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# Messianic Perspectives®

*God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.*



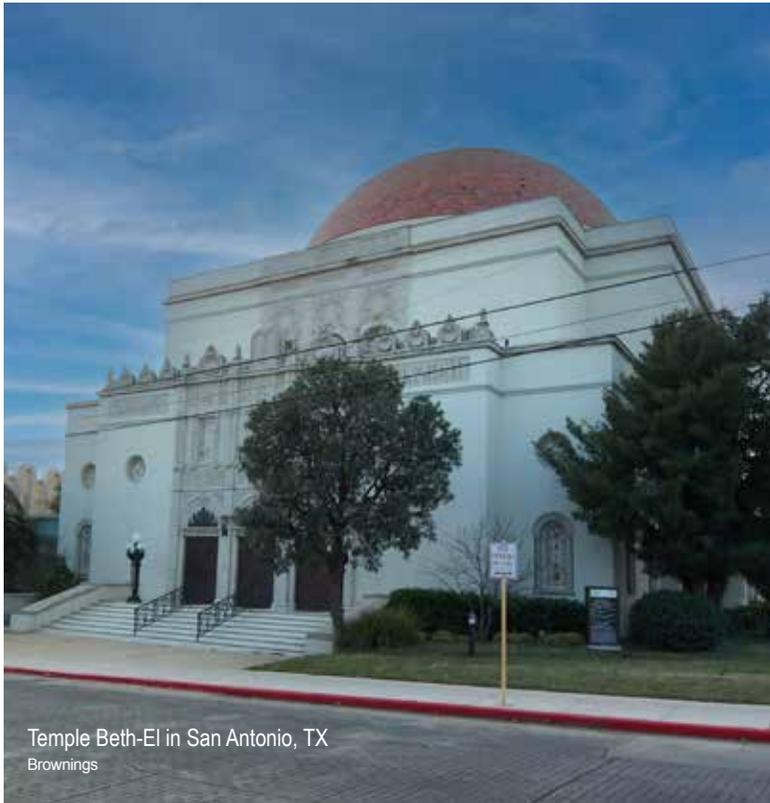
**JESUS & THE  
ATONEMENT**  
Why the Rabbis Are Skeptical

BY DR. CHARLES HALFF (1929-2000)  
WITH DR. GARY HEDRICK

Charles Halff was the Jewish Founder of CJF Ministries. This article is based on notes retrieved from his files, as well as earlier versions of his life story. Gary has collated and edited the material for style and readability. He also added the explanatory footnotes. We trust that the resulting work product—this article—will be a blessing to our readers.

“**Atonement**” is a key theme—and arguably *the* key theme—of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> It’s about bringing God and humankind together by resolving the sin problem that has separated us since the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Under the Older Covenant, atonement signified the forgiveness (that is, the “covering” or “wiping away”) of the people’s sins on the holiest day of the year, *Yom Kippur*, the “Day of Atonement.” This Atonement was temporary. It had to be repeated annually.



Modern Jews continue the tradition of Yom Kippur, but with an important difference. Temple sacrifices are no longer mandated. There is no shedding of blood. Instead, the focus is on self-affliction to remain on good terms with God for another year. The traditional Hebrew greeting for Yom Kippur is *G’mar Chatimah Tovah*, meaning, “May you be inscribed for good [in the Book of Life].”

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for “atonement” is *kapparah* (כפרה), from the root *kaphar* (כפר), meaning “to cover” or “to wipe away.”

When I was a youngster, one of our teaching rabbis at Temple Beth-El explained that the meaning of “atonement” could easily be remembered by dissecting the word like this: *at-one-ment*. That is, it’s about two estranged parties coming together and meeting *at one* point of reconciliation. I have never forgotten the rabbi’s simple yet profound definition.

My Jewish family would gather in the synagogue on Yom Kippur for a 25-hour period of fasting, prayer, and repentance. Dad always made sure we had tickets for the service.<sup>2</sup> It was a special time of the year for all of us.



As you might imagine, it’s not easy to keep a youngster occupied for a whole day within the confines of a synagogue—but Jewish families manage it well. As for our branch of the Halff clan, our parents and grandmothers used Yom Kippur as an opportunity to teach my sister and me to “atone” for our wrongdoings by “afflicting” our souls and repenting—that is, being sorry for the things we had done wrong during the year.

Fortunately, children under 13 years of age are exempt from the more rigorous requirements, like fasting from food and drink. So, Mom would bring snacks that we could nibble on throughout the day.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Synagogues typically sell tickets for Yom Kippur services because seating is limited and it’s the one time of the year when everyone wants to attend. So, ticketing is the best way to guarantee seating for everyone who has made a reservation. While there is a price for the tickets, provision is typically made for people who can’t afford them—that is, if they put in their request far enough ahead of time.

<sup>3</sup> People with qualifying medical conditions can also be exempted from the fasting requirement on Yom Kippur.

## Messianic Perspectives®

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Some people have the mistaken notion that we're supposed to be sad and down-in-the-dumps on the Day of Atonement. After all, it's a solemn time. But at Temple Beth-El, our Rabbi, Ephraim Frisch, had a different take on it. He made a distinction between sadness and the "affliction of Egypt." To him, those two things were not the same. Israel's affliction in Egypt was unpleasant, to be sure, but it never broke our collective spirit.

We never ceased calling out to our God, and He finally responded (Ex. 4:31). Once He entered the picture, the people knew better times were ahead. So, the affliction the Egyptians were laying on them became a cause for hope and anticipation—not sadness and despair.

On Yom Kippur, the day's activities were supposed to bring us into a closer relationship with God, but sometimes that personal aspect was obscured by all the busy-ness. Like all Jewish holidays, there are many traditions to observe. Everyone has a job to do. Honestly, though, I never felt much closer to God when it was all over. But maybe that was my fault because my young and active mind was too distracted by other matters.



## Two Aspects of Forgiveness

I didn't understand it when I was a child, but now I can see that the underlying truth of Yom Kippur—the need for our sins to be atoned for—is essential to our understanding of salvation.

The New Testament (NT) builds on the foundation of Yom Kippur. It explains that our sins have separated us from God. Sin is anything that falls short of His perfection—and it cannot be merely swept under the rug. Sin creates a deficit (or imbalance) that must be offset. It must be forgiven. A price must be paid.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In both Hebrew and Greek, the words translated *sin* mean "to miss the mark." Anything that doesn't match up with God's standard of perfection is sin. If He just ignored it, even the smallest act of sin would fester and cause a rupture in His Creation—a Creation that was meant to reflect His own character and nature (Psalm 19:1). That's why sin must be dealt with and cannot be overlooked. Forgiveness comes at very high cost (1 Peter 1:18–19). The deficit caused by sin in the universe must be offset. This is the great takeaway from the Day of Atonement.

This forgiveness may come from either one of two different directions. Vertically, for instance, we need God's forgiveness because we have failed to meet His righteous standard. We have offended His holiness and His character. So, we need His mercy and forgiveness.

Horizontally, we need the forgiveness of others whom we have wronged. This may require restitution to make things right. We cannot claim that just because we're saved and God has forgiven our sins, we're off the hook for wrongs committed against others. If we have stolen something, for instance, we must return it to the rightful owner. Or, if we have slandered or lied about someone, we should admit it, tell the truth, and do whatever it takes to make it right.<sup>5</sup> This is something the rabbis emphasize on Yom Kippur.<sup>6</sup>



ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

Please note, beloved, that Jesus agreed with the priority of horizontal forgiveness. In fact, He said it comes first, even before divine (vertical) forgiveness: "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23–24).

<sup>5</sup> *Lashon Hara* (lit., "the evil tongue"), the rabbinic term for slander (or tale-bearing), is a practice that's condemned in Leviticus 19:16 and elaborated on at great length in the Talmud. Interestingly, the rabbis say that slander is wrong even if the malicious statement itself is true but was shared with the intent of harming the other person.

<sup>6</sup> When we refer to "the rabbis," we're not painting every rabbi on the planet with the same, broad brush. Rather, we are talking about a rabbinic consensus—that is, a generalized point of view that represents a majority of traditional (non-Messianic) teachers or rabbis. In Rabbinic Literature (known in Judaism as *Sifrut Chazal*, "Literature [of the] Sages"), ancient rabbis dispute and debate back-and-forth among themselves endlessly. This is especially true in the Talmud itself, where it is difficult to nail down a single, definitive ruling on almost any disputable issue. Messianic (i.e., Jewish-Christian, Yeshua-believing) teachers or rabbis, on the other hand, while they may see Talmudic sources as historically or culturally informative, don't regard those sources as possessing equal authority with Scripture. Rather, they embrace the New Covenant (*Berit HaChadashah*, the New Testament), in tandem with the Older Covenant (*Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible), both divinely inspired, as their source of authority.

## How Was Atonement Made?

So, once we understand that our sins and shortcomings have separated us from God, the next question is: How do we obtain forgiveness for those sins? I already explained how we petitioned God for forgiveness at schul in the 20th century during Yom Kippur (i.e., corporate fasting, prayer, and repentance). However, the method was much different in the first century when the Temple was still standing in Jerusalem.

Those ancient instructions are straightforward and can be found in the Torah (Leviticus 16). On Yom Kippur, the High Priest (*Cohen HaGadol*) entered the Holy of Holies (*Kadosh haKadoshim*) and sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the Mercy Seat (*Kaporet*), or lid, of the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD (*Aron Berit YHVH*).

When the priest was finished, the nation's sins had been absolved (neutralized) and their names were securely recorded in God's heavenly Book of Life (*Sepher Chayim*) for another year.<sup>7</sup>

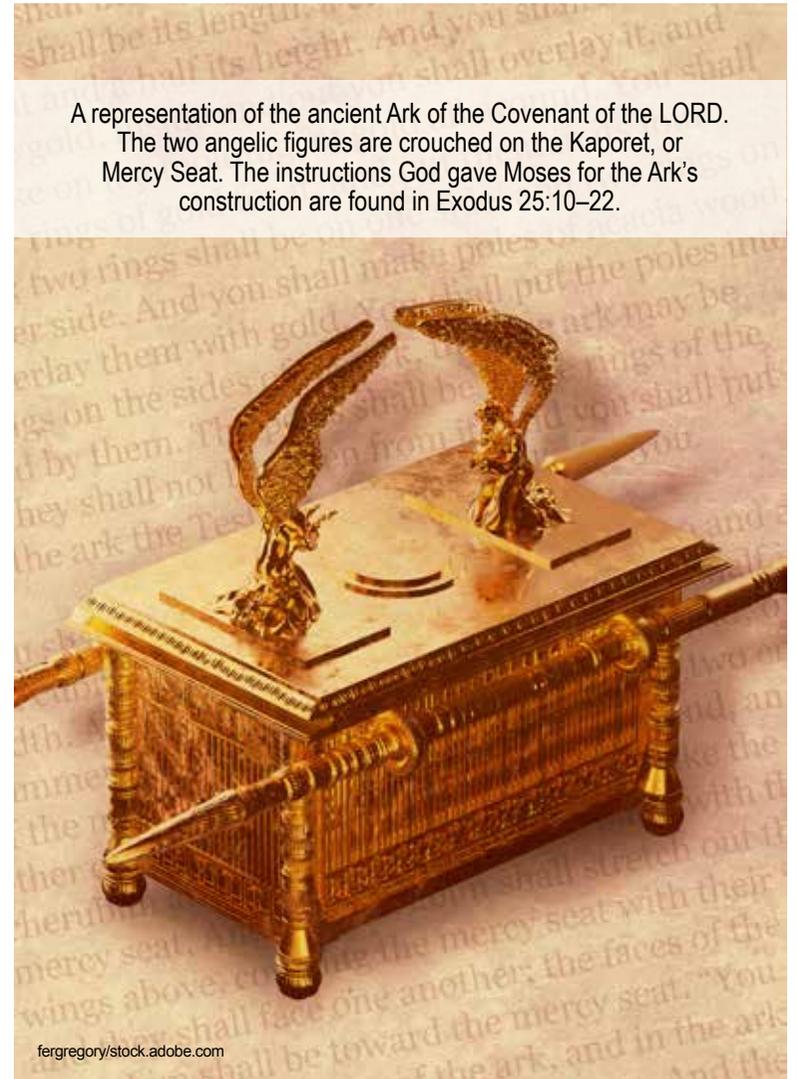


Joshua passing the River Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant  
Benjamin West

Interestingly, when the Hebrew Torah mentions the Day of Atonement, it uses the plural form of the word (“atone-ments,” or *kippurim*). Literally, then, it’s “the Day of Atonements” (plural). Why is it plural in the Hebrew? The traditional explanation for this is that the plural signifies that there are numerous means of atonement—like prayer, fasting, and repentance/confession, for instance. Another explanation is that the nation consists of many people—hence, individual “atone-ments” (plural) were required. That is, the value of the atonement had to be distributed over the entire populace.

<sup>7</sup> According to Psalm 69:28, the Book of Life is the heavenly “database” or repository where God records the names of the righteous. It is most likely not a literal “book,” although we can’t say that with certainty.

However, I don’t find this notion of *other means of atone-ment* in my Bible. I’ve looked for it and it’s not there. According to Scripture, there is *only one way* to make atonement for sin, and that is through the death of a spotless and innocent sacrifice—a blood sacrifice offered by a duly-authorized descendant of Aaron in the Temple. The whole purpose of shedding the blood of tens of thousands of animals in the Tabernacle and the Temple over a period of 1,500 years was to emphasize the necessity of a blood sacrifice for sin.<sup>8</sup> It was not an option; it was a requirement. Atonement by the shedding of blood was—and still is—a very serious matter.



A representation of the ancient Ark of the Covenant of the LORD. The two angelic figures are crouched on the Kaporet, or Mercy Seat. The instructions God gave Moses for the Ark’s construction are found in Exodus 25:10–22.

If it’s true that the shedding of blood wasn’t the only acceptable means of making atonement for sins, then an immeasurable amount of time and effort—not to mention hundreds of thousands of gallons of blood—was poured out needlessly in the Tabernacle and Temple during those 1,500 years! For those many centuries, spanning almost forty generations, observant Jews made their way up to Jerusalem three times a year for the pilgrim festivals so they could pay their tithes and offer their sacrifices according to the requirements of the Mosaic Law.

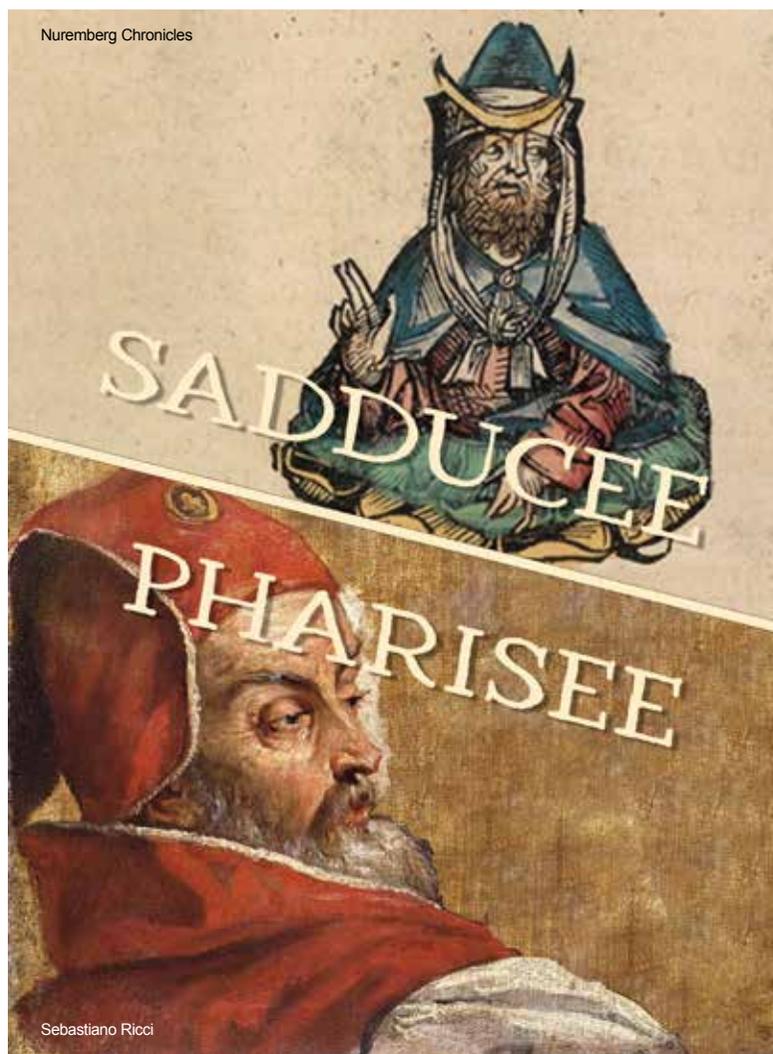
If the blood sacrifices were, in fact, optional, one can’t help wondering why a simpler, more economical, bloodless system wasn’t instituted from the very beginning.

<sup>8</sup> Atonement required a blood sacrifice because blood represents life. The Torah says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).

## Yavneh: Temple-less Judaism

From where, then, did this idea about *other means of atonement* come? Who decided that blood sacrifice was optional? To answer this question, we must go all the way back to the first century.

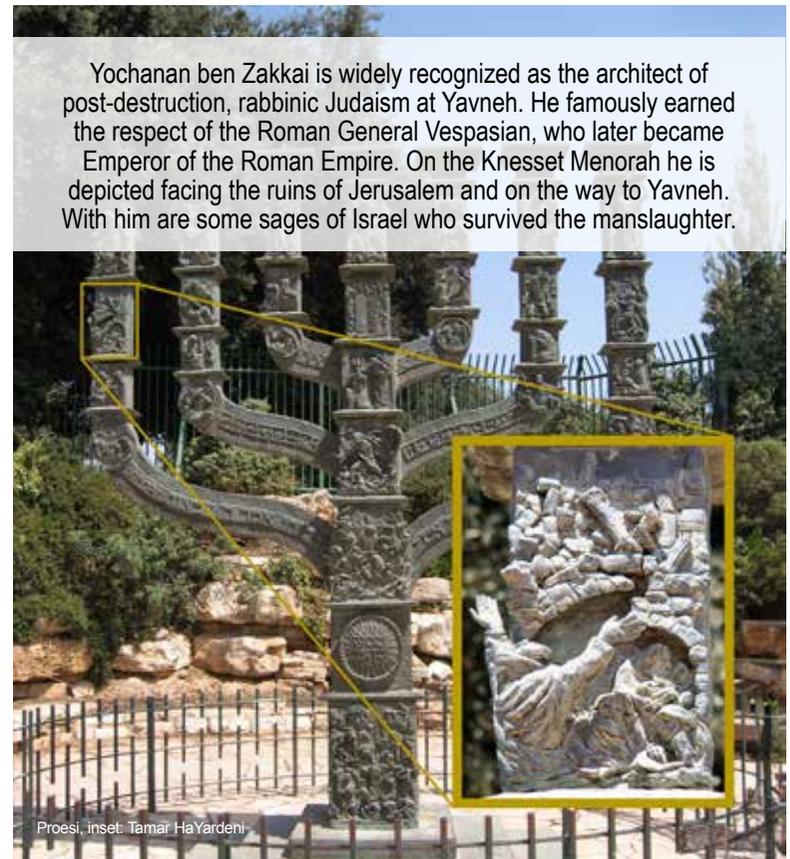
Before the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, Judaism was more diverse than it is today. In fact, some historians talk about ancient “Judaisms” (plural) rather than just one form of Judaism during the Second Temple Period. One of the most powerful and influential of these first-century Judaisms was the Priesthood (the *Cohanut*), which was populated mainly by Sadducees (*Tz’idukim*).<sup>9</sup> Thousands of priests served in 24 courses (or watches) under the supervision of the elite, aristocratic Sadducean party.<sup>10</sup> However, their work was centered in the Temple—so when the Temple was destroyed, the Sadducean priesthood was wiped out virtually overnight. They quickly fled from Jerusalem and its smoldering ruins, never to be heard from again.



<sup>9</sup> The Party of the Sadducees oversaw the Temple establishment, but not all the thousands of priests (*Cohanim*) were necessarily Sadducees. Priests had to be descended from Aaron, who, in turn, was from the tribe of Levi. But as far as we know, they didn’t have to be members of the Party.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Chronicles 24 lists the 24 rotating courses of priests during the Second Temple period (vv. 1–31). Commentator David Allen writes, “Josephus mentioned that there were some 20,000 priests, and according to Jeremias [*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*] there were some 7,200 priests attached to the temple in Jerusalem alone” (*Hebrews in The New American Commentary* series [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010], 66). In the NT, Zacharias, father of John the Baptizer, is said to have been a Temple priest from the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). There is irony here in the fact that Zacharias may have been a Sadducee, as many priests were—and Sadducees didn’t believe in angels, the resurrection, or anything supernatural. Yet Zacharias received the news about his soon-to-be-born son, John, from an angel (v. 13)!

The Pharisees (*P’rushim*), on the other hand, were not dependent on the Temple, so they survived the destruction of Jerusalem. In fact, they had anticipated what was about to happen and started planning for the destruction before AD 70. A rabbi named Yochanan ben Zakkai, a capable and charismatic organizer, took the reins of leadership after the destruction. He had established a thriving yeshiva in Yavneh, a town in central Israel, just north of present-day Ashdod. Post-AD 70, he also recruited some famous sages and scholars, brought them to Yavneh, and reestablished the Sanhedrin—without the Sadducees, of course. Today’s rabbis, in fact, consider themselves the successors of these ancient Pharisees who convened at Yavneh.



Yochanan ben Zakkai is widely recognized as the architect of post-destruction, rabbinic Judaism at Yavneh. He famously earned the respect of the Roman General Vespasian, who later became Emperor of the Roman Empire. On the Knesset Menorah he is depicted facing the ruins of Jerusalem and on the way to Yavneh. With him are some sages of Israel who survived the manslaughter.

These surviving Pharisees/Rabbis had to adjust to a harsh, new reality—that is, the Temple was no more. Temple-oriented Judaism was now a thing of the past. Jewish law (*halakha*) requires that sacrifices be offered only in the Temple under the supervision of the Sadducees and the Aaronic priesthood. Now, in August of AD 70, the priests had fled in the face of the final Roman onslaught, and the Temple itself had been razed, so there would be no more sacrifices.

With no approved venue for sacrifices, then, how would sins be atoned for? What would Jewish people do on Yom Kippur to get their sins “wiped away” for another year?

The solution they came up with in Yavneh was truly innovative. The elaborate, bloody sacrificial system of Leviticus would be replaced by something much simpler and more economical than the old Temple sacrifices. The Academy at Yavneh determined that from then on, Jewish communities, wherever they were, would gather themselves and atone for their sins through fasting (the predominant feature of Yom Kippur), prayer, and repentance (Heb., *t’shuvah*). This new arrangement would replace the blood sacrifices.

That’s how it happened. Blood atonement was replaced at Yavneh.

## Theories of the Atonement

“Atonement” is primarily an OT term. It only appears once in the NT—and that’s in the KJV translation of Romans 5:11: *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the **atonement*** (emphasis added in bold). Here, it translates the Greek *katalagei* (καταλλαγῆ). Virtually every other English translation (NKJV, NLT, NIV, ESV, CSB, NASB, LSB, NET, RSV, ASV, YLT, DBY, WEB, and HNV) translates it as “reconciliation.”

The reason this is important is that the OT word for “atonement” (Heb., *kippurim*) comes from the Hebrew *kaphar*, which means “to cover.” When we cover something, we’re hiding it from view—but it’s still there, lurking underneath the covering. So, the OT sacrificial system provided a temporary covering for (or “wiping away” of) sin—but the sin wasn’t completely done away with. Doing away with sin, once and for all, is a uniquely NT concept. Under the OT economy, animal sacrifices had to be offered over and over, from one year to the next, because they weren’t permanently effectual.<sup>11</sup>



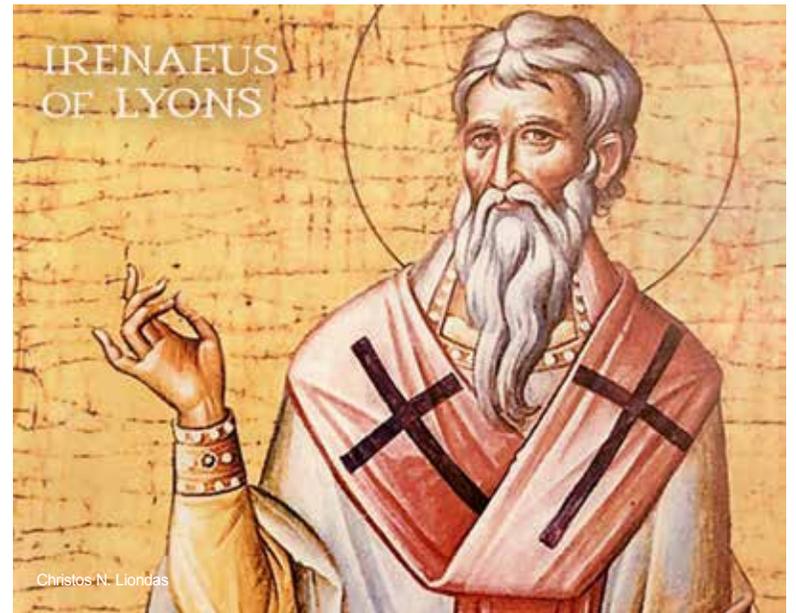
This glaring contrast (i.e., temporary vs. permanent atonement) is something the rabbis have zeroed in on with great interest. They look askance on the Christian claim that when Jesus died on Calvary, He made atonement, once and for all, for the sins of the world. How, exactly, does that work? How does one innocent Man take upon Himself the penalty for others’ sins? The rabbis want to know the details about how this works.

The problem is that Christian theologians over the past 2,000 years have been unable to agree among themselves as to how it works. Numerous theories have been proposed as to precisely how Yeshua’s Atonement on Calvary accomplished our Redemption.

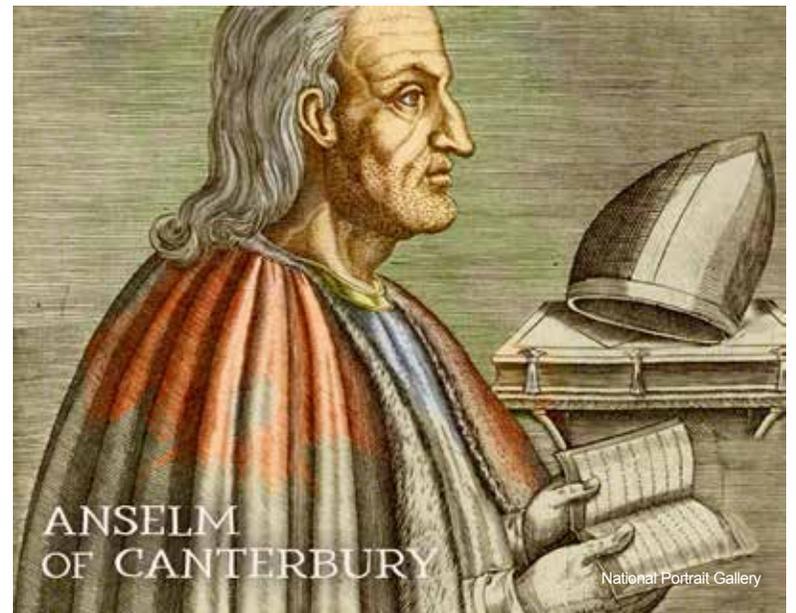
<sup>11</sup>There are allusions in the OT to the NT’s concept of permanently doing away with sin and its penalty: *As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us* (Psalm 103:12).

Bill Muehlenberg had this helpful summary of the different Christian theories of the Atonement on his *Culture Watch* blogsite a few years ago:<sup>12</sup>

- **The Ransom Theory** (held by early church fathers). Adherents believe the death of the Messiah was a ransom paid by God to Satan.
- **The Recapitulation Theory** (Irenaeus of Lyons). In this scheme of the Atonement, Yeshua is the New Adam who succeeded where the “first Adam” failed.



- **The Satisfaction (Commercial) Theory** (Anselm of Canterbury). “God’s offended honor and dignity could only be satisfied by the sacrifice of the God-Man, Jesus Christ” (Theopedia).



- **The Penal Substitution Theory** (the view of the Reformers, and many evangelicals today). Jesus died on the Cross *in our place* to satisfy the requirements of God’s justice and holiness. He took our penalty upon Himself.

<sup>12</sup>Bill Muehlenberg, “C.S. Lewis and Theories of the Atonement” (Nov. 25, 2016) on the *Culture Watch* blogsite (billmuehlenberg.com). We added explanatory notes to Bill’s seven points.

- **The Moral Example (Subjective, or Moral Influence) Theory** (Abelard). This theory says that the purpose of the Crucifixion was to provide us with an example of a morally perfect life.



- **The Governmental Theory** (Grotius). This one suggests that Jesus gave His life on Calvary so that God could forgive us of our sins without forfeiting His right to rule with justice and righteousness over His Creation.



- **The Christus Victor (Dramatic) Theory** (Aulen). This view is related to the Ransom Theory (above) and celebrates the Lord's victory over Satan as He liberates God's people from the power of sin. However, it doesn't provide a definitive answer to the question of how, exactly, the Messiah's death accomplishes this.



The rabbis find it curious that Christian theologians for centuries have struggled to explain how Yeshua's death paid for the sins of humanity and made Redemption possible. In fact, one of the fundamental principles of rabbinic Judaism is that individuals are responsible for their own actions and cannot be punished for the transgressions of others. They point to passages like Deuteronomy 24:16, where the Torah declares: *Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.*

The rabbis are right about this. Each of us is responsible for his/her own sin. It's a general rule in the Torah. Where the rabbis err, however, is in their failure to recognize that many rules have exceptions—and Yeshua's Atonement for the sins of the world is a wonderful, glorious exception to the rule. Sometimes, the exception proves the rule—and this is one of those times.

### The Mechanics of Yeshua's Atonement

Yeshua of Nazareth was God Incarnate, the sinless Lamb of God, and as such, He was uniquely qualified to offer Himself as the ultimate Atonement for sin. No one else could have done it. Anyone else would have had their own sin to account for—but not Him.

So, how does the Atonement work? Which of the seven theories (above) is correct? In my humble opinion, there are elements of truth in all of them. The scope and efficacy of Messiah's Atonement is so wide and so vibrant, it is difficult to sum it up in a single, simple formula.

The main feature of the Messiah's Atonement is that it was permanent, "once for all," never to be repeated (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10).<sup>13</sup> Its benefits are circumscribed by the following NT terms:

- Expiation—A price was paid to cancel sin. In Scripture, sacrifices of *expiation* are set apart from sacrifices of *consecration* and *communion*.<sup>14</sup>
- Propitiation (1 John 2:2)—God's justice was satisfied with no compromise on His part.
- Reconciliation—The effect of Atonement is that we are reunited with our Creator for time and Eternity.

Is the Lord's Atonement hard to express in words? Yes, it is. Is it mindboggling? Absolutely.

C.S. Lewis, the far-famed British philosopher-theologian, decided that the best way to understand the Atonement was by manufacturing his own parable—a story with some captivating characters who teach us about truth.

The story that Lewis wrote is *The Chronicles of Narnia*. One of its characters is a Lion named Aslan. The point of the story is that the Atonement is a deeper and more powerful form of "magic" than the Enemy could ever have anticipated.

<sup>13</sup>The fact that the Atonement Yeshua accomplished when He died on Calvary was a once-and-for-all event doesn't mean the Temple's sacrificial system was abrogated in the first century. After all, the prophetic Scriptures indicate that the future Millennial Temple will be a busy place, with worshippers from all over the world converging on Jerusalem to offer sacrifices (Ezek. 45–46). These future sacrifices will be for commemorative and purification purposes—and will in no way add to (or detract from) the Lord's finished work on Calvary. See Jerry M. Hullinger's article "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 52 (July-September 1995), 279–89.

<sup>14</sup>See the explanatory note on "Sacrifice: Guilt Offering" in *The Amplified Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 553 (Kindle Edition).



# Aslan,

## THE LION WHO SACRIFICES HIMSELF

*The Chronicles of Narnia* consists of seven books, the first of which is *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. In *LWW*'s storyline, careful readers will recognize the Lion as representing Jesus, and the White Witch as the devil (or evil personified). The wardrobe (closet) is the doorway the children (Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy) use to enter (and exit) the magical Land of Narnia.

Art Lindsley, a fellow at the C.S. Lewis Institute in Virginia, explains how Lewis uses *LWW* to highlight the hard-to-comprehend, deeper "magic" of the Atonement. He writes, "In *LWW* there is a confrontation between the White Witch and Aslan. [The witch] comes to claim the life of Edmund because he has turned traitor. She appeals to a deep magic from the beginning of time saying that 'Every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey' and that 'for every treachery I have a right to kill.'"<sup>15</sup>

Lindsley continues, "Aslan and the White Witch talk privately, and Aslan declares Edmund free from the witch's claim. But the look of joy on the witch's face as she departs, and her allusion to a promise Aslan has made, indicate that something ominous is about to happen.

"Late that night, Aslan leaves the camp 'head hung low' and walking slowly. As Lucy and Susan watch from a distance in horror and disbelief, the witch and all manner of evil creatures bind Aslan to the Stone Table, shave him, and muzzle him.

"Finally, the witch takes a stone knife and kills Aslan. Exhausted by grief, Lucy and Susan wait for morning. As the sun rises, they hear a loud crack and see the Stone Table broken in two. But there is no Aslan.

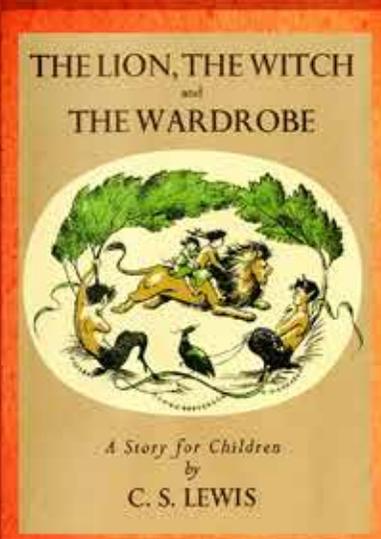
"'Who's done it?' cried Susan. 'What does it mean? Is it more magic?'

"'Yes!' said a great voice behind their backs. 'It's more magic.'

"Aslan is alive! He is real, not a ghost. He licks Susan's forehead. The girls are overjoyed and throw themselves on him, kissing him repeatedly. When they calm down, Susan asks: 'But what does it all mean?'

"'It means,' said Aslan, 'that though the witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little farther back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.'"<sup>16</sup>

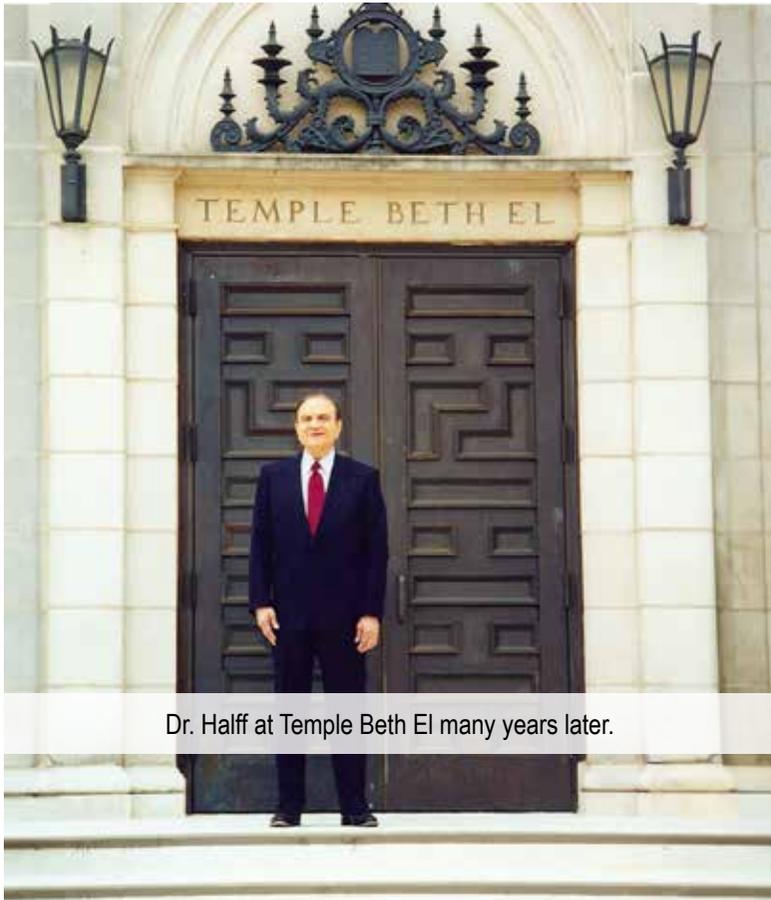
Lindsley concludes: "Just as Aslan was killed in Edmund's stead and saved his life, so Jesus' death for us not only takes away our guilt for what we have done or left undone, but when we believe in Him, new life begins to transform us from the inside out, from death to life that will go on for all eternity."<sup>17</sup>



<sup>15</sup> Every sin we commit reinforces the Evil One's claim on us (Ezek. 18:4). Sin is like the fiery brand a rancher burns onto his cattle, identifying them as his property. Likewise, sin brands us as belonging to the devil. In *LWW*, Edmund had committed a great sin (treason against Aslan), so the Witch had every right to claim the boy as her own—her "rightful prey." Aslan the Lion, however, devised a plan—the "deeper magic" that was beyond the witch's understanding—to redeem Edmund by offering to take his place. This was an offer the Witch could not refuse because it would enable her, at long last, to kill Aslan, her longtime Adversary.

<sup>16</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: Harper Collins, 1950), 274.

<sup>17</sup> Art Lindsley, "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" in *Knowing & Doing: A Teaching Quarterly for Discipleship of Heart and Mind* (Winter 2005 issue). Art Lindsley, Ph.D., is a Senior Fellow at the C.S. Lewis Institute in Springfield, VA ([cslewisinstitute.org](http://cslewisinstitute.org)).



Dr. Halff at Temple Beth El many years later.

### Conclusion

At the end of the day, that simple, LWW parable may be our best hope for understanding something that's virtually incomprehensible—the Atonement. Biblically, it's the Great Exception to the rule. The Innocent One died for the guilty. And like Aslan the Lion, death couldn't hold Him.

Yes, of course, it's confounding and mindboggling because that's what "magic" is—something that defies explanation. And may I remind our rabbi friends that just because Christians have historically had difficulty reducing the Atonement to a simple, easy-to-understand formula doesn't mean it didn't happen?

The reality is that it *did* happen. The Atonement—and the Redemption it secured for us—was accomplished in the most unlikely of circumstances. A humble, Jewish carpenter entered this world as a Baby born to a Jewish maiden in a stable in Bethlehem. He lived, died, was resurrected on the third day, and returned to His home in Heaven—and someday soon, He will return to vanquish His enemies and reign as our King of kings and Lord of lords! ✨



Gary Hedrick is president of CJF Ministries.

"For us, our trip to Israel was indeed our trip of a lifetime. We know that phrase can be cliché but it was that and much more. Adjectives and superlatives really don't do it justice. Our trip to Israel through CJF Ministries and Yosher Tours, led by Rob Styler and our local tour guide Dan Altaras, was an experience like no other. It brought the Bible 'alive!'"

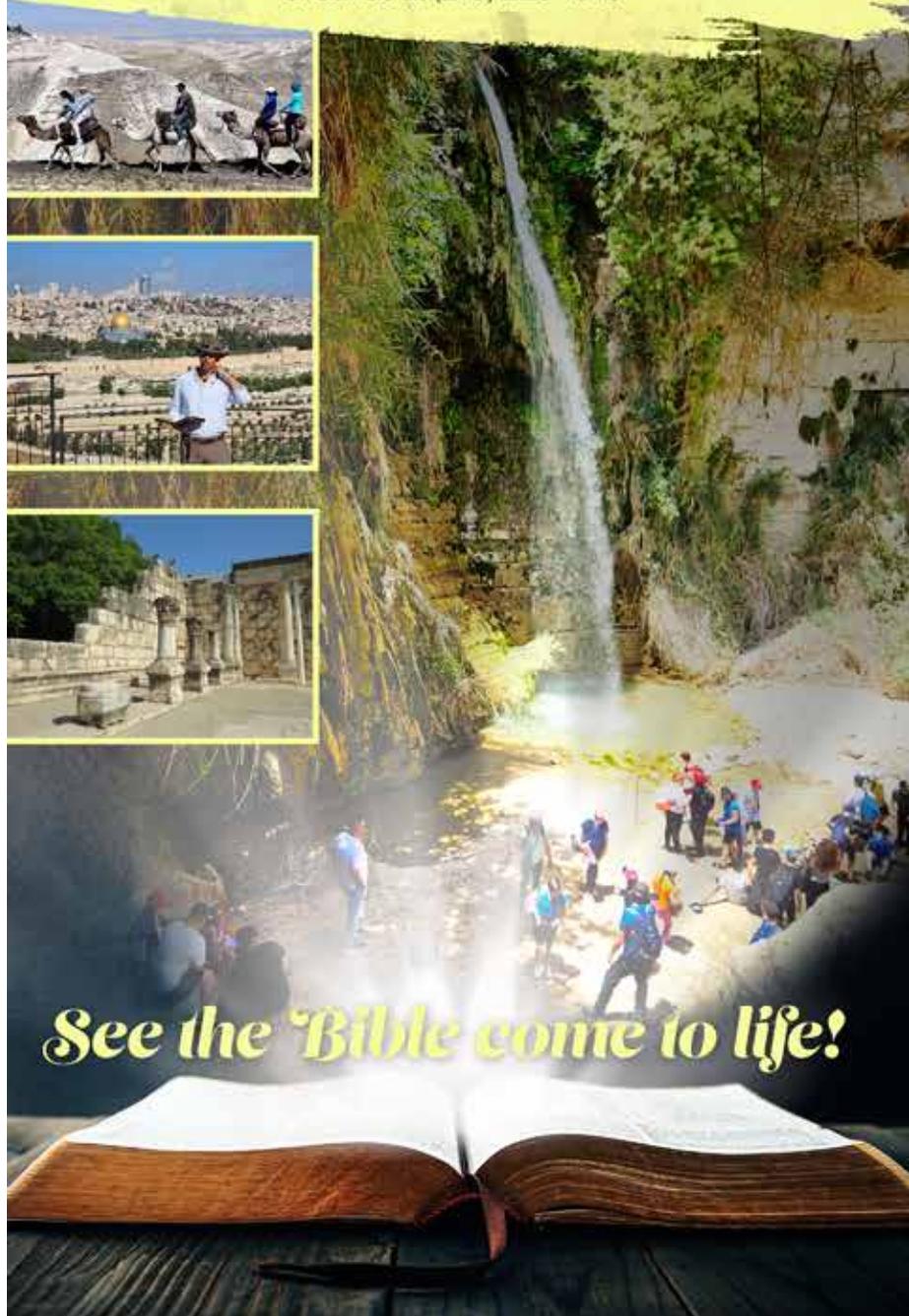
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# Bible Questions & Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

HOLY BIBLE

HOLY B

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at [garyh@cjfm.org](mailto:garyh@cjfm.org), or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

**QUESTION:** *I'm confused, and hopefully you can help me out. I just finished reading a book that says Israel's New Year begins with Passover in the spring (March or April). However, I have also seen sources that say Rosh HaShanah is the Jewish New Year—and that's in the fall (September or October). Is there a discrepancy here? Is the Jewish New Year in the spring or the fall?*

**ANSWER:** The Jewish people have two different calendars—a civil (or secular) calendar (which begins in the fall) and a religious calendar (which begins in the spring).

The secular calendar uses Babylonian/Akkadian names for the months of the year (e.g., “Nisan”). The Hebrew religious calendar uses only numerals—like “the first month,” “the second month,” and so on.

The religious calendar begins at sundown on Nisan 1 (“the first month”) and commemorates Israel's departure from Egypt during the first Passover (Ex. 12:2). The main features of this religious calendar are the annual festivals or “appointments” (Heb., *mo'edim*) listed in Leviticus 23:

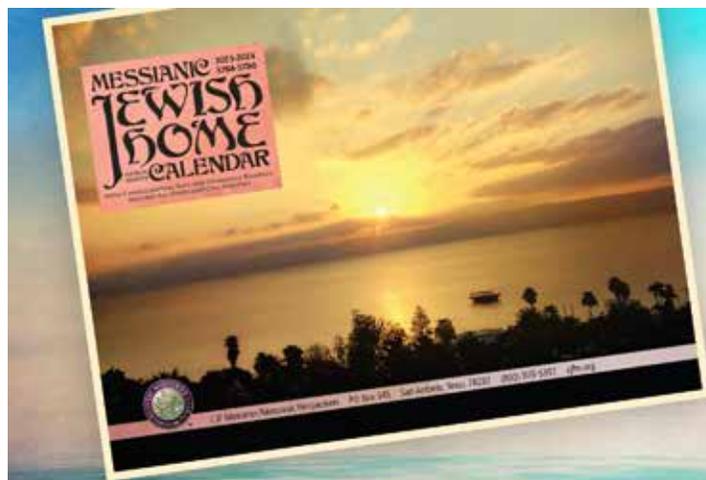
- *Pesach* / *HaMatzot* (Passover/Unleavened Bread)
- *HaBikkurim* (Firstfruits)
- *Shavu'ot* (Weeks or Pentecost)
- *Rosh HaShanah* (Teruah, Trumpets)
- *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) and
- *Sukkot* (Tabernacles).

The civil calendar, on the other hand, begins with *Rosh HaShanah* (lit., “Head of the Year”) on Tishrei 1–2, the seventh month. (It starts at sundown on Tishrei 1 and concludes 24 hours later, at sundown on Tishrei 2.) The primary features of the secular calendar are observances like Israel's Independence Day, Holocaust remembrance day, and other similar, non-biblical commemorations.

In Leviticus 23:23–25, Rosh HaShanah is referred to as *Yom Teruah* (lit., the “Day of Horn-Blasting”). However, it's said to occur “in the seventh month [of the year]” (*Tishrei*), rather than the first month (*Nisan*); so, Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah wasn't considered the beginning of the year in the reckoning of Leviticus.

Yes, it's complicated. However, we have a resource that can help you sort it all out. It's our beautiful Messianic Jewish Home Calendar, which we've been publishing since the 1960s. It started out as a small, modest calendar, and it has grown over the years into a large, amazing, 16-month calendar featuring breathtaking artwork and photography. It combines the features of the familiar, Roman/Gregorian calendar (January to December) with both the Jewish religious and civil calendars—so, it's really three calendars in one. You'll find yourself referring to your Messianic Jewish Home Calendar over and over throughout the year.

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# Fruit from the Harvest



by Violette Berger



## Semillas (Seeds) and Soccer

Marcos and Deborah Morales, CJFM representatives (Mendoza, Argentina), write how thankful they are “to the Lord for His grace and goodness as they (we) serve him with gratitude and joy of heart.” Before the pandemic, Marcos created a two-minute audio and video devotional called “*Seeds of Peace and Love*.” These devotionals were recorded to be shared with Marcos and Deborah’s Jewish friends, members of their congregation, and, ultimately, the unsaved Jewish population in Argentina. The feedback was excellent and soon the devotionals were being shared with friends locally and abroad. Thus, the *semillas* (seeds) reached Spanish-speaking people in Israel, Germany, the USA, Canada, and Italy. During the pandemic, these devotionals served both to evangelize and to disciple. Please pray for the *semillas* that were planted to come to fruition. Deborah also teaches a series of brief Bible studies on Hebrew roots on Facebook and WhatsApp. One year ago, an Israeli Orthodox Jewish man and his wife became believers as the result of Marcos’ daily devotionals. Recently, the husband, “M,” became a widower, left with two young daughters, one of whom is autistic. Marcos and Deborah were concerned that his faith in Yeshua would weaken due to the death of his wife. It is an Argentinian Jewish believer and friend of theirs who forwards the devotionals to M in Israel in order to bypass the controlling Orthodox community. When Marcos had a problem with his Internet server for a couple days, M stated that he missed them, that “they are his daily spiritual food and help him establish himself in faith in Yeshua and not fall into a depressive pit; that during this trial period he has clung to his Savior. To Him be the glory!” It is a risk for a believer in Yeshua who is a member of an Orthodox community, if he is exposed. Please continue to pray for M’s protection and his spiritual growth.

“In June, the U-20 Soccer World Cup was held in the Argentinian province where Marcos and Deborah live. The team from Israel played two games there. Marcos and Deborah write: “Suddenly, we began to see in supermarkets and other places several people speaking loudly in Hebrew. So, we took this opportunity to pass out some tracts in Hebrew to greet our new visitors in their language. Everyone received our tracts, staring in amazement at a Hebrew tract 7,926 miles from home. Most of them were family, friends, and supporters of the Israeli team. Meanwhile, the Israeli media pointed out that its government—which is going through a moment of political tension—took advantage of this event to encourage the people of Israel to be more inclusive in accepting consensus in the diversity of opinions; making an analogy between this team made up of Israelis, Christian Arabs, and Muslims. They pointed out that, just as great goals can be achieved in a soccer game with diversity of cultures, in the same way it could be achieved in politics. Please pray with us for those who received these tracts and for peace and salvation for Israel.”

## Kiosks & Parking Lots

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of *Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas)*, looks forward to the yearly visit of good friends who are Israeli Jewish missionaries. Together, they visit the shopping malls for opportunities to witness to the Jewish Israelis who operate the kiosks. Rich’s wife, Oanh, saw a young woman with whom she had shared the Gospel with over the years. This time “Rachel” really listened and prayed with Oanh right there at her kiosk to receive Yeshua as her Jewish Messiah. Rich and Oanh have followed up with Rachel to affirm that it was a true confession of faith and to answer her many biblical questions. For a Jewish Israeli, becoming a believer poses many risks. Please pray for Rachel’s protection and spiritual growth.

Recently, while arriving at the congregation for the weekly service, Rich noticed a Spanish-speaking homeless man in the parking lot. His minister friend translated and told Rich that the man wanted to attend a service the following Friday. True to his word, he came—and brought a homeless friend who was Jewish and not doing well spiritually or emotionally and had even thought about ending his life. However, he was excited to attend the Jewish Messianic service and to get back to his Jewish roots. Rich was teaching from 2 Peter on how we are to live in holy conduct and grow in the grace and knowledge of Yeshua. Rich said, “It was the perfect message to introduce ‘Joseph’ to the loving Messiah Jesus! Joseph prayed to receive his Jewish Messiah and verified his salvation during the time of fellowship. Please pray that both men turn their lives around.”

## On the Road Again

Larry and Debbie Dubin, CJFM representatives (Florida), were blessed to get the “okay” to travel again after receiving the great news from Larry’s doctor that his cancer is in remission. They embarked on a seven-week Passover tour (6,000-mile road trip) throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, speaking in churches and various home groups. It was also a joy for them to reunite with friends they have made in the past 20 years of their ministry. Also exciting, was meeting with several couples in person who attend their weekly Zoom Bible discussions. A prayer request for their trip was to not only visit friends and/or donors, but to also develop new relationships with pastors and other believers who share in their burden for Jewish evangelism. The Dubins write: “Glory to God, that prayer has been answered.” Larry adds: “A highlight of the trip was one of the greatest honors of my life. A dear brother and friend informed me that he and his wife were naming their baby son, Lawrence, after me, to remember the impact I had on his life.” Larry was humbled and blessed, as he and Deb have no children of their own. He prays that “baby Lawrence” will grow up to be a man of God and follow Him all the days of his life.

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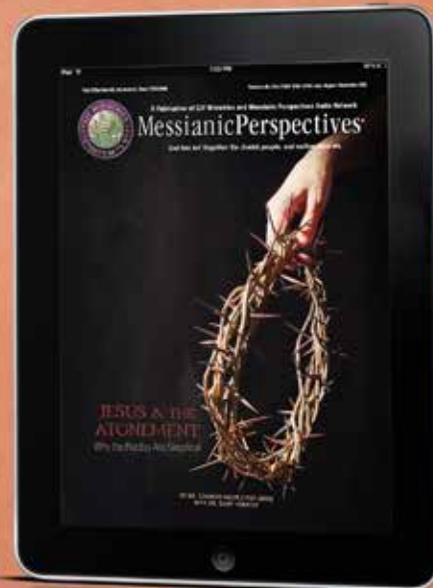
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