an 18-year-old Jewish boy in a Moslem country talking to a Gentile Christian about the Jewish Messiah. Never in my life had I been so confused.

But after three hours of talking and reading from both of our Bibles, my confusion started to disappear. I now understood that I was a sinner and needed the salvation offered by Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.

I couldn't sleep that night, nor could I keep myself from crying as I tried to fall asleep. The knowledge of my great sinfulness so overwhelmed me that I *knew* I needed Jesus—but I also knew I was Jewish and couldn't accept Jesus as my Messiah.

I pulled my blanket over my head so the others couldn't hear my weeping. And then I turned on a flashlight so I could read the New Testament my Christian friend had given me.

As my tears fell upon the pages in the Book of Romans, I could no longer resist doing what I knew I had to do—I prayed to accept Jesus into my life, asking forgiveness for my sins! A few moments later I went peacefully to sleep.

God's Law is holy
but it doesn't give us
the power to keep
the Law.

and later, a Day of Atonement without
atonement for sins.

We have forsaken the covenant
which God made with us and we all
know that we have broken it. Because
of this, our prophet Jeremiah foretold
the time when God would make a
New Covenant with the House of
Israel, this promise is made in Jeremiah
31:31-34:

*"The time is coming," declares the LORD,
"when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant
I made with their forefathers
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,"
declares the LORD.
"This is the covenant I will make*

*with the house of Israel
after that time," declares the LORD.
"I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.
No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
or a man his brother saying,
'Know the LORD,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,"
declares the LORD.
"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."*

This New Covenant is explained in
the New Testament. This New Testa-
ment declares that the Lord Jesus
Christ is the promised Messiah of our
Scriptures and that He died to com-
pletely obtain forgiveness for our sins.

God's Law, which He gave to us by
Moses, is good, righteous, and holy. It
has one weakness—it doesn't give us
the power to keep the Law. But our
Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, fulfills
the purpose of the Law:

"For what the law was powerless to
do in that it was weakened by the
sinful nature, God did by sending his
own Son in the likeness of sinful man
to be a sin offering" (Rom. 8:3).—DF

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