

OIM UPDATE

November 2015

This past month has been incredibly busy with all sorts of circumstances that have drawn our family much closer to the Holy One of Israel. Being dependent upon Him for **all things** is often exacerbated when the trials and tribulations of life present themselves along with human activities that demand our attention. However, by His grace, we have been blessed to depend even more upon Him for revelation and understanding about what He is doing through and among us. Hence, with many distractions to contend with, I have been a little tardy in writing this month's article, but with patience and perseverance, what I have been shown is reflected in a piece entitled, "**Cursing the Blind.**" It is my prayer that what I believe the Holy Spirit has revealed to me will have a positive impact on your personal walk with the Messiah. I know that I have benefitted immeasurably, as He has reminded me that His fine tuning of our spiritual journey is always at the forefront of His love for us, both individually and the Body of Messiah collectively.

Per usual, the work of the ministry we have been called to do continues with some additional projects mentioned in last month's update. Thankfully as the work load has increased, I am personally becoming far more productive with my time. This includes, but is not limited to, ministering to: my wife, children, aging parents, infant grandchildren, eldership at our local congregation, and taking on the responsibilities as national director of the March of Remembrance. What a blessing to be working as unto the Lord in so many diverse fields of ministry! Next month I will be relating what I believe is, for the first time in my life, the possibility of participating in what could be a genuine revival and move of the Holy Spirit in the Dallas area and beyond. Some meetings with other ministers which I have had the privilege to attend throughout the month of November, have, from my limited perspective, established the foundation for God's Spirit to touch an untold number of hungry souls seeking the truth found only in Yeshua. Prayerfully, 2016 will be a year which produces much good fruit for the Kingdom of God!

Nevertheless, the work of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics continues, and John in particular continues to help see many of the theological and spiritual issues of the Messianic movement addressed, researching and writing volumes of material that I believe will benefit the Body of Messiah for a generation. Your faithful prayers and financial support of our endeavors is always greatly appreciated! And of course, we continue to solicit donations for our **Theological Defense Trust** and the **Prison Ministry Free Book Fund**, as our exposure to more prisoners continues to expand. We thank you in advance for your support of these efforts to minister to the Body of Messiah free to move about, and those incarcerated with a great deal of time on their hands.

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

CURSING THE BLIND

by Mark Huey

“You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:14).

*“Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road.’
And all the people shall say, ‘Amen’” (Deuteronomy 27:18).*

The other day at a Messianic Jewish conference, I had a conversation with an insightful brother about a set of circumstances which occurred to him at the Christian assembly he attended, where he was falsely accused by another attendee of adultery. The incident described and subsequent revelation received, when coupled with some other observations heard on a radio interview, allowed me to conclude the following: one of the primary challenges which continues to plague, not only the Body of Messiah in general, but specifically *the Messianic community of faith* which we serve, is the “blind cursing the blind.” This results in relative darkness when it comes to following the Light of truth, Yeshua the Messiah. Let me explain.

My friend and his wife are ranch managers, who live on one of their ranches, while managing properties for others in the rural counties of Northeast Texas. It just so happens that they have so much work, that two or three times a week, depending on the workload, a younger woman comes to their ranch office where she does the accounting for all the different properties they manage. But being a wise couple with much experience in their walk with the Messiah, they have made it a family policy that whenever the wife has to leave the ranch to go to the store when the younger lady is there doing the bookkeeping, she takes her along, whether the husband is in the house/office or out on the ranch tending to some of the many chores. They knew from years of experience that even the appearance of impropriety was something they always wanted to avoid, given the “accuser of the brethren” and his constant attempts to discredit men and women of God.

As it turned out, there were rumors floating around their assembly that some unwholesome behavior had taken place out on the ranch between my rancher friend and their part-time female employee. Apparently, one of the male members of their Christian assembly (who knew about the working arrangement with the bookkeeper, and who also was a member of their church), was suffering with an excruciating case of kidney stones that he was unable to pass. Since the rancher had a gift of discernment and was used by God in a number of healing prayers over the years, the hurting man actually turned to him for prayer. Providentially, the pain was so intense that during the session of prayer, the man in physical turmoil actually confessed to my friend and his wife that he had made some unsavory comments about the rancher’s work circumstances, and those very innuendoes were the source comments that had expanded to the rumors of fornication and adultery, as gossip and slander (Heb. *lashon ha’ra* or “the evil tongue”) have a tendency to do.

By the mercy of God, during the prayer session after the muted confession, the kidney stones were actually dislodged until they were able to be discharged through some pain. The stones were not pulverized minimizing the pain, but the relief came within a day to the man who confessed his transgression to the very people whom he had wronged, and who just happened to be used by the Lord to pray for healing and relief. During this prayer ordeal, the rancher received a “word of knowledge” that he shared with me about how the Lord protects His anointed from the darts of the enemy.

Originally with the Scriptures, adultery was to be punished by being stoned to death:

“If *there is* a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:10).

“But Yeshua went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and *began* to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Yeshua stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:1-7).

Because mercy triumphs over judgment—“for judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13)—my godly friend simply forgave the man for his offense, and continued to pray for healing. But in the meanwhile, the rancher understood that the concept of “stoning” actually resulted in the man with the kidney stones receiving a form of judgment for his false accusations. In other words, the very punishment of “stoning” for the act of adultery, bounced off of my friend and landed right back on the bearer of a false witness. Immediately, I was reminded of the Scriptural principle that applies to this realization found in Deuteronomy 19, so I mentioned it to my friend:

“A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days. The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deuteronomy 19:15-21).

If a single witness has falsely accused someone else of a transgression against the Word of God, then the judgment is now born by the accuser. In this case above, the stoning was not corporal punishment for the false witness, but instead, some kidney “stones,” which may be said to represent a stoning. Yet, the offender was allowed to confess his sin, and be free to go and sin no more—which is exactly what Yeshua directed to the woman brought forward on charges of adultery:

“Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they *began* to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of *the court*. Straightening up, Yeshua said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ **And Yeshua said, ‘I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.’** Then Yeshua again spoke to them, saying, ‘**I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life**’” (John 8:8-12).

How does this relate to the concept of “cursing the blind?” Consider how a curse of blindness can bounce back upon those who are found to curse others—cursing them because of their apparent lack of knowledge Yeshua, as “the Light of the world,” states how “he who follows Me will **not** walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” *Do you want the Light of life?* Are you willing to examine yourself and confess that you just might fall in the category of one who happens to curse others, because they do not “know” what you “know”? Certainly, no one in his or her right mind would ever want the “curse of blindness” to fall back onto them. But let us see what the Scriptures say about light and darkness, and how those in the dark, have enhanced their inability to comprehend the Light, because they have inadvertently been cursed by spiritual blindness!

I believe that *if* followers of the Messiah would simply take the profound teachings which Yeshua conveyed in His Sermon on the Mount of Matthew chs. 5-7 to heart, and do them, *then* our walks with Him would be less complicated than they need to be, due to the influences of the world, our flesh, and the Evil One. After all, Yeshua the Messiah, God incarnated in a human body, revealed for all of humanity exactly what His chosen disciples are supposed to do, as each lives out their lives in the blessing of the salvation that they have received:

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. **And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.** When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU [Psalm 2:7]?’ And again, ‘I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME [2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13]?’ (Hebrews 1:1-5).

“**And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth**” (John 1:14).

The challenge with my conclusions, involving the profundity of the words of the Messiah, is the reality that too many of us do not really follow His instructions, and the Messiah's own basic interpretations and applications of the Word as He knew it, the Tanakh or Old Testament. For most assuredly, if Believers would do what Yeshua directed in Matthew chs. 5-7, many of us would not be in the predicament where we currently reside—with strife, division, rebellion, and all sorts of evil permeating our supposedly sacred assemblies. So what is the problem? I would contend that many of us have each received a blindness of spirit, because whether overtly or covertly, we have found ourselves cursing others, by our thoughts, words, and deeds. Let me give you an example.

Consider many of the Pharisees of Yeshua's day, and the challenge they had when this wandering Nazarene teacher, was questioned by a future disciple named Nathanael (John 1:46). Imagine what various Pharisees living in Jerusalem thought when the Lord came and introduced Himself as *Yeshua* (ישוע) or "Salvation." "*Shalom, I am Yeshua!*" What do you think various high-minded and proud teachers of the Torah thought when this seemingly "unschooled" man approached them and declared that He was salvation! Do you think they might have had an issue with a proclamation which was simply a reflection of His given name? Of course they did, but it was not necessarily just the name, because they were in the presence of the Holy One of Israel in the flesh. Despite their study of the ancient texts, many did not realize that they were encountering the Creator God in a human body. Perhaps they had been blinded by various curses that they themselves had hurled upon Greek and Roman occupiers of the Land of Israel, who had been the cause of much oppression for several centuries. From the Tanach, Israel had been called to be a light to the nations and a beacon of God's goodness, rather than a vehicle by which condemnation was to come upon them:

"I am the LORD, I have called you [Israel] in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations" (Isaiah 42:6).

"He says, 'It is too small a thing that you [Israel] should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth'" (Isaiah 49:6).

The responsibility of Israel proper, with all of the blessings available through obedience to the received Word of the Holy One of Israel, was to be a servant to the rest of the world, in order to reveal to them the character of the One True God, and hence the opportunity for salvation through the Messiah. But because Greeks, Romans, and many other pagans were not following the ways of Israel's God, can you imagine how many curses were issued from religious persons—who were actually supposed to be an example of righteousness and obedience to His Word? My conclusion rests on the fact that because of the spoken or unspoken curses of many religious Jews in the First Century, upon the pagans at large—much of which took place as a byproduct of frustration or general lack of respect, and much of it being issued against their idolatry—what should have been a con-

cern for their sin and well-being instead turned into self-righteousness and nationalistic self-absorption. The Apostle Paul had to confront some of this in his writing to the Romans, where he addresses how possession of God's Torah does not at all mean that those who know what it commands always follow it:

"But if you bear the name 'Jew' and rely upon the Law and boast in God, and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?" (Romans 2:17-23).

Thankfully, any blindness that Paul discerned was present among his Jewish brethren, was only partial, and in God's perfect timing, the veil will be lifted:

"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-- that a partial hardening [blindness] has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.' 'THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM [Isaiah 59:20-21], WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS [Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33-34]" (Romans 11:25-27).

Elsewhere, Paul depicts how a veil lies over the hearts of many of his fellow Jews, a result of being declared sinners by "the ministry of condemnation" (2 Corinthians 3:9)—but that in turning to Yeshua, they are able to fully behold the Lord:

"Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Messiah. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:12-18).

A veil of blindness keeps people in darkness and susceptible to the wiles of the Devil. Much of the blindness that religious people experience—professing "Believers"—can come a result of their cursing others via a spirit of self-righteousness, and the thought that they can act in a condemning manner because they apparently know and follow the Word of God. Yeshua the Messiah instructed His followers to maintain a clear eye focused on the Light, so that the ever-present darkness can be lifted, and hence any blindness resultant of curses or condemning words they have declared, be removed:

"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of

darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and wealth**" (Matthew 6:22-24).

When someone calls another person blind, or erects legalistic stumbling blocks for those they consider to be "blind to the truth"—has condemning judgment been issued? Does not Yeshua say that one will be judged by, and then receive, the measure by which you judged or cursed another person?

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

The solution is fairly simple. Just take the log of legalism out of your own eye, confess that you have been judging others by your own flawed standards (because we are all human), and then repent of ever judging or cursing others again. Then you should see that the blindness to spiritual understanding, whether total or partial, will begin to be lifted. All of a sudden the words and teachings of Yeshua become more profound than ever. The Messiah's example for us should then take on such importance, that you actually believe that in following Him, you will have eternal life—not to mention a more useful and meaningful life advancing His Kingdom here on Earth. All of the good works that you were predestined to complete will now become evident, and you will actually begin to walk in them. Of course, because of our humanity, we will always see through a mirror dimly or a "glass darkly":

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:12-13).

Notice the reward of having some of the darkness removed. All of a sudden attributes like faith, hope, and love become evident in your life. We are told to abide in all three, with love being the dominant feature of a life devoted to Him and His Kingdom. And by the way, when we do so, the ability to volitionally choose to serve God rather than wealth becomes a joyful choice! Finally, everything we have been created to do with the life we have been given, makes so much more sense. Not only is our blindness lifted to a certain degree, but ears which have had a hard time hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit, hear much more clearly.

Now we can forgive others when we are falsely accused of anything, because we not only know we are forgiven ourselves by the atoning blood of the Messiah Yeshua—but we understand that people are blind because they have inadvertently cursed themselves, by not believing what Yeshua says we should be doing, in lieu of judging or cursing with our thoughts, words, and deeds. Soon, even our prayers will be received as they ought by the Holy One of Israel, because we ac-

tually understand that if a brother has anything against us, we go and make restitution or reconciliation before even getting on our knees to pray:

“Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison” (Matthew 5:23-25).

Additionally, if or when a brother sins in a manner to an extent where it is jeopardizing fellowship with the saints, there is a Biblical means to address the transgression:

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED [Deuteronomy 19:15]. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembly; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15-17).

Notice that in both cases above, where disunity or sin is evident, it is incumbent upon the child of God to initiate the reconciliation process, either before presenting an offering, or when a private meeting can be arranged to address a sin requiring restoration of fellowship. As one’s sight is being reclaimed by feasting upon the Word of God, baskets of darkness will be lifted off, as good works shine the light of truth on even the secret and hidden sin that entangles so many in the Body of Messiah:

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

“And He was saying to them, ‘A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’ And He was saying to them, ‘Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him” (Mark 4:21-25).

In addition, as blindness is lifted, ears to hear the small and still voice of the Holy Spirit, improve their ability to listen. In time, as one more consistently listens to Him in order to walk by the Spirit and be led by the Spirit, more usefulness for the work of the Kingdom is possible. But, when the light of understanding reveals hidden sinful things, or an increased ability to hear the Holy Spirit is misused with inappropriate measures taken to remedy what was shown or heard, the Holy One will then take those attributes away. After all, He monitors even the slightest action where His chosen vessels begin to depend upon their own

human nature to accomplish the work of His Kingdom.

This natural tendency to avoid dependence on the Spirit of God, and return to independent thinking—given human talents, abilities and spiritual gifting—can lead to a “blind spot” of self-righteousness that Yeshua addresses:

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you. When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and **your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.** And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way: **‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen’**” (Matthew 6:1-13).

Personally, I believe that covers it all. But as an aside, try asking the Father if you are consciously or subtly cursing others because they remain ignorant of what you know about the Scriptures, and how the Spirit of God is apparently working in your midst. These people you know just might not understand that many of the wiles of the Evil One have cleverly kept them bound in error. Indeed, many are still dead in their trespasses and sins—which should cause us to be a good example to them of those changed by the Lord, not examples of harsh condemnation which will push them away from Him:

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Ephesians 2:1-3).

A life of being in slavery to sin is to be replaced by a new life in service to righteousness:

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18).

We are *not* to curse the blind, but instead, be imitators of God who walk in love as “children of Light”:

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just

as Messiah also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and God. **Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are **Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light** (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. **Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.** For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Messiah will shine on you'" (Ephesians 5:1-14).

What do you think? Is it time to stop cursing the blind, and wake up from the darkness of our sleep? Is it time to arise from the depths of our dullness of hearing, and see the work of the Spirit of God? Indeed, let us truly allow Yeshua the Messiah to shine upon us—so that we might witness the blind see Him!

May He do so, according to His riches, and for His glory alone!

In what way did Antiochus Epiphanes commit the “Abomination of Desolation”? I thought this was a future event.



The event describing the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus, even though it actually was carried out by an Athenian senator (2 Maccabees 6:1), was in fulfillment of the Prophet Daniel’s words in Daniel 11:31: “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.” It may seem confusing for us because the eschatological term that often describes “the Abomination of Desolation” in most pre-millennial prophecy circles is used to refer to another event, that of Daniel 9:27:

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Without a doubt, what happened in the period of the Maccabees was an abomination before the God of Israel. But it was not the final abomination spoken of by Daniel that occurs at the end of the seventy-weeks prophecy. A future leader, much like Antiochus, eager to unite the world as one people worshipping him, will make all of the previous abominations that have occurred on the Temple Mount seem like nothing. The text uses the plural *kenaf shiquzim* (כְּנָף שִׁקְצִים), indicating that there have been *multiple abominations* committed,^a but this one will be the *extreme abomination*, topping all the others. This is perhaps reflected in the NLT rendering, “And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration.” The Apostle Paul describes this in greater detail in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.”

From Paul’s vantage point, the Abomination of Desolation has yet to occur; and from our view today, it likewise has yet to occur. Yeshua the Messiah makes this clear in His Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24:

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Who-

^a While many interpreters connect *kenaf* (כְּנָף) or “wing” (NASU) to a part of the Temple, it can also relate to the extremity of a garment or the wing of a bird (BDB, 489). Because of the ambiguity of prophecy, while *kenaf shiquzim* has most often been interpreted as “a wing of the temple” (NIV), we should be inclined to remember how *kenaf* is used to speak of a cloak spread out or the extreme ends of the Earth (H.F.W. Gesenius: *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 406), connecting it to how this final Abomination of Desolation will stretch far over the other abominations previously committed on the Temple Mount.

ever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath" (Matthew 24:15-20).

Some have claimed that the Abomination of Desolation occurred in ancient times when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in 70 C.E. But that is contingent on several things. While Yeshua has Daniel's description of the Abomination in mind, His statement is preceded by the ever-critical, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). Even today, almost 2,000 years later, this word has yet to be fulfilled. Furthermore, we see the statement "let the reader understand" inserted into the text, presumably by Matthew when he composed his Gospel. When Matthew wrote his Gospel also tells us quite a bit as to whether or not this has occurred. If Matthew's Gospel post-dates the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., as most conservative and liberal scholars believe, then it is indeed an indication that this Abomination of Desolation is to occur in the future.

There has been no leader like Antiochus, or even an emissary of his, who has entered into the Temple in Jerusalem to be worshipped as God. In fact, there is no Temple in Jerusalem today where this prophecy could even be fulfilled. The seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel has yet to be completely fulfilled, as when it is all over we are to see the restoration of God's Kingdom on Earth, stated clearly in Daniel 9:24:

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*."

We are still awaiting to see everlasting righteousness established in the Earth. That has not happened, and any claim by theologians or teachers that it has is totally misguided.

The example of Antiochus Epiphanes is very, very important to understand. It lays the historical precedent as being one of the many abominations that has occurred on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This abomination in 167 B.C.E. was followed by the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., and the subsequent erection of a temple to Jupiter. Likewise, when Islam expanded throughout the Middle East the Dome of the Rock was built on the Temple Mount. Today, we await the reconstruction of the Temple by many of the Temple Mount faithful groups in Israel, and then we can see the climax of all of these abominations. Unlike those who committed abominations in the past, though, the man of lawlessness will be able to broadcast himself to the world, so everyone, not just those in Jerusalem, will be able to see him declare himself as God. Do you think Antiochus Epiphanes would have liked to do this? Well, the same spirit of antimessiah that was in him will be in someone else in the future.

What can you tell me about the Feast of Dedication being celebrated in place of Sukkot by the Maccabees when they rededicated the Temple?

When the Seleucid Greek invaders occupied the Land of Israel, it was forbidden for any of the Biblical holidays to be celebrated, possibly under the threat of death. Obviously, this would have included *Sukkot* or the Feast of Tabernacles. Many Jews continued to celebrate the appointed times in secret, or in some limited way without being caught.

Some in the independent Messianic community, who largely frown on observing *Chanukah*, say that when the Maccabees rededicated the Second Temple that the eight-day festival they celebrated was Tabernacles, which they were unable to celebrate prior to this time. They base it on statements made in 2 Maccabees 10:5-6:

“It happened that on the same day on which the sanctuary had been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Chislew. And they celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of booths, remembering how not long before, during the feast of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals.”

The REB actually says “they recalled how, only a short time before, they had kept that feast while living like wild animals in the mountains and caves.” Did the Maccabees actually try to “keep *Sukkot*” while evading the Seleucid armies in the wilderness? We might never have an answer to this question. But what we do know is that while there were various elements and themes of *Sukkot* brought into the first Festival of Dedication, it was celebrated and mandated as its own unique holiday. The text continues, clarifying what the Jews assembled in Jerusalem were actually doing:

“Therefore bearing ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place. They decreed by public ordinance and vote that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year” (2 Maccabees 10:7-8).

We are told that this new holiday, commemorating the rededication of the Temple, was “decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year” (NRSV). This makes *Chanukah* something new and unique that was not intended to be a substitute for *Sukkot*, even though *Sukkot* may have served as a template for much of it to be based upon.

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS UPDATE

November 2015

Dear Friends:

This November will see the formal release of the massive *Messianic Sabbath Helper* publication, and with it a long-standing goal of mine finally



achieved: all of the major publications that our ministry has released, at one point or another, are now available in paperback and eBook. It has taken us a long time to get where we are, as Outreach Israel Ministries got started thirteen years ago in 2002, and just this past year TNN Online transitioned into Messianic Apologetics—something unforeseen but welcomed. A new season of making new progress, on a whole series of theological and spiritual issues, awaits.

This new season has been anticipated by me for quite some time. *I have had open files for many years, electronic and paper, on a huge array of subjects.* While some of you might think that I am feeling stressed out, as I look to those research and writing projects which I would like to now see achieved, I am actually feeling more of a sense of relief! *The time is finally here to get into some of the complicated topics.* Some of the more basic issues which Messianic people have, I believe we have now addressed. Now it is time to get on with those things which catch us off guard at the most inconvenient times.

I am presently in the middle of finishing up the written commentary on 1 Corinthians ch. 15, meaning that by the end of November, I should be in the final stages of completing the 1 Corinthians commentary. I have been very pleased that this study has stayed on schedule, and that a resource will soon be available to people on a Biblical text which too often eludes today's Messianics. As far as the planned *Salvation on the Line* volume on Yeshua's Divinity goes, I have already started some of the early writing. I do not know how long this is going to take (and there is even a good chance that it will have to be released as two volumes because of size), but I do know that there are many components to the nature of the Messiah which need to be addressed carefully and fairly.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee