

# OIM UPDATE

April 2014

Every year since our family has embraced a Messianic lifestyle, the opportunity to celebrate the Spring feasts of the Lord has never been taken lightly. By His sovereign grace, we appreciate the significance of remembering Ancient Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, coupled with our unique connection to Israel, as non-Jewish Believers, through our belief in the accomplished work of Yeshua the Messiah. It was almost twenty years ago, during a tour of Israel organized by a Messianic Jewish ministry, that Margaret and I were prompted by the Holy Spirit to seriously consider seeking out the Hebraic Roots of our faith upon our return home to the United States. While we did not necessarily understand all that the Spirit was communicating at that time, we did know from previous participations in Passover *sedars* that these convocations were special times for the Jewish community, especially if it was understood and taught that the Passover lamb foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah, the ultimate Passover Lamb of God. But in 1995, our knowledge of the Messianic Jewish movement was limited to what was available to us locally.

We did not make it to the first Passover *sedar* available to us in 1995, but the Spirit finally prevailed, as we were led to participate in the Fall feasts, beginning with *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah* and *Sukkot*. Shortly thereafter, we were supernaturally urged to return to one of the weekly Sabbath services at a Messianic Jewish synagogue, where we were exposed to a multitude of Scriptures from the writings of Moses and the Prophets of Israel. This Biblical emphasis was certainly different from our traditional evangelical backgrounds. But despite the fact that we were not Jewish, we were not deterred from seeking the Lord in this more traditionally Jewish atmosphere. So with renewed vigor from the spiritual promptings we were receiving, we rapidly migrated to full-time involvement with the congregation and left the church where we had been attending. Within several months at the Messianic Jewish congregation, we joined the new member's class, became members, and then began taking elementary Hebrew, while becoming very involved with the assembly. Needless to say, we were launched on the path that eventually led us to found Outreach Israel Ministries in 2002.

In recalling these memories, I have written this month's lead article, entitled, "A Light to the Nations." It is my intention to convey what it means for those of us, whether we be Jewish or non-Jewish Believers—but who compose the Commonwealth of Israel together (Ephesians 2:11-13)—to be witnesses to the people in our immediate environment, as well as to the world at large. The Apostle Peter confirms that, "God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35, ESV). What is most important to any person alive today, is a faithful acknowledgement that Yeshua is Lord, and that a man or woman has been forgiven sin by the precious blood of the Lamb of God! Thankfully at this time of remembering the Exodus, people can revel in the reality that in the Messiah, they have been redeemed by Yeshua's sacrifice.

Please be reminded that we continue to receive multiple requests for our materials from an expanding group of people incarcerated in the U.S. Penal System. The **Prison Ministry—Free Book Outreach** needs your faithful support. Additionally, the **Theological Defense Trust** is funding the production of some significant publications, which are in many regards, establishing a critical written theology for the Messianic community of faith. This issue of OIM News includes a teaching excerpt on **Ezekiel 4:9-17** from the *Messianic Kosher Helper* presently being produced. Thank you in advance for your contributions to these needs!

Advancing His Kingdom, until the Messianic restoration of all things...  
*Chag Samaech!*

Mark Huey

# A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

by Mark Huey

For more than three millennia, faithful followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have had a critical individual and corporate responsibility to be the Creator's representatives or ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), on this planet, to the rest of humanity. In His mercy, God had to choose a group of people to communicate His love, and as found in the Holy Scriptures, He chose Abraham and his descendants to be His intermediaries to the rest of the world (Genesis 12:1-3). Very soon after Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the Lord told Moses—another mediator—that the Israelites were uniquely chosen to be His possession among the nations. Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, with the incumbent responsibility to obey His voice and keep His covenant:

**“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6).

While being one of the “fewest of all people” in number, this unique elected status resulted from the promises of the Lord to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as confirmed in the deliverance of Ancient Israel from bondage in Egypt:

**“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments”** (Deuteronomy 7:6-9).

The Israelites were also given some significant appointed times (i.e., the *moedim*, מועדים of Leviticus 23) which were to be visible testimonies and witnesses to others. One of the primary signs was to observe the weekly Sabbath or *Shabbat* (שַׁבָּת) in perpetuity, as a regular reminder that the Creator rested and was refreshed after the period of Creation:

**“So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased *from labor*, and was refreshed”** (Exodus 31:16-17).

The next significant sign, to be a witness to the nations, was the annual memorial convocation which celebrated Israel's deliverance from bondage in

Egypt:

“Moses said to the people, ‘Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out from this place. And nothing leavened shall be eaten. On this day in the month of Abib, you are about to go forth. It shall be when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall observe this rite in this month. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders. You shall tell your son on that day, saying, “It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.” And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year” (Exodus 13:3-10).

One of the main features that is witnessed down until today, in order to remember the Exodus from Egypt, is how traditional Judaism has formulated what is commonly known to as the Passover *sedar* (*sedar*, סֵדֵר is a Hebrew term for “order”). Each year, the faithful have a God-expected responsibility to teach their children the significance of this great deliverance, and its influence on both Biblical history and God’s actions in saving His own. People within the broad Messianic community, both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, also strive to adhere to the instruction to keep the Passover—instructions which are to surely take on new dimensions in association with the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah.

It must be observed, if one studies the history of Israel from the Scriptures, how God’s people have not always followed the instructions in Moses’ Teaching, and have suffered various curses rather than promised blessings (Deuteronomy 28-29). Whether it was disregarding the Sabbath, or forgetting to remember the deliverance from Egypt, the shirking of responsibility had consequences.

Without going into all of the details, we see that the Lord has had to send different prophetic voices to restate with different emphasis, what Moses had recorded, in order to admonish wayward people. One of the most prominent prophets was Isaiah, who multiple times in his prophecies used the terminology “**light to the nations,**” in an attempt to encourage his audience to remember its original calling, as God’s uniquely chosen representatives to the world:

“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise *His voice*, nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.’ Thus says God the LORD, who created the heav-

ens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it, 'I am the LORD, I have called you 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** [*l'or goyim*, לְאֹר גוֹיִם], to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim *them* to you" (Isaiah 42:1-9).

When one reads this prophecy, it has obvious, multiple dimensions to it. The noted "Servant" can refer to the collective nation of Israel itself, or it can be understood as the Messiah Himself, who will bring justice to the nations. Further illumination about the role of Israel, indicates the intimacy of the Father's relationship with His own:

"And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and My God is My strength), He says, **It is too small a thing that You 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** [*l'or goyim*, לְאֹר גוֹיִם] **so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth**" (Isaiah 49:5-6).

In reading this prophecy, the key concept of being a "light to the nations," is so that the salvation of the Lord may reach the ends of the Earth. Whether those of Israel are intended, or the reference is to the Messiah of Israel—or even those who are connected to the Messiah by extension—the goal or purpose witnessed is to demonstrate forth the message of God's goodness, grace, and mercy, to all in the world.

By the time of Yeshua, the Jewish people were primarily focused around the Land of Israel, with diverse communities spread throughout the Mediterranean basin via the Diaspora. Even with a widespread Jewish rejection of the Messiah present in much of the First Century, and with the Apostle Paul was given a distinct mission as an "apostle to the nations" (Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13), he recognized how his own Jewish people had some important distinctions because of their being chosen by God:

"Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? **Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God**" (Romans 3:1-2).

God foreknew that the Jewish people would be able to persevere down through the centuries, despite the exile, persecution, and hardship they would endure—in order to see themselves, the Hebrew Scriptures, and their traditions and customs preserved for perpetuity. To this end, all modern-day followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—especially non-Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah, who have been grafted-in to the olive tree of Israel (Romans 11:17-24)—should be eternally grateful. We especially see an additional reference from Isaiah indicates that the nations will indeed come to the light of Israel, and be delivered from the darkness of unbelief. This includes the added ben-

efit that in time, those drawn to the light of Israel, will aid in the restoration of the Twelve Tribes to the Promised Land:

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. **Nations will come to your light**, and kings to the brightness of your rising. **Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in the arms.** Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you” (Isaiah 60:1-5).

Now when one considers the Messiah being **the Light** which is promised, simply reviewing some of His statements found in the Gospel of John, confirm how Yeshua was not bashful in making such a declaration:

“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 8:12).

“**While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world**” (John 9:5).

“And Yeshua cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. **I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness**’” (John 12:44-46).

But elsewhere in Yeshua’s proclamations, He also made it clear that He considered His Disciples to also be representatives of the Light, embodied in Him. Speaking to those gathered at His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua declared,

“**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).

Being a disciple of Yeshua’s has responsibilities which should be taken seriously by all who call upon His name. In this case, observing God’s commandments becomes one of the primary ways of how people testify for the Lord before others. This can certainly mean that various, visible “signs,” such as those regarding the appointed times like the weekly Sabbath and the convocations like the Passover *sedar*—are ideal times to witness or “**be a light**” to family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Believers in the Messiah of Israel need to always understand that to many, the light of the gospel is shrouded from view to those who are perishing. By participating in these appointed times, some may be provoked to want to know more about the hope of glory (Colossians 1:7) which resides inside the hearts of those who have received the Messiah’s gift of salvation. The Apostle Paul de-

scribed it this way to the Believers at Corinth:

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Messiah Yeshua as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Yeshua’s sake. **For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah**” (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

Note in this passage that the emphasis in declaring the good news is not necessarily placed upon the Believers, but upon Yeshua the Messiah and His accomplished work, by those who claim to be His servants. And if one is truly a servant, then it is critical that he or she do what the Master has commanded. Therefore, followers of the Messiah are to be a **“light to the nations,”** through their observance of tangible signs like the appointed times, so that they might be able to witness to those who are perishing.

Personally, we believe that opportunities like the Passover *sedar* and the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, are ideal times for not only sharing the gospel of the Messiah, but introducing others to what early First Century assemblies of Believers would have been doing. As the Holy Spirit leads, we highly recommend that Messianic Believers invite curious or searching people to your family or congregational *sedar*, in order to expose them to the light of the gospel. When presented from a Messianic perspective, with Yeshua poignantly noted as the Lamb of God—eyes will be opened and hearts moved toward repentance!

Do not hide your personal light or understanding of the good news under a basket—because as children of the light (Ephesians 5:8), born again Believers are to serve the Kingdom of God by being the Heavenly Father’s witnesses to the world! A Believer’s challenge is to testify of *the* Light of the world to all those whom he or she encounters! Take this opportunity, as the Lord is in the process of currently fulfilling the prophesied “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:19-21), to demonstrate that you know God and want to walk in a manner that emulates the Messiah Yeshua, who certainly participated in remembering the Passover! As the Apostle John would direct us,

**“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked”** (1 John 2:3-6).

Pray that the Lord might use you to not only share the true Light of the world with others—but *to especially* provoke Jewish people, who do not yet know Yeshua, to jealousy (Romans 11:30-31). Enjoy this season of remembrance and the Divine privilege and opportunity to represent the Holy One of Israel, the Lamb of God, the “Light” of the world—and be about reflecting God’s light and love to all in the world!

# Ezekiel 4:9-17

by J.K. McKee

The following has been reproduced from the forthcoming TNN Press publication, the *Messianic Kosher Helper*. This book is going to set a new standard for the breadth and level of engagement, not only with the topic of the Torah's dietary laws, but also for what both the Tanach and Apostolic Scriptures inform us about them. When completed sometime this Summer, this title is easily expected to be around 600 pages!

“But as for you, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, put them in one vessel and make them into bread for yourself; you shall eat it according to the number of the days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days. Your food which you eat *shall be* twenty shekels a day by weight; you shall eat it from time to time. The water you drink shall be the sixth part of a hin by measure; you shall drink it from time to time. You shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked *it* in their sight over human dung.’ Then the LORD said, ‘Thus will the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will banish them.’ But I said, ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth.’ Then He said to me, ‘See, I will give you cow’s dung in place of human dung over which you will prepare your bread.’ Moreover, He said to me, ‘Son of man, behold, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they will eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and drink water by measure and in horror, because bread and water will be scarce; and they will be appalled with one another and waste away in their iniquity.’”

The Book of Ezekiel informs Bible readers a great deal about various aspects of the kosher dietary laws, ancient issues faced in the Sixth Century B.C.E. by the exiles in Babylon, as well as futuristic issues pertaining to the Messianic Age. The Prophet Ezekiel was a priest (1:3), who had been taken into Babylonian captivity, and while in Babylon was directed by the Lord to do some rather out-of-the-ordinary actions, often to depict the shame of the exile.<sup>1</sup>

Among the action, that Ezekiel is directed by God to perform, is that he was to lie on his left side 390 days for the House of Israel (4:4-5), and on his right side for 40 days for the House of Judah (4:6), with the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon impending. While seemingly an awkward activity, Ralph H. Alexander is right to conclude how, “The text does not demand that Ezekiel be on his side twenty-four hours each day. The rest of chapter 4 has Ezekiel fixing meals, while in chapter 8 Ezekiel sat in his house with the exilic elders during the final days of lying on his right side. It would seem that a portion of each day would suffice to fulfill the symbolism and the text.”<sup>2</sup>

It is important to recognize that there is some debate over the different numbers prescribed to Ezekiel, and what they represent. The Greek Septuagint

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<sup>1</sup> Consult the entry for the Book of Ezekiel in the workbook *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph H. Alexander, “Ezekiel,” in *EXP*, 6:769; also Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 77 fn#40; Daniel I. Block, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 179.

actually has 190 years (which has passed into the NEB rendering of 4:5),<sup>3</sup> and various interpreters are convinced that this is a better way of approaching the passage, with Ezekiel's actions looking back at the sins of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel.

More customarily, though, and with the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text in view, a Jewish interpreter like S. Fisch summarizes that "Abarbanel...reckons the period of Samaria's guilt from the time when the schism took place under Rehoboam (cf. 932 B.C.E.) until the fall of Jerusalem. Corresponding to the 390 years of Israel's sinning, the prophet was ordered to lie on his left side the same number of days to atone for their iniquity." He further states, "Judah's corruption lasted forty years beginning soon after Samaria's fall. According to Malbim, the time is reckoned from the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (626 B.C.E.) when Jeremiah began his ministry (Jer. i. 2)."<sup>4</sup>

A number of interpretational options for the Prophet Ezekiel lying on his left side, then followed by his right side, are described by Charles L. Feinberg, in his work, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*:

"Many believe that the Greek Old Testament is probably correct in giving 190 days (representing years) in verses 5 and 9 instead of 390. Ezekiel would then have been on his left side 150 days and on his right side 40 days. The period from the deportation under Tiglath-pileser in 734 B.C. (II Kings 15:29) to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. was 148 years, or about 150 years. The forty years (about a generation) for Judah correspond approximately from 586-536 B.C., the time of Judah's exile in Babylon. According to this reckoning there can be no exactness in the numbers; round numbers are the most that can be hoped for. Another view holds that, since there is no question as to the numbers in the Hebrew text, the longer period must be reckoned from the disruption of the kingdom under Rehoboam, son of Solomon (I Kings 11:31). According to the chronology of the book of Kings the period from Rehoboam to 586 B.C. was 394½ years. The figures can hardly refer to the duration of the northern kingdom apart from Judah nor even to Judah itself, because the kingdom of Israel continued from about 930-722 B.C., while the kingdom of Judah went on about 136 years after the fall of Samaria. The 40 years for Judah are assigned as those of the reign of Solomon.

"Other interpreters take the 430 years (390 years plus 40 years) to be symbolic. They see the figures as a representation of the future in the terms of the past, specifically a reminiscence of the 430 years Israel spent in Egypt and of the 40 years in the wilderness. Thus no exact period is in view by the prophet. Obviously, no completely satisfactory solution has been found as to the number, though the general concepts are clear enough."<sup>5</sup>

There are conservative examiners who will favor the 190 years variant as perhaps being more accurate, but much of whether Ezekiel was to lie on his left side for 390 or 190 days is dependent on how one interprets the different punish-

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<sup>3</sup> "Allowing one day for every year of their iniquity, I ordain that you bear it for one hundred and ninety days; thus you shall bear Israel's iniquity" (Ezekiel 4:5, NEB).

<sup>4</sup> S. Fisch, *Soncino Books of the Bible: Ezekiel* (London: Soncino, 1950, 1994), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of The Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), pp 33-34.

ments represented. Much of this is related to what Israel and Judah are intended to represent in 4:4-5. Later, in a place like Ezekiel ch. 37, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel are clearly supposed to be delineated out, with a futuristic reunification in view.<sup>6</sup> A challenge is presented when how the *Beit-Yisrael* (בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל) or House of Israel referenced in 4:4, is later in 5:4<sup>7</sup> obviously a reference to Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Christopher J.H. Wright informs us how most normally in the Book of Ezekiel, when the Northern Kingdom of Israel is intended to be represented, it is often referred to by terminology like Joseph or Ephraim—whereas when the House of Israel is often referred to, it can refer to all of Israel together, or in many cases to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He explains,

“The northern kingdom of Israel came into existence only after the reign of Solomon around 930 or 920 BC in a *coup d'état* led by Jeroboam [1 Kgs. 12]. It was finally destroyed when Samaria fell to the Assyrians in 722/721 BC. So ‘Israel’, as the name of the separate northern kingdom, lasted only about 200 years. However, it is only the use of the term ‘Judah’ in 4:6 that makes us think, retrospectively, that ‘house of Israel’ in 4:4-5 refers exclusively to the separate northern kingdom. Up to that point in the preceding chapters of the book (e.g. 2:3; 3:4, 7, 17), the expression ‘house of Israel’ clearly means the whole covenant people, without reference to the historical division into two political states. In fact, since Ezekiel was explicitly told to go and speak to the ‘house of Israel’, the expression obviously means, in those contexts, his fellow exiles from the kingdom of Judah, not the exiles of the northern kingdom who had been scattered by Assyria more than a century earlier. Likewise, in 4:13, ‘people of Israel’ obviously refers to the Judean exiles in their deprivation. It seems very probable, therefore, that the political division of the kingdoms is not in view in these verses, and that ‘house of Israel’ and ‘house of Judah’ are being used virtually synonymously.”<sup>8</sup>

With House of Israel (4:4) representing the whole of Israel, both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, then the 390 days for the 390 years, begins a period of the Prophet Ezekiel lying on his side for the sins committed by Israel since the time of Solomon, with Wright<sup>9</sup> subsequently taking the 40 days afterward representing the 40 years of exile that Judah would experience. Peter C. Craigie, however, properly directs readers, “it would be a mistake to take the numbers to be the central aspect of this symbolic action. For the audience at that time, the most evident aspect of the action would be that day after day, month after month, there was Ezekiel prostrate on his side on the ground, symbolising the weight of God’s punishment on his people. It was the length and continuity of the actions

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<sup>6</sup> Consult the exegesis paper on Ezekiel 37:15-28, “Have the Two Sticks Been Reunited?” by J.K. McKee, appearing in his book *Israel in Future Prophecy*.

<sup>7</sup> “Take again some of them and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 5:4).

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 78; also Iain M. Duguid, *NIV Application Commentary: Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 91; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp 75-76; Steven Tuell, *New International Biblical Commentary: Ezekiel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 26 take both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel being in view here.

<sup>9</sup> Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 80.

that would carry such impact to the audience; only after the actions were completed would the numbers suddenly assume significance.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, our attention, in view of the bread that the Prophet Ezekiel is directed by the Lord to cook (4:9), and his reaction to cooking it (4:14), is how this affects our overall Biblical understanding of the Torah’s dietary laws.

4:9-11 The Prophet Ezekiel was instructed by God to make a special kind of bread to eat, which included ingredients not normally used to make bread: “take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and emmer. Put them into one vessel and bake them into bread. Eat it as many days as you lie on your side: three hundred and ninety” (v. 9, NJPS). Craigie labels this as “a kind of ‘bits-and-pieces bun.’”<sup>11</sup> The main point, more than anything else, is that the bread which Ezekiel was directed to make is the food of hard-rationing, which would be present in Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege (vs. 1-2). The actual measurements for the bread and water to be consumed are stated in vs. 10-11, “The food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; this you shall eat in the space of a day. And you shall drink water by measure; drink a sixth of a hin in the space of a day” (NJPS). Twenty shekels is about 8 ounces or 0.23 kilograms, and a sixth part of a hin is about 1.4 pints or 0.6 liters.<sup>12</sup> *IVPBBC* further describes,

“The fact that Ezekiel’s food has to be weighed out and eaten at a particular time signals that this is the hard-rationing that would have been necessary during a siege. Twenty shekels would be equivalent to eight ounces of food. That amount of calories would keep him alive, but it would also significantly weaken him. The weakness of a starvation diet mirrors conditions in Jerusalem... Water rationing would also be necessary during the siege, since the people would be dependent on the supply in cisterns...and the pool deriving from the Siloam tunnel. Ezekiel’s ration is one-sixth of a hin or two-thirds of a quart per day. The extremely hot conditions during the summer and fall of 588 would have severely taxed the besieged people of Jerusalem. Such a small water ration would have further contributed to their misery.”<sup>13</sup>

Because of the commercial popularity, in various Christian and even Messianic quarters, of what has been marketed as “Ezekiel’s bread” as a healthy bread—much can be lost on some readers. Kathryn Pfisterer Darr makes light of how, “In our age, ‘multi-grain’ bread is lauded for its nutritional benefits. Here, however, Ezekiel’s resort to a bit of this and that signals shortages in Jerusalem, where no single foodstuff is available in sufficient amount to make a loaf.”<sup>14</sup> Some later, rather negative and crude observations, on the bread to be cooked by Ezekiel, were made in the Talmud:

“Said R. Hiyya bar Abin said Rab, ‘They prepare a fictive fusion meal with bread made from lentils.’ *Well, now, is that so? But wasn’t some bread of that kind made in Samuel’s time, and he didn’t eat it but tossed it to his dog? That*

<sup>10</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Daily Study Bible Series: Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 31.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 32 takes the view that the 430 days represents the 430 years connected to the servitude in Egypt and the Exodus, and that a New Exodus from the exile is in view with Ezekiel’s actions.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>13</sup> David J. Reimer, “Ezekiel,” in *ESV Study Bible*, 1507.

<sup>14</sup> Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, 693.

<sup>15</sup> Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, “The Book of Ezekiel,” in *NIB*, 6:1148.

*bread was made up of a mixture of various kinds of grain, for thus it is written: 'Take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt' (Eze. 4:9) [this is a time of famine, and people eat anything, but ordinarily people don't eat that kind of bread (Slotki)]. R. Pappa said, 'That was baked in human shit: "And you shall bake it with shit that comes out of a man in their sight" (Eze. 4:12): 'What's the meaning of "barley" in the verse, 'And you shall eat it as barley cakes' (Eze. 4:12)? Said R. Hisda, 'It means, in fixed quantities.' R. Pappa said, 'It is prepared the way barley bread is prepared, not the way wheat bread is" (b.Eruvin 81a).<sup>15</sup>*

4:12-13 What is a bit revolting about the bread that the Prophet Ezekiel was directed to prepare, is seen in how he was directed to cook it: “[The bread] you eat is to be baked like barley cakes; you are to bake it before their eyes, using human dung as fuel” (v. 12, CJB). This is a bread that is to be cooked via a fire, which uses *human excrement* for fuel! It does need to be noted—before modern, Western readers, seem a bit nauseated about this—that the use of excrement, due to the scarcity of wood in the Ancient Near East, was hardly uncommon. Lamar Eugene Cooper describes,

“The use of animal manure as a fuel did not violate the strict dietary laws of Israel. Human waste, however, was considered a defilement (Deut 23:9-14), and its use in such a manner was strictly prohibited. Having grown up in a priestly family and probably in training as a priest himself, Ezekiel was especially sensitive to this command to prepare a meal in such an unclean manner.”<sup>16</sup>

The specific Hebrew instruction was, *b'gel'lei tei'at ha'adam te'u genah* (בְּגֵלְלֵי תַעִי'אֵת הָאָדָם תֵּעֲוֶגֶנֶחַ). Perspective issues are present with how to translate the Hebrew preposition *b'* (בְּ), with English versions variably having “over” (NASU), “on” (RSV/NRSV/ESV), “with” (NJPS, AT5), and with the NIV employing the ambiguous “using.” A very obvious translation of the preposition *b'* can actually be, as it is the first definition of *b'* provided by *BDB*, “In.”<sup>17</sup> While some context needs to always be considered, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* indicates that a **spatial** usage of the preposition *b'* “indicates localization, especially ‘in,’ ‘at’ or ‘on’ a place.”<sup>18</sup> As some have had to note (discussed further), Ezekiel was actually instructed to cook this bread *in the hot the coals* of a fire fueled by human excrement.

What is intended to be insulting and humiliating about this bread, is how God tells Ezekiel, “Thus will the Children of Israel eat their food: unclean, among the nations where I will banish them” (v. 13, AT5). The bread of the exile is bread that is decisively unclean (cf. Hosea 9:4).

4:14-15 The Prophet Ezekiel's response to the Lord's direction is one of not only disgust, but one of reminding Him how he has been consistent in his obedience to the Torah's instructions on food: “Ah, Lord GOD, my person was never defiled; nor have I eaten anything that died of itself or was torn by beasts from

<sup>15</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary.*

<sup>16</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, *New American Commentary: Ezekiel* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 97.

<sup>17</sup> *BDB*, 975.

<sup>18</sup> Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103.

my youth until now, nor has foul flesh entered my mouth” (v. 14, NJPS). To cook bread within the hot coals of human dung, would be just as bad to eat from an animal that had been violently killed, or to eat any other kind of “loathsome” (ATS) meat. Here, it is useful to keep in mind what is communicated by Deuteronomy 23:12-14, regarding the disposal of human waste:

“You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement. Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.”

With Ezekiel having told the Lord how he had never violated the instructions of clean or unclean, or had been defiled by what he had eaten, the concession is made to him to instead cook his bread over cow manure: “He answered me, ‘See, I allow you cow’s dung instead of human excrement; prepare your bread on that’” (v. 15, NJPS). Here, the Hebrew clause of interest is *v’asita etlach’mekha alei’hem* (וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת־לֶחְמְךָ עַל־יהֶם), “and-you-can-make \*\*\* bread-of-you over-them” (Kohlenberger).<sup>19</sup> The preposition *al* (עַל), being **spatial** or **locative**, often “indicates a location ‘over’ or ‘upon’ an object” (*A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*).<sup>20</sup> Noting the differences between the prepositions *b’* (v. 12) and *al* (v. 15), Steven Tuell concludes,

“The Hebrew implies that Ezekiel’s bread was to be cooked not *over* the fire, but *in* its hot ashes, so that the food would be in direct contact with the unclean fuel...But now God tells Ezekiel that he may prepare his bread *over cow manure*...Rather than cooking his food in the ashes, he can fry his bread above them. Apart from the uncleanness incurred in collecting and drying the manure, Ezekiel is spared defilement—as well as the indignity of collecting, drying, and cooking in his own dung.”<sup>21</sup>

4:16-17 It is decreed to Ezekiel that the food supplies of Jerusalem will be rationed, and that his actions are mimicking of what is to transpire: “Son of Man, behold, I am breaking the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and people will eat bread by weight and with worry, and drink water by measure and with consternation; for they will lack bread and water, and every man and his brother will be confounded, and they will pine away in their iniquity” (ATS). Vs. 16-17 include some echoes of Leviticus 26:26, 39:

“When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied...So those of you who may be left will rot away because of their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; and also because of the iniquities of their forefathers they will rot away with them.”

**Ezekiel 4:9-17 application** The main thrust of what is seen in Ezekiel 4:9-17 is that the Prophet Ezekiel, having already been taken into Babylonian exile, is directed by God to eat the sort of food that those in Jerusalem will be forced to

<sup>19</sup> Kohlenberger, 4:309.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold and Choi, 120.

<sup>21</sup> Tuell, 28.

eat, as the city will soon be under siege. As Marvin A. Sweeney observes, “The coming disaster will result in the people lacking food, so that they and the priests will be compelled to violate their food restrictions, and will have to eat impure food when Jerusalem and the Temple are under siege and ultimately destroyed. Ezekiel mixes a variety of grains, including those not normally consumed in bread, to demonstrate that there is insufficient grain to make an entire loaf of bread.”<sup>22</sup>

The most shocking piece of instruction within Ezekiel 4:9-17 is undeniably how the Prophet was first directed by God to cook this bread within the hot coals of a fire fueled by human feces (4:12). Given the fact that Ezekiel was a priest, and observed the Torah’s dietary laws, the Prophet declares that he is innocent of any violation of the Law (4:14). The Lord makes a concession to Ezekiel, that he may cook his bread over a fire instead fueled by cow dung (4:15), meaning that the only uncleanness Ezekiel would contract, would be by collecting and processing this. It is to be recognized, however, that those in Jerusalem who would have to suffer through the siege and hard-rationing, would have to cook their bread over their own excrement.

The word of Ezekiel 4:14, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never defiled myself. From my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat<sup>23</sup> come into my mouth” (ESV), is almost identical to what the Apostle Peter would later say in Acts 10:14,<sup>24</sup> when he would be shown the vision of the sheet with various unclean animals on it. There is discussion as to whether or not the Prophet Ezekiel, in being directed to bake the bread in human feces, and later over cow excrement, was a part of some significant alteration being made by God to His Instruction.<sup>25</sup> Alexander takes the view, “God was not changing his law when he commanded Ezekiel to do all this. God temporarily caused Ezekiel to disregard the principle of eating unclean food to dramatize in an extreme way how abhorrent the Captivity would be. God used an acted parable to convey this truth in a way that would surely be understood. However, this was only symbolic; the eating of unclean food as a normal practice was not being condoned. God sovereignly protected Ezekiel against any ill effects of eating defiled food.”<sup>26</sup>

While the bread Ezekiel was directed to cook hardly sounds appetizing, and having to cook it over cow dung formed and dried with one’s own hands is not at all appealing—it would be those in Jerusalem having to cook with their own feces, who would be in far more violation of Torah instructions regarding cleanliness, than Ezekiel’s minor infractions. This is especially realized in how the siege

<sup>22</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, “Ezekiel,” in *Jewish Study Bible*, 1052.

<sup>23</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 186 describes how “the last expression, *bēšar piggūl* [בֶּשֶׂר פִּגּוּל], is rare, but the sense is suggested by Lev. 7:18 and 19:7, where *piggūl* refers to sacrificial meat that has not been eaten by the third day. In the absence of refrigeration such meat would obviously have begun to decompose. In Isa 65:4, the only other occurrence of the term, the ‘broth of *piggulim*’ is paired with *bēšar haḥazîr* [בֶּשֶׂר הַחַזִּיר], ‘the flesh of swine.’”

<sup>24</sup> “No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean” (Acts 10:14, RSV).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. John B. Taylor, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Ezekiel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1969), 84; Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 82; Duguid, *Ezekiel*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander, in *EXP*, 6:770.

of Jerusalem would result in cannibalism (5:10), something also having been witnessed with the previous siege of Samaria (2 Kings 6:28). The Prophet Ezekiel's actions are a far cry from what the Prophet Jeremiah decreed would happen, and what the author of Lamentations (likely Baruch) observed:

"I will also make this city a desolation and an *object of hissing*; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters. I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them" (Jeremiah 19:8-9).

"The hands of compassionate women boiled their own children; they became food for them because of the destruction of the daughter of my people" (Lamentations 4:10).

Per the reaction of the Prophet Ezekiel (4:14), various Christian interpreters have rightfully noted that there is some kind of a connection to be made with the Apostle Peter's word, when shown the vision of the sheet.<sup>27</sup> It is often recognized that for the Prophet Ezekiel, who was directed by God to do some out-of-the-ordinary things in cooking the bread, that ultimately the dietary laws of the Torah were not abolished—as instead Ezekiel was directed to demonstrate some of what the Jerusalemites would have to do under siege. Yet, most Christian commentators on the Book of Ezekiel would conclude that the later vision given to the Apostle Peter in Acts chs. 10-11, does communicate that the Torah's dietary laws have been abolished for the post-resurrection era. In the estimation of Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Inevitably, the reader of the New Testament will recall Simon Peter's reaction when commanded to eat ritually impure food (Acts 10:9-16; 11:5-10). The fact that these laws were eventually abrogated within the mainstream of Gentile Christianity should not lead the Christian reader to misconstrue their intent."<sup>28</sup> He describes the uniqueness of Ezekiel's community, urging contemporary Christians not to be negative toward the kosher dietary laws, by further stating, "There is a certain ecological concern here—for bodily states, what we ingest; in a word, for the body as that part of the world for which we are especially responsible...The preservation of that culture in the inhospitable milieu in which the deportees found themselves remained a major concern of his throughout his career."<sup>29</sup> The bread that Ezekiel had to eat, was intended to ultimately communicate how humiliating the judgment and exile upon Israel was going to be, and how much of the Torah would be unable to be properly followed in exile.

Messianic readers of Ezekiel 4:9-17, who adhere to the continued validity of the kosher dietary laws in the post-resurrection era, will need to take some cues from what the Prophet Ezekiel was instructed to do (4:9-12), his reaction (4:14), and God's allowance to him (4:15). While the bread he was directed to bake was

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. John B. Taylor, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Ezekiel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1969), 84; Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 82; Duguid, *Ezekiel*, 96.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Ezekiel* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), pp 37-38.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

hardly appetizing, the only uncleanness Ezekiel would contract would be with having to get his hands dirty in collecting and processing the cow excrement for the fire; Ezekiel would not be eating unclean bread cooked with human waste, unlike those in Jerusalem under siege, and a great many of those who would go into the exile, as a part of their punishment.

Given this background for what the Apostle Peter would later declare to God in the vision of the sheet (Acts 10:9-15), there should be a greater probing of the setting considered by readers, further consideration for the details of what Peter would be shown by God, and also an evaluation of Peter's subsequent actions.

## TNN ONLINE EDITOR'S UPDATE

April 2014

Dear Friends:

It is really hard to believe that the first three months of 2014 have passed by so quickly! My



attention has been heavily focused, as you can expect, on plowing through our **Romans Bible Study**, and in making continual progress on the *Messianic Kosher Helper*. I am certainly pleased to report that I am now working through my notes on Romans ch. 10, and that the Tanach passages relating to the kosher dietary laws are now finished! We still have quite a ways to go for each of these publications to be released, though.

Be sure to take a look at this month's edition of Outreach Israel News. There is an excerpt from the forthcoming *Messianic Kosher Helper* on **Ezekiel 4:9-17**, which many of you will find enlightening! When you see it, notice how detailed the level of engagement is with the topic of *kashrut*. When completed, this book is going to set some new standards for the Messianic community—certainly with how thorough things need to be in how we approach various subjects, whether they be Torah related or not.

This is a time, and this is a year, when it has become clearer to me—perhaps more than ever before—that things are going to be increasingly more complicated for the broad Messianic movement. *Religious politics, posturing, and maneuvering are not going to ever go away*. Those of us who strive to be mature adults, have to take a **much harder and more difficult road** in addressing the issues that face us. As is seen with the projects that sit before Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online: we have to address the issues from the text of Holy Scripture. Whether it be via a commentary on a book of the Bible, which might take a year or so to complete—or via an analysis book of a topic (like kosher)—this is how progress for the Kingdom of God gets made!

Until next month... J.K. McKee