

# Ariel Magazine

Spring 2022 / Volume 1 / #42

 Ariel Ministries



*Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li*  
Jewish Weddings and the  
Marriage of the Lamb

Plus:

Romans 1:16  
Is There a Priority  
in Proclamation?



# 2022 | School of Messianic SHOSHANAH | Jewish Studies

July 4 - August 26 / Labor Day Program September 2-5

Every summer, Ariel Ministries welcomes people of all ages and nationalities to participate in the Messianic discipleship program held at the Shoshanah Campus in Keeseville, NY. The program centers on establishing and growing believers in Yeshua through in-depth study of the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective. Learning modules are taught in 1, 2, and 3 week formats with plenty of free time included in the schedule. Whether you come for only one week or for the entire eight-week program, the Shoshanah Campus, beautifully nestled in the scenic Adirondack mountains, will provide the perfect environment for a fun and relaxing spiritual retreat for the whole family.

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Angelology, Satanology, Demonology  
Messiah in the Tabernacle/Temple  
Personal Eschatology

### Weeks 3 – 5

Doctrine of the Church  
Highlights of Ezekiel  
Doctrine of Israel  
Highlights of the Life of Messiah  
The Book of Acts  
Design for Discipleship

### Week 6

Life of Messiah

### Weeks 7-8

The Jewish People in the Book of Romans  
The Doctrine of Man  
Post-Mosaic Jewish Holy Days  
The Doctrine of Sin

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Modern State of Israel in Prophecy  
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Israel in the Tribulation  
Israel in the Messianic Kingdom

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In light of Romans 1:16, how does one develop a biblically based missions strategy? Does this verse indicate a priority in the proclamation of the good news of Messiah—to the Jew first and then also to the Gentile? In this article, Levi Hazen, the Executive Director of Life in Messiah, answers these and other important questions.

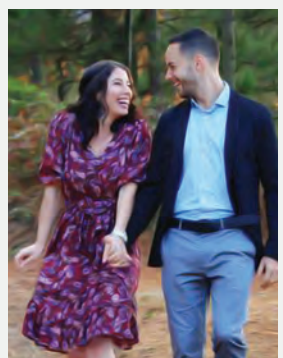


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### Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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# It takes faith to believe in EVOLUTION.

You will love this edition of *Ariel Magazine*! As the cover shows, the focus of most of the articles is on the topic of weddings. It can't get any more joyous, can it? Well, the publishing department has been working on other publications, too, such as *Ariel's Study Bible* by John Metzger. What a tremendously important work this is! Furthermore, our team of proofreaders is nearly done working through the Romans commentary. While waiting for their results, I started putting together and editing Volume 6 of our *Come and See* book series. This one is about anthropology and hamartiology, two super interesting topics, if you ask me.

Let me tell you why I think this. When I was a little girl, my family and I lived in Vienna, the beautiful capital of Austria. I have a childhood friend from this time, and to this day, whenever I call her, we are back to giggling about silly things like only people who have known each other their entire lives can do.

Before my parents moved us back to my birthplace, Munich, my friend invited me to say goodbye to her extended family. I do not recall how we ended up discussing the origin of life, but we did. When my friend's family mentioned that we descended from monkeys, I incredulously refuted the thought and said that surely Adam and Eve were our original parents. My remark was met with laughter and comments such as, "Just wait until you learn science in school." During this conversation, I happened to be standing next to a portrait of one of my friend's ancestors. I was so enraged by the mockery that I turned to this painting and said, "Well, if you look at some people's ancestors, you might indeed think that we come from monkeys."

I have no idea how my ten-year-old self got the *chutzpah* to speak up like that. Clearly, I had just completely dissed my friend's family!

Volume 6 of our *Come and See* series discusses the origin of life on numerous pages, and evolutionism is given the attention it deserves simply because of its prominence in the current worldview. While working on Dr. Fruchtenbaum's text, I learned about the law of entropy. In brief, this law states that, left to itself, any isolated system will degenerate from greater order to less order. Since the theory of evolution is dependent on an increase in order and information rather than the loss thereof, this scientific law is a huge problem for evolutionists. Entropy, if you will, is the antithesis of evolution.

My work on the book reminded me of the story that took place in Vienna so many decades ago. My ten-year-old self really had a point! I came to the conclusion that it is easier to believe in a Creator God than it is to believe in evolution.

Still, a part of our calling is to always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks us a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). If you need help finding the right words to defend your faith, we recommend Ariel's *Come and See* book series.

In Messiah's service,

*Christiane Jurik*  
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Jackie Fierman has been with Ariel Canada since January of 2005, traveling and sharing about the ministry and teaching its material in Canada and the U.S.A.



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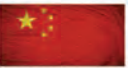
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Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, turned it into a full branch. Today, this branch is led by a team of brothers and sisters.



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Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband-and-wife team has developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They also host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish and Gentile believers and unbelievers in Hungary.



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Jack Nakashima represents Ariel Ministries in Rock Hill, SC. Previously serving in Israel, he is now available to teach and disciple in the U.S.



# DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECEIVES AN AWARD

In December of 2021, during the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Pre-Trib Study Group Conference in Irving, Texas, Dr. Fruchtenbaum received the Pre-Trib Research Center’s “John F. Walvoord Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Prophetic Studies.” The award came as a complete surprise. When asked what was going through his head as he was called up on stage during the gala dinner, Dr. Fruchtenbaum replied, “I thought Tommy Ice wanted me to tell a few rabbi jokes.” While most people who have ever met him can certainly appreciate his great sense of humor and the way he tells his jokes, Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s true accomplishments lie in his biblical scholarship. It has been 65 years since he trusted the Messiah as his Savior. Ever since, he has been tested through the trials of life and has remained faithful. His excellence in presenting the Bible from a Messianic Jewish, dispensational perspective is what was honored during the Pre-Trib Conference, and we all feel that this award was well deserved. Mazel tov, Dr. Fruchtenbaum!



Dr. Thomas Ice presents Dr. Fruchtenbaum with an award.



*A good friend of Ariel Ministries, Nanette Keao, sheds some light on how Wion and Shirley Wleh were first introduced to the ministry.*

## Liberia: Home of Ariel Ministries Liberia, West Africa

By Nanette Keao

Have ever wondered what it would be like to visit one of the poorest West African nations? A dark period in Liberian history began in 1980 with the assassination of President William R. Tolbert. The violent *coup d'état* was followed by a military dictatorship and the suspension of the constitution. In 1989, civil war broke out, followed by a second civil war that ended in 2003. During these 14 years, an estimated 250,000 people were killed, with tens of thousands more displaced or left destitute. Pastor Wion Wleh and his wife Shirley met, married, and began their ministry during those terrible years. When I stepped off the plane in Monrovia for the very first time, not knowing what to expect, I encountered a people who were proven partakers in the suffering of our Lord and who knew and delighted in His Word. It was February 2013 when my husband and I went to Liberia as part of the World Missions Outreach (WMO) team to participate as speakers in a regional pastors' conference hosted by Pastor Wion's congregation. As a reminder, WMO is led by

Henry and Darlene Matarrita, who are good friends of Ariel Ministries. *Ariel Magazine* has published a few articles about the work of this wonderful couple.

You may wonder why my husband and I would go to Liberia. The story began in 2011 when I met Pastor Wion and Shirley in Israel while serving together with a WMO team. Pastor Wion, in turn, had met the Matarittas in 2000 when they had served with Chosen People Ministries at a Billy Graham Conference in Amsterdam. Wion, drawn to their ministry to the Jewish people, invited the



2011 Trip to Israel



Matarittas to speak at the 2001 Missions Conference in Liberia. Although the conditions were quite dangerous, the Matarittas went and returned every other year for almost two decades. In 2007, Henry gifted Pastor Wion with Dr. Fruchtenbaum's book *The Footsteps of the Messiah*. Pastor Wion and Shirley began teaching the Bible from a Messianic Jewish perspective, never anticipating that they would one day be representing Ariel Ministries in Liberia, West Africa.

During our visit to Liberia in 2013, Shirley invited me to lead the women's Bible study. I chose Dr. Fruchtenbaum's teaching on *The Wife of Jehovah*, quickly jotted down a few notes, marked Scriptures in my Bible, and followed Shirley across the yard to where a

group of women clothed in colorful lappas sat in the shade of a cottonwood tree. After some introductions, one of the ladies began to sing *a cappella*. Soon the others joined in, blending harmoniously, one hymn flowing into the next. My eyes closed. I felt outside of time. Heaven must be like this. When the singing stopped, someone prayed, and together we read through the stages of God's relationship with Israel as His wife from Deuteronomy to Hosea. The women delighted in the description of God's love for Israel despite her betrayal. I will never forget how eagerly they followed the narrative of the separation, divorce, and eventual reunion of God and His wife, as if it were speaking of close family members.

Today, Pastor Wion and Shirley are busy teaching the Bible from a Messianic Jewish perspective; promoting Ariel Ministries materials through Monrovia Bible College, Carver Mission Academy, and Paynesville Community Church; and conducting conferences for churches and church pastors from neighboring West African countries.



Nanette Keao (third from the right) and the Matarittas (couple in the middle) in Liberia (2013)



## Ariel Hungary

Most of our readers know Ariel Hungary as the branch that ministers to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. However, our branch leader, Ivan Nagy, is also actively teaching and often focuses on the false doctrines of the charismatic movement. In this short article, he explains one of the ways in which he makes his point.

### Where are the signs and wonders of the apostolic age?

It is quite possible that nearly all believers have been confronted with this question at some point in their lives. In theology, there are two main answers: the cessationist view and the continuationist view.

According to the cessationist view, signs and wonders ended when the apostolic period did. Cessationists do not deny that God is able to perform signs and wonders even today. However, they teach that this is not His primary way, and if He does perform such miracles, He works by providence.

The continuationists teach that signs and wonders are possible today but that the church has not reached this stage of maturity and purity yet. Most of them believe in the restoration of all ministries, including prophecy and apostleship.

There are, of course, many variations of these two views.

Biblically, signs and wonders served two purposes, especially in the apostolic age. First, in the Hebrew Scriptures, signs and wonders proved the message of God in contrast to false gods. In the Gospels and in Acts, they authenticated the Person of the Messi-

ah and His message. Hebrews 2:1-4 summarizes this point well:

<sup>1</sup>Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup>For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, <sup>3</sup>how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup>while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

These verses summarize the role of signs and wonders very clearly and connect them to the Messiah, the Messianic message, and its authentication. They emphasize that we should pay closer attention to what we have



heard than to signs and wonders. The key sentence is verse 4, which states that God worked together with the witnesses who had heard His message. God supported these witnesses by the signs, wonders, and various miracles that He performed. Even the special ministry of the Holy Spirit is connected with this process. Especially important is the closing phrase: *according to his will*.

Since the Scriptures leave no doubt about the context of signs and wonders, we need to ask ourselves several questions: Where do we see these biblical conditions in today's world? In which denomination are these conditions found? Who would be able to use this kind of God-given ability for the sake of the gospel message? The Roman Catholic Church? The Pentecostal movement? The charismatic movement? The

Third Wave? Any other movement or great preacher?

If I could make a suggestion, I would say that the best place for signs and wonders would be on the missions field. But which ministry should get God's supernatural support?

Let's just imagine for a moment that the blind see, the lame run, and all people with serious illnesses experience immediate recovery. The gospel is preached. What would be the guarantee that the person or denomination through whom these miracles are done fulfills the role that was assigned to signs and wonders in the apostolic age? To whom would the miracles point? This kind of ministry with signs and wonders could only focus on a different "anointed one," as we so often see in the case of hyper-charismatic preachers and their ministries.

It is not by mistake that signs and wonders disappeared after Acts. While I am not a cessationist and think that the gifts of the Spirit could function in this age, two offices clearly disappeared in Acts: the prophet and the apostle (Eph 2:19-22). These offices played an important role at the time of the birth of the church, but the church has been in existence since the events of Acts 2, which took place nearly 2,000 years ago. Hence, the signs and wonders that authenticated the message of the prophets and apostles have on the one hand become obsolete. On the other hand, even if they still existed, they would be misleading. It is not surprising that the Scriptures connect most signs and wonders that will appear before the second coming of Messiah with the work of the dark side.

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2021 was a remarkable year for one unique reason: Wedding bells were ringing all throughout the ministry. The following is the heartwarming story of our graphic designer Jesse Gonzales and his lovely bride Bea.

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## How Did We Get Here?

By Jesse Gonzales



I was asked by Ariel Ministries' editor-in-chief to share a little about our road to the wedding altar.

The one word that my bride Bea and I would use to describe our story is "surprising." Having both lost our spouses several years ago, the thought that either one of us would ever get married again was nowhere on the radar. We sincerely believed that we had each had the privilege of experiencing successful marriages of over thirty years and that we would now concentrate on ministry, children, and of course our grandkids. Yet, God had other plans.



It all started so innocently. About a year and a half after losing my wife, I found myself to be very impatient with the grieving process. I would ask others what they thought would come next, but I never really felt that they quite understood my situation. As I thought about my predicament, only one person came to mind: Bea. She had lost her husband to H1N1 eight years earlier. Both of our families had been in fulltime ministry for decades, and this made my decision to contact her an easy one. Yet, while the decision was obvious, I reconsidered contacting her. I was afraid that maybe I would be opening some old wounds. I determined to ask the Lord to provide me with the right opportunity when He thought it would be appropriate.

from the only person I felt was qualified to understand what I was going through. When I received the “misrouted” text from Bea, I couldn’t wait to text her back. I invited her to come over to the house to talk to me and my son Josh. Bea ended up sharing much of what she had gone through, and it was very similar, if not exactly the same, to what I had been experiencing. As we pursued this informal counseling, we started seeing each other differently. We were falling in love.

That led to a special event on February 14, 2018: On that day, we became boyfriend and girlfriend. How silly this sounded to us 62-year-olds! We searched for the right wording. Some of the phrases could be telling a different story altogether, such as “my companion,” “my friend,” “We are a couple,” or “We are together.” Bea went with “boyfriend/girlfriend,” while I was partial to the old-school “We are going steady.”

this relationship that we had not been looking for as a special gift from God.

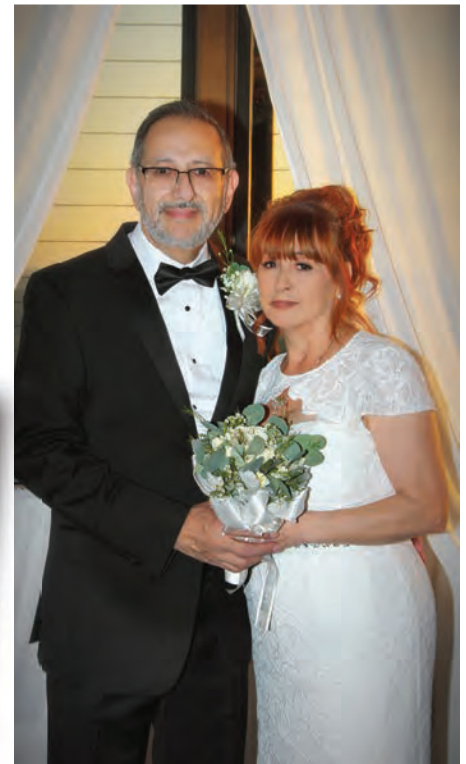
But I must be honest; one of the biggest surprises was how young we felt. We were 16 years old all over again— so much so that we had to remind ourselves of all the counseling sessions we had provided for teens and college students on self-control! Life seemed to be moving at such a rapid pace.

On September 17, 2021, we traveled from boyfriend and girlfriend to Mr. and Mrs. We are so thankful to the Lord for this unexpected gift!



Six months later, “out of the blue” I received a text message from Bea inviting me to her daughter’s baby shower. Now, this text message should have gone to a certain Jessica. Instead, Bea “mistakenly” sent it to me, Jesse. I considered it a sign from God. Please understand that at this time my motivation was to get some answers

It took us a while to believe and understand what was happening. Was this of God? It seemed so orchestrated. We were in earnest prayer just wanting to make sure it was what He wanted. While that may seem very spiritual, we have to admit that it felt so good to love and be loved again. We started to see



The wedding of Jesse and Bea Gonzales took place at the Tower of the Americas, overlooking San Antonio from 750 ft. high.



# Is There a Priority in Proclamation?

By Levi Hazen

Without a doubt, Romans 1:16 is one of the favorite verses used in conferences that deal with the Great Commission of the church to share the gospel and make disciples. However, in light of this verse, how does one develop a biblically based missions strategy? Does this verse indicate a priority in the proclamation of the good news of Messiah? Levi Hazen, the Executive Director of Life in Messiah, International, answers this question positively.

to the Jew first?



Paul's teachings on topics such as Christology, ecclesiology, and soteriology have shaped the church's doctrines for two thousand years. As you know, dear reader, Paul penned Romans 1:16, which says: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek."<sup>1</sup>

This verse is often displayed in churches, plastered on banners at missions conferences, and etched on bracelets and t-shirts. It was even the theme verse for a tour by Christian rap artists in 2013.<sup>2</sup> These are all good! Reminding people that the gospel is "God's power for salvation" is a message worth declaring from any platform. Affirming that the gospel is for "everyone who believes" is crucial. No one is excluded from God's power to save. But rarely does one hear it proclaimed from the pulpit that the gospel is "to the Jew first."

The phrase "to the Jew first" is just as important as the other truths contained within Romans 1:16. If the first part of the verse is true, so is the second. For this reason, it is important to properly exegete this verse.

What does Paul mean by the phrase "to the Jew first"? Dr. Douglas J. Moo, a professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, comments on Romans 1:16 in this way:

What is the nature of the Jew's priority ("first") over the Gentile? Some scholars, indeed, have sought to remove any sense of

priority from the phrase, but without success. Paul clearly accords some kind of priority to the Jew. Some suggest that no more is involved than the historical circumstance of the apostolic preaching, which, according to Acts, began with the Jews and moved to the Gentiles. But Paul must intend more than simply historical fact in light of the theological context here. If we ask what precedence Paul accords Israel elsewhere in Rom., we find that his emphasis is on the special applicability of the promise of God to that people whom he chose (3:2; 9-11). However much the church may seem to be dominated by Gentiles, Paul insists that the promises of God realized in the gospel are "first of all" for the Jew. To Israel the promises were first given, and to the Jews they still particularly apply. Without in any way subtracting from the equal access that all people now have to the gospel, then, Paul insists that the gospel, "promised beforehand... in the holy Scriptures" (1:2), has a special relevance to the Jew.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Moo makes a good point. Paul is referring to the *nature* and *priority* of the gospel message. Regarding the nature, the gospel is inherently Jewish and therefore *especially* for the Jewish people. Though Gentiles have equal access to the Messiah, the Messiah is

especially for those to whom He was promised. Aside from this, the Jewish people had been awaiting a Messiah for centuries before the Gentiles discovered Him.<sup>4</sup>

In agreement with Dr. Moo, Dr. Fruchtenbaum writes:

Consistent exegesis would demand that if the gospel is always the power of God to save, then it is always to the Jew first. The Greek word that Paul used for the English word "first" is *proton*, which means "first in time, in place, in order, and in importance." Applying this verse to the Great Commission, the gospel, wherever and by whatever means it goes out from the local church, must go to the Jew first.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Fruchtenbaum rightly applies Romans 1:16 to the church's mandate in carrying out the Great Commission.



**If the gospel really is "to the Jew first," a missions strategy that neglects the Jewish people lacks a vital component. If a missions strategy neglects the Jewish people, for whom the gospel is a priority, what kind of strategy is it?**

<sup>1</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible used throughout.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.unashamedtour.com](http://www.unashamedtour.com).

<sup>3</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 69.

<sup>4</sup> At this juncture, it is important to understand what I am *not* saying. I am not arguing that Jewish people are somehow better than other people. Jewish people are not more deserving of the gospel. It is important to remember what Romans 3:23 states: "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." "All" includes both our Gentile and Jewish friends.

<sup>5</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, "Romans 1:16 – To the Jew First," *Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism Bulletin*, no. 85 (Sept. 2006), [lcje.net/bulletins/2006/85/85\\_01.html](http://lcje.net/bulletins/2006/85/85_01.html) [accessed April 13, 2016].



The Greek word *proton* is used elsewhere to indicate a priority. For example, in Romans 2 Paul teaches about the future judgment of God. Paul makes the point that just as the gospel is “first to the Jew,” so God’s judgment is “first to the Jew”:

*He will repay each one according to his works: eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality; but wrath and indignation to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth but are obeying unrighteousness; affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. There is no favoritism with God. (Romans 2:6-11)*

Paul’s teaching is consistent. Though there is no favoritism in either salvation or judgment with regards to Jew or Gentile, there is a *priority* of “to the Jew first” for both.

*Proton*, translated in Romans 1:16 and 2:10 as “first,” is also used in Matthew 6:33: “But seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you” (emphasis mine). Most of us have little difficulty comprehending what Matthew means by “first.” He means priority. Matthew urges readers to place a higher priority on seeking the kingdom of God than on seeking earthly things. The word *proton* indicates a priority of something or someone over something or someone else.

Paul’s use of *proton* in Romans 1:16 is evidence that gospel proclamation to Jewish people should be prioritized in missions strategies. The church is in

agreement that the gospel is “the power of God.”



**The church agrees that the gospel is “for everyone who believes.” Why are we failing to accept and implement the priority of the gospel “to the Jew first”?**

A biblically based missions strategy is one that incorporates the Jewish people. Neglecting the Jewish people creates a strategy that is not in line with the highest biblical standards. These strategies will miss out on potential blessings of evangelistic success. As Dr. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. reminds us:

It would be wise for the church to once again take another look at how she is carrying out the work of the kingdom and how she is regarding the nation of Israel. Otherwise, she will have small victories here and there, but we will miss the full favor of our Lord, who calls us to a much higher biblical standard of performance for the sake of his excellent name and his Jewish people.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Darrell L. Bock & Mitch Glaser, *To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture & History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 52.



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# Wedding Bells are Ringing

The focus of this edition of *Ariel Magazine* is on Messianic Jewish weddings, and in the following articles you will find reports on one of the most romantic weddings Ariel Ministries has ever hosted. Then comes an article on the importance of the chuppah, followed by a study regarding the Jewish wedding system and the bride of Messiah. The magazine ends with a piece that compares the story of Ruth with the marriage of the Lamb. Let the wedding bells ring!





# A True Shoshanah Love Story

By Samuel and Shoshanah Feinberg

Ariel Ministries and its School of Messianic Jewish Studies have played a crucial role in the lives of many people—and not only for spiritual reasons. Some people have met their future spouses at the Shoshanah Campus in New York! One example is the love story of Samuel and Shoshanah Feinberg, who first met at the school when they were very young. The beautiful testimony of God's faithfulness culminated in a marriage ceremony conducted by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum in October 2021 on the very grounds where the couple originally met over 18 years ago.





Our story begins in the summer of 1982 when both of our parents camped out side by side on the sandy shores of Trout Pond in New York. As they were being discipled under the teaching of Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, our families became acquainted with one another and quickly formed a close bond. At the time, none of the eight Kravitz kids had been born, nor did the Feinbergs have any offspring. Shoshanah would be born later as the first Kravitz daughter, and Samuel would be born the youngest of three children, with two older sisters.

As our families possess Jewish heritage, it is worthy to note just how significantly the biblical discipleship of Ariel Ministries has influenced both sets of families in the raising of the next generation. Both of us, at different points in our childhood, professed faith in Messiah Yeshua and were baptized on the same shores where our parents had met some years earlier. These are

now two generations of Messianic Jewish believers having been discipled under and saved through the faithful ministry of Ariel Ministries at the Shoshanah Campus.

We were teenagers when we first met, and we eventually lost touch with each other. Shortly before God orchestrated our reunion, Shoshanah was concluding her two-year stint in San Antonio, Texas, where she had been caring for Mary Ann Fruchtenbaum. It was on the night of Passover, the 4th of April 2021, when Shoshanah stumbled upon Samuel's photo and sent him a text message. Unbeknownst to her, Samuel was seated, Haggadah in hand, preparing to initiate the Passover Seder with his family. It took only two weeks after that first text message until we were greeting one another at the airport with flowers in our hands and love in our hearts.

From the very commencement of this courtship, God made it clear, as He did

in Genesis 24 concerning the union of Isaac and Rebekah, that "the matter comes from the Lord." Within six months, both of our families came together, and we were able to fulfill God's will in the binding covenant of marriage under the direction and officiation of Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. From



*The happy couple on the shores of Trout Pond*

the ceremony to the reception and the heartfelt words shared from both sides of our family, the 13th of October 2021 will go down in the history books of Camp Shoshanah as the culmination of a beautiful tapestry woven and directed by God Almighty.



*The parents of the groom and the bride*



# ANI L'DODI V'DODI LI

*Report from a Messianic Wedding at the Shoshanah Campus*

BY CHRISTIANE JURIK







"Mazel tov, darlings, you are getting married!" I am sure Shakespeare would have met this cheerful greeting with incredulous shuddering—but cheerful it was, and it was the first thought on my mind when I heard that Shoshanah Kravitz and Dr. Samuel Feinberg were going to tie the knot. I have known Shoshanah and the rest of the Kravitz clan for decades. In fact, the first time I came to Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies in 1996, this family was already what one could call "an establishment." As for the Feinbergs, I met them later and only briefly. However, there are precious memories of this beautiful family as well. Hence, I was thrilled to hear of Shoshanah's engagement to Samuel and expressed my delight by adding about ten exclamation points to the mazel tov message I sent to the bride.

Then, Dr. Fruchtenbaum asked me to fly up to New York to attend the wedding. He wanted me to be the reporter and also to serve the bride as her personal photographer. Now, my delight was without bounds! I was going to witness Mr. and Mrs. Feinberg's first kiss!

It is hard to say what ended up bringing me more pleasure: the venue, the reunion with so many old friends, spending precious time with the bride and the groom, or seeing Dr. Fruchtenbaum's smiles while he officiated the wedding. To sum it all up, the marriage ceremony and everything that went with it could not have been more perfect!

## The Venue

The wedding took place at the Shoshanah Campus in upstate New York. The venue allowed most of the 75 guests to arrive early and stay a few nights in the beautiful cabins and dormitories of the school. The caterer was able to use the kitchen so that the ceremony and the subsequent feast could be held in the same place.

By talking to the Campus Director, Joe Azevedo, I learned that plans are in the making to use the facilities more often for such occasions. Dr. Fruchtenbaum confirmed this when he said, "While this was the first actual wedding on the Shoshanah Campus—we had three previous renewals and anniversaries—we look forward to many future ones."

## The Wedding Ceremony

The Feinberg wedding would not have been Jewish without the multiple traditional elements that were built into the ceremony. We all know that many have sought to gain "spirituality" on the basis of manmade traditions, and, in those cases, traditions are something negative. However, Jewish wedding customs can create a

meaningful link between the past, present, and future; and this was so in the case of the Feinberg wedding. For example, there was a *chuppah*, lovingly built by Joe Azevedo and decorated by Kravitz family members. Mottel Baleston wrote an article about the meaning of the chuppah for this edition of *Ariel Magazine*, so not much more will be said here.

I would personally say that the most meaningful tradition is the recitation of many Hebrew prayers during the ceremony. In the case of the Feinberg wedding, the prayers all included references to Yeshua, and so the clear message of these prayers was that this marriage was supposed to be placed under the headship of Messiah.

After Father and Mother Kravitz gave away their daughter and expressed their agreement to this union, the wine was blessed—which is another Jewish tradition. As Dr. Fruchtenbaum, who officiated the entire ceremony, explained: "This cup of wine illustrates a truth about life. Some wines are sweet, and some wines can taste bitter. Life brings us both bitter times as it does times of great rejoicing. As both of you take strength in your faith and trust Yeshua with all your heart and depend on God for your spiritual nourishment, then blessed are you as a couple who will serve each other with unconditional love, just as God had intended marriage to be."



Shoshanah reading the wedding vows



The happy bride



The groom and the bride lighting some of the candles on the menorah



### *The Circling by the Bride*

A tradition that may need some explanation is the circling by the bride. Shoshanah, garbed in the 52-year-old wedding dress of Mrs. Fruchtenbaum (whose caretaker she once was and whose much beloved "adopted" daughter she still is), circled the groom seven times. Why would she do such a thing?

Again, we'll let Dr. Fruchtenbaum's words shed some light on the meaning of this tradition: "Jeremiah the prophet wrote, 'A woman shall encompass a man.' Seven is the number of completion. The bride now circles the groom seven times, showing how she will love her husband in the same way that God loves His people and betrothed Israel to Himself and Messiah to His church. The bride will love her husband with justice. She will love him in righteousness. She will love him with compassion. She will serve him in faithfulness. She will be as a hedge of protection around him, and he will see only her from now on."

### *The Lighting of the Candles*

Although the bride and the groom stood alone under the chuppah, they were entering into the marriage with support from those who love them. The lighting of the menorah illustrated this truth, as Dr.

Fruchtenbaum pointed out: "As we look at the menorah here in front of us, we are reminded that it has been used in Judaism for over 3,500 years as a symbol of light and hope. Today, we are using the menorah as a witness of blessing and hope. Samuel and Shoshanah, who were once separated with different goals and experiences in life, will now become united in their walk together as they pursue a holy life in Yeshua. May these candles, when lit, represent your family and friends, who will help build a wall of protection around you both, to secure you and encourage you in the bonds of marriage. Love is the glue that will lock your hearts together."

The first candles on the menorah were lit by Ken and Ruth Kravitz, the parents of the bride. Dr. Fruchtenbaum said, "These first two candles are lit with love from the parents of the bride, who have loved you, Shoshanah, from the beginning and will now continue to love you both, Shoshanah and Samuel. But how do we define love? Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud."

Then the groom's parents, Janet and Henry Feinberg, came to light more candles, and Dr. Fruchtenbaum continued, "Keep this definition of love in mind, Samuel and Shoshanah, and your

marriage will honor God. Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. Power without love can be reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. We rejoice that marriage is given by God, blessed by Yeshua the Messiah, and sustained by His Holy Spirit. Therefore, let marriage be held in honor among us. Let every man here today, even all those sitting watching as witnesses, so love his wife as if this day they too were just getting married. Let each woman here give her husband the place of honor and respect that is due him. Let those who are married be examples to this bride and groom, and may you rejoice and love the spouse to whom you are bound."

The remaining candles were lit by friends of the groom and by the couple.

### *The Wine*

Next, the groom and the bride were given a cup of wine, and after blessing it, Dr. Fruchtenbaum drew a very interesting analogy from this tradition: "Samuel and Shoshanah, you have both tasted of this



*The Kravitz clan*



*The Feinberg clan*



wine together. May the sweetness of this wine bring sweet words, words of comfort and encouragement for one another. Words are very powerful. Words can hurt or heal, build up or tear down, comfort or curse. Always coat your words with grace. Be kind to one another and use your words carefully, honoring each other always. Remember, Samuel and Shoshanah, it is not what goes into your mouth that makes you holy or sanctified, but it is what comes out of your mouth that reflects the condition of your heart. Honor each other in word and in deed all the days of your lives together."

### *The Exchange of Vows and Rings*

The groom first recited his vows to the bride, and I will gladly say that this young man did a wonderful job of making Shoshanah feel special and loved. However, we will have to be honest here: Her vows trumped his—so much so that both the mother of the bride and the mother of the groom burst into tears. The many nods and whispered "Amens" were just precious to behold.

After the exchange of the vows, a ring bearer—cute as a button—brought the rings. Dr. Fruchtenbaum explained, "A ring is made from a precious metal that is valuable, and so these vows of commitment you are making are precious in the sight of God. A ring is circular, with no beginning and no end. May there be no end to this holy union. There is a tradition that says that the wedding ring should be placed on the ring finger of the left hand because there is a vein that runs from that finger straight to the heart."

So on that finger on Shoshanah's hand Samuel placed the ring. Once she had done the same to him, they both exclaimed, "*Ani l'Dodi v'dodi li*—I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

### *Reading of the Ketubah*

The *ketubah* is the marriage contract, which is traditionally read publicly, and so it was at this wedding as well. Again, Dr. Fruchtenbaum provided an interesting explanation when he said, "We have a Jewish lawyer in heaven, our Messiah, who advocates for us before our accuser." In other words, this *ketubah*, signed by the groom, the bride, and the witnesses, is a legal document. If the accuser comes and tries to find anything offensive in this wedding ceremony, Messiah Himself would stand in defense of this couple. The marriage was finalized. It is there to stay. It is legal.

### *Reciting of the Seven Blessings—Sheva Brachot*

Next came the reciting of the *Sheva Brachot*, a Hebrew phrase that literally means "the seven blessings." These wedding blessings are also known as *birkot nissuin*—*nissuin* being the Hebrew word for "marriage." The blessings were prayed upon the bride and the groom over a cup of wine.

This was followed by another blessing, as Dr. Fruchtenbaum said: "Now may God,

through our Messiah Yeshua, bless you, preserve you, and keep you. The Lord with His favor look upon you and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that you may enter into this joyful covenant."

### *The Breaking of the Glass*

The ceremony concluded with the best-known aspect of Jewish weddings: the stomping on a glass. After the best man gave the bridegroom and the bride a taste from the second goblet of wine, he wrapped the glass in a cloth and placed it on the floor. The bridegroom joyfully stomped on and broke the glass with his foot.

This practice dates back to Talmudic times, and the main idea was to indicate that where there is rejoicing, there should also be trembling. Furthermore, the tradition was to remind everyone of the destruction of the Temple with the lesson that even at the height of personal joy, one is to recall the pain and losses suffered by the Jewish people.

Dr. Fruchtenbaum concluded the ceremony with a triumphant "I now pronounce you husband and wife." As the room erupted in a joyous "Mazel tov," I got to take pictures of the first kiss Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Feinberg exchanged. May it be followed by many, many more!



*Dr. Fruchtenbaum contently looking at his "adopted" daughter*



*Mr. and Mrs. Feinberg's first kiss*



## CHUPPAH, THE WEDDING CANOPY

by Mottel Baleston



Would you like to briefly enter a world that is both modern and ancient, familiar and exotic? On any major search engine, enter the phrase "Jewish wedding." Then click on the "Images" tab. A kaleidoscope of photos from all over the world will greet you. Some scenes are elaborate and some simple. In some the participants are deeply religious and in others very modern and secular. The one consistent feature you will see in the images that show the entire scene is that the couple is being married underneath a cloth canopy.

The Jewish wedding canopy goes by the Hebrew name *chuppah*, with some variations in spelling, such as "hupa," since the actual Hebrew letters are transliterated into Latin characters.





### *The Structure*

The chuppah's basic design consists of four poles that hold up a cloth canopy. In its simplest form, the actual cloth may be no more than six feet square (about two meters square), is held up by plain wooden poles, and may accommodate the groom, the bride, and the person officiating the wedding. In more elaborate and Orthodox weddings, sizes up to twelve feet square are seen, large enough to accommodate parents and other relatives. These chuppahs often come with elaborately embroidered cloth and poles wrapped in flower garlands. In all these variations, all four sides of the structure are open.

Often, the four poles supporting the chuppah are fixed in place; in other cases, four men physically hold the poles, a common practice in Israel.



### *The Material*

The material used for chuppahs varies widely and has undergone a shift in the last century. My parents' early 1950s wedding in an Orthodox Jewish synagogue in Brooklyn was very traditional with a large, heavy satin chuppah with fringes all around and a crowded scene underneath with many relatives gathered.

The Six-Day War in 1967, which liberated and unified Jerusalem, brought a new interest in Israel to the American Jewish community. One result was that the Israeli flag began to be used as a chuppah. When my wife and I, as new Jewish believers in Messiah Yeshua, were married at the end of the 1970s in a Messianic Jewish ceremony in New York City, we stood under such an Israeli flag chuppah.

Sometimes a *tallit*, or Jewish prayer shawl, is used. In recent years, the trend

is toward a thin, airy canopy material that allows in lots of light.

Often, the Hebrew words *Ani L'Dodi v'Dodi Li* are found embroidered around the edges of the cloth. This phrase from Song of Solomon 6:3 means "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."



### *The Wedding Ceremony*

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the term *chuppah* is found twice: in Psalm 19:5 and in Joel 2:16. In both cases, the term refers to the original wedding chamber. This brings up the fact that, biblically, a Hebrew marriage was in two parts. The first part was the *erusin*, or betrothal, where a commitment for a marriage between the two families was formalized and from which point onward the couple was considered what we would call "engaged." In biblical times, however, the *erusin* was much more of a firm, legal commitment than a modern-day engagement. Among some Orthodox Jews, this separate formal betrothal period is still practiced, with the young woman residing with her parents and with many strict rules about the couple's behavior in place.

The second part of the biblical marriage was the *nissuin*, the actual public wedding ceremony. After this ceremony, the private consummation of the marriage was held in the "chamber." Over time, the tradition developed that the chamber was publicly represented in a symbolic way by the use of this cloth canopy, the chuppah. This public display emphasizes the fact that a Jewish wedding is not a private event but is rather a confirmation and a pledge of Jewish continuity and survival to the community.

In modern Israeli Hebrew, the noun *chuppah* is used to designate the wed-

ding event. Over just the past several years, at least five young Jewish people who had been to the Shoshanah Campus of Ariel Ministries have gotten married in Messianic ceremonies in Israel. As I spoke to the parents or read the description of the weddings in Hebrew, in all cases the ceremony was simply called the *chuppah*, showing how much the object of the wedding canopy has become synonymous with the Jewish marriage ceremony.

As the American Jewish community has become more assimilated with the associated dramatic rise in intermarriage of young Jewish people, a common practice has been the use of a decorative archway under which a couple is married. This is seen as a sort of compromise—a step away from the traditional Jewish four-cornered canopy but still a nod to the Jewish family. This is so often seen by the wedding guests that it is now common to find couples where neither partner is Jewish who choose to marry under an archway.



### *The Ultimate Wedding*

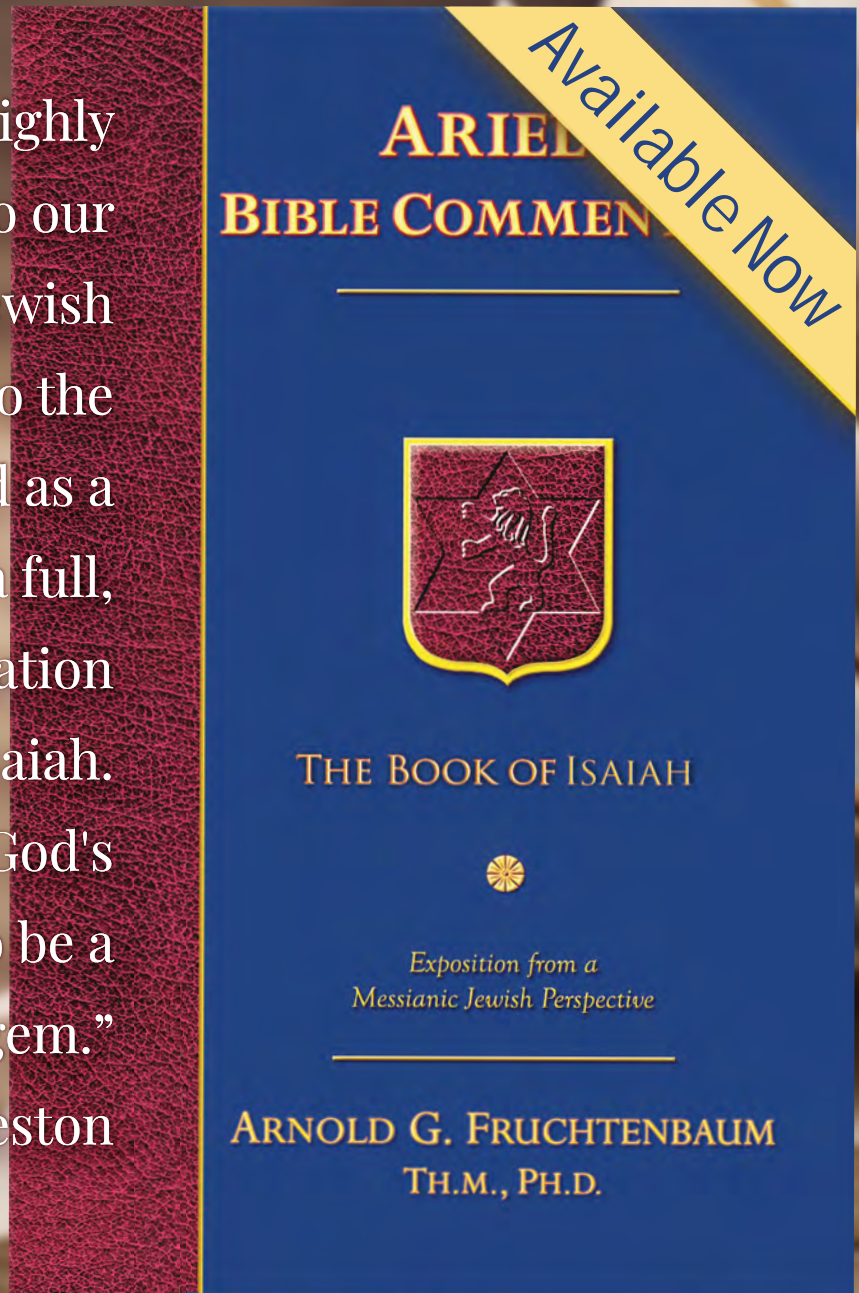
As believers in Messiah Yeshua, we look forward to the ultimate wedding of the body of believers to our Savior. That will be the most joyous wedding of all!



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# *The Jewish Wedding System and the Bride of the Messiah*

By Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

In the Scriptures, the church is depicted both as the body of the Messiah and as His bride. Regarding the latter, the thrust of all New Testament passages is that she is a betrothed bride who is not yet joined to her Husband, the Messiah.





Within the context of the church, one must distinguish between the visible and the invisible church. The invisible church is composed of all true believers, whereas the visible church can be composed of both believers and unbelievers. A clear definition of the invisible church can be deduced from Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 2:11-16, I Corinthians 12:13, Acts 1:5, and Acts 2 (in combination with Acts 11:15-16). Summarizing these five passages, the bride of Messiah is composed of all true believers from Pentecost in Acts 2 until the rapture. Once she has been raptured, the bride will experience the marriage of the Lamb. To fully understand what this event involves, one must first understand the background of the Jewish marriage system at the time of Yeshua's first coming. A thorough examination of this system provides a better understanding of the believers' special relationship with Messiah, and it explains the future aspects of church history. As will be seen, the Jewish wedding system involved five distinct steps.



## THE ARRANGEMENT

The first step in the Jewish wedding system was the arrangement, during which the father of the groom made the arrangements with the father of the bride for the marriage and paid the bride price. The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes, it occurred when both the bride and the groom were still children. Other times, it occurred at least one year before the marriage

itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day.

The application of this step in the Jewish wedding system to the bride of the Messiah is that God the Father—the Father of Messiah the Groom—made the arrangement and then paid the bride price. The bride price was the blood of His Son. This is seen in two passages of Scripture, the first of which is Ephesians 5:25b: *Messiah also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.* The second passage is John 3:16a: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* By giving up His Son and by shedding the blood of His Son, God the Father paid the bride price, and thus the arrangement was sealed with blood.



## THE PREPARATION

The second step in the Jewish wedding system was known as the preparation. This was the period of the betrothal. It lasted for at least a year but could also have lasted for many years, especially if the arrangement was made when the bride and groom were only children. During this time, the bride was prepared to take on the role of a wife. Furthermore, she was observed for her purity. The betrothal had to last a minimum of a year because this time span allowed at least a full nine months to pass to make sure that the bride was a virgin at the time of the betrothal. If she gave birth before the year was up, it demonstrated that she was in a state of immorality.

The application of this stage to the church is that the bride is even now in the process of being perfected for the

Groom. Two passages deal with this fact. In II Corinthians 11:2, Paul stated: *For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Messiah.* Paul explained that the church has been espoused or betrothed to one husband. The goal is that she might be presented as a pure virgin to the Messiah. She is now in the period of preparation when the bride is being prepared to become a fitting wife for her husband. When the wedding day comes, she will be presented as a pure virgin to the Messiah.

In Ephesians 5:26-27, Paul further detailed the process of sanctification, which the church is currently undergoing. According to verse 26, this process involves the following points: *that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word.* The term “sanctify” means “to set apart” or “to be set apart.” The church is being set apart for the Messiah to eventually be presented as a pure virgin to Him (II Cor. 11:2). The means of sanctification is *by the washing of water with the word.* This phrase does not refer to water baptism but to the water of the Word of God. The church is being cleansed by the Word of God. As she becomes more and more conformed to what the Scriptures teach, she becomes more and more that pure virgin to be presented to Messiah.

Verse 27 provides the purpose of this process of sanctification: *that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* The purpose is to present the bride as a glorious church. This is just another way of saying what was stated in II Corinthians 11:2, namely, that the





intent of the sanctification process is to present the church as a pure virgin to Messiah. The four characteristics of a glorified church are as follows:

1. The church will have no *spot*, meaning there will be no outward defilement.
2. There will be no *wrinkle*, meaning there will be no evidence of age.
3. The church will *be holy*, meaning she will eventually reach full sanctification.
4. There will be no *blemish*, meaning there will be no inward defilement.

The church will be declared glorified at the judgment seat of the Messiah. At that time, the wood, hay, and stubble of each believer will be burned, while the gold, silver, and precious stones will be purified by the fire of that judgment. More will be said about this event in the discussion of the next step in the wedding system.

The final verse to consider in the context of the preparation of the bride of Messiah is Ephesians 5:29: *for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Messiah also the church.* Paul revealed the way that the church is being made glorious: She is being nourished, built up, and given strength. Furthermore, the church is being cherished, meaning that she is receiving care with warmth and tenderness.

Two thousand years have passed since God the Father paid the bride price. The period of betrothal or preparation will end with the next step in the Jewish wedding system: the fetching of the bride.



The third step in the Jewish wedding system was known as the fetching of the bride. This event occurred a year or more after the marriage had been arranged and the bride price had been paid. It ended the period of preparation. The bridegroom would go to the home of his soon-to-be wife in order to pick her up and bring her to his own home. It was the father of the groom who determined the timing of the fetching of the bride. Prior to the groom's leaving, he had to already have a place prepared for her as their abode.

The application of this step to the bride of the Messiah will be accomplished by the rapture of the church. The main Scripture for the rapture is I Thessalonians 4:13-18:

*<sup>13</sup>But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For if we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Yeshua will God bring with him. <sup>15</sup>For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Messiah shall rise first; <sup>17</sup>then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we*

*ever be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

This passage describes the course of the rapture. In verses 13-15, Paul answered a question that was raised in Thessalonica: Do believers who have died miss out on the benefits of the rapture? Apparently, while Paul had been with the Thessalonians, he had taught some truths concerning the rapture as it related to the living but not to the dead. But now, some believers had passed away, and those they left behind were distressed by not knowing what the future had in store for them. So, Paul comforted the bereaved family members with the truth that dead believers will not miss out on the benefits of the rapture; in fact, they will receive them first.

Then in verses 16-17, Paul spelled out the chronological sequence of the rapture in seven stages to show why this is true (vv. 16-17). First, the Messiah will come out of the heaven of heavens and descend into the atmospheric heavens. In doing so, He will enter into the realm of the home of His bride.

Second, the Lord's descent will happen *with a shout*. The Greek word used is that of a command of a military leader who comes out of his tent and issues an order. One day, the Chief Commander will come out of His heavenly tent and give the order for the resurrection and the translation to occur.

Third, the Lord's descent will also happen *with the voice of the archangel*. Angels are often used to put God's plan into motion. Michael the archangel will be used in the case of the rapture. The content of what the voice says is not stated. But if known military procedure can be applied to this situation, then this is simply a repetition of the original



order. The sub-commander repeats the order (the “shout”) of the chief commander. Yeshua will give the command for the course of the rapture to begin, and it is Michael’s task to set it into motion, so he will repeat the command.

Fourth, the Lord’s descent will also happen *with the trump of God*. The sound of the trumpet was used as a summons either to battle or to worship. With Michael’s repetition of the command, the trumpet will sound and thereby trigger the rapture itself. Thus, this trumpet will serve as a summons for the plan to go into motion.

Fifth, *the dead in Messiah shall rise first*. This is the resurrection, and it is why dead believers will not miss out on the benefits of the rapture. To the contrary, they will begin to enjoy the benefits of the rapture first. The expression “in Messiah” limits the resurrection at the time of the rapture to those who were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body, which only began in Acts 2. Thus, this resurrection of dead saints will be limited to church saints only. The Old Testament saints will be resurrected at a later point in God’s prophetic program.

Sixth, *then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds*. The resurrection of the dead church saints will be followed by the translation of the living saints. Every believer without exception will be removed from the earth and will be united with the Lord Yeshua in the heavens. The living believers will be caught up with the dead ones. The expression “to be caught up” is the source of the term “rapture.” The Greek word used in I Thessalonians 4:17 is *harpazo*. When the verse was translated into Latin, the word *rapio* was used. The English word “rapture” comes from this Latin source.

Seventh, the raptured saints will *meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord*. Both the resurrected dead believers and translated living believers will meet the Messiah in the air. Once they have been united with Him in the air, they will permanently remain with Him and return with Him into heaven, as already promised in John 14:1-3.

It is after the fetching of the bride into heaven that the final point of cleansing and sanctification will come. This final point has already been mentioned. In I Corinthians 3:10-15, Paul described the judgment seat of the Messiah, when the wood, hay, and stubble will be burned away and the gold, silver, and precious stones will be purified. According to I Corinthians 15:50-58, the church will indeed be glorified because, at that point, mortality will put on immortality and corruption will put on incorruption.



## THE CEREMONY

The fourth step of the Jewish wedding system was the ceremony. It was conducted in the home of the groom. Only a few, usually the immediate family and two witnesses, were invited to come in and observe the wedding ceremony.

The application of this fourth step to the church as the bride of the Messiah is that there will be a marriage ceremony in heaven. The main Scripture that describes this step is Revelation 19:6-8:

*6And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of*

*many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. 7Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. 8And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

These verses make three main points. First, *the marriage of the Lamb is come* (v. 7). This describes the marriage ceremony of the Lamb, which will occur in heaven just before Yeshua’s second coming. Second, *the wife has made herself ready*. She is now glorified. There is no spot, no wrinkle, no blemish, nor any such thing on her anymore. Third, she is arrayed *in fine linen, bright and pure*. The fine linen is interpreted as representing *the righteous acts of the saints*. This shows that by this time, the sanctification process is complete, the judgment seat of Messiah is over, and the church is indeed a pure virgin. Now, she is being presented to the Messiah at the wedding ceremony.



## THE MARRIAGE FEAST

The marriage feast is the fifth step in the Jewish wedding system. Often, this feast lasted for seven days. While only a few people were invited to the wedding ceremony, many more were invited to celebrate the marriage of the son.



The application of this step to the church as the bride of Messiah is that the marriage feast will take place on earth. In fact, it will initiate the Messianic kingdom. Among the guests will be three groups that will not have participated in the wedding ceremony but will be invited to the marriage feast. The first group will be composed of Old Testament saints who are resurrected after the tribulation (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). In John 3:28-30, John the Baptist considered himself to be neither part of the groom nor part of the bride but rather part of a third category called *the friend of the bridegroom*. The friends of the bridegroom are the Old Testament saints. The second group is the tribulation saints who will be resurrected after the second coming (Rev. 20:4-6). The third group will be the regenerated nation of Israel, meaning those Jews who survive the tribulation and come to faith in Messiah Yeshua. The invitation to the wedding feast will be sent out just before Messiah's second coming (Rev. 6:9, 11-16).



## THE HOME OF THE BRIDE



The sixth and final step of the Jewish wedding system concerns the home of the bride. Traditionally, the groom was responsible for providing a suitable home for the bride, and he got this home ready during the preparation stage.

The application of this step to the church as the bride of Messiah is seen in John 14:1-3, where Yeshua said that

He was going to heaven to prepare a place for His bride. This place is known as the New Jerusalem. All believers will move into this home in the eternal order. The main Scripture is Revelation 21:9–22:5, where John was able to see the home of the bride. In verses 9-10, he stated:

*<sup>9</sup>And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, Come hither, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. <sup>10</sup>And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

According to verse 9, the bride is now *the wife of the Lamb* because by this time the wedding ceremony and the wedding feast will have taken place, and the Lamb and His bride will have been married a thousand years. In verse 10, John next saw the eternal home of the bride, the New Jerusalem.



## CONCLUSION



As this discussion of the relationship between the Jewish wedding system and the church as the bride of Messiah has shown, some things have already been fulfilled; other things are in the process of being fulfilled; and again others will occur in the future. The conclusion is that there is a great future for those who have believed in the Messiahship of Yeshua.



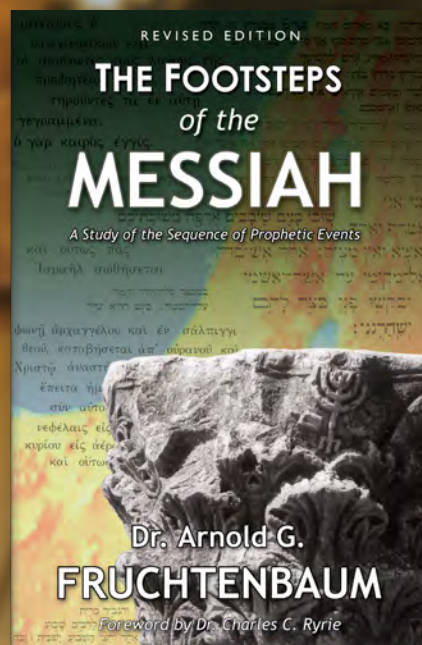
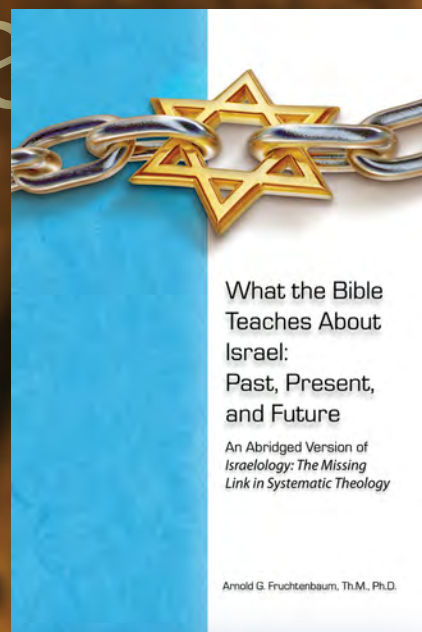
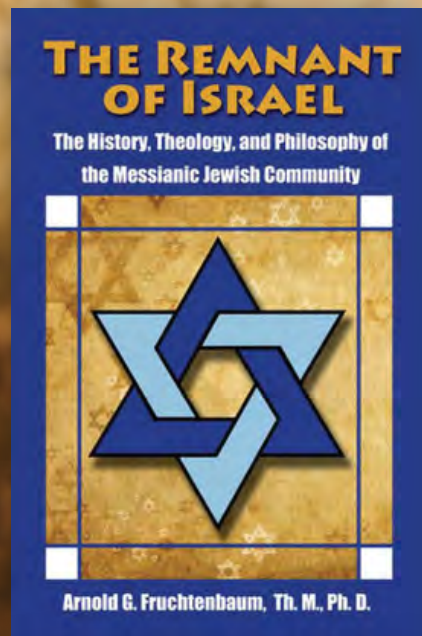
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# Parallels between the Book of Ruth and the Marriage of the Lamb

By Jacques Isaac Gabizon

The book of Ruth is a moving story of love, hope, faithfulness, and genuine kindness in the midst of continual tragedies. The verse-by-verse analysis of this book may be found on Beth Ariel's website ([bethariel.ca](http://bethariel.ca)) and also in Ariel's Bible commentary on Judges and Ruth. The purpose of this article is to point out several parallels between the book of Ruth and God's redemptive plan through His Son.



*Ruth and Boaz & Wedding at Cana paintings by Paul Gustave Doré*



The story of Ruth is well known. A family of four left their hometown of Bethlehem for a foreign country because a famine was sweeping across the land of Judah. Once in Moab, the husband died, leaving behind his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion. As time went on, the sons married Ruth and Orpah, two women of the land. After a while, another tragedy struck, and Mahlon and Kilion died. Naomi and her two daughters-in-law were now widows. It was at this time that Naomi decided to head back to Bethlehem. She discouraged her two daughters-in-law from following her and begged them to return to their families. They could remarry since they were young women, and being from a country that was often at war with Israel, they would have a difficult time adapting to life in Judah. However, only Orpah left, while Ruth refused to abandon Naomi, and it is here that we begin to reach the heart of this story. It is a tale of compassion and faith as well as redemption.

The redemption is first seen in the wedding bells that start ringing in Ruth 2:4. According to this verse, Boaz met Ruth for the very first time. The reader may recognize in him and in his words a man of God, as Boaz mentioned the LORD in his blessings over his workers. His first words were, “*May the LORD (יהוה) be with you.*” The mention of יהוה, the LORD, is refreshing for the reader who, so far, has primarily learned about the harsh history of Naomi’s family. At this point, the reader is somehow assured that this woman of faith and her daughter-in-law are in good hands. The rest of the story will confirm Boaz’s blessings on them, for he will turn out to be Ruth’s redeemer. In his protection and concern for this woman, he typifies the Messiah.

The great symbolism behind this love story is enhanced when we recognize that it coincides with the ripening and first harvest of barley at the time of Passover, the festival of redemption, and ends with another harvest of barley and of wheat (Ruth 2:22) at the time of Shavuot. The Targum of Ruth places the first harvest on the eve of Passover: *So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem on the eve of Passover* (Targum of Ruth 1:22, emphasis added). So, Boaz met Ruth on Passover and married her on Shavuot. This leads to the Jewish tradition in which the whole book of Ruth is read in the synagogue on Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks.



The relation to Yeshua the Redeemer must not be missed. Passover speaks of the redemption through the Messiah who died for the sins of the world, and Shavuot speaks of the birth of the *ecclesia*, the bride of the Messiah. This is where the story of Ruth leads us. Ruth is a Gentile woman who came to the commonwealth of Israel and married her redeemer. In the same way, all people from the nations may return to their Creator through their Redeemer, and by so doing they become the bride of the Messiah. From Passover to Shavuot, the story of Ruth begins with tragedy, famine, and poverty but ends with a wedding. The same is true for the life of every believer. Without the Messiah, there is no salvation. He is the only way to God. Just as it was God who orchestrated Ruth’s redemption story, God is also the One who orchestrates each person’s salvation story, for salvation is wholly from Him.



### Faith

Naomi and Ruth knew their God well, and when the time was right, the Lord responded to their faith in wonderful ways and with great blessings. For example, when Ruth went out to find food, *she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz* (Ruth 2:3). Of all the fields outside of Bethlehem, God directed her to the one that belonged to the man who was going to marry her and support her and Naomi. The next verse begins with the words “Now behold,” or as the Hebrew would have it, “Would you believe that?” or “Have you heard such a thing?” *Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem* at the very same time that Ruth was there (Ruth 2:4). God prearranged their meeting.



### Ruth Asks Boaz to Marry Her

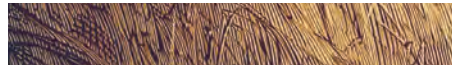
What exactly Naomi was asking Ruth to do in Ruth 3:1-5 is a matter of much debate. However, judging from Ruth's explanation and Boaz's response later on, this seems to have been part of a custom at the time in which one would ask a redeemer for marriage. In other words, Ruth literally asked Boaz to marry her. The basis of her request is that Boaz was Ruth's *goel*, meaning "redeemer."

As soon as Boaz heard Ruth's request of marriage, he responded in great excitement—perhaps as if it were a dream come true. From the beginning, he had had an eye on Ruth, and now, there she was in his room asking him to wed her. What a treat!

In 3:10-11, he answered: *Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.* Boaz was so overwhelmed by Ruth's proposal that he first blessed the Lord. Then he spoke of this encounter as a greater kindness than the previous one, probably referring to the kindness, or *chesed*, that Ruth had been showing Naomi. Now she was showing a superior kindness to Boaz. But how was it superior? The answer is that Ruth did not go after young men. Hence, age must have had something to do with it here. Perhaps Boaz was so much older than Ruth that he did not even dare hope to be able to marry her, and when she appeared, he was completely inundated with gratefulness and found

himself more fortunate than even Naomi.

This is the story of a man in love. It reminds one of the parable of the pearl, in which Yeshua finds His bride and says in Matthew 13:45-46: *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.* The pearl in this parable is the church, and Yeshua the Redeemer finds and loves this pearl. We find the same type of excitement in the book of Ruth.



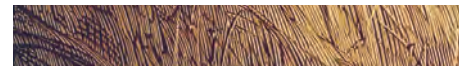
### The Threshing Floor

Before marrying Ruth, Boaz had to solve the problem of the closer relative who had first choice in redeeming Ruth (3:12), and the story of how he dealt with it is covered in chapter 4. However, this article is not about Ruth per se but about the redemption of Messiah's bride. Let me bring you back to Ruth 3:2, where Naomi said the following about Boaz: *In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.* One has to ask why this information was added to the story of Ruth.

The answer is that this information indicates that the time had now advanced to the end of the spring harvest when the grain was threshed or repeatedly beaten until the inner softer part of the seed was separated from the hard layer and also from the chaff covering it. At the end of the day, when the winds rose, the farm workers would take the seed and throw it in the air so that the wind would separate the remaining chaff from the grain. What fell back to the ground was the good seed. This process of threshing and winnowing, well known at the time, is the picture that is used to show how Yeshua will

come and sort out His church: *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire* (Lk. 4:17). When the Lord comes, He will separate the good seed from the chaff. But there is something else very powerful here: The Temple was built on a threshing floor (II Sam. 24:18; I Chron. 21:15). Hence, the place where man used to meet God also used to be a place where the good seed was separated from the chaff.

In the story of Ruth, the Moabite woman met her redeemer on a threshing floor. In the same way, the church meets her Redeemer on a threshing floor as well. This is a powerful illustration of the life of the believer who is, in many ways, on a threshing floor fighting off the old life and trying to put away the hard layer that needs to be broken up and winnowed.



### Getting Ready to Meet God

Another application that may be derived from the book of Ruth is seen in Naomi's instructions before Ruth was to meet Boaz. She said: *Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor* (Ruth 3:3). Ruth was to do three things before meeting Boaz. First, she was to bathe herself. The Hebrew word for "wash" is used for all kinds of physical washing and also for the ritual cleansing of the priest. It is also used for the notion of cleansing from sin in Isaiah 1:16. Second, Ruth was to anoint herself. This reminds us of the believers' responsibility to let the Holy Spirit control and lead them. Third, Ruth was to put on her best clothes. This reminds us of the sanctification



process that makes us ready to meet our God.

In response to these instructions, Ruth promised to obey: *All that you say to me I will do* (Ruth 3:5). Like the washing, anointing, and putting on of one's best clothes, obedience is also required before coming to the threshing floor where the presence of God is.



**The Two Barley Loaves of Shavuot**

In Israel, the spring harvest ends on Shavuot. During this feast, two barley loaves are offered in harvest thanksgiving. These two loaves of bread have leaven, which is unusual since leaven is banned from the divine presence.<sup>1</sup> So, why are the sacrifices on this day any different from all of the other sacrifices?

The body of the Messiah was born on Pentecost, and the event represents a new phase in the history of Israel. The Gentiles have become fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Yeshua HaMashiach through the gospel (Eph. 3:6). The two leavened breads represent the Jews and Gentiles being one. In the book of Ruth, a Jew (Boaz) and a Gentile (Ruth) came together in marriage on Shavuot and were both blessed by God. From their union came the Messiah. Hence, this union of a Jew and a Gentile led to the birth of the church because through Messiah's redemptive work, a new entity—the body of the Messiah—was born.



**The Wedding**

There is one little disappointment in the story of Ruth. Anyone who may have

hoped to be able to participate in the wedding of Ruth and Boaz is left with a short statement in Ruth 4:13. Why do we not learn more? Why have we not been invited to this wedding?

The answer may lie in the fact that this story is not really about Boaz and Ruth's wedding but about our own wedding with our own Redeemer, Yeshua the Messiah. We just have to wait a little longer, and soon we will be the bride. In Revelation 19:7-9, we read:

*Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.*<sup>8</sup> *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*<sup>9</sup> *Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*



<sup>1</sup> See: Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001).





The book of Ruth is leading us to the marriage of the Lamb to His bride, detailed in these verses. Just like it is in modern weddings, the wedding ceremony is described in two parts: the marriage itself (v. 7) and the supper (v. 9). Even today, we first have the religious ceremony and a few hours later the big supper.

We can only imagine the joy and even the food that will be served at the marriage of the Lamb. I do not think we have tasted anything yet. The Creator of the universe has prepared for us a menu surely as wonderful as His creation itself. Just wait until we are seated at this great table! This wedding in heaven—our wedding—is in the making at this very moment.



**The Parts of a Biblical Wedding**

When we speak of a biblical wedding, there are several steps to consider. First, there is the legal part of the marriage. The marriage is ratified when the parent of the groom pays a dowry to assure the faithfulness of the groom and secure the marriage. For our wedding, God the Father sent His Son to die on the cross to pay the dowry and assure the bride of the marriage to the Lamb. Just as God had all of Ruth's circumstances in His hands, He is currently organizing this wedding in His sovereignty.

Second, after the bride price is paid, a certain length of time is given to the groom to go and prepare a place for his bride. Before paying the bride price, Yeshua promised His future bride in John 14:2-3: *In My Father's house are many mansions... I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

Third, once the groom has prepared a place for his bride, he comes and takes the bride to their new home. In the book of Ruth, this coincides with the time when Boaz declared: *Ruth the Moabitess... I have acquired as my wife* (Ruth 4:10). For believers, this will happen at the rapture, which will fulfill the next feast after Shavuot: the Feast of Trumpets.

Fourth, once the groom has brought his bride home, he claims her at the wedding ceremony. In the book of Ruth, this stage was fulfilled in 4:13 when Ruth was spoken of a second time as the wife of Boaz: *So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife.* For believers, this stage will be fulfilled in Revelation 19.



**A Most Intimate Relationship**

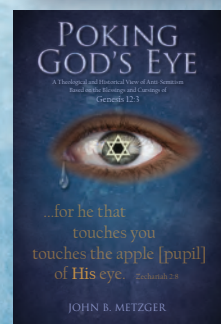
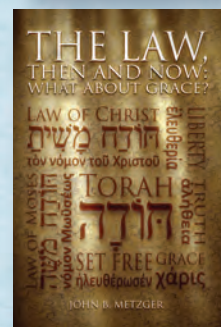
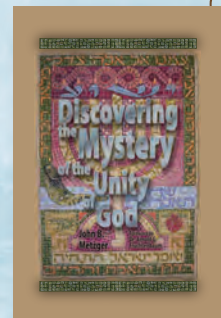
The Spirit of God could have used other words to describe the relationship that the bride will have with the Lamb. He could have used terms such as “union,” “bond,” or just “relationship.” Yet, He chose a term that defines the most intimate of relationships that human beings can have with one another and spoke of a wedding and a marriage. This is the relationship that we will enjoy with the Son of God: one in which we will share everything He has and in which we will have a common purpose in life.

*What a glorious moment that will be!*

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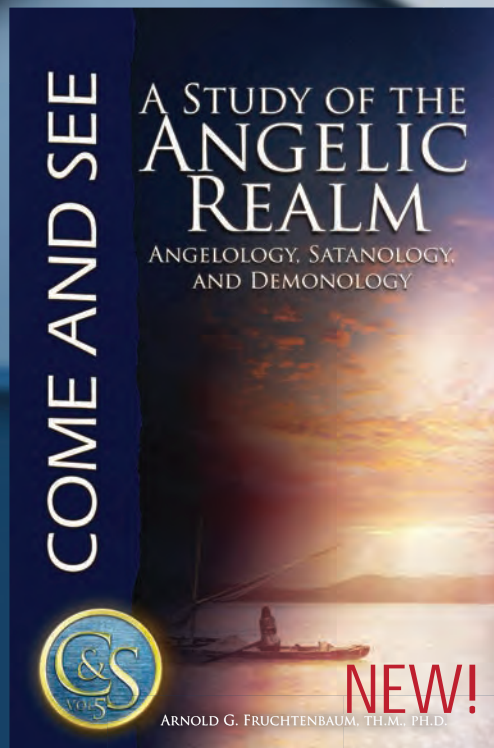
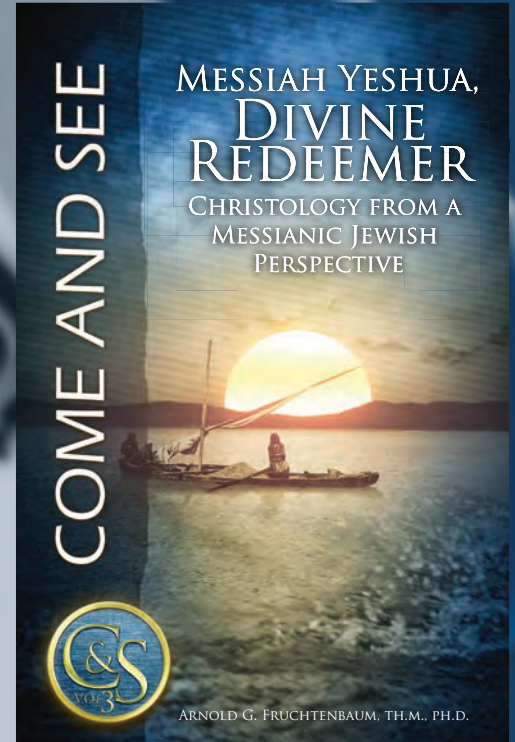
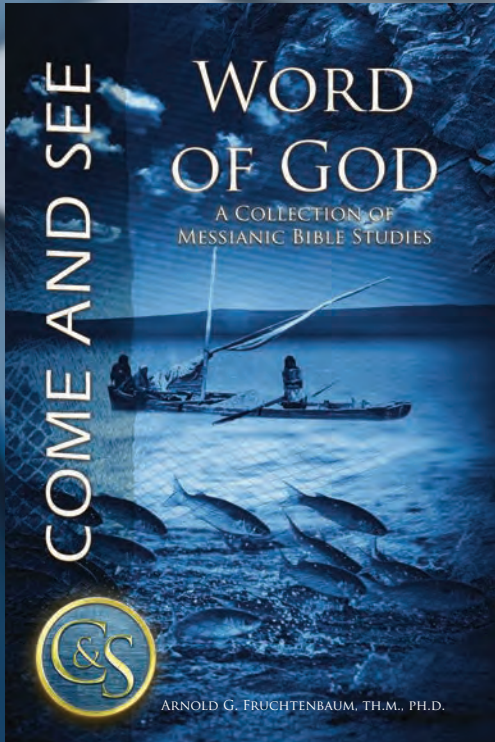
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