

Are we living in the end times? Could it be that Covid-19 crisis marked "the beginning of the end?" Should we expect an imminent (pre-tribulation) rapture? This book addresses the above questions in a convincing and biblical way.

God's Great Reset: Assessing Covid, the Rapture & Yeshua's Body in an END TIME Context

By Yosef Rachamim Danieli

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GOD'S GREAT RESET

**Assessing Covid, The Rapture
& Yeshua's Body
In An END TIME Context**

YOSEF RACHAMIM DANIELI

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Chapter 2:

The Doctrine of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture – The Great Blessed Hope, or a Tragic Delusion?

Introduction

As I wrote in the opening chapter, I am persuaded that we are living at the very end of what Scripture defines as *the Latter Days*. I am convinced that Covid-19 has been the starting point, the catalyst, or as I called it, “the beginning of the end.” I do believe that the signs we are witnessing in today’s world clearly reveal that we are indeed entering the time which will usher in the very *end of the age*.

This second chapter deals with one of the most controversial topics in the body of Messiah today, especially as it relates to eschatology—namely, the pre-Tribulation Rapture. My goal is to assess what Scripture really tells us about the return of Messiah and our gathering unto Him.

Is the study of the Rapture and its timing important at all? Why should we invest time in it? Millions and millions of sincere followers of Messiah throughout the world (including here in God’s Promised Land) believe they are not going to live through what Scripture defines as *the Great Tribulation*. Not only this, but they also claim that they will not even witness the revelation of the Anti-Messiah in this world. They believe, instead, that they will be snatched up and out of this world just before his public appearing.

Now, if they are correct, none of us should be troubled or even look into this study, as there is no real need for it. Yet, if they are wrong and followers of Yeshua are going to not only witness the revelation of the Anti-Messiah, but also go through (even a part) of the great Tribulation, then studying this subject should be of crucial importance to all of us!

If our gathering unto the Lord takes place *after* the Anti-Messiah is revealed, many millions among the worldwide followers of Yeshua will

find themselves in great confusion. They are going to be disappointed and, as a direct outcome, at risk of losing their faith in Messiah Yeshua! Their confusion might lead them to anger towards God, as the realization sets in that they were neither spared from the great Tribulation nor did God fulfill “His promises” to them. They might seriously doubt His goodness, mercies and even His very salvation through Yeshua of Nazareth! In more scriptural terms, some of them might find themselves as those who are part of *the great falling away*.¹⁶⁵

The following are the main points I will address in this chapter:

- From where does the concept of *a Rapture* emanate? Is it a biblically based concept?
- Does Scripture tell us *when* the Rapture of the true believers will take place?
- The Rapture as seen and interpreted through Hebrew Middle Eastern lenses
- Biblical patterns of Rapture
- Responding to some known claims held by believers in the doctrine of pre-Tribulation Rapture

¹⁶⁵ Or *apostasy*. See 2 Thes. 2:3. See also Jn. 6:66.

Building the Foundations Part 1: The Origins and Concept of Rapture in Scripture

The word *Rapture* does not exist in the original Greek manuscripts of the New Covenant writings. *Rapture* originated from the first translation of the Bible into Latin in the fifth century CE.¹⁶⁶ There, in 1 Thes. 4:17, the Greek word *harpazō* (*har-pad'-zo*)¹⁶⁷ was translated as *rapio* (*to catch up or take away*) and made its way into the English translations as *Rapture*.

Yet, the concept of Rapture, in the sense of an individual or a group of people (even a whole nation) being *taken away* (or “transferred”) from one place to another or from one position and condition to another, is very much biblically based! To better understand this concept, we first need to become familiar with a few other words in Scripture, both in Hebrew and in Greek, which allude to the idea, or concept, of a *Rapture*. Before we do, it’s important to note that in ancient Hebrew, as well as in the Greek, there is often more than one possible translation for words! To make it easier, I have included all the different possible translations for each of the following words, in specific footnotes.

In the Tanach, we have two main words that allude to the concept of Rapture:

¹⁶⁶ *The Vulgate*, by Hieronymus.

¹⁶⁷ G726 (Strong), ἀρπάζω, *harpazō*—*to seize* (in various applications): catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force). This use is also seen in other texts, such as in Acts 8:39; 2 Cor. 12:2-4; and Rev. 12:5.

(1) *lekichah* (לקיחה), or *lakach* (לקח),¹⁶⁸ and (2) *aseifah* (אסיפה/אספה), or *asaf* (אסף).¹⁶⁹

In the New Covenant writings, there are also a few other words (other than *harpazō*), which allude to the concept of Rapture. They are: *Episunagōgē* (ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay),¹⁷⁰ *apairō ah'ee-ro*,¹⁷¹ *airō-ah'ee-ro*,¹⁷² *epairō- ep-ahee'-ro*,¹⁷³ *paralambanō* (par-al-am-ban'-o),¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ H3947 (Strong). A primitive root; to take (in the widest variety of applications): *accept, bring, buy, carry away, drawn, fetch, get, enfold, X many, mingle, place, receive (-ing), reserve, seize, send for, take (away, -ing, up), use, win.*

¹⁶⁹ H622 (Strong). A primitive root; to gather for any purpose; hence *to receive, take away*, that is, remove (destroy, leave behind, put up, restore, etc.): *assemble, bring, consume, destroy, fetch, gather (in, together, up again), X generally, get (him), lose, put all together, receive, recover [another from leprosy], (be) rewarded, X surely, take (away, into, up), X utterly, withdraw.*

¹⁷⁰ G1996 (Strong)—a complete collection; specifically, a Christian meeting (for worship): *assembling (gathering) together.*

¹⁷¹ G575 (Strong)—to lift off, that is, *remove: take (away).*

¹⁷² G142 (Strong). A primary verb; to lift; by implication to take up or away; figuratively *to raise* (the voice), *keep in suspense* (the mind); specifically, *to sail away* (that is, *weigh anchor*); by Hebraism (compare [H5375]) *to expiate sin: away with, bear (up), carry, lift up, loose, make to doubt, put away, remove, take (away, up).*

¹⁷³ G522 (Strong), ἀπαίρω. From G575 and G142—to lift off, that is, *remove: take (away).*

¹⁷⁴ G3880 (Strong), παραλαμβάνω, paralambanō, *par-al-am-ban'.* From G3844 and G2983; *to receive near*, that is, *associate oneself with* (in any familiar or intimate act or relation); by analogy, *to assume an office*; figuratively, *to learn.*

ginomai (*ghin'-om-ahee*)¹⁷⁵ and *sullegō* (*sool-leg'-o*).¹⁷⁶ These Greek words are also connected to the concept of a person, a group or even a nation, being *taken* (or “transferred”) from one place, situation or condition to another. Let us now delve into a few examples where the conceptual demonstration of Rapture is shown.

Rapture — By Means of Separation

Gen. 2:23 — *And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out* (in Hebrew, *lukachah* — ללקח) *of Man*. In other words, Eve was taken out, or separated from one place or position (Adam’s body) into another one, a new one—her own independent body of flesh.

Gen. 3:19 — *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken* (in Hebrew, *lukachtah* — לקחת), *for dust you are, and unto dust you shall return*. Adam was an integral part of the ground, or soil, from which he was *taken*. In other words, he was separated from one position, or

¹⁷⁵ G1096 (Strong), Γίνομαι. A prolonged and middle form of a primary verb; to *cause to be* (“gen”-erate); that is, (reflexively) to *become* (*come into being*), used with great latitude (literally, figuratively, intensively, etc.): *arise* *be assembled*, *be* (*come, -fall, -have self*), *be brought* (*to pass*), (*be*) *come* (*to pass*), *continue*, *be divided*, *be done*, *draw*, *be ended*, *fall*, *be finished*, *follow*, *be found*, *be fulfilled*, + *God forbid*, *grow*, *happen*, *have*, *be kept*, *be made*, *be married*, *be ordained to be*, *partake*, *pass*, *be performed*, *be published*, *require*, *seem*, *be showed*, *X soon as it was*, *sound*, *be taken*, *be turned*, *use*, *wax*, *will*, *would*, *be wrought*.

¹⁷⁶ G4816 (Strong), συλλέγω. From G4862 **and** G3004, in its original sense; *to collect*: *gather* (*together, up*). See also G4863 (Strong), συνάγω, **sunagō**, *soon-ag'-o*. From G4862 **and** G71: to *lead together*, that is, to *collect* **or** *convene*; specifically, to *entertain* (hospitably): + *accompany*, *assemble* (*selves, together*), *bestow*, *come together*, *gather* (*selves together, up, together*), *lead into*, *resort*, *take in*.

condition, into another; and one day he will return to the place from where he came (due to his sin).

Ex. 14:11 — *Then they said to Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us (in Hebrew, lekachtanu — לקחתנו) away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? God, using Moses, took His Chosen People out of Egypt—once again, He repositioned them from one location to another—a new one (see also Deut. 4:20).*

Isa. 24:22 — *They will be gathered together (in Hebrew, vusfu asefa — ואספו אספה), as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison... Again the concept of people being gathered (taken/separated/transferred) from one position or condition to another, appears.*

Isa. 49:5 — *And now, the LORD says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, so that Israel is gathered (in Hebrew, ye'asef — יאסף) to Him....*

Matt. 13:40 — *Therefore, as the tares are gathered (in Greek, sullegō — sool-leg'-o) and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*

Matt. 25:32 — *All the nations will be gathered (in Greek, sunagō — soon-ag'-o) before Him, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides His sheep from the goats.*

Matt. 24:40-41 — *Then two men will be in the field, one will be taken (in Greek, paralambanō — par-al-am-ban'-o) and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken (in Greek, paralambanō — par-al-am-ban'-o) and the other left.*

Jn. 20:2 — *Then she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, whom Yeshua loved, and said to them, they have taken away*

(in Greek, *airō* — *ah'ee-ro*) the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.

Rapture — By Means of Death

Gen. 49:29 — Then he charged them, and said to them, I am to be gathered (in Hebrew, *ne'esaf* — נאסף) to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite...

Num. 20:24 — Aaron shall be gathered (in Hebrew, *ye'asef* — יאסף) to his people: for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

Num. 27:13 — And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered (in Hebrew, *vene'esaf* — ונאסף) unto your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered (in Hebrew, *ne'saf* — נאסף).

Num. 31:2 — Take vengeance on the Midianites for children of Israel. Afterward, you shall be gathered (in Hebrew, *te'asef* — תאסף) to your people.¹⁷⁷

Isa. 57:1 — The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart. Merciful men are taken away (in Hebrew, *ne'esaf* — נאסף) while no one considers that the righteous is taken away (in Hebrew, *ne'esaf* — נאסף) from evil.

Job 1:21 — And he said, naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away (in Hebrew, *lakach* — לקח). Blessed be the name of the LORD!

¹⁷⁷ See also Deut. 32:50; 2 Kings 22:20; and 2 Ch. 34:28.

Rapture — By Means of Healing

2 Kings 5:3 — *She said to her mistress, ‘I wish that my master was with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him (in Hebrew, ye’esof oto — אתו יאסוף) of his leprosy.’*

2 Kings 5:6 — *I have sent Naaman my servant to you that you may cure him (in Hebrew, ve’asafto — ואספתו) of his leprosy.¹⁷⁸*

Rapture — By Means of Resurrection and/or a Changed and Glorified Body

Acts 1:9 — *Now when he had spoken these things, while they watched, he was taken up (in Greek, apairō — ap-ah’ee-ro) and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

2 Thes. 2:1 — *Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Messiah Yeshua, and our gathering (in Greek, episunagōgē — ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay’) together to Him...*

2 Thes. 2:7 — *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out (in Greek, ginomai — ghin’-om-ahee) of the way.¹⁷⁹*

We can see that the concept of *Rapture* (in the sense of being taken from one place or position to another) is scriptural and that it runs throughout the Old and New Covenant writings. We see it is not limited to only one eschatological event (i.e., the Rapture of followers of Yeshua up and out of this world), but also to individuals, a group of people and a nation who are transferred from one place, position

¹⁷⁸ See also 2 Kings 5, verses 7 and 11.

¹⁷⁹ As we progress, we are going to see that there is yet another way to translate this specific Greek word, which can change the entire understanding of this specific Biblical reference.

and/or condition to another - a new one, while still here on Earth. Likewise, it concerns individuals, a group of people, and nation, who are transferred from life in the flesh, here on Earth, to the next world by means of death. Lastly, a *Rapture* can refer to the sense of one's physical condition (in sickness) being changed, or transferred to a new condition, by means of healing or being cured.

Building the Foundations Part 2: Four Main Views

Within Messiah's body, there are four main viewpoints regarding the timing of the last days' Rapture and our gathering unto Yeshua: (a) *the pre-Tribulation Rapture*—the belief that the Rapture will take place at any time prior to the great Tribulation; (b) *mid-Tribulation Rapture*—the belief that it will take place in the middle of the great Tribulation, i.e., in the middle of the seven last years; (c) *the post-Tribulation Rapture*—the belief that it will take place at Messiah's glorious return, i.e., at the very end of the great Tribulation; and, lastly, (d) *the pre-wrath Rapture*—the belief that it will take place at some point during the second half of the seven last years, just prior to God's outpouring of His wrath on this present world.

What follows are the main claims of the above four viewpoints. In this chapter, I will relate specifically to the main pre-Tribulation claims, as this is the view which concerns me the most. While doing so, you will see that my explanations also cover some of the other positions.

Main Claims of the Pre-Tribulation Viewpoint

- The Bible never claims that Yeshua's body will go through the Tribulation period.
- Yeshua's body had no part in the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel, and it will have no part in the seventieth week as well. In other words, Daniel's seventy-week prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) deals only with Old Testament Israel and thus, has nothing to do with Yeshua's body.

- While Yeshua's body is mentioned more than twenty times in the first three chapters of Revelation, there is no further mention of it from Rev. 4:2 all the way to 19:1. This is because John the Apostle, as a foreshadowing of Yeshua's body, is *taken out or Raptured*, in Rev. 4:1.
- Yeshua comes to meet His body in the Rapture (1 Thes. 4:16-17) and returns to Earth together with her in His Second Coming (1 Thes. 3:13). In other words, Yeshua's body goes up from the Earth in the Rapture and comes down to the Earth, together with Messiah in His Second Coming.
- The Anti-Messiah cannot be revealed until after the Rapture (2 Thes. 2:6-8). If Yeshua's bride goes through the Tribulation period, she will recognize the Anti-Messiah, since he will head the One World Government (Rev. 13:10), erect a statue of himself in the reconstructed Temple (Matt. 24:15), demand that people take his mark and number (Rev. 13:15-17), and kill the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7). All of this is not supported in Scripture.
- No one can know the day nor the hour of the Second Coming of Messiah (Matt. 24:15). But if Yeshua's body goes through the Tribulation period, some will know the day because it will be seven years from the signing of the seven-year covenant (Dan. 9:24-27) and 1,260 days from the day that the Anti-Messiah defiles the temple (Rev. 12:6).
- Yeshua's body must go to Heaven for the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7), before the Second Coming of Messiah at the end of the Tribulation period (Rev. 19:11-14).

- It is written that the Anti-Messiah will prevail against true believers during the Tribulation period (Rev. 13:7), but it also says that *the gates of hell won't prevail* against Yeshua's body (Matt. 16:18). So, it must be that there are two kinds of believers (or, "saints"): Old Testament ones—Israel, and New Testament ones - Yeshua's followers.
- The twenty-four elders are a representation of Yeshua's body. They are in heaven before the first of the seven seals of the scroll is broken.
- The pre-Tribulation Rapture is more consistent with God's grace, love, and mercy, as we were never appointed to God's wrath but to His everlasting grace and eternal life (1 Thes. 1:10, 5:9).
- Yeshua promised to come and remove His faithful ones and take them home to be with Him (Jn. 14:1-3).
- The Second Coming of Yeshua and the Rapture of His bride are separate events.

Main Claims of the Mid-Tribulation Viewpoint

- Reading about Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:26-27), one needs to differentiate between the Anti-Messiah wrath, during the first three and a half years, and God's divine wrath, during the last three and a half years.
- Yeshua's body will go through the first three and a half years of Daniel's last week, and just before God starts to pour His wrath out on the Earth at the beginning of the second three and a half years, it will be caught up to heaven (some say, with the two witnesses of Rev. 11:12).

- Believers throughout history have gone through some very difficult trials and tribulations, even unto death (note the example of eleven of the first twelve disciples of Yeshua, as well as the persecuted believers - which included many martyrs), during the first three to four centuries CE, as well as the persecuted believers in China, Persia and other places in our own modern world. Thus, we should expect that this will repeat itself within the first three and a half years of Daniel's seventieth week.

Main Claims of the Post-Tribulation Viewpoint

- The Rapture occurs after the Tribulation—at Yeshua's Second Coming. Yeshua's Second Coming and the Rapture of Yeshua's body are not separate events.
- Yeshua's body will have to endure the entire seven-year Tribulation, as there is only one resurrection (called *the first resurrection*) before Yeshua's Second Coming.
- The Rapture occurs after the Sun and Moon have been darkened and after the heavens are shaken and the stars fall from heaven (Joel 4:15, Matt. 24:29).
- Yeshua comes with the sound of a trumpet at the end of the Tribulation (Matt. 24:29-31, 1 Cor. 15:51-53).
- Believers throughout history have gone through some very difficult trials and tribulations, even unto death (see above, mid-Tribulation claims).

Main Claims of the Pre-Wrath Viewpoint

- Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy is divided mainly into three sections: "Man's wrath," "Satan's/the Anti-Messiah's wrath" and, lastly, "God's wrath."
- The great Tribulation begins three and a half years after the Anti-Messiah *confirms a covenant* for one week, i.e., the seventieth and last week in the Daniel 9 prophecy.¹⁸⁰
- Once the first three and a half year period ends, the Anti-Messiah will break that covenant, place *the abomination of desolation* inside the Temple in Jerusalem, declare himself to be *god* and rule over the Earth for the last three and a half years of this seventieth week.
- There is no way one can predict the exact timing of the Rapture, as it will take place sometime following the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12).
- God's wrath will be shortened (Matt. 24:29) by Yeshua's glorious Second Coming.

We can see clearly that all four of the above viewpoints are sincere beliefs (by those who hold to them), based solely on Scripture! None of those teaching them are trying to mislead Messiah's body! None of them possess some hidden agenda or have bad intentions... I'm truly convinced that all of them are well-intentioned, sincere and being taught by faithful followers of Yeshua. Nevertheless, no one can ignore the significant differences between their respective views! So, the question we should all ask at this point is: How is it that true,

¹⁸⁰ See a special portion dedicated to this well-known prophecy: "Daniel's Seventy Weeks" - following this chapter.

sincere followers of Yeshua, arrive at completely different conclusions while using the same book—the Bible?

Building the Foundations Part 3: Each of Us Needs Each Other So We Can See the Whole Picture

All of us have come to Yeshua from a different background, culture, and upbringing. Thus, we all look at life and circumstances through different lenses. God is a master artist and as such, He loves variations and different colors. As long as we - with all our different variations and colors - respect one another and try to have an open mind, humility, and true love toward one another, we can reach the much-needed unity in Yeshua, with an extra bonus, which is seeing what I call *the whole picture*.

None of us is able, nor called to change his or her own color or predisposition! After all, was it not given to us by our Maker? This entire book, which you are now reading, was naturally written through my own lens and color. I'm deeply rooted in God's Promised Land, where most of His Holy Word was written. Hebrew is my mother tongue, and I was brought up in what I call "the Middle Eastern Hebraic culture." And so, the only way I can discuss the timing of the Rapture is while using my own specific lenses.

The Middle Eastern Hebraic Mindset

I'm in the process of writing a five-book series, on portraits and foreshadowing of Yeshua throughout the five Books of Moses. I entitled it, *Moses Wrote About Me*. It is based on Yeshua's well-known words to the religious authorities of His time.¹⁸¹ I am grateful to the Lord that in the Fall of 2020 I was able to complete the first book, which deals with the portraits and foreshadowing of Yeshua in the book of Genesis. There, in its introduction, I gave my own testimony and a very detailed explanation of this Middle Eastern Hebraic mindset. For those of you who have already read the book, the following are direct excerpts from it (with a different font and some modifications).¹⁸²

There is a great necessity to understand the Scriptures in their historic and cultural contexts. It is an undeniable historical fact that Jews were the ones who wrote the *New Covenant* books. As a matter of fact, Jews not only wrote the books of the *New Covenant*, but also the vast majority of the entire Bible—both the Tanach and New Testament. Moreover, during the first few decades after Messiah's ascension, His body (the body of believers) was solely Jewish. Shortly after the death of the first apostles, His body became increasingly non-Jewish in its orientation and thus, lost its Jewish flavor and expression... As it became predominantly non-Jewish, the body started handling and interpreting God's Word outside of its original context, i.e.,

¹⁸¹ See Jn. 5:46.

¹⁸² See *Moses Wrote About Me*, pages 12-17. <https://tourneyourroots.com/books-%26-articles>. **Please note: All excerpts in this book are presented using a different font.** This is done to ease it on the reader, to better distinguish them from my present book wording.

disconnected or detached from its Hebraic/Jewish Middle Eastern mindset.

Without a doubt, Hebrew-speaking Jews who lived in the Middle East during the Tanach and New Covenant periods, understood and processed life, including God's Word, differently from Western, non-Jewish people. This remains true to this day. In order to better understand this book and the Hebraic/Jewish mindset I am using; I would like to offer a short explanation and give only a few examples that exemplify and emphasize the need to go back to study and apply God's Holy Word more properly than we have done during the past eighteen hundred years.

Logic and Mental Processing — Linear Versus Cyclical

The traditional Western mindset is heavily influenced by Greek culture. Greek thinking is expressed through words, ideas and logical definitions which often obscure the object of concern, removing it from its environment. To determine what an object is and why or how the object functions, a western thinker might compile a list of truths in an outline form, a1/b1/c1/c2/c3, placing them on a line (*linear thinking*). Historical events are put on a graphic line as well, following the idea that each of these events had actually been a new event. To the western thinker, it is the rational part that is important. Consequently, the rational part will often be abstracted from emotions so as not to hinder the logic of a matter. Using this Western thought process, one would say that something is true based on truth 1, truth 2 and truth 3. In the traditional Western mindset, truth is fixed, static and unchanging.

In contrast, the Hebraic/Jewish mindset is heavily influenced by Middle Eastern culture. Hebrew thinkers would express the truth in words, pictures, stories, or metaphors, which would keep the object of concern within its context and relationship to its environment. The effect of this is that the concept would not only provoke rational

thinking but would also provoke imagery that could be physically seen, touched, tasted, smelled, and heard, with the aim of developing an emotional/spiritual link for the thinker. The Hebrew thinker might describe God as: *eagle's wings, honey, a rock, living water, a shepherd, bread, shade, a fortress, father*, and so on. Living water, for example, would provoke the image of *a river, stream, or rain*. A person can experience living water and know its benefits and effects. Hebraic/Middle Eastern logic is contextual and *cyclical* (or *spiral*) in nature. Events are constantly recurring and, thus, placed in a cycle, rather than on a graphic line.¹⁸³

The Scriptures are filled with examples, but here I would like to present three very clear ones:

- King Solomon, who is described as the wisest man to have ever lived, said that all we see is actually a repetition of what has already taken place in the past, as well as what will actually take place in the future. He declared, *there is nothing new under the sun!*¹⁸⁴
- Yeshua, Israel's Messiah, said, *I am the alpha and the omega—the beginning and the end.*¹⁸⁵ If you place these words on a line (i.e., read it via the Greek/Western *linear thinking*), it would mean that Yeshua once had a beginning and that, sometime in the future, He will also have an end. This conceptual understanding is in complete contradiction to Scripture, as God has neither a beginning nor an end; He is forever the living God. Alternatively, viewing this verse via the Hebraic/cyclical mindset, the beginning and the end meet one another (as with a

¹⁸³ See my suggested illustration regarding the cyclical manifestation of God in the Bible, on page 461 of my book titled *Moses Wrote About Me: Genesis*.

¹⁸⁴ Eccl. 1:9-10.

¹⁸⁵ Rev. 1:8.

ring, which is always round/cyclical) and, thus, are strongly connected, never actually having a beginning nor an end. In other words, if you wish to understand the end/the future, first look at the beginning and the past, as they are very similar and strongly connected!¹⁸⁶

- It is sufficient to look at the stars on a beautifully clear night to understand the cyclical reality behind the One who created them. When looking at the sky, can we find one single star or planet which is triangular or square in shape? Are they not all circular?¹⁸⁷

Numbers in the Middle Eastern Hebraic Mindset

To most Westerners, numbers are merely quantities. In contrast, to Middle Easterners, numbers often serve as symbols bearing spiritual significance. For example:

(As we already saw in chapter one of this book), the number 3 is often associated with double blessings or with resurrection. In the story of Creation, it was on the *third day* that God twice proclaimed, *and it was good*. The wedding at Cana was on the *third day*. Yeshua was resurrected on the *third day*, and lastly, Israel, as a nation, will be resurrected (from her spiritual death) on the *third day*.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ See also Isa. 44:6-7, 46:9-10, 48:3.

¹⁸⁷ The reader will find it interesting to know that the Biblical words translated to English as *path/s* and *ways* actually read in the original Hebrew as *ma'agal* and/or *ma'agalim* — *circles* and/or *cycles* (see a few examples in Isa. 26:7; Ps. 17:5; and, particularly, Ps. 23:3. See also Prov. 1:9, 4:11; and many more).

¹⁸⁸ Gen. 1:9-13; Jn. 2:1; 1 Cor. 15:4; Hos. 6:2 (holding that *a thousand years in your sight are like a day*, see Ps. 90:4 and 2 Pet. 3:8).

The number 4 usually points to the entire world (*the four corners of the Earth, the four winds*, etc.). There are *four* gospels, which are directed to the entirety of humankind living on Earth.¹⁸⁹

The number 6 is mostly connected with mankind. As the creation of humanity (Adam and Eve) happened on the *sixth* day, the number suggests weakness and fleshly deeds. It is no wonder that the number 666 is a multiplication of this very number.¹⁹⁰

Most people agree that the number 7 is God's number, which symbolizes Him, as it is a number of completeness and perfection. For example, God the Creator created everything within *seven* days. He ordained the *Sabbath*, which is the *seventh* day of the week. Most of His (*seven*) Feasts are based on the number *seven*. There is the *Sabbatical Year*, and there is *the Year of Jubilee*, which is celebrated at the completion of *seven* Sabbatical Years. There are *seven* spirits before His throne, *seven* churches in the book of Revelation, and so on.¹⁹¹ *Sheva* (Hebrew, *seven*) is also connected to *oath* and *swearing* (in Hebrew, the word is *sh'vuah*). This, by itself, speaks volumes about our great Creator, who is the only One who can keep His oaths and all the good promises He swore to the forefathers!

Numbers in Scripture are Not Always Mathematically Precise!

The following are a few examples, just as a little taste:

- According to 2 Sam. 5:4, David reigned in Israel for forty years. Yet, when elaborated upon in the next verse, it says that he reigned in Judah for "*seven years and six months*," which brings his combined reign to a total of forty years and six

¹⁸⁹ Isa. 11:12, Ezek. 37:9.

¹⁹⁰ Gen. 1:27, 31; Rev. 13:18.

¹⁹¹ Gen. 2:1-3; Lev. chapters 23, 25 and 27; Deut. 15 and 31:10; Rev. 1:12-13, 4:5.

months. It is clear then that the six months were included in, or, rounded off to forty years.

- Scripture tells us that David was the last son of Jesse. In one particular verse it states that he was the seventh son, and in another, the eighth (see 1 Sam. 16:10-12, 1 Ch. 2:15). Taking into consideration the symbolic meaning of numbers in the Hebrew Scriptures, could it be that there is no mathematical contradiction but rather the writer's desire to tell us about the significance of 7 (a godly number) and 8 (new beginnings, new hope, etc.), attributing them to the very same person, King David, who is the prototype or foreshadowing of *Messiah Son of David*?
- According to Gen. 46:27 and Deut. 10:22, the total number of the children of Israel, who went down to Egypt, was *seventy*. Yet in the book of Acts, they number seventy-five (7:14).¹⁹²
- The Sabbatical (seventh) Year: Most of us know that Israel was commanded to have a *Sabbatical Year*, which was to take place *on the seventh year*. Nevertheless, a careful reading shows that in one place, it looks as if this might be the eighth year (*at the end of every seven years...* Deut. 15:1. Compare with verses 9-12).
- Gideon—exactly how many sons did he have? According to the book of Judges, he had seventy. Yet, it seems that Abimelech was not counted among them, even though he was also his son (see Judges 8:29-30 and 9:2, 5, 18, 23-24).
- How long did the famine in Elijah's time last? According to 1 Kings, it lasted for three years or even less (*in the third year* —

¹⁹² *The Septuagint* (a third century B.CE Greek translation of the Torah) also mentions *seventy-five*, probably adding Joseph's family to the seventy.

see 1 Kings 18:1); yet, according to Yeshua and His faithful apostle, it lasted *three and a half years* (see Lk. 4:25 and James 5:17).

- Mathematically, on which day was Yeshua resurrected exactly? Was it on the *third day*? Was it on the *fourth*? In most references, Yeshua says He would rise *on the third day*, while in one other place He says that He must be *three days and three nights* in the tomb, which brings us to the fourth day (see Matt. 16:21, 17:23; Mk. 9:31; Lk. 9:22; compare with Matt. 12:40).¹⁹³
- A very similar “mathematical contradiction” appears in 1 Sam. 30, about the *young man from Egypt*, who led David to the Amalekites’ camp, after they had invaded Ziklag and took all the women and children captive. It says in verse 12: *For he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights*. Nevertheless, when David speaks to him in the following verse (13), the young Egyptian tells him, *because three days ago I fell sick...* In Hebrew it literally reads, *hayom sh’loshah*—Today is three (i.e., the third day).

It should then be no wonder that the Jewish sages, at times, understood numbers (including in Daniel 9, as we shall see later) symbolically, i.e., more than just literally.

¹⁹³ I’m well aware of different attempts by different commentators (especially my Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters) to reconcile this, whether by counting only parts of the day and night (a few hours) or in other ways. All I’m trying to say is that, at times, one cannot take numbers in Scripture too literally or precisely.

The Mindset and Background Behind the Pre-Tribulation Viewpoint

Above I have shared with you my Middle Eastern Hebraic lens, or the place from where I'm particularly coming. At this point, I will present you with the Greek Western lens behind one of the most accepted views regarding the timing of the Rapture—the pre-Tribulation point of view.

Theologians who hold to the pre-Tribulation Rapture base their beliefs mainly on four principles of Bible interpretation: (1) *Consistent literal interpretation*, (2) *Premillennialism*, (3) *Futurism*, and (4) *Distinguishing between Israel and the Church*. Pre-Tribulation proponents consider the above four principles not only as mere suppositions, but rather as important biblical doctrines from which the pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine emerges! Allow me to elaborate:

1. Consistent literal Interpretation: This principle attempts to understand the Bible as plainly and naturally as possible, whether in relation to the Bible's historical context or the words' ordinary meaning, and the grammatical construction of the text. This method of Bible interpretation leans on the idea that properly understanding what God is saying is vital, and the emphasis on "literal" interpretation calls the reader not to "go beyond the facts," into the realm of elaboration or extrapolation. Language is understood to be inseparable from its contextual usage, both socially and culturally, and thus, Bible literacy requires insight into the customs, historical context and common perspectives that would morph into some form of linguistic expression.

Literal Interpretation understands that words or phrases in the Bible can be used plainly or figuratively, and that either could convey the

same concept without detracting from its meaning. Figures of speech and metaphors would be understood as a demonstration of the shared and widely familiar linguistic artifacts of the society. Biblical language, whether conveyed plainly or figuratively, still refers to events that *literally* happened.

Some interpreters assume that a figure of speech, used to describe an event, implies the event was not literal and did not happen in history. Yet, in the early 20th century, David L. Cooper came up with the “Golden Rule of Interpretation,” which is used by pastors and Bible scholars till today:

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise.”

Following this view, pre-Tribulation Rapture proponents believe that Consistent literal Interpretation of the Bible as a whole, “logically leads to the pre-Tribulation position.”

2. **Premillennialism:** Pre-Tribulationists adhere to *Premillennialism*, which teaches that the Second Coming of Messiah will happen before His thousand-year reign upon Earth, from Jerusalem (Revelation 19:11-20:6). Pre-Tribulation proponents consider Premillennialism foundational, this, in contrast to the Postmillennial or Amillennial views of Scripture.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ **Postmillennialism** — A Christian End Times doctrine that holds that there won't be a millennial (1,000-year) reign of Messiah here on Earth; that rather, Yeshua established His Kingdom here on Earth already, through his preaching and redemptive work in the first century, and that he equips his Church with the gospel, empowers the Church by the Spirit and charges the Church with the Great

3. **Futurism:** Proponents of the pre-Tribulation Rapture adhere to biblical *Futurism*, which presumes that “virtually all the prophetic events of the Bible” will only happen during the future, at the Second Coming of Messiah, or during his millennial reign—and not in the present “Church Age.” This view relies upon an expectation of a literal fulfillment of future events that prophecy promises will occur.

Interpreters’ positions on fulfillment of Bible prophecy, as it relates to time, define four possible views: Futurism as described above. Preterism, suggesting that most, if not all, prophecy has already been fulfilled, mainly in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD. 70.¹⁹⁵ Historicism, in relation to the present, sees extensive expression of the tribulations manifesting within the current Church Age, implying that prophecy is in the midst of its ultimate fulfillment during this present

Commission (Mt. 28:19) to disciple all nations. Postmillennialism expects that eventually the vast majority of people living will be saved. Increasing the success of the gospel message will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ’s return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of men and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions, Yeshua the Messiah will return visibly, bodily, and gloriously, to end history with the general resurrection and the final judgment, after which the eternal order follows.

Amillennialism — A Christian End Times doctrine that teaches that there will be no millennial reign of Messiah and His righteous ones on Earth. Amillennialists interpret the thousand years symbolically, to refer either to a temporary happiness, or rejoicing of souls in Heaven before the general resurrection, or to the infinite happiness and rejoicing of the righteous after the general resurrection. In other words: this view does not hold that Yeshua will physically reign on the Earth for exactly 1,000 years. They claim that the Millennium has already begun and is identical with the current Church Age. Amillennialism holds that while Christ’s reign during the millennium is spiritual in nature, at the end of the Church Age, Messiah will return in final judgment and establish a permanent reign in the new Heaven and new Earth.

¹⁹⁵ See more on *Preterism* and *Futurism*, in “Daniel’s 70 weeks” prophecy appendix, at the end of this chapter.

age. The fourth view, titled *Idealism*, adheres to a timelessness, that holds prophetic texts as “teaching great truths about God” with no relationship to any timeline of prophetic warnings and their effect on the decisions of Israel or others, or of prophetic promises and their ultimate fulfillment. This view does not see any explicit biblical timeline of prophetic events or allow for any preemptive understanding about future events, despite the prophets of Israel serving as important, well-trusted members of historical Israel, whose words did come to pass, according to the Bible.

4. Distinction Between Israel and the Church: Pre-Tribulationists also adhere to a final principle, which claims that God’s “program” throughout history applies to two distinct peoples - Israel and the Church. This, according to various dispensations of time (what is known as *dispensationalism*). The pre-Tribulationist view on this distinction sets God’s plan for Israel “on hold” until He completes His purposes for the Church, which culminate in His “rapturing His bride to heaven.” Pre-Tribulation proponents offer their reason for this pre-Tribulation Rapture as removing the Church from the physical realm, so that God can “complete His purposes for Israel” by way of the “Seven-Year Tribulation” period. Per this position, Israel is to stand alone while undergoing this “Great Tribulation.”

According to adherents of the pre-Tribulation Rapture, not only does God’s Word contain distinct messages for the Church and Israel (despite offering “grace” to both), but “blurring the lines” between these distinct messages “destroys an important basis for the pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine.” As noted above, this view sets Israel as the sole target for great persecution, in a time described by Yeshua as *has not been from the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be* (Matt. 24:21).

Reflections on the Pre-Tribulation View

While I understand and can accept most of the arguments in the first two principles of interpretation – Consistent *Literal Interpretation and Premillennialism*, when it comes to the third and fourth principles – *futurism* and *distinction between Israel and the Church*, my use of different lenses for attempting to understand God’s Word, emerges. For example, I can identify with both the *Historicist* and the *Futurist* positions, as reading Scripture using the “cyclical, Hebraic/Jewish lens,” shows that prophecy can have more than just one fulfillment.

The fourth and last principle – *Distinction between Israel and the Church*, illustrates the biggest theological gap between me and the pre-Tribulation Rapture theologians. Are Israel and Yeshua’s body really separate entities? To address this crucially important question, I need to take you once again to some (partially modified) excerpts from the introduction to my book, *Moses wrote about Me*.¹⁹⁶

The New Covenant Versus the Old Covenant

The first mention in Scripture of the term *New Covenant* is in Jeremiah 31:31. In Hebrew, it reads *brit chadasha* – (ברית חדשה). A covenant (*brit*) involves an act undertaken by two parties who agree on something specific. The word *brit* does not refer to the written agreement primarily, but rather to the act that seals the agreement, thus, giving it its authority.

By way of example, God’s covenant with Abraham involved *the act* of killing animals and then dividing, or cutting, their bodies into pieces.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ See, there, pages 26-49.

¹⁹⁷ See, Gen. 15:9-21.

The covenant at Mount Sinai involved *the act* of sacrificing oxen or bulls and, later, sealing the covenant with their blood.¹⁹⁸ The Hebrew verb used to describe the making of a covenant is *lichrot* (or, *Likhrot*) It speaks of *cutting*, and at that time, *entering into a covenant* almost always involved the shedding of blood.¹⁹⁹

While many of us connect the words *Old Covenant* (or Old Testament – the Tanach) with a set of 39 books, the immediate biblical context shows something quite different. When the Bible uses the term *brit* (covenant) in connection with the Mount Sinai event, it relates to the *luchot* (or *lukhoht* - tablets) on which *Aseret haDvarim* (The Ten Words, or Commandments) were written,²⁰⁰ and to *sefer haBrit* (The Book of the Covenant).²⁰¹ It never refers to the entirety of the Tanach writings!

When Yeshua talked about *the New Covenant*, He could not have been referring to the set of books to which we refer today as the *New Testament*, for the very simple reason that there were no New Testament writings arranged or canonized during His lifetime. Most of us know, all too well, to what He was referring as *the New Covenant*. It was *His blood*, which was going to be shed for many, for the remission of sin. He was speaking of the Golgotha experience that He

¹⁹⁸ See, Ex. 24:4-8.

¹⁹⁹ See Heb. 9:18, 22. The American reader may be reminded of the way Native Americans would make covenants between their different tribes and among themselves. Likewise, people from the Middle East or Africa are familiar, to this very day, with this description of a covenant.

²⁰⁰ See, Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11.

²⁰¹ A *book* (singular form), Ex. 24:7, 8. In both cases, the *tablets* and the *book* contain the description of the terms agreed upon between the two parties after (or some time before) they have *cut* and sealed, or stamped, the covenant (usually) with blood.

was going to endure. He was referring to *His body*, which was going to be *cut* and would bleed on that crucifixion tree.²⁰²

The parts of the Tanach known as *the Prophets* and *the Writings* were never referred to by biblical figures, as *a covenant* or a testament. Again—only the two Mosaic tablets and *the Book* were explicitly included in that covenant made on Mount Sinai.²⁰³

When Jeremiah delivered his famous prophecy, he never had “two sets of books” in mind (i.e., the Old and the New Testaments). He was simply differentiating between a new covenant that God was going to make with both Houses of Israel and an Old Covenant, which He had made in the past with the same body, Israel, at the foot of Mount Sinai (in Hebrew, this covenant would be called *Brit Sinai* - ברית סיני).²⁰⁴

Yeshua and the Old Covenant

Yeshua said that one should not think that He had come to *destroy* (or *abolish*) the Torah or the Prophets. He had come to fulfill them.²⁰⁵

Over the years, due to a lack of Hebraic and Jewish understanding of the terms *to fulfill* and *to destroy*, many thought that Yeshua, by *fulfilling* the Torah and the Prophets, exempted His followers from taking any responsibility in relating to or obeying them.²⁰⁶

²⁰² See, Matt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24.

²⁰³ See this concept showing the direct connection between *brit* (covenant), the two stone *tablets* and *the book*, in other Biblical references, as well: Deut. 31:9, 25-26; Josh. 3:6, 8, 11; and 1 Kings 8:1, 6, 21.

²⁰⁴ See, Jer. 31:31-34.

²⁰⁵ See, Matt. 5:17.”

²⁰⁶ The issue of how followers of Yeshua should relate to and obey the Torah is discussed in both *Moses Wrote About Me*, especially in connection to the *Lech*

The terms *to fulfill* and *to destroy* are still in use within Orthodox Jewish circles, and they continue to bear the very same meaning they had two thousand years ago. *To fulfill* means to give the correct interpretation, while *to destroy* means to give an incorrect interpretation. Let us examine this statement with just two examples:

- *You have heard that it was said to those of old... But I say to you...*²⁰⁷

By the very use of *you have heard...* and *but I tell you*, Yeshua gives the correct interpretation of God's Holy Torah and the Prophets. Yeshua, indeed, *fulfills* them.²⁰⁸

- *But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring him into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.*²⁰⁹

You likely remember the well-known story of the twelve men sent by Moses to spy out the Promised Land. Only two of the twelve had *a different spirit* in them—Joshua and Caleb. In Hebrew, the words *have followed Me fully* read *vayimaleh acharai*. *Vayimaleh* literally means *and he fulfilled*. This comes from the very same root from which the words *lemaleh* (to fulfill) and *maleh* (complete/filled up) are derived.

Indeed, there were two kinds of *interpretations* in that tragic story. On the one hand, Caleb, who had *a different spirit within him*, gave a

Lecha, Vayera, Chayey Sarah and *Miketz* Torah portions, and, in this book, as one of the appendixes closing the third chapter.

²⁰⁷ See, Matt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38.

²⁰⁸ It is very interesting to note that here too, the definition of the Greek word translated as *fulfill* (G4137, πληρώ, *plēroō*) supports the correct Hebraic or Jewish meaning, i.e., *fulfilling* as giving the correct interpretation and *destroying* as misinterpreting.

²⁰⁹ See, Num. 13–14 (especially 14:24).

correct interpretation of what he (and Joshua) saw while spying out the Promised Land. On the other hand, the other spies, who did not have the right (godly) spirit within them, gave a wrong interpretation to the very same things Caleb and Joshua had seen in the land; thus, the ten spies *abolished/destroyed* – misinterpreted – the situation!

Yeshua, exactly as Caleb and Joshua, came to provide us with the correct interpretation of His Torah and the words of His prophets. In contrast, the leaders of His day acted similarly to the ten spies, misinterpreting these things—thus, they did not and could not recognize Him as their long-awaited Messiah Redeemer.

The above explanations and examples are consistent with the context of Yeshua’s entire message regarding the Torah and the Prophets. He said:

*For assuredly, I say to you, till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever, therefore, breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*²¹⁰

First of all, heaven and Earth still exist today!

Secondly, according to Yeshua’s own words, one’s position in the Kingdom of God will be determined by how they relate to and apply the Torah and the Prophets in their life. Notice, I said one’s position in the Kingdom—*not* outside of it! In other words, salvation itself (or the key to eternal life) is purely the free gift of God; nevertheless, one’s position in eternity will be determined by how they relate to the words of God’s Holy Torah and His Prophets.

²¹⁰ Matt. 5:18-19.

The First Century Believers and the Old Covenant

As stated earlier, the first body of believers did not have an orderly and canonized set of New Testament books. What did they have? They had the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings (i.e., the *Tanach*). The first century followers of Messiah never looked down upon or neglected the first two-thirds of the Bible that we have today.

The New Covenant writings are filled with quotations from the Tanach. In fact, what we consider as being purely New Covenant teachings, beliefs, and doctrines, are all based upon, or directly quoted from the Tanach, especially from the first part which is referred to as the Torah.

Israel's Messiah, Yeshua, His disciples, and the large body of first century Jewish believers conducted their lives in obedience to the full counsel of God's Word, i.e., to what we know today as the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. Here are only a few examples:

- Yeshua visited the synagogues on the Sabbath. He never taught against the observance of the Sabbath. After all, was it not God who had commanded its observance?²¹¹
- Yeshua participated in God's Feasts (e.g., the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles) and even the Feast of Dedication (known in Hebrew as *Chanukah*, or *Hanukkah*).²¹²
- The disciples, after the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua, celebrated the Feasts and even kept their Jewish traditions (such as the traditional Jewish evening prayer at the Temple and others).²¹³

²¹¹ Matt. 12:9; Mk. 1:21, 3:1-2; Lk. 4:16.

²¹² Lk. 2:41-42, 22:7-22; Jn. 7:14, 37, 39; Jn. 10:22.

²¹³ See, Acts 2:1, 3:1, 5:42, 10:14, 10:28.

- Many in the first century Jewish body of Messiah were *zealous for the Torah*.²¹⁴
- Shaul the Apostle, himself, kept the Torah and even the Jewish traditions.²¹⁵

But Didn't God Establish 'A New Thing' Through Yeshua?

Yes, He did. But we are all in great need of knowing and understanding the Biblical definition of this “new thing” that He established. *This new thing was, and still is, in effect, **only within the commonwealth of Israel** and never outside of it.* Let me elaborate.

The *brit chadasha* (New Covenant) was never promised to or made with anyone outside the nation of Israel. God promised it to His beloved Chosen Nation and to them alone!²¹⁶

The very first body of believers was solely an Israeli/Jewish body, at least until the days of Cornelius.²¹⁷ The first body of believers never understood the teachings of their Jewish Messiah as contradicting the previous teachings and instructions given by God, including His promises to their fathers.

(As we noted in chapter one), a key question the disciples asked Yeshua – the risen Yeshua, just before He ascended to heaven before

²¹⁴ See, Acts 21:20, 22:12.

²¹⁵ See, Acts 20:16, 21:24, 21:26, 22:17, 24:14, 24:18, 25:8, 28:17; and 1 Cor. 16:8.

²¹⁶ See, Jer. 31:31 — *the House of Judah and the House of Israel*.

²¹⁷ The Acts 10 narrative happened about ten to fifteen years after the ascension of Yeshua. There were two examples of non-Jews coming to faith in Israel's Messiah before Cornelius and his household—the new non-Jewish believers in Samaria (see Acts 8:4-25) and the Ethiopian eunuch (see Acts 8:26-39).

their very eyes, demonstrates and proves the above statements. That question was, *will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?*²¹⁸

Remember, these men had literally walked and lived with the Master for about three and a half years. They had witnessed all of the miracles He had performed and were with Him for forty days after that glorious *Yom Rishon* (“The First Day,” Hebrew for Sunday, i.e., His resurrection day).

During that forty-day period, Yeshua had taught them about the Kingdom of God.²¹⁹ Did they totally miss His message concerning the “new thing” He had come to establish?

Notice that Yeshua did not rebuke them for asking what some people in the body today would consider, an immature, short-sighted question. He simply said that it was not for them to know the time that the Father *has set*. Set for what? Set for the return of His Son so that He could restore the kingdom to Israel and rule and reign from Jerusalem for a millennium.

Even today, it is not for us to know the exact time when God will restore the kingdom to Israel (or in other words, the time of Messiah’s Second Coming). Nevertheless, all believers (Jews and non-Jews alike) need to recognize that Yeshua is going to come back to a specific geographic location on planet Earth. It won’t be to America, Europe, or any location other than the Land of Israel, specifically, the City of Jerusalem. He will return to the exact place from where He ascended and returned to the Father almost two thousand years ago.²²⁰

When Yeshua came down to planet Earth the first time, indeed something new took place in Israel (both the nation and their Promised

²¹⁸ See, Acts 1:6.

²¹⁹ See, Acts 1:3.

²²⁰ See, Zech. 14:4 and Acts 1:10-12.

Land). This new thing marked a fresh era in the life of God's ancient beloved people—the nation of Israel. From that point on, Israel's relationship with God would not be solely based on Torah-keeping, nor on what I call Torah performance, (righteousness based exclusively on obeying the covenant made at Mt. Sinai). Rather, it would be based on faith and full trust in what *their* Messiah had done for *them* in His atoning death on the crucifixion tree. In other words, their righteousness would not be based on mere external performance of the Torah, but rather on faith and full trust in the work of Messiah at Golgotha. This work would enable them to follow the Torah principles and laws as a direct result of their changed hearts and, in light of their Messiah's correct interpretation (*fulfillment*) of it. After all, does the Word not say that God would inscribe His Torah on their hearts?²²¹

But Didn't Many in Israel Reject Their Own Messiah?

Yes, they did. On this occasion, as in many instances in their history, there was indeed *nothing new under the sun*.

Throughout our Jewish history, only a remnant of people has followed the Almighty. There have been a few exceptions to this general rule in Israel's past, such as during the times of the good kings (e.g., David, Hezekiah, Josiah), or when the people followed Joshua into the Promised Land. Unfortunately, even these exceptions did not last for long. Furthermore, prophecy clearly foretold that the Messiah would be rejected by His own people.²²²

This should not be a surprise. Let us remember that numbers never impress God in the same way that they impress the faithless. So, what

²²¹ See, Jer. 31:33. What exactly did God inscribe on our hearts? This question is discussed in greater detail at the very end of chapter 3, as well as in *Moses Wrote About Me: Genesis*, Appendix 1: "Shaul and the Torah," pages 427-452.

²²² See, Isa. 53 and others.

is it that really impresses the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? It has always been the men and women who belong to a small remnant who have trusted Him wholeheartedly - those who were willing to follow Him under any and all circumstances; those who walked in His footsteps, no matter what; those who considered themselves *a living sacrifice* on His holy altar as a daily life practice and those who always sought His kingdom before the things of this world. With these, God has always been impressed! This very *remnant* of people, both then and now, is an integral part of what Shaul described as *the Olive Tree* (see further discussion).²²³

Shaul (Paul) and the Nation of Israel

Shaul's epistle to the believers in Rome is one of the most important documents among all the New Covenant writings. It lays the foundation for doctrines such as *grace*, *faith* and *righteousness based on faith*. Actually, the first eight chapters of this epistle describe these doctrines in great detail, while the last chapters (12-16) deal mainly with the practical ramifications and expression of these doctrines in the lives of individuals who claim faith in Israel's Messiah.

At the very heart of this important epistle, Shaul pauses and dedicates three whole chapters (9-11) to address matters concerning Israel and her destiny. He does so in order to tackle an issue that has challenged both him and the majority of Yeshua's followers of that time. It had to do with the rejection of Messiah by many of their own flesh and blood—within the nation of Israel. At that time, many questions arose in the minds of Jewish believers, such as, "What will happen to our beloved nation now?" "What about all the promises God gave our forefathers?" But the question that bothered them the most was probably...

²²³ See, Rom. 11:16-24.

Has God Cast Away His People Israel?²²⁴

This, indeed, is the million-dollar question that many believers to this day still ask themselves. Many in the body of Messiah, especially amongst Messianic Jews, agree that in these three chapters, especially chapter 11, Shaul proves beyond any shadow of a doubt, that God did *not* reject or cast away His ancient chosen people and that indeed, one day *all Israel shall be saved*.²²⁵

However, I think that many still fail to grasp other (no less important) hidden lessons in this crucial chapter—lessons which, if understood correctly, would help settle other controversial doctrines such as “replacement theology.”

Back to Shaul. He answers his own million-dollar question in a manner that is difficult to misunderstand or misinterpret. He declares, *certainly not!*²²⁶ What made him so confident that God had truly *not* cast away His beloved, ancient people?

Shaul went on to prove his point by presenting his audience (including us today) with two examples, probably following the biblical principle, *by two or three witnesses, everything shall be established*.²²⁷

1. He, Shaul, being an Israelite himself, is proof that God had *not* cast away His ancient people,²²⁸ *and*

²²⁴ See, Rom. 11:1.

²²⁵ See, Rom. 11:26.

²²⁶ See, Rom. 11:1.

²²⁷ See, Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16.

²²⁸ See, Rom. 11:2.

2. The seven thousand individuals who did not worship Baal in Elijah's time.²²⁹

Now, what in the world is the connection between Shaul, the seven thousand in Elijah's time and the question of whether or not Israel was cast away by God? Let us use Shaul's own words:

*Even so then, at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*²³⁰

Here is the crucial point we need to grasp and hold fast to: In every given generation, there was (and still is) a remnant that *does not bow their knee to Baal!* In other words, since Israel was chosen to be God's beloved nation, there has existed in every generation *a remnant* who has walked with God and followed Him wholeheartedly, while the rest (i.e., the vast majority) have turned their backs on Him and followed other (pagan) gods. In every generation, there have been those who did not bow their knee to any kind of god or demon; there have been those who feared the Lord and called upon His name. In every generation, there have been those who let the Spirit of God lead them daily. Thus, these faithful Israelites, the remnant, were considered spiritual (Spirit-led) people. Notice that "spiritual" does not, in any way, mean that they were a kind of winged creature, flying around, praising God all day long. Spiritual simply means that they have followed the leading of God's Spirit. These Spirit-led people, the remnant, bring us back to Shaul's analogy of...

²²⁹ See, Rom. 11:2-4.

²³⁰ See, Rom. 11:5.

The Olive Tree

Who or what, according to Shaul, did *the Olive Tree* represent? Why did he use this analogy to begin with?²³¹

First, we must understand that *the Olive Tree*, as Shaul uses it in Romans 11, is not a description of every individual in Israel! When carefully looking at what the Bible describes as the Olive Tree, we can see the following:

- The Olive Tree was a descriptive name for the city of Jerusalem.²³²
- The Olive Tree and its fruit were associated with God's righteous ones.²³³
- The priests and (some of) the kings were an integral part of these righteous ones. What made them righteous? The olive anointing oil by which they were consecrated to their calling.

Based on these three assessments, among other things, we can say that *the Olive Tree* speaks of blessings, of Jerusalem—the city God chose to place His name upon, of God's anointing and of His righteous people. These terms can easily be associated with the remnant we discussed previously, a remnant which has existed in every generation within the nation of Israel.

²³¹ See, Rom. 11:13-26. For a detailed description of an olive tree and its unique characteristics, please read *Moses Wrote About Me: Genesis*, pages 38-42.

²³² See, Jer. 11:16; notice the context, especially verses 6, 9, 12-13, 15 and 17.

²³³ See, Ps. 52:8, 128:3-4; Zech. 4:3, 11-14. The Olive Tree symbolized those who were righteous in God's eyes.

***They Are Not All Israel Who Are of Israel*²³⁴**

It is well-known that ever since Israel was called by God to be His chosen one among the nations, *not* every individual Israelite has followed that holy calling. Not every Israelite has obeyed His voice and His commandments. Not every individual within the nation of Israel has allowed God's Spirit to lead him or her on a daily basis.

Yes, every person who is born into the nation of Israel (to Jewish parents) is indeed an Israelite. Nevertheless, there are two kinds of Israelites: those who are “according to the natural” alone (bloodline Israelites), and those who are according to *both* “the natural” (bloodline Israelites) and “the spirit” (i.e., “Spirit-led”—true followers of God's Spirit). It is always the *remnant* that is defined as being both natural and Spirit-led Israel!

The Remnant Always Functions Within the Larger Body

Now to a very important historical and biblical fact. The faithful ones of Israel (those who are Spirit-led, as well as being Israelites through their bloodline) have always functioned *within* the larger body, i.e., the whole nation of Israel. For example, these faithful ones (the *remnant* or *the Olive Tree*) have lived in the Promised Land, worked the land, and lived their lives among, and as an integral part of, the rest of the nation of Israel. Yes, both the Spirit-led Israelites and the natural Israelites have walked side by side in the same Promised Land, such that there has hardly been any external difference between them (as far as clothing, culture, language, etc., are concerned).

Here are three examples from the history of Israel for these *two kinds of Israelites*:

1. When the children of Israel left Egypt, they comprised (mainly) twelve distinct tribes; nevertheless, they functioned as, and were

²³⁴ See, Rom. 9:6.

considered, one body. When they arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, the majority started worshipping a golden calf, while waiting for Moses to return. Only a small remnant followed Moses' call to follow the One true God and execute His judgment on the unfaithful ones. This small remnant was from the tribe of Levi.²³⁵

What the Bible clearly describes is that the tribe of Levi (and those who joined it) were led by, and obedient to God's Holy Spirit, while the others acted upon the desires of their nature/flesh and were thus, considered only natural Israelites (or *Israel according to the flesh*).²³⁶

Were these Spirit-led people (the Levites) completely separated from the rest of Israel that day? No! They still traveled and did everything together with the other children of Israel. They lived and functioned side by side with the rest of Israel; nevertheless, they were indeed the *Israel of God*.²³⁷

2. When Moses sent twelve men (each representing a specific tribe) to spy out the Promised Land, they went as representatives of one body - the nation of Israel. Even so, only two of them, Joshua and Caleb, walked *by faith and not by sight*, based on trust in what God was more than able to do with the fearsome giants they had seen with their natural eyes.²³⁸ The other ten spies presented their conclusions based on what their natural eyes alone had viewed.

So, once again we can see that there are some who *walk in the Spirit* (choosing to follow the leading of God's Spirit), while others *walk in the flesh* (choosing to follow what their natural eyes see). However,

²³⁵ See, Ex. 32:1-6, 26-28.

²³⁶ Actually, because of this, only the tribe of Levi was allowed in God's presence (see Num. 1:47-51, 3:5-12).

²³⁷ Review Rom. 9:6 and Gal. 6:16.

²³⁸ In accordance with His promises (see Num. 13:28-33, 14:1-10, 14:20-24).

they are still with one another, walking side by side within the single body called the nation of Israel.

3. Going back to Elijah's time, have you ever noticed that he was not aware of the existence of the other *seven thousand* faithful who lived during his time? He thought he was the only devoted Israelite left. That *remnant* of seven thousand had been there all that time, living side by side with him as well as the rest of Israel, but they had no special outward look or distinguishing robes or religious title to identify themselves. They were mixed in and living side by side with everyone else. Elijah and the seven thousand were that *remnant* who followed God's Spirit and thus were indeed the *Israel of God*.

To conclude, *the Olive Tree* referred specifically to the Spirit-led Israeli *remnant*. Understanding this crucially important point will help us better understand Shaul's very important statements in Romans 11:

- *And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree...*
- *You will say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not arrogant, but fear...*
- *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own Olive Tree?²³⁹*

²³⁹ See, Rom. 11:17, 19-20, 23-24.

We see again that *the Olive Tree*, in Romans 11, does not refer to the entire nation of Israel nor to each and every individual in Israel. It does not speak of Israelites who walk according to the flesh and are thus the broken branches. It speaks only of the righteous amongst Israel – *the remnant* – who follow the leading of His Spirit.

Biblical terms, such as *the Olive Tree*, *the seven thousand*, *the remnant according to election*, *the Israel of God*, and *Messianic Jews* (Jews who believe in and accept their Messiah and thus, follow the leading of His Spirit) are all synonymous terms describing Messiah's bride. This beloved bride is the one who is chosen, the elect, or *called out* by Him in every generation as the faithful remnant who abides in Him.

God has not cast His people away, *certainly not! The Olive Tree is indeed Israel*. Nevertheless, it refers to Spirit-led Israel. It speaks of the *Israel of God*, meaning those faithful ones who are connected to the roots of the Olive Tree.²⁴⁰

In Shaul's time, *the Olive Tree* described those Israelites who acknowledged Yeshua as their Messiah and followed Him wholeheartedly. At that time, they were called *yehudim notzrim* (a Hebrew term which means Jews who follow the man from Nazareth). Today, *notzri* refers to anyone who is neither a Jew nor a Muslim and who claims to belong to the Christian faith (a term which has become synonymous with the religion called "Christianity," and thus has lost, in my opinion, its first century Jewish flavor).

²⁴⁰ In my opinion, the roots of the Olive Tree are God, His Word, and the faithful forefathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I'm aware that there are those who see the Olive Tree as Yeshua, Himself. I have no problem with that, as long as we also know that one cannot separate Yeshua from His people Israel. The best way to understand this statement is by carefully reading Isa. 49:1-6, where the parallel between Israel (God's *servant*) and her Messiah (also called God's *Servant*) is clearly portrayed.

Again, please note that the first century Spirit-led Israelites (today's Spirit-led Messianic Jews) were still living among their beloved people—the nation of Israel. *They did not see themselves as 'a separate entity' nor as a new nation or religious system! Those first century Messianic Jews were part and parcel of the nation of Israel, exactly as it was in the days of Moses, the twelve spies and Elijah.*

Israel according to the flesh (i.e., those Israelites who did not accept Yeshua as their Messiah), was indeed *put aside* (or *broken off*) from their own Olive Tree due to their unbelief, but only temporarily.²⁴¹

Until the glorious return of Messiah, the King of the Jews (referred to as His Second Coming), God's calling and promises concerning Israel are unchangeable. Indeed, *all Israel shall be saved*.²⁴² And until then, both natural and Spirit-led Israelites must live side by side within one single framework called Israel, exactly according to the Biblical pattern described above.

One of the most terrible mistakes made by those who hold to any of the various types of replacement theology, is their claim that they are now the new Israel, while the old (or natural) Israel is no longer of any interest to God.²⁴³

How is it that believers arrive at such wrong conclusions regarding Israel? They completely misunderstand Shaul's analogy of *the Olive Tree* in Romans 11. They miss the clear Biblical pattern, according to

²⁴¹ See, Rom. 11:15, 17, 19, 21, 23

²⁴² See, Rom. 11:26, 29

²⁴³ Notice, that the term "Spiritual Israel" is not found anywhere in Scripture. Nevertheless, while considering related Scriptures, one is able to see that within the Nation of Israel, there are and there always were both "Spirit-led Israelites" and "Israelites according to the flesh." My understanding of this concept of "Spirit-led Israelites" has nothing to do with anything or anyone that adheres to replacement theology!

which individual descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob always have and always will function (living side by side) within a single body called Israel—whether or not they walk in the Spirit! They completely miss the vital connection between *the seven thousand*, *Shaul* (an Israelite, himself) and *the Olive Tree*, which is the *remnant called out* by God in every generation, a *remnant* that has existed always within the larger body called Israel.

In light of what has been covered thus far, we can better understand Shaul's grief concerning his non-believing fellow Israelites.²⁴⁴ Actually, every follower of Yeshua should have this same kind of love and compassion for *Israel in the flesh* (non-believing Jews). Why? Simply because we are connected. Israel is the framework in and through which we (*the Olive Tree, the remnant*) are functioning. How can we hate our own framework (or home) or our own people?

Up until now, we have spoken of *the Olive Tree* as describing the Spirit-led remnant within the nation of Israel. “But what about gentile followers of Messiah?” one might ask. The following paragraphs will cover this very important gentile issue.

First The Fullness of the Gentiles and Only Then All Israel Shall be Saved

Is the concept of gentiles being grafted into *the Olive Tree* (the believing, Spirit-led Israelite remnant) only a New Covenant concept? Not at all!

A brief look at the biblical history of the nation of Israel shows beyond a shadow of a doubt, that since the nation of Israel was established by the Almighty, there have always been individuals from other nations,

²⁴⁴ See, Rom. 9:1-2.

who were welcomed into His chosen sheepfold. Here are a few examples:

- Joseph married a gentile woman in Egypt, one of whose children was later fully adopted by his father Jacob (also called *Israel*).²⁴⁵
- Jethro gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage, despite their ethnic and religious differences. They married and had two sons, Gershom, and Eliezer.²⁴⁶
- Rahab the harlot, together with her household, joined Israel after hiding the two spies sent by Joshua.²⁴⁷
- Boaz bought the estate from Naomi and married Ruth, the Moabitess. Ruth and Boaz became the parents of Obed, who became the father of Jesse, the father of David.²⁴⁸

It is very interesting to note that the apostle Shaul, while referring to the gentiles who are grafted into *the Olive Tree*, quotes directly from a well-known prophecy given by Jacob (Israel) to his grandsons—Joseph's two sons.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ See, Gen. 41:45, 50-52; 48:1-20.

²⁴⁶ See, Ex. 2:21-22

²⁴⁷ See, Josh. 2:1-22, 6:22-25.

²⁴⁸ The Book of Ruth. Both Rahab and Ruth are an integral part of Yeshua's genealogy (Mt. 1:5).

²⁴⁹ See, Rom. 11:25; Gen. 48:8-20. Look especially at verse 19 — "*his (Ephraim's) seeds shall become the fullness of the Gentiles.*"

Could it be that some of the gentiles who have been grafted into the Olive Tree since Yeshua's First Coming, have a biblical (and historical) connection to one or both of Joseph's sons?²⁵⁰

Meanwhile, as I understand it, until *all Israel shall be saved* actually takes place at Messiah's Second Coming, *the fullness of the gentiles* will continue to be in effect, since gentiles are still being invited to come into *the Olive Tree of Israel*. Once the last gentile has entered, the door for them will be closed and it will open wide to the Jews to come (back) in, and become a part of their own original tree.²⁵¹ As long as the majority of Israel has not accepted their Messiah (and, thus, are still put aside, cut off or broken off from their own Olive Tree), gentiles who accept the Good News are still being grafted into the olive tree of Israel.

These gentile followers of the Jewish Messiah can actually enjoy everything with which the nation of Israel was blessed and promised by God. They become equal and "first -class citizens" with Messianic Jews in their Olive Tree, exactly as Joseph's wife and children, Moses' wife and children, Rahab, Ruth, and others.

Conclusions Thus Far

The New Covenant was made (formed/*cut*) between God and the two houses, or kingdoms of Israel (the two houses/kingdoms formed at the split of the Kingdom of Israel, following King Solomon's reign). No

²⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion on Jacob's blessings over the sons of Joseph and the historical ramifications of these blessings, read *Moses Wrote About Me: Genesis*, pages 397-417 and 453-460.

²⁵¹ See, Rom. 11:11-12, 15-16, 25-26.

other nation (or individual) is mentioned! As we all know, God does not change; especially with regard to His promises!²⁵²

Gentile believers have been grafted into *the Olive Tree of Israel* – as individuals or families (*you and your household...*) – not as a different entity or nation! Gentiles are called into the *commonwealth of Israel!*²⁵³

Returning to the question I posed regarding the pre-Tribulation worldview; I would like to ask again: **Are the church and Israel separate entities?** Nowhere in Scripture do I see that God marries *two wives*! Nowhere in God's Holy Word do I see that He deals separately with two *bodies*.²⁵⁴ It is true that He never forgot His promises to the nation of Israel and that, since Yeshua's First Coming, He has shown His great mercies to both *Spirit-led Israelites* (Jews and gentiles alike, as one body – Messiah's body – *the Olive Tree*) and to *natural Israelites* (non-believing Jews). Yet, Spirit-led Israelites must follow the first century *Olive Tree* example, seeing and considering themselves as being strongly connected to *Natural Israel*! The fact that the church, throughout history, diverged far away from her Jewish roots does not at all change the biblical truths concerning who she really is - A mixed body of both Jews and gentiles inside an *Israelite Olive Tree* and within the framework of *the Commonwealth of ISRAEL!*

²⁵² See Lev. 26:44-46; 1 Sam. 12:22; Jer. 31:35-40, 33:19-26; Ps. 94:14; Rom. 11:28-32.

²⁵³ See, Eph. 2:11-17.

²⁵⁴ I'm very aware of His dealing with the two houses of Israel – *the house of Judah and the house of Israel/Ephraim* – and even giving them different names (see, for example, Ezek. 23). Yet, they are always within what is desired by God to be one, united body called ISRAEL (see Ezek. 37:15-23; see also Jn. 10:16).

The Good News and the Cyclical Hebraic Mindset

Not only did God make a New Covenant exclusively with His Chosen Nation, Israel, but this New Covenant is directly connected with, and based upon, clear patterns that were established mainly in the Torah, which was given to Israel as well. The message of the good news (usually referred to as *the Gospel*), as presented in the New Covenant writings, is not “a new doctrine” but rather, strongly based on the Old Covenant writings. Allow me to elaborate.

Our Fathers Under Moses and the Good News Message

The clearest pattern upon which the story of our salvation is based, is described in the exodus of Israel out of Egypt. These are Shaul’s own words:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; all were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Messiah. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell. Nor let us tempt Messiah, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents. Nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them as examples: and they were written

*for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*²⁵⁵

The epistle to the Hebrews says something similar:

*Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed **the good news was preached to us as well as to them**; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it... For if Joshua had given them rest, then he would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered his rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His!*²⁵⁶

From the above scriptures, we can clearly see how Shaul the Apostle (taking into consideration that he also wrote the book of Hebrews) makes a direct connection between the story of the great exodus of *our fathers* and our own personal story of salvation through Yeshua's atoning blood. Notice that he does not say "my fathers" as he clearly understands that gentiles, once having been grafted into the *Olive Tree* of the nation of Israel, even enjoy the Israelite heritage, i.e., being connected to the fathers of Israel during the time of Moses! Here are a few examples to further clarify this crucially important point:

- Our fathers were under Pharaoh's heavy bondage. Thus, Moses introduced them to the lamb of Passover as the only way out into freedom from their misery. The exact same thing happened for us—true followers of Israel's Messiah Redeemer: Once, we, too, were in "Egypt" (representing the world we live in) until someone introduced us to the lamb of

²⁵⁵ See, 1 Cor. 10:1-12. See also Jude 5.

²⁵⁶ See, Heb. 4:1-2, 8-10.

Passover, who is the Lamb of God – Yeshua, the only way into freedom out of Satan’s grip of bondage!

- Our fathers were all *immersed into Moses and into the Cloud*. The exact same thing happened to us—true followers of Messiah: we were immersed into Yeshua in water. Our fathers received the Torah at Mount Sinai in the third month (during the Feast of Shavuot, i.e., Pentecost). We, the true followers of Yeshua, also received God’s Holy Spirit at Shavuot.²⁵⁷
- Our fathers walked through the wilderness to the Promised Land. We, likewise, are walking through the wilderness of this world (sin, temptation, etc.) to our Promised Land.

And lastly,

- Only the new generation of our fathers finally crossed over the Jordan River to the other side, to God’s Promised Land, under the leadership of Joshua the son of Nun. In the future, we, the true followers of Israel’s Messiah, will also *cross the Jordan River as a new creation*, and enter our Promised Land!

So, we can see that everything taught in the New Covenant writings, concerning salvation through Israel’s Messiah, is based on *the Tanach* and, in that sense, indeed *there is nothing new under the sun!*

Moreover, we can clearly see that *salvation is a process* and *not* a one-time event. The “wilderness walk” is inevitable and an integral stage that all true followers of Messiah Yeshua should and will go through.

²⁵⁷ See Acts 2.

Only *the one who endures to the end* (i.e., crossing over the Jordan River) *will be saved!*²⁵⁸

In summarizing, we can see that there are actually three main stages to the story of our salvation through Messiah's atoning blood:

- a. The application of the blood of the Passover lamb and the crossing of the Red Sea (immersion into Moses and the cloud).
- b. The wilderness walk (to shape and mold us as *a new creation*, or, as some rightfully say, "to take Egypt out of us").

And lastly,

- c. The crossing of the Jordan River into our Promised Land.

The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Good News Message

The following is yet another pattern upon which the good news of our great salvation, portrayed in the New Covenant writings, is based.

Already from the very beginning, God greatly desired to dwell within us human beings to have intimate fellowship with us - the only ones He had created in His own image and likeness! Once He gave His Holy Torah to His Chosen Nation, the next thing He instructed Moses was:

*And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them!*²⁵⁹ (emphasis added).

²⁵⁸ See Matt. 24:13. Once we successfully have "crossed the wilderness," the very last stage every one of us must experience (following the example of our fathers) will be the crossing of the Jordan River into our "Promised Land"—this will be either by death or by transformation in the twinkling of an eye (see 1 Cor. 15:50-57).

²⁵⁹ See Ex. 25:8.

Above, we saw that the gospel of salvation through Messiah's precious atoning blood, has three primary stages. All these stages can also be seen in what composed the three parts of the Tabernacle, and later the first and second Temples in Jerusalem:

a. The Outer Court: Here were the Brazen Altar and the Laver. This court represented the first of the three stages of salvation, which we all need to go through in order to *endure to the end*—to make it to our Promised Land - God's Kingdom. There is the need to first apply the blood of the Passover lamb (represented by a pure sacrifice on the Bronze Altar) and to go through the Red Sea (via water immersion, represented by the Laver). The Laver also can be seen to represent the screen separating the outer court and the next (second) section of the Tabernacle.

b. The Holy Place: Here were the Menorah, the Table of Show Bread, and the Altar of Incense. This Holy Place, with its three furnishings, represents the second stage of salvation – the Wilderness Walk – where our Lord and Savior sustains us with His own body/bread (represented by the Table of Showbread) and shines His Light (represented by the Menorah and reminding us of the pillar of fire in the wilderness), to direct us through our lifelong journey. Lastly, He leads us (as did the pillar of cloud) by way of the spiritual intercession that He offers on our behalf (represented by the Altar of Incense). Notice, that everything used in this second section of the Tabernacle has been crushed, pressed, and carefully purified (the olive oil that is used to light the Menorah, the grain used to make the Showbread loaves and lastly, the ingredients used for the Incense). Thus, this part of the Tabernacle also represents the crushing, shaping and molding processes we all need to pass through to “take Egypt out of us,” and “die to self,” so that the *new creation* can come out pure and ready for the next and final stage.

c. The Holy of Holies: In this last part of the Tabernacle, there was only one piece of furniture - The Ark of the Covenant. Only once a year could the High Priest of Israel come into this room, and that was on the Day of Atonement. This he could only do after having first atoned for himself and his family! He would then pass through a veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This last veil can very well be a picture or representation of the Jordan River that separates between the wilderness (Holy Place) and the Promised Land (Holy of Holies). The New Covenant writings describe Yeshua as our High Priest in the Heavenly Tabernacle/Temple and His flesh/body as that very *veil*!²⁶⁰ This last room represents the third and last stage in the process of our salvation—the entrance into our Promised Land, entering God's very presence (the Ark of the Covenant)—His heavenly throne room.

So far, we have discussed and established the following crucially important points: (1) there is a strong connection between the first century body of Yeshua (comprising *Spirit-led Israelites* and *grafted-in gentiles in the Olive Tree of Israel*) and the (natural, non-believing) nation of Israel; and (2) the story of our salvation through Israel's Messiah is based on and patterned after two main witnesses in the Biblical history of Israel: (a) the exodus out of Egypt, all the way to the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land, and (b) the three parts, or sections of the Tabernacle—the Outer Court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

Now, after establishing the general Biblical context, or *the bigger picture*, we will go back to the main issue discussed in this chapter - the Rapture and its timing.

²⁶⁰ See Heb. 2:17, 4:14, 5:1-10, 6:20, 8:9, 10:20-21. See also Lev. 16.

Israel and the Rapture

If Yeshua's body is strongly connected to Israel, God's ancient Chosen Nation, and if the good news message - the story of our own salvation through Israel's Messiah, has a strong connection both to the three stages that relate to the exodus out of Egypt and the three parts of the Tabernacle, then it would only be natural to continue this discussion by addressing the most important question: **Can we see any foreshadowing or any prototype of a 'Rapture' in the history of Israel as a nation; and more specifically, can we see a 'Rapture' in the two main patterns we have discussed above** (the exodus of our fathers and the Tabernacle)?

At the very beginning of this chapter, I dealt with both the literal and conceptual meanings of *Rapture* in Scripture. I said that it is not at all new. I demonstrated that there are multiple meanings for the concept of Rapture. As a short reminder, in God's holy word the concept of Rapture primarily refers to an individual, a group of people or even an entire nation being removed, or taken, from one place/situation/condition into another—a new one. This can be done by different means: separation, death, healing, resurrection, and transformation, such as into a glorified body in a twinkling of an eye.

I would like to suggest that when carefully looking at the history of the nation of Israel (*our fathers*), we can find one particularly clear example of "a Rapture." This Rapture has what I like to call a three-fold fulfillment.

The First Rapture is Physical

As discussed above, all *our fathers* were in Egypt (a picture of the world in which we are living). All were under the heavy yoke of

Pharaoh (a picture of Satan). As the yoke became more and more of a burden, they cried out to the Lord to save them from Pharaoh's strong grip. And so, God sent Moses and Aaron to save them and take them out of Egypt.

As an integral part of the process of taking them out of Egypt, God exercised certain severe judgments over Pharaoh, his people, their false gods, and his land. It is my understanding that these judgments (namely, *the ten plagues*), exercised over Egypt prior to the great exodus, are a picture, or a foreshadowing, of the severe judgments which God is going to inflict upon Satan and the different gods of this world (Egypt) just prior to Yeshua's glorious return.

There are two questions we should address at this juncture: (1) Did God take His Chosen Nation out of the land of Egypt at any point before inflicting His holy and just judgments upon Egypt? Did He take them out *seven years* before He afflicted the Egyptians with the ten plagues? Did He take them out *three and a half years* before? Not at all! (2) Did God's Chosen Nation suffer under these severe judgments? Again, not at all! A careful reading of Scripture shows that the Israelites were provided with a specific location - the land of *Goshen*, which was separated from the rest of the Egyptians but, nonetheless, was still within the boundaries of Egypt!²⁶¹

It is time to elaborate on the very last plague that God inflicted on Egypt—the death of every first born. As far as Pharaoh was concerned

²⁶¹ It is very interesting to note how Ps. 78:49 describes God's Severe Judgments upon Egypt prior to the Exodus of our fathers as *the fierceness of His anger*, wrath (in Hebrew, *charon* — חרון), *indignation and trouble* (from "Tribulation" — in Hebrew, *tz'arah* — צרה) and *a great trouble* (which can also be translated as *great Tribulation* (in Hebrew, *tz'arah g'dola* — צרה גדולה). See this same description as it relates to the great famine in Egypt in the days of Joseph, who is a clear picture of Yeshua, in both His First and Second comings (Acts 7:11).

(once again, Pharaoh as foreshadowing Satan), the tenth and last plague was the straw that broke the camel's back. Once it had taken place, Pharaoh could no longer keep God's Chosen Nation under his strong grip, and he almost immediately let them out of his land.

Two crucially important things are worth noting: (1) It was the blood of the Passover lamb that protected God's elect while still in Goshen, and (2) it was at midnight when the great outcry in Egypt was heard, granting freedom to our fathers!²⁶²

So, when exactly were our forefathers Raptured — removed from, or *taken out of Egypt*? It was at the very end— the very last minute (after the last plague). And it was *at midnight*! Were our fathers afflicted with God's severe judgments? Scripture is pretty clear that at least from the fourth plague onward, they were not affected at all, nor were they affected by the final two.²⁶³

The Second Rapture is Spiritual

The above description of our fathers' Rapture in the physical realm, also took place in each of our lives in the spiritual realm. Allow me to elaborate.

Every born-again, or true follower of Israel's Messiah, has had to pass through their own exodus out of Egypt or *Passover experience*. Each one of us who is now an integral member of Israel's *Olive Tree*, was once a slave in Egypt. Each one of us was in heavy bondage inflicted by Pharaoh (i.e., under sin and under the god of this world). Each one

²⁶² See Ex. 12, especially verses 29-32, and compare with Yeshua's own words concerning His glorious return to His beloved in Matt. 25:6 — And at midnight a cry was heard...

²⁶³ See Ex. 7:21; 8:6, 17, 22; 9:4-6, 25-26; and 10:22-23.

of us, once in our lives, heard the good news message of Messiah from someone, just as the Israelites heard it from Moses and Aaron. Each one of us heard about the urgent need for the blood of the consummate Passover Lamb – God's Lamb – Yeshua. Each one of us chose to apply this precious blood to the *doorposts and lintels* of our hearts and minds! Thus, each one of us has been delivered, or Raptured out of Egypt, in the spiritual realm!

Now, as it was with *our fathers* under Moses in the physical realm, so it was with our own spiritual *Passover experiences*. It did not take place years (*seven, three and a half*, etc.) before we were completely at the end of our human resources—broken and humbled before God, acknowledging that we could not do anything about our very lowly condition (as slaves to Pharaoh, sin etc.). Yes, as it was with *our fathers*, our spiritual Rapture out of Egypt did not take place at any time before we were at our very end, the end of all our natural resources as well as the end of the many gods we had served that were now consumed, finished, and judged by the Almighty. Only then, at the very end God miraculously intervened and saved us! He has spiritually Raptured (*taken*) us out of this darkened world (Egypt) and into *the Kingdom of His beloved Son* and made us *sit together in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua*.²⁶⁴ As with our fathers, it was only *at midnight* – the darkest hour of our lives, at the very last minute that we asked Yeshua to take full control of our lives. And He graciously did!

Can we also apply the above two fulfillments to the next, third and last fulfillment of all? I think we can!

²⁶⁴ See Eph. 2:6 and, Col. 1:13.

The Third Rapture is Both Spiritual and Physical

Based on the pattern established above, it is my understanding that the third and last Rapture will take place at the very end of what I described above as our salvation process (or journey).

Above, we saw that as followers of Yeshua, we cannot and should not be separated from non-believing Israel! As the first century body of Spirit-led Israelites walked side by side with the rest of their brethren (natural/ non-believing Israel), today's Spirit-led Israelites must return to the realization of their Jewish roots and once again consider themselves as an integral part of *the Commonwealth of Israel*.²⁶⁵

Both non-believing Israel and Yeshua's body – *the Olive Tree*, have one destiny—to be an integral part of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel!²⁶⁶ Both non-believing Israel and Yeshua's body need to arrive at the Jordan River, and cross it safely under the leadership of *Joshua* (a picture/ foreshadowing of *Yeshua*)! Both non-believing Israel and Yeshua's body must get to *the plains of Moab*, which are on the east bank of the Jordan River - opposite Jericho - which is the lowest place on Earth!²⁶⁷ Both are going to be protected by the Almighty until that glorious moment (Yeshua's Second Coming)!

When Will This Third and Final Rapture Take Place?

The apostle Shaul declared that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*!²⁶⁸ Upon what was he basing his words? As a Jewish rabbi, there is no doubt it was on God's Holy Word! Yes, this Holy

²⁶⁵ See Eph. 2:11-13.

²⁶⁶ See Acts 1:6-7.

²⁶⁷ See Num. 22:1; Deut. 32:49, 34:8; Josh. 1–2.

²⁶⁸ 1 Cor. 15:50.

Word portrays patterns, foreshadowing and prototypes. The character of this Holy Word is *cyclical* rather than linear, and thus, it contains many narratives with multiple fulfillments, multiple repetitions, and multiple progressive revelations.

Note that it was only the *new generation* who crossed the Jordan River and entered God's Promised Land! It was not a group of old slaves with their slave mentality who entered the Promised Land. It was their children—being a foreshadowing, a picture, a pattern of the *new creation, the Israel of God!*

As flesh and blood cannot inherit God's Kingdom, there is a need for a change to take place just prior to the crossing of the Jordan River: a supernatural change only God can undertake Himself. Those who have already died will be raised with completely different, glorified bodies; and the ones still alive in this present body of flesh will be changed as *in the twinkling of an eye*, and, therefore, Raptured (removed or *taken*) to meet Yeshua in the sky. This third Rapture will occur *both* in the physical (with a changed body, a *glorified* one) and in the spiritual (with the new creation, newly generated spirit)!²⁶⁹ Indeed, *there is nothing new under the sun!*

Based on all of the above, the final/third Rapture will follow the exact same pattern set by the first two, i.e., occurring at the very end! If we speak about the pattern set in Egypt, it will take place at the end of the severe judgments of God on this world. If we speak about our own personal Passover experiences, it takes place at the very end of our fleshly resources —after all has been used up and we give up on our ability to save ourselves from Egypt, or from our enslavement to this world and all its sinful ways.

²⁶⁹ See 1 Cor. 15:35-58.

Following the pattern of the twofold fulfillment described above, God knows all too well how to protect His beloved chosen ones here on this Earth, while at the same time inflicting His severe judgments upon those who reject His rulership over their lives. God knows where the different lands of *Goshen* are in this present world!²⁷⁰

The Rapture cannot be artificially and un-Biblically detached from the history of the nation to which we are so strongly connected - Israel! In the same way that salvation is not a one-time “altar call” or “sinner’s prayer,” but rather a process we all need to endure and stick out to the very end. We cannot expect any kind of shortcuts, hoping to avoid, or be exempt from one of the three main phases of this salvation process!²⁷¹

Furthermore, the patterns, the foreshadowing and prototypes upon which our story of salvation is built – i.e., the three stages/phases above - involve walking through difficulties, persecutions and tribulations, all of which are under God’s full control as He protects us

²⁷⁰ See how He protects His chosen ones during hardships and different “tribulations” in other Biblical references, such as 1 Kings 18:4 and 13. See Yeshua’s famous prayers on behalf of His chosen disciples (but not only them) in Jn. 17:15. See also Rev. 12:6.

²⁷¹ See Ex. 12; Num. 14 and 26:65; and Josh. 3–4. The three stages of the salvation story took place at the end of all human resources: (a) The applying of the Passover lamb’s blood and the crossing of the Red Sea came at the very end of the people’s human resources, i.e., at the very end of the final plague, and at the very end of their own resources standing before the Red Sea. (b) There were no shortcuts in the wilderness walk for the Israelites (and for us as well). The Israelites needed to walk all of the forty years, not any fewer—due to the sin of the spies, needless to say. And lastly: (c) Crossing the Jordan River involved God’s miraculous intervention, as the Israelites could not do it by themselves or in their own (very limited) power!

and never tries us beyond our abilities!²⁷² No wonder Yeshua, Shaul and the other apostles always encouraged true followers of Yeshua to hang on until the very end and to be encouraged and joyful, despite tribulations.²⁷³

²⁷² See 1 Cor. 10:13. See also Matt. 6:13.

²⁷³ See Matt. 24:9; Jn. 16:3; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3, 8:35, 12:12; 2 Cor. 6:4; Heb. 10:33.

Noah, Lot, and the Rapture

Concerning the Rapture taking place at the very end, it is quite interesting that, when speaking of His Second Coming, Yeshua used only two biblical examples as patterns: Noah and Lot!

A careful reading of Scripture shows, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that both Noah (together with his family) and Lot (along with his wife and two daughters) were Raptured (removed or *taken*) out of their situation or condition (God's severe judgment upon all their surroundings) at the very end, only moments before He inflicted His judgments upon the sinful world during their times. God did not take them out of the trouble any time prior to that!²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ See Gen. 6–7, especially 7:7, 11, 13 and 16! See Gen. 19:12-25, especially 19:16-17!

A Summary

Before I endeavor to answer some of the main claims of the pre-Tribulation view, I would like to give you a short summary of what has been discussed so far.

No doubt, the issue of the Rapture and more specifically, its timing, is one of the most controversial issues in Yeshua's present-day body. By now, I'm sure you have noticed that I have not dealt with the historical origins of the Pre-Tribulation doctrine at all. This subject is very much debated by different End-Time prophecy Bible teachers. All I would say about it is that whether the point of origin was J. N. Darby (at the beginning of the 19th Century CE), whose understanding of the Rapture was influenced by the vision of a 15-year-old girl, Margaret McDonald, or a specific 19th century believing group with which he was affiliated, or whether the origins go back to somewhere in the 4th or 5th century CE, my personal conviction is that this argument is futile, as it does not address this issue through its original first century lens!²⁷⁵ In other words, I have chosen to present the reader with what I call "the missing link," which in my understanding has been neglected

²⁷⁵ For good articles regarding what I describe as "a futile debate" within Christianity, you can find studies of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture at Liberty University's Digital Commons-
<https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/do/search/?q=pre-trib&start=0&context=234296&facet=>; read a thesis by David Hebert, Oral Roberts University, on "The Rapture of the Church" —
[http://web.oru.edu/current_students/class_pages/grtheo/mmankins/DrHebert/M.A.%20Thesis/MA\(Th\)%20Thesis.CH-1a%20The%20Problem.pdf](http://web.oru.edu/current_students/class_pages/grtheo/mmankins/DrHebert/M.A.%20Thesis/MA(Th)%20Thesis.CH-1a%20The%20Problem.pdf); or read "The Rapture Question" by Alan S. Bandy, The Gospel Coalition —
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-Rapture-question/> — among many others.

by most End-Time prophecy teachers - i.e., to look at this specific subject through the Hebraic/Jewish Middle Eastern Lens!

I began by laying some foundational stones, such as the scriptural concept of *Rapture*. I stated that even though the specific term “Rapture” is not shown in the Greek manuscript of the New Covenant writings, it remains a scriptural concept, nonetheless.

I discussed what I call the Middle Eastern Hebraic mindset behind Scripture—for example, its cyclical characteristic (versus the Western Greek linear one) and the Middle Eastern Hebraic understanding of numbers.

I moved from there and presented the mindset and background behind the pre-Tribulation view. I expanded upon a few of the described foundational principles of this view, especially concerning the difference between Israel and Yeshua’s body. I explained my understanding of *the Olive Tree* and its strong, undivided connection to the nation of Israel.

I shared my understanding of the patterns upon which the story of our salvation (or, more correctly, the process or stages/phases of our salvation) is based, including the exodus out of Egypt and the three parts of the Tabernacle and temples in Jerusalem. I connected these patterns to what I consider as the only possible timing of the Rapture.

According to the patterns set before us in God’s Holy Word, God is going to gather us unto Himself at the very end, while simultaneously protecting us here on Earth while He inflicts His severe judgments upon this sinful world!²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ This points to Rev. 6:10, where, as an integral part of God’s protection, He orders his angels to *seal the servants of our God on their foreheads*... I know there will be some who will point me to the immediate context, which is the sealing of

Moreover: The biblical pattern clearly points out that the believer should *endure to the end*, and not to “seven” or “three and half years” before the end!²⁷⁷

the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. Yet, according to the broader context of the Book of Revelation, everything has to do with Israel (see the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem, who are none else than *the bride—the wife of the Lamb!* See 21:9-14). Again, I suggest going back and reading about the strong and undivided connection of *the Israel of God* (or “Spirit-led Israelites” - the *Olive Tree*), who are joined by gentile individuals and families from every nation in the world, to non-believing Israel!

²⁷⁷ See for example: Matt. 10:22, 24:13, 1 Cor. 1:8, Rev. 2:26.

Assessment of Common Pre-Tribulation Claims

This is the time to go back to some of the pre-Tribulation claims and objections in order to address them in greater detail. Needless to say, I'm going to do it while considering the biblical context established above – namely, within their “Israeli- connection.”²⁷⁸

Claim: Yeshua's body had no part in the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27), and it won't have any part in the seventieth week either. Daniel's seventy weeks' prophecy deals only with Old Testament Israel—not with Yeshua's body.

Above, I have made it clear that no one can artificially separate Yeshua's body and Old Testament Israel! Such a separation was not known to the first apostles nor to the multitude of disciples who followed Yeshua in the first century! They all saw themselves as an integral part of *the Olive Tree of Israel*. Moreover, they saw gentiles

²⁷⁸ While dealing with some of the pre-Tribulation Rapture claims, as well as working on the appendix, at the end of this chapter – “Daniel's Seventy Weeks,” my research led me to quite a few sites and books. Here I would like to give credit to, and highly recommend two resources that I found to be very helpful: (1) A book published in 2004, named, “**End Time Delusions,**” by **Steve Wohlberg, head of the “white horse media”** (www.whitehorsemedia.com), and, (2) “**Logos Apostolic (online) Bible College.**” A site that invites followers of Yeshua, from all over the world, and from all backgrounds, to freely study and use their online resources. I highly recommend visiting their “Bible Study Index” (https://www.logosapostolic.org/bible_study/studiesindex.htm), where you can find many good Bible studies, including word studies, articles and the like.

Disclaimer: I do *not* agree with every point the above two resources present! Yet, I do wish to follow John the Apostle, who encouraged us to *not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God...* (1 John 4:1). Take whatever is good and reject whatever is not of God! This is operating with discernment.

who had joined them in the Olive Tree, as partakers within *the commonwealth of Israel!*

As it concerns Daniel's famous seventy weeks prophecy, I have dedicated an entire appendix to it, and I recommend that the reader carefully look it over.²⁷⁹ Just to provide a small taste, I would like to draw your attention to the following: (a) Up until the 17-18th centuries CE, most Protestant Bible commentators did not draw a distinction between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks but rather saw them as one continuous unit; (b) Many commentators saw Yeshua as the One who *confirms a covenant for the many*; and lastly, (c) This prophecy, as others in Scripture, has more than one fulfillment. In fact, for those with eyes to see, it is being fulfilled before our very eyes in our generation.

Claim: The Second Coming of Yeshua and the Rapture of His body are separate events. Yeshua comes to meet His body in the Rapture (1 Thes. 4:16-17) and returns to Earth with them during His Second Coming (1 Thes. 3:13). In other words, Yeshua's body goes up from the Earth in the Rapture, and it returns to the Earth during the Second Coming of Messiah.

I dare say that there is not even one clear scripture that supports the first two statements above. Rather, they are based on combining, or putting together different scriptures while, at times, taking them out of their immediate context. We shall clearly show this later. There are no scriptures to support the idea of three comings of Messiah: (1) the first, about two thousand years ago; (2) the second, when He comes to Rapture (or *take*) His body out of this world; and (3) the third and

²⁷⁹ See at the end of this chapter.

last one, when He comes to restore the Kingdom to Israel for a period of one thousand years here on Earth.

Each one of the above claims must first be consistent with and based upon Messiah's own words! Yeshua spoke very clearly about the End Times as well as His glorious return, and this is recorded in a few places in Scripture. I would like to draw your attention to two well-known references:

Matt. 10: At the beginning of this chapter, Yeshua sends His disciples to preach the good news all over the land of Israel. Interestingly enough, in verse 16, there seems to be a kind of shift, as His instructions seem to apply not only to His time with His disciples back in the first century, but also to the future—to the very time He returns to establish His Kingdom here in the Promised Land (see specifically verses 21-23 and compare with Matt. 24:9-13). Notice, that there is no pre-Tribulation Rapture mentioned here! Quite the opposite: Yeshua's disciples (including those of us who, I believe, are living very close to His glorious return) are *no greater than the master/teacher!* (10:24) Whatever was done to Him will be done to His followers as well. In other words, as true followers of Messiah who walk in His footsteps, we should also expect persecution, even unto death! This has been a proven pattern, clearly and powerfully demonstrated in the first century, where most of Yeshua's close disciples and apostles, as well as many others, lost their lives while being severely persecuted for His Name's sake!

Matt. 24-25: In theological seminaries, Matt. 24 is known as “the Mount of Olivet Discourse.” I would define this chapter as the clearest End-Time prophecy given straight from the mouth of the King of Kings.

Any kind of scriptural interpretation – including that given by Shaul and the other apostles – must first agree with and be based upon

Yeshua's own words! If it doesn't, then the interpretation has not come from God's Spirit but rather from the wishful thinking of men's own hearts' desires! So, let us now delve into some of Yeshua's descriptions of the End Times, in Matt. 24 & 25 as it describes the events preceding His glorious return:

*Immediately after the Tribulation of these days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in Heaven, and then all the tribes of the Earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. **And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other** (Matt. 24:29-31, emphases added. See also Mk. 13:24-27).*

Note the order in which the events were arranged by Yeshua Himself:

- a. His coming to gather the elect will be after the Tribulation has ended! Note that in the immediate context, *the Tribulation of those days* is that very *great Tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be!*²⁸⁰
- b. The signs in the Heavens, including the sign of the Son of Man and His coming in the clouds with power and glory, are very similar to the description in the book of Revelation.²⁸¹
- c. The loud sound is of the very last trumpet.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ See Matt. 24:21

²⁸¹ See Rev. 19:11-16

²⁸² See also 1 Cor. 15:52, 1 Thes. 4:16 and Rev. 11:15-19.

- d. Only then, after the previous points (that we can call “precursors,” or events which must take place prior to the gathering of those holy/set apart), the elect will be gathered to Him!

I cannot see anywhere in the above description that Yeshua separated the *gathering of the holy* (the Rapture) from His glorious Second Coming! A simple and basic reading of the above verses show beyond a shadow of a doubt, that only one great Second Coming (adjoined by a gathering of the saints), with a harsh sounding event is to be expected!

But what about 1 Thes. 3:13 and 4:15-17?

Let’s see what the two Scripture references above really say: *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first . Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah with all His saints. (Or *holy ones*. 1 Thes. 3:13, 4:15-17; emphases added).*

Note the following:

- a. The events described in the above references clearly speak of *the coming of our Lord!*
- b. It does not separate *the coming of the Lord* into two different events (we will see this later, when dealing with the references found in 2 Thes.).

- c. It seems that from these two references, His coming won't be at all quiet, secret, or unnoticed. To the contrary: It will be a very noisy event, with (1) *a shout*, (2) *a voice of an archangel*, and (3) *the trumpet of God*! Pretty different than, for example, the description in the *Left Behind* series or movies featuring a pre-Tribulation Rapture, where a very "sudden and silent Rapture" occurs.
- d. The phrase, *with all His saints/holy ones* does not necessarily mean with all of us—Yeshua's followers! I know this might come as a shock to some of us, but when assessing the broader context relating to Yeshua's Second Coming, one can clearly see that these *holy ones* are actually angels! Here are three clear examples for your careful review:
 1. *When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory* (Matt. 25:31, emphasis added).
 2. *For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels* (Mk. 8:38, emphasis added).
 3. *And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Yeshua is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels...* (2 Thes. 1:7, emphasis added).

Claim: The Anti-Messiah cannot be revealed until after the Rapture (2 Thes. 2:6-8). The Holy Spirit is the restrainer who holds back the Anti-Messiah, and, as the Holy Spirit dwells in us — the Rapture must take place before the Anti-Messiah is

revealed on the stage of history. If Yeshua's body goes through the Tribulation period, it will know who Anti-Messiah is because he will head the One World Government (Rev. 13:10), erect a statue of himself in the rebuilt Temple (Matt. 24:15), demand that people take his mark and number (Rev. 13:15-17) and kill the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7), and all of this is not supported in Scripture.

“Not supported in Scripture?” Let us carefully assess this last statement.

2 Thes. 2:1-8 is one of the key scriptures used by our precious brothers and sisters who hold to the pre-Tribulation Rapture view. Let us see what it really says. We shall start with the first five verses and then move on to verses 6-8:

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Messiah had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for (that Day will not come²⁸³) unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things?” (2 Thes. 2:1-5, emphases added).

²⁸³ Please note that the words, *that Day will not come* are not found in the original Greek manuscript! Those of us who read the NKJ English version, can clearly see that these words are *italicized*. Nevertheless, this fact actually strengthens my argument against the pre-Tribulation point of view, as without these specific words, the sentence reads: *Let no one deceive you by any means, for unless the falling way comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.*

Note the following:

- a. Shaul connects *our gathering together to Him* with *the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah!* He does not see them as two separate events!²⁸⁴
- b. In complete contrast to what Pre-Tribulation brethren say, the order of things in 2 Thes. 2:1 is as follows: First comes the falling away (the great apostasy—see also Matt. 24:10); Second is the revealing of the Anti-Messiah, *the man of sin, who sits as God in the holy place of God* (translated as *the Temple of God*²⁸⁵—see also Dan. 9:27), and only then (i.e., following the two previous events) will Yeshua appear and put an end to all of it!

Let's continue with the three last verses:

And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thes. 2:6-8. Emphases added).

²⁸⁴ See also 1 Cor. 1:7-8, where Shaul connects between *eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and the day of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah* (see a similar idea in 2 Tim. 2:18). See 1 Cor. 15:23 and 52, where Shaul connects the resurrection of Yeshua's followers with the day of His (Second) Coming.

²⁸⁵ G3485 (Strong), **naos**, *nah-os'*. From a primary word ναίω, *naîō* (**to dwell**); a *fane, shrine, temple*: *shrine, temple*. Compare G2411.

Who is this Restrainer, and what is he really taken out of?

The following points might be shocking to some of us, but nonetheless, they must be pointed out for the sake of a true and sincere seeking after God's truth. Since Yeshua's First Coming, there have been three main views concerning the identity of the *restrainer*:

- a. Some influential Church Fathers²⁸⁶ interpreted the restrainer as **the Roman Empire with Caesar at its head**. According to this view, Shaul didn't want "to call the baby by its name," out of fear this would lead to severe (Roman) repercussions on himself and the entire congregation of believers of his time. This was the very reason he *did* reveal the identity of the *restrainer* to those in Thessalonica while in person during one of his previous visits there (2 Thes. 2:5-6).
- b. Some have interpreted the *restrainer* as **the preaching of the gospel itself**. They have based this on Romans 1:16-17, where the gospel is described as *the power of God* (see also 1 Thes. 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:18, 24; Heb. 4:12; Matt. 4:1-11). According to this view, the restrainer is the actual preaching of the gospel, which will cease just before the end of *this age* (due to severe persecutions. Matt. 24:14).

²⁸⁶ See, for example, Tertullian (second to third centuries CE), Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine (fourth to fifth centuries CE). See also a few prominent Bible scholars and great men of God who fully agreed with the above church fathers—Edward Bishop Elliot (18th century CE), Dr. John Eldon Ladd (a very respectable Baptist theologian in Fuller Theological Seminary in the 1950s, who said: *this view, or a modification of it, best fits into the Pauline theology*). See Henry Grattan Guinness (19th century CE) and more. See also Daniel 2 and 7 which contain well-known prophecies about the *four kingdoms*—among which the last and worst was the Roman Empire, which severely persecuted Yeshua's body .

- c. Some, including most modern-day pre-Tribulation brethren, have suggested that the restrainer is **the Holy Spirit, indwelling the body of Yeshua's followers**. According to this view, Yeshua said that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, unrighteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8-11). When the Holy Spirit is removed from this Earth, it will lead to utter lawlessness which will naturally lead to the appearance of the Anti-Messiah on the world's stage.

I want to explain my take on this *restrainer*, by raising what I believe is a very challenging question: Is the translation we quoted above (2 Thes. 2:6-8) the only possible translation? The following is a literal translation of verse 7, taken from an interlinear Greek English New Testament:

*For the mystery already operates, of lawlessness, only (there is) the (one) restraining just now until out of (the) midst it comes*²⁸⁷ (emphasis added).

Four Important Greek Words

The second part of verse 7, which is translated in the NKJ (as well as other translations) into no less than eight words – *until He is taken out of the way* – is based on only four Greek words: *heōs*, *genetai* (strongly connected to *ginomai*), *ek* and *mesos*.

²⁸⁷ See *The Nestle Greek Text*, by Reverend Alfred Marshall, 1958. See also <https://www.Scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/2th2.pdf>, where it literally reads as follows: *THE (to – G3588) for (gar – G1063) CLOSE-KEEP secret (mustErion – G3466) ALREADY (EdE – G2235) IS-IN-ACTING is-operating (energeitai – G1754) OF-THE (tEs – G3588) UN-LAWness lawlessnes (anomias – G458) ONLY (monon – G3440) THE (to – G3588) one-DOWN-HAVING one-detaining (katechon – G2722) at-PRESENT (arti – G737) TILL (heos – G2193) OUT (ek – G1537) OF-MIDst (mesou – G3319) it-MA Y-BE-BECOMING may-be-becoming (genEtaI – G1096).*

While *heos*²⁸⁸ and *ek* are translated correctly and are part of the proper context of the text, for some reason, the other two (*genetai* and *mesos*) are translated with no consistency in the same way that they are translated in the other scriptures where they appear, and with little connection to the immediate context. Let me elaborate.

Translating *heos* as *until* and *ek*²⁸⁹ as *out of* fit the proper context of 2 Thes. 2:1-8 and agrees with other references where these words are shown throughout the New Covenant writings. Nevertheless, when considering *genetai* (or, *ginomai*) and *mesos*, there are much better ways to translate them than just *to be taken out of the way*.

Genetai (and *ginomai*²⁹⁰) occurs about 700 times in the New Covenant writings. Its basic meanings are *to come into existence, to be created, to be born (or to be produced), comes into being, comes to pass, to be*

²⁸⁸ G2193 (Strong), ἕως, *heh'-oce*. Of uncertain affinity; a conjugation, preposition and adverb of continuance, until (of time and place): *even (until, unto), (as) far (as), how long, (un-) til (-l), (hither-, un-, up) to, while*.

²⁸⁹ G1537 (Strong), ἐκ, ἐξ, *ek, ex*. A primary preposition denoting *origin* (the point *whence* motion or action proceeds), *from, out* (of place, time or cause; literally or figuratively; direct or remote): *after, among, X are, at betwixt (-yond), by (the means of), exceedingly, (+ abundantly above), for (-th), from (among, forth, up), + grudgingly, + heartily, X Heavenly, X hereby, + very highly, in, . . . ly, (because, by reason) of, off (from), on, out among (from, of), over, since, X thenceforth, through, X unto, X vehemently, with (-out). Often used in composition, with the same general import; often of completion*.

²⁹⁰ G1096 (Strong), γίνομαι, *ginomai, ghin'-om-ahee*. A prolonged and middle form of a primary verb; *to cause to be (gen-erate)*, that is, (reflexively) to become (come into being), used with great latitude (literally, figuratively, intensively, etc.): - arise *be assembled, be (come, -fall, -have self), be brought (to pass), (be) come (to pass), continue, be divided, be done, draw, be ended, fall, be finished, follow, be found, be fulfilled, + God forbid, grow, happen, have, be kept, be made, be married, be ordained to be, partake, pass, be performed, be published, require, seem, be showed, X soon as it was, sound, be taken, be turned, use, wax, will, would, be wrought*.

made, to be done, to become, may come to be and to arise. The last meaning (*to arise*) is the most frequent translation of this Greek word.²⁹¹

*Mesos*²⁹² occurs about sixty times in the New Covenant writings. It is usually translated *midst, among* and *from among*.²⁹³ Only in this one scripture, has it been translated as *way*!

If Shaul really wanted us to understand *mesos* as *way* in 2 Thes. 2:7, he could have used a better Greek word, *hodos* (ὁδός), which literally means, *a way, a road and/or a path*. And, indeed, *hodos* occurs about one hundred times in the New Covenant writings and is usually translated as *way, side way, journey, highway, etc.*²⁹⁴

Taking into consideration the above explanation of the different meanings of these four Greek words, the following is a very likely translation of this famous sentence in the second part of verse 7:

²⁹¹ See, for example, Matt. 8:24, 13:21; Mk. 4:17, 37; Lk. 6:48, 15:14; Jn. 3:25; Acts 6:1, 11:19, 19:23, 23:7 and 9-10. In every one of these cases the word *arose* could be replaced by *came into being* or *came to pass* without changing the meaning. The word *arises* could be replaced by *comes into being* or *comes to pass*, again, without changing the meaning. There is no thought of anything being *taken away* in any of these scriptures, and the verb "*ginomai*" should never be translated with any idea or thought of anything being *taken away*, unless it is clearly specified by other words, which, in this case, it is not. Other translations of this specific word include *be, come to pass, be made, be done, come, become* and the like.

²⁹² G3319 (Strong), μέσος, *mesos, mes'-os*. From G3326; *middle* (as adjective or [neuter] noun): - among, *X before them, between, + forth, mid [-day, -night], midst, way.*

²⁹³ See, for example, Matt. 18:2, 20; Mk. 9:36; Lk. 2:46; Rev. 1:13, 2:1; and many more.

²⁹⁴ G3598 (Strong), ὁδός, *hodos*. Apparently, a primary word; a *road*; by implication *progress* (the route, act, or distance); figuratively a *mode or means: journey, (high-) way*. See, for example, Matt. 13:4, 19; Mk. 11:8; and more.

ἕως (*heos*) ἐκ (*ek*) μέσου (*mesos*) γένηται (*genetai*).

until	out of	midst	comes into being/arises
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When I stumbled upon the different meanings of these four Greek words, I almost immediately asked: What is this *midst* and who exactly is he who *comes into being/arises out of* this *midst*? The following is what I sensed was from the Spirit, although I might be wrong, and I suggest that you, the reader, carefully assess and weigh all of this before the Lord!

Here is how I believe 2 Thes. 2:6-8 should read:

And now you know what is restraining (back then, the Roman Authorities. In our times, whatever political power there might be), that he (Anti-Messiah) may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already acting (is operating) until he (Anti-Messiah) arises out/from our midst (the Body of Messiah). And then the lawless one (Anti-Messiah) will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

Even though we have gotten so used to the idea that *He who restrains* is the Holy Spirit, I think we should truly consider the following questions: (1) Is God's Spirit only in Yeshua's body? And if it is, where will He be after we are Raptured from the Earth? What kind of *spirit* will then dwell in the "Tribulation believers?" From the most immediate context (see above), it clearly cannot be the Holy Spirit! Why? Simply because Shaul clearly states that *our gathering unto Him* will not be before the Anti-Messiah is first revealed! So, it must be something other than God's Spirit; (2) In Matt. 28:20, Yeshua says, *and lo, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age*. In Jn.

14:6, he says, *and I will ask the father and He will give you another helper, that He may remain with you forever, the Spirit of Truth...* (emphases added). In other words, Yeshua said that neither He nor His Spirit would leave us before the end of the world—at which time God will deal with the Anti-Messiah (see, for example, Rev. 19:11-21).

Note: In the above quotations, Shaul declares that *the mystery of lawlessness is already operating* (i.e., in the first century)! Should this surprise us? Not at all! Remember that John, Yeshua's beloved apostle, said that the spirit of Anti-Messiah was already in operation during his days! He said that there were some *Anti-Messiahs* who came from within us, but were never from us...²⁹⁵ Moreover, some of Yeshua's parables clearly show that not all who claim faith in Him are indeed true (saved) followers of Him! In the general introduction, I mentioned, as an example, Yeshua's parables of *the wheat and tares*, and the *net filled with all types of fish*. We can add to the above examples His parable about the five foolish virgins.

Yes, since the very beginning (the first century), Yeshua's body has included fake believers, *false prophets, false teachers* as well as true, fully dedicated born-again followers! In other words, within the body of Yeshua – since His First coming – there have been some who have possessed the *spirit of Anti-Messiah* rather than His Holy Spirit!²⁹⁶

The Identity of the Anti-Messiah According to Some Famous Church Leaders

In our modern-day world, to be politically correct, so as not to offend or hurt someone's feelings, is acceptable and very much encouraged by leaders, politicians and *even* some pastors and elders within

²⁹⁵ See 1 Jn. 2:18-19, 22; 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 7.

²⁹⁶ See Matt. 13:24-30, 47, 25:1-13; Jn. 6:70, 13:2; 2 Thes. 2:7.

Messiah's body. Yet, if we read expressions and declarations of some renowned church leaders within the last four or five centuries, we can see that they were not as worried about being politically correct. To the contrary, some of their statements would shock present-day leaders within Messiah's body. See Martin Luther (1483-1546), Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), John Knox (1505-1572), Fox's *Book of Martyrs* (from 1563), John Calvin (1509-1564), Roger Williams (1603-1683), "The Westminster Confession of Faith" (1647), Cotton Mather (1663-1728), John Wesley (1703-1791), David Benedict (*A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America, 1813*) and others, who seriously thought and taught that the system or kingdom of the Anti-Messiah was the Roman Catholic Church, while its head, the Pope, is the Anti-Messiah himself!²⁹⁷

The Son of Perdition — Judah Iscariot, and the Anti-Messiah

In 2 Thes. 2:3, Shaul warns, *let no one deceive you by any means; for (that day will not come) unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition*. Interestingly enough, in the famous long prayer Yeshua offered to His Heavenly Father, He referred to *Judah Iscariot* – one of His twelve closest disciples – as *the son of perdition*. Here it is in His own words: *While I was with them (the twelve disciples), I was keeping them in Your Name, which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but*

²⁹⁷ According to 1 Jn. 4:1-4 and others, one way to recognize the spirit of the Anti-Messiah is that it does not believe that *Messiah Yeshua came in the flesh*. I challenge the reader to assess one of the main dogmatic confessions within the Roman Catholic Church, with regard to the "sinless birth of... Miriam (Mary)!" Yes, this was not a typo! According to one of the pillars of Roman Catholic "Faith Statements," it was Yeshua's mother – Not Yeshua Himself (!) – who was born sinless, and thus, her flesh (the one that begot Messiah—her first born) was not like other human flesh! This is no less than blasphemy!

the son of perdition (Judah Iscariot, according to both the immediate and broader context), *so that the scripture would be fulfilled...* (Jn. 17:12, emphasis added). Please notice: the only other reference in which this phrase (*son of perdition*) is used is found in 2 Thes. 2! Let me suggest that it is not merely a matter of coincidence...

The best example, or prototype (a foreshadowing or picture) of the Anti-Messiah *coming out of our midst* (Yeshua's very body of believers) is Judah Iscariot! Judah was one of the twelve closest disciples of Yeshua. Yet, at the very end he was the one who betrayed Him, leading His capturers to Him and being the very tool used by the Almighty to put His only begotten Son on that Tree in Golgotha! Judah was in the inner circle (see Lk. 6:13-16). When Yeshua sent His twelve chosen ones to heal the sick, to cast out demons and preach the good news, He empowered them with His own Power and Spirit, and, Judah was one of them! Yes, Yeshua's power came upon him as well (Matt. 10:1-4). As you remember, Judah was also responsible for the finances—a responsibility given only to someone who is very close to the Master.

Outwardly, Judah Iscariot resembled a faithful servant and apostle of Yeshua, and he even used the right words when approaching Messiah – *my Master...* Yet, the one who dwelt in him at the end, was none other than Satan himself (Lk. 22:3)! With Satan indwelling him, Judah gave the famous venomous *kiss* to the Lord, a kiss that eventually led to Yeshua's death (Matt. 26:49)!

Claim: Yeshua's body is mentioned more than twenty times in the first three chapters of Revelation, but there is no mention of it between Rev. 4:1 and 19:1. This is yet one more proof that it is 'taken out' or 'Raptured' in Rev. 4:1, and that the Apostle

John is a picture or foreshadowing of Yeshua's body (following the pattern of Enoch and Elijah in the Old Testament).

The argument here is that the Apostle John, being called up to Heaven in Rev. 4:1 (*Come up here*) is clear proof that we, Yeshua's true followers, will indeed be Raptured out of this world just before all that the apostle is shown while in Heaven starts to take place. Here it is from Rev. 4:1-2:

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in Heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.' Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and One sat on the throne (emphases added).

First, have you noticed that Jews are also not mentioned (at least by name) after Rev. 3? Yet, deep into the book of Revelation, there are quite a few references of those who have *the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah* (Rev. 12:17, 20:4). I am acquainted with the argument that these are *the Tribulation saints* (i.e., "Old Testament saints"); nevertheless, as I have already established, there is no biblically based difference between Old Testament saints and New Testament saints! Both are an integral part of *the Olive Tree* of Israel throughout history!²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ According to Matt. 8:11, many Gentiles *will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven...* Just to remind you, respected reader: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the fathers of a nation called *Israel!* Moreover: Yeshua sends His disciples, at least at the beginning of His ministry, *only to the lost sheep of Israel!* (See Matt. 10:5-6). As I have mentioned previously, the First century body of believers was comprised of only Jews, at least for a few decades before they were joined by non-Jews. So, in short, the whole story is about a God who makes

Second, note the following: The specific incident in John's life happened about 1,900 years ago, and it was a personal experience of the beloved apostle. According to ancient tradition, once the vision he received in Heaven ended, John descended back to Earth and later died a peaceful death.²⁹⁹

I would like to remind you that Yeshua, when speaking of End-Time events, used only two examples: **Noah** and **Lot** (see Lk. 17:26-36)! There is no scriptural evidence that John's personal ascension to Heaven was a picture, foreshadowing or a prototype of the pre-Tribulation Rapture. Is there anyone who would dare say that Yeshua was not aware of Enoch or Elijah's stories, when speaking of the End Times and His Second Coming?

As I mentioned before, if we wish to look for a scriptural pattern for the Rapture of Yeshua's body, we should never take it out of its broader context (what I called before, "the Israeli connection;" see the following). The only scriptural pattern is the exodus of *our fathers* out of Egypt (and, if you wish, also the three parts in the Tabernacle, as explained before). Over and over, there is no scriptural basis to claim

this *New Covenant* with His people Israel, while allowing others – Gentiles – as He did from the very beginning, to join with His Chosen Nation!

²⁹⁹ Information regarding John's last days comes to us primarily from tradition. The *1913 Roman Catholic Encyclopedia*, in an article about his life, states that writers in the second and third Centuries CE accepted a widely held tradition that the apostle spent his last days in Ephesus. According to Roman Catholics, Justin Martyr also referred to John as an apostle of Yeshua who lived in Ephesus. St. Irenaeus, Eusebius, and others, again according to the *Roman Catholic Encyclopedia*, all agree that John left the isle of Patmos where he was banished for preaching the good news of Messiah (see Rev. 1:9). The last alive, of the twelve original disciples, John spent his remaining days in Ephesus until he died sometime around the close of the First century.

that John is a prototype or a foreshadowing of the pre-Tribulation Rapture!

With all due respect, I really think that this specific Rev. 4:1 argument is a stretch and is used only to support the preconceived idea regarding the supposed pre-Tribulation Rapture.

Moreover, claiming that the sound John the apostle heard, which was *like a trumpet*, is connected to *the last trumpet*, which is going to sound at the very end, is also no more than a stretch, trying once again to support a preconceived idea regarding the timing of the Rapture.

Claim: The twenty-four elders are a representation of Yeshua's body. They are in Heaven before the first of the seven seals of the scroll is broken.

As with the last one, I think that this argument is also a stretch. Is there any other scripture that supports this assumption? Not at all! As with the argument above, this is an attempt to fit any scripture possible into an already existing, or preconceived doctrine regarding the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

Claim: No one can know the day or the hour of Messiah's Second Coming (Matt. 24:15). But if Yeshua's body goes through the Tribulation period, some will know the day, because it will be seven years from the signing of the seven-year covenant (Dan. 9:24-27) and 1,260 days from the day the Anti-Messiah defiles the Temple (Rev. 12:6).

This argument clearly demonstrates the departure of those who hold to a pre-Tribulation Rapture from their Hebraic/Middle Eastern (Jewish) roots. To remind you, despite the fact that most Western readers view numbers as merely quantities, to Middle Eastern

readers, numbers often serve as symbols bearing spiritual significance.³⁰⁰

I'm very aware of the fact that the *three and a half year* period spoken of in both Daniel and Revelation is mentioned in different ways: *A time, times, and half a time* (Daniel 7:25, 12:7; Aramaic, *ad-idan v'Idanin uflag idan* -- עדן ועדנין ופלאג עדן), and *one thousand two hundred sixty days*, and *forty-two months* (Revelation 11:2, 12:14, 13:5). The question should be: Does it mean that *seven years* or *three and a half years* is to be understood in a precise mathematical way? If one remembers Yeshua's words, *No one knows **the day nor the hour**, not even the angels, nor the Son...* (Matt. 24:36), it stands to reason that the answer to my question is no. Of course, Yeshua also said, *when you see all these things, know it is near the door* (Matt. 24:33). Yes, we should know the times and seasons in which we are living. We should be able to recognize *the big picture* – in terms of those times – yet, at the same time, we should remember that we still cannot know (in a precise, mathematical, Greek manner), *the day nor the hour!*

It's important to understand that I am not claiming that numbers, such as *seven years* and *three and a half years*, could be stretched as if they had no limits! All I'm trying to convey is that *seven years* in Scripture can also be *seven years and six months* or *seven years and two days*. *Three and a half years* can also be *three and a half years and four days*, or *three hours...*

And so, to say that the Rapture must take place before the seven years starts, so that we cannot *calculate the day and the hour* is, once again, not only detached from the culture through which Scripture was given

³⁰⁰ For a more detailed discussion, see Appendix 1: "Daniel's Seventy Weeks."

to us, but also demonstrates the attempt to fit certain scriptures into our already preconceived ideas and doctrines.

Claim: Yeshua's body must go to heaven for the marriage of the Lamb before the Second Coming of Messiah at the end of the Tribulation period (Rev. 19:11-14, 19:7).

If taken in the proper context, we can see that Rev. 19:7 does not clearly say that the *marriage* takes place in Heaven! It just says that *the marriage of the Lamb has come*, and that *she has made herself ready*. Actually, if taken in the broader context, we can see that the marriage is at the very end of the Tribulation and is directly connected to the following chapter, Rev. 20! Furthermore, the description of this marriage sounds very similar to another known scripture, Ezek. 39:17-20, when compared with Rev. 19:17-21.

Yes, indeed, there will be a marriage of the Lamb of God, and we are all welcome to be there, but only at its right timing—at the very end of the Tribulation!

Claim: It says that the Anti-Messiah will prevail against the believers during the Tribulation period (Rev. 13:7), but it also says that 'the gates of hell won't prevail against it' (Matt. 16:18). So, it must be that there are two kinds of believers: 'Old Testament saints —Israel,' and 'New Testament saints — Yeshua's very body.' Moreover, the Bible never says that Yeshua's body will go through the Tribulation period.

Above, we have already discussed the great error made by differentiating between Israel and Yeshua's body. We said that they are strongly connected, as had been in the first century, and that God has not changed His mind concerning His ancient beloved nation! Moreover, for at least the first few decades of the first century,

Yeshua's body was comprised solely of Israeli Jews! They did not see themselves as "New Testament saints" but rather as an integral part of the nation called Israel!

Exactly as it was at the beginning, so it will be at the end. Just as the first century believers experienced some very tough persecution, even unto death, so the present-day believers will go through persecution and tribulations (including the Great Tribulation), even unto death! Going through the great Tribulation will not at all mean that *the gates of hell have prevailed against the believers!* Otherwise, we would also have to say that they prevailed against the first century believers!

Present-day (End Time) believers will be delivered into our enemy's hands only for a relatively short period of time so that their faith can be tested. It's important to note that not all End-Time believers are going to suffer death and/or persecution! Some will be protected in whatever *Goshen* to which God will lead them, while others might be beheaded and so on.³⁰¹

Believers throughout history have gone through some very difficult tribulations and trials, even unto death. For example, eleven of the twelve disciples of Yeshua were put to death; all the martyrs of the first three to four centuries CE; the persecuted in China, Persia, and other places in our own modern-day time! Do they consider themselves "defeated by the gates of hell?" Do they see themselves as "Old Testament saints?"

To say that "there are two kinds of saints," yet again demonstrates how disconnected some in Yeshua's body are from their authentic first century (Jewish/Israeli) roots! As I have frequently mentioned here,

³⁰¹ See Rev. 12:6. See also, the previous discussion regarding the Exodus from Egypt as a pattern for the Rapture.

God made *the New Covenant* with His Chosen Nation Israel—and no other nation or entity! Gentiles are grafted into *the Olive Tree* of Israel, and all those who are in that tree, are also part of *the remnant by election*, within the larger body of Israel!

Claim: The Pre-Tribulation Rapture is more consistent with God's grace, love, and mercy, as we were never called to God's wrath but to His everlasting grace and eternal life (1 Thes. 1:10, 5:9).

These statements are very true! God did not call (or appoint) us for wrath! Nevertheless, this does not mean that He takes us out of the world when inflicting His wrath or severe judgment upon it! The Biblical pattern clearly shows that as He protected His chosen ones – *our fathers* (Israel under Moses) who were still in Egypt - He also, at the same time, inflicted His wrath on the land and gods of Egypt. He is quite able to do the same during the great Tribulation! A loving God does not necessarily mean that He prevents His beloved ones from going through hardships, persecution, and tribulations even unto death, while taking some to a protected place in the wilderness and allowing (in accordance with His perfect will) others to be His holy martyrs! Whatever we shall experience in the great Tribulation, we should never forget that our reward is in His soon-coming Kingdom—not in the kingdom of this dark world in which we live! The more we are persecuted for His glorious holy name, the greater our reward will be!

Claim: Yeshua promised to come and remove His faithful ones and take them home to be with Him (Jn. 14:1-3).

No doubt He did! Yet, does this really point to a pre-Tribulation Rapture of His body? Is this at all in the context of “a great, silent Pre-Tribulation Rapture?” No, it's not! Why I am so sure about that? If His

words in Jn. 14 did indeed refer to a pre-Tribulation Rapture, all of His faithful first century disciples, apostles and multitudes, who were true believers, completely missed it and would not even be worthy of being “Raptured before the Tribulation!” If it’s true that these verses refer to an End-Time pre-Tribulation Rapture, where are all of the believers who have already preceded us? Are they not “home” with Him? Did He deceive them when promising He would come and take them to where He is? God forbid!

It is my understanding that Yeshua spoke of the natural (or unnatural) death each of His faithful disciples and followers throughout history since the time of His First Coming, and up to the end of this age, will experience! He truly will come and take everyone who dies in Him *home*. Indeed, each and every one of His children, since His First Coming, and until His Second Coming, has gone or will go to be with Him in His home—heaven!

A very similar idea of *taking you home to where I am*, in connection to natural or unnatural death, is clearly shown in the book of Hebrews. Abraham (and other faithful God-fearing people before and after him), did not look at an earthly city as their eternal home. They rather looked at the heavenly one (Jerusalem). In other words, they, as the first century believers, also awaited their (already prepared) home in heaven.³⁰²

³⁰² See Heb. 11:10, 13-16.

Assessment of Some Mid-Tribulation Claims

Claim: One needs to differentiate between the Anti-Messiah wrath (during the first three and a half years) and God's Divine wrath (during the last three and a half years) in Daniel's seventieth week. The entire body of Yeshua will go through the first three and a half years of the last week of Daniel's seventy weeks' prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27); and just before God starts to pour out His wrath on the Earth, at the beginning of the second three and a half years, they will be caught up to Heaven (Some say, with the two witnesses of Rev. 11:12).

I would like to respond to this specific claim with a few challenging questions:

- In the well-known Daniel 9 prophecy, where exactly does it say that the first *three and a half years* are “the Anti-Messiah wrath?” Furthermore, where exactly is the “Anti-Messiah” mentioned in that famous prophecy? At the end of this chapter (Appendix 1 - “Daniel’s seventy weeks”), I’ll share a few other possible interpretations regarding the identity of the one who *confirms a covenant with the many*. As previously stated, it might surprise you to know that up until the 17th or 18th Centuries CE, Bible scholars as well as church leaders, did not recognize an Anti-Messiah in that specific prophecy but rather Messiah Yeshua Himself! They believed that Yeshua is the One who *confirms a New Covenant* with all those who have

believed and accepted Him as *the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world!*³⁰³

- Is there any scriptural basis for modern-day prophecy teachers splitting Daniel's first sixty-nine weeks from the seventieth and last week, while placing a two-thousand-year gap between them?

And lastly,

- Would someone please show me even one reference in God's entire Word that says that there will be "a seven-year Tribulation?"

Interestingly enough, when I read of the great Tribulation, it always refers to three and a half year period. A careful examination of Daniel 9:24-27 also shows that there is only three and a half years Tribulation!³⁰⁴

Additionally, I have a hard time finding any scriptural basis for separating Daniel's sixty-ninth week from the seventieth and placing a two-thousand-year gap between the two. Even if we take it as "a given" that there is a 2,000-year gap between Daniel's first sixty-nine weeks and the seventieth and last week, there is not even one scripture that says that the first *three and a half years* of this seventieth and last week is characterized as some kind of "a wrath!"

If you do a thorough study of Daniel 9:27, you will see that it describes the first three and a half years as characterized by peace, tranquility and security, which are then suddenly interrupted at the end of the

³⁰³ See Jn. 1:29. See also Matt. 26:28 — *the Blood of the Covenant, for many...* (emphasis added).

³⁰⁴ See Dan. 9:27 and compare with Rev. 11:2-3, 12:6 and 12:14.

first half of this seventieth and last week! Again, up until the 17th or 18th centuries CE, Bible scholars and church leaders have understood Daniel's prophecy to be one undivided prophecy, which was completely fulfilled in Yeshua's First Coming!³⁰⁵

Regarding the mid-Tribulation Rapture view, although it sounds very good and very encouraging, I strongly believe that it is not biblically based! There is no pattern or foreshadowing in Scripture showing that God's chosen ones are *taken* prior to, and/or in the middle of some great End-Time event.

³⁰⁵ See, in Chapter II, Appendix 2, a discussion of "Respected Traditional Commentaries on Daniel 9:24-27." Also, see an example of how the early followers of Yeshua saw the timetable of Daniel's well-known prophecy, at: <https://www.bible.ca/H-70-weeks-daniel.htm>

Conclusions and a Call to Be Open-Minded

Beloved, I truly recommend reading Scripture as a whole, especially when contemplating the timing of Messiah's return. For some among us, this might require putting aside preconceived ideas which we have been taught, or those constructed by us based on a partial grasp of the message of Scripture.

Now that we have seen the ways various scriptures have been used to defend *different* positions regarding the timing of the Rapture, are we willing to put down even our strongest dogmas and allow the Lord to lead us according to His truth, even if these revelations might be accompanied by a new challenge to trust Him in and through what could end up being extremely frightening times?

Having taken time to consider that the Rapture *cannot* be artificially and un-biblically detached from the history and the nation of Israel; having recognized that salvation is *not* a one-time altar call, but rather a process requiring that we endure until the very end, are we willing to amend our perspective regarding God's timeline for the Messiah's return and our being gathered unto Him? I certainly hope and pray we are.

Chapter 2:

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Daniel's Seventy Weeks

Introduction

Daniel 9:24-27 is for sure one of the more controversial passages which has undergone a variety of interpretations. In the course of history, there have been many attempts to explain this well-known prophecy, and in this appendix, I will endeavor to present the main views, interpretations and commentaries concerning this specific prophecy. I have tried to present them in chronological order, beginning with the Jewish sages and moving on to the Roman Catholic view, the Protestant view, the Seventh Day Adventist view, all culminating with my own view. I have also added a few illustrations to help you visualize the different stated opinions.³⁰⁶

Daniel's ninth chapter is divided mainly into two parts: (1) Daniel's prayer, repentance, and supplication for his people, all after realizing that seventy years of exile are about to end (Dan. 9:2-19); and (2) God's response through His archangel Gabriel, which includes the well-known seventy weeks prophecy (Dan. 9:21-27). The two parts are strongly connected and cannot be arbitrarily separated. Alternatively stated, one cannot attempt to interpret the second part without first considering its immediate context in the first part.

Moreover, from the first section, we can clearly see that the nation and land of Israel are in the very center. The seventy weeks are *decreed upon your people* (Israel) and *your holy city* (Jerusalem). As with the timing of the Rapture, Daniel's seventy weeks must be

³⁰⁶ See chapter 2 – appendix 3: illustrations.

interpreted within its “Israeli connection.” In fact, since Israel - *God’s first-born son*³⁰⁷- is the very tool or instrument God chose to use to save the entire world, she is indeed the center of all End Time prophecy!

Daniel 9 takes place *in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the Chaldeans* (9:1). According to the Jewish sages and most Bible commentators, this is the same *Darius* mentioned in chapter 6. Thus, the seventy weeks prophecy takes place during the second of four named kingdoms—the Medo-Persia kingdom (see the following. Also see Dan. 2:37-46).

A Short Summary of Related Historic Events

Daniel and his contemporaries were exiled during the first wave of the Babylonian Exile, **around 610-605-BCE**. The Babylonian Empire was replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire **around 539 BCE** (see Dan. 5). Cyrus, the Persian king, gave his famous decree concerning the rebuilding of God’s Temple in Jerusalem **around 538-537 BCE** (see Ezra 1, based on Isa. 44:28, 45:1. See also 2 Chr. 36). A Jewish minority undertook the rebuilding of the Temple **around 537-536 BCE** (see Ezra 3). Their work was stopped and delayed for a few years by some of their opponents (see Ezra 4 & 5). The Temple was finally established in Jerusalem **around 516-515 BCE** (see Ezra 5:2, 6:15; Hag. 1:14). With King Artaxerxes’ permission **around 457 BCE**, the walls of the city were finally completed. **Around 445 BCE** (see Ezra 7, Neh. 1, 2 & 6), the Greeks, under the leadership of Alexander the Great, defeated the Persians and established the Greek Empire. After Alexander the Great’s death, **around 333-332 BCE**, his empire was divided amongst four leaders (see Dan. 7:6-7, 8:8 and chapter 11). **Around 170 BCE**, one

³⁰⁷ See Ex. 4:22.

well-known Seleucid General, Antiochus Epiphanes the Fourth, made a covenant with some of the Jewish elites, a covenant that he broke after three and a half years. He placed a statue inside God's Temple in Jerusalem and began to persecute the Jews by imposing impossible restrictions upon them, all having to do with their observance of God's Torah (for example: they were not allowed to circumcise their boys, keep the Sabbath, and so on). This severe persecution finally led to the Maccabean Revolt, which lasted another three and a half years—up until sometime **around 164 BCE**. The Jews succeeded in driving out the Seleucids from Jerusalem. They cleansed the Temple from the desecration of Antiochus Epiphanes and rededicated it. Since then, Jews have celebrated the feast of Chanukah, which falls in the winter of each year. **Around 5-4 BCE**, Yeshua of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem. He started His three and a half year ministry sometime **around 26-27 CE**, which ended with His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection, **around the year 30 CE**. About forty years later, **in 70 CE**, the second Temple was destroyed by Titus the Roman, and most Jerusalemite Jews were, once again, exiled. Finally, the Roman Empire fell **around 476-477 CE**.

Seventy Weeks Are Determined...

This specific prophecy is not considered a sealed vision in comparison to other prophecies and visions Daniel, as well as other prophets, received.³⁰⁸ This prophecy contains six objectives to be fulfilled within 70 weeks (of years):

1. *To finish the transgression.*

³⁰⁸ Compare Dan. 9:22 — *I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding*—with 8:26-27, and 12:4, 9.

2. *To make an end of sins.*
3. *To make reconciliation for iniquity.*
4. *To bring in everlasting righteousness.*
5. *To seal up the vision and prophecy; and*
6. *To anoint the Most Holy.*

As we already mentioned, while dealing with numbers and their spiritual significance in the Hebraic/Middle Eastern culture/mindset, *six* represents humanity, as the first Adam was created on the sixth day. Thus, the six objectives have to do with mankind's sin, which started with the first Adam and his wife in the Garden of Eden. It is important to note here that in the New Covenant writings, Messiah Yeshua is described as the *second or last Adam*.³⁰⁹

Already now, we can see that the only One who is able to fulfill these six objectives is the Messiah of Israel Himself – the *second Adam*, because Yeshua is strongly connected to His nation Israel, and He is truly the only One who could fulfill all six objectives through His work on that tree at Golgotha! According to the New Covenant writings, the death of Yeshua is *the ultimate solution to sin* (the first three objectives). Yeshua makes those who are in Him *righteous* (the fourth objective). He is *the optimal fulfillment of prophecy* (the fifth objective). And lastly, He, as *Immanuel (God with us)*, our heavenly High Priest, is the One who *sanctifies the Holy of Holies* (the sixth objective). More on this later.

Most scholars, commentators, and theologians throughout history, understood these seventy weeks to be weeks of years—i.e., the 490 days should be understood as 490 years. And indeed, these *weeks*

³⁰⁹ See Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:45, 47; and 1 Cor. 15:22.

cannot be normal seven-day weeks, as it would be a very short time to accomplish all the above objectives, not to mention the following interpretations of this prophecy.³¹⁰

Different Interpretations of Daniel's Seventy Weeks

In the following paragraphs, I present the four main commentaries on Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy. None of these views though, are etched in stone, even among the different theologians who hold them. Which is to say, within each of the following commentaries, there are slightly different understandings.

The Jewish View³¹¹

The Jewish sages did not take the number 70 as a literal (mathematically precise) number but rather as a symbolic one that represents God, completion, perfection, etc. Thus, they understood Daniel's seventy weeks to be a divine description of events in Jewish history, beginning with the seventy years of Babylonian Exile and ending with the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE.³¹²

³¹⁰ In Hebrew, *weeks* is read as *shavueem* (masculine form) and not the normal *shavuot* (feminine ending form). See examples of *Shavuot*—seven-day weeks—in Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:9 and 16; 2 Ch. 8:13. There might be one scriptural hint that points to a connection between “a week” and a seven-year period in Jacob's story (in Hebrew, *Sh'vuah* — see Gen. 29:18, 27). Moreover, these seventy weeks must be four hundred and ninety years; otherwise, the last week, the seventieth, would not correlate with other references in the book of Daniel (see there: 7:25; 8:14, 26; 11:31; 12:7; or 11–12).

³¹¹ See chapter 2 – appendix 3: illustrations.

³¹² According to the Jewish sages, Daniel did not know when to start his counting—from the renewed kingdom of Babylon (610 BCE)? From Jehoiakim's exile (610-605 BCE)? Maybe from Jehoiachin's (600 BCE)? From the time of Zedekiah and the

The First Seven Weeks: *From the going forth of the command* (in Hebrew, *min motzah davar*) was applied in two possible ways: (1) to God's Word through His prophet Jeremiah, around 588 BCE.³¹³ Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the seventy years of exile until *Messiah the Prince* brought them to King Cyrus, who issued the decree for the Jews to return and rebuild God's Temple; (2) Daniel's own words in the beginning of his supplications,³¹⁴ which leads to the time of Nehemiah or Ezra. There, according to them, we should find *Messiah the Prince*—which should have been Zerubbabel or Joshua the son of Tzadok, the high priest.

The Following 62 Weeks and the 70th Final Week: These 63 weeks were applied symbolically. The sages did not separate the 69th week from the 70th week. According to them, all 63 remaining weeks must have led to two crucially important events in Jewish history: (1) Antiochus the Fourth (Epiphanes), in whose time the high priest Chonio III was murdered,³¹⁵ or another Jewish leader of that time who they viewed as the *Messiah shall be cut off*. That murder led to severe persecution of the Jews which brought about the Maccabean Revolt. To this revolt they also connect (2) the severe persecution of the

destruction of the first Temple (587/6 BCE)? According to Zechariah, the seventy years were finished the second time with Darius (Zech. 1:12; Hag. 1:2, 2:20-23). According to historic calculation, there were seventy years and seven months between 587/6 and 515/6 BCE.

³¹³ See Jer. 25:1 (in Hebrew, *the word that was* — *hadavar asher haya...*) See also verses 25:10-11, and 29:10 (in Hebrew, for *I will come to you and fulfill my good word* — *vehakimoti aleichem et D'vari hatov*) and Ezra 1:1 (*that the word of the Lord, by the prophet Jeremiah might be fulfilled*).

³¹⁴ See 9:21 – Hebrew, *now while I was speaking*; Hebrew, *veod ani Medaber* – Daniel 9:23.

³¹⁵ See 2 Maccabi's 4:34.

Romans against the Jews, which led to the Great Revolt and included the destruction of the second Temple by Titus in 70 CE.

The Roman Catholic View³¹⁶

Roman Catholic theologians have followed the Jewish sages' approach and have understood 70 to be a symbolic number. They also have applied most of the events described in Dan. 9:24-27 to a general description of two events in Jewish history: (a) Antiochus Epiphanes, his persecution of the Jews and the desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem, followed by the Maccabean Revolt and the rededication of the Temple (around 164 BCE); and (b) events in Yeshua's time, all the way through the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE.

The First Seven Weeks: *From the going forth of the command* — most Catholic commentators saw this *command* as commencing from Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 25:11, 29:10) around 588 BCE. They interpreted the first *seven weeks* (forty-nine years) as the approximate amount of time that the exile in Babylon lasted. They saw *Messiah the Prince* as either Cyrus — *the anointed of the Lord* — who called for an end to the exile (Isa. 45:1), or the high priest Jeshua, who presided over the rebuilding of the altar of sacrifice after the exile (Ezra 3:2).

The Following 62 Weeks and the 70th and Final Week: *In the course of sixty-two weeks... rebuilt* was seen as a period of 434 years, roughly including the time between the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the exile, and the beginning of the Seleucid persecution. *An anointed one* was seen as Chunio the third (who was murdered around 171 BCE, see

³¹⁶ See the Revised Standard Version Roman Catholic Edition of Daniel 9 and a Roman Catholic perspective blog on Daniel 9 found at (<http://blog.theotokos.co.za/?p=5171>). See also chapter 2 – appendix 3: illustrations.

above), while *a leader* was Antiochus the Fourth (Epiphanes). The final week was seen as the time of Antiochus' persecution. According to this view, *he* is Antiochus himself; *the many* are the faithless Jews who allied themselves with the Seleucids,³¹⁷ and *half the week* is when the Temple was desecrated by Antiochus from 167 to 164 BCE; while *the abomination that causes desolation* is the pagan altar set up by Antiochus. They, as the Jewish sages, stretched the time to also include the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE.

The Seventh Day Adventist View³¹⁸

Seventh Day Adventists do not believe in a millennial kingdom with the leadership of Israel as a nation here on Earth, with Messiah as her King. Thus, Seventh Day Adventists do not acknowledge Israel's special place as having remained God's chosen people. Moreover, they connect Daniel 9:24-27 to Dan. 8 (especially verse 14) and group the 490 years with the 2,300 days (days of years, according to them), arriving at the year 1844 as marking the beginning of the final *heavenly judgment of God...*

The First Seven Weeks: *From the going forth of the command* is interpreted as the decree issued by Artaxerxes in 457 BCE, authorizing the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:7-23, 7:12-26). This decree allowed the Jews to govern Judah according to their own law

³¹⁷ 1 Maccabees. 1:11-11.

³¹⁸ See chapter 2 – appendix 3: illustrations. The Seventh Day Adventist Church is a Protestant Christian denomination which is distinguished mainly by its observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. It emphasizes the imminent Second Coming (the advent) of Yeshua. This denomination grew out of the Millerite movement in the United States during the mid-19th century, and it was formally established in 1863. See <https://ssnet.org/qtrly/eng/02b/less05.html> and <https://www.adventistreview.org/the-70-weeks-made-simple>

(7:25,26). According to them, exactly 49 years later (seven prophetic days) the city was rebuilt (in 408 BCE).

The Following 62 Weeks and the 70th and Final Week: They see it as a time period that covers: (a) the anointing of Messiah Yeshua in the Jordan River by John in 27 CE; (b) His death in 31 CE (Seen as the middle of the seventieth week); (c) the severe Roman persecution on the first believers (beginning with Stephen's martyrdom in 34 CE), and then on the non-believing Jews, which ends in (d) the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem.³¹⁹

³¹⁹ The following is a detailed explanation as found on one of their websites: "The first thing announced is the coming of the Messiah after 62 weeks plus 7 weeks (69 weeks). He will initiate His ministry at the end of the 69 weeks as '*the Anointed One*' (Mk. 1:9-11). According to Daniel 9:26, '*after the sixty-two weeks*' (plus the previous seven) '*the Anointed One*' will be killed, and no one will help Him. *This will take place during the last week of the 70 weeks—an obvious reference to Messiah's sacrificial death on the tree.* During the last week, *the Messiah will also 'confirm a covenant with many'* (verse 27). A better translation could be '*he will make a strong covenant.*' This is the new covenant firmly established through the blood of Messiah (Lk. 22:20), and includes Jews and gentiles who, through faith in Messiah, enjoy its benefits. *During the middle of the seventieth week, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament would end* (Dan. 9:27). *Messiah's sacrificial death brought to an end the Israelite sacrificial system* (Mk. 15:37-38; Heb. 10:8-10). The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies is predicted in this prophecy, *even if it is not clearly stated that it will happen during the 70 weeks. The destruction is decreed to take place in the future, but we are not told when* (Dan. 9:26). The fate of the city was decreed by Yeshua during His ministry (Matt. 24:1-2) and took place about forty years later. Stephen died as a martyr in 34 A.D.—the date ending the 70-week prophecy, and from that point, the gospel went also to the gentile world" (emphases added).

The Popular Protestant View Within Recent Centuries³²⁰

Most modern-day Protestant prophecy teachers see the first week and the following sixty-two weeks as one unit.

The First Seven Weeks: *From the going forth of the command* is believed to have commenced with the letter written by King Artaxerxes around 458-7 BCE (Ezra 7:7-26). It leads them to the year 26-7 CE, when Yeshua would have begun His ministry. A few of them arrive at the year 29-30 CE, which points to Yeshua's entry into Jerusalem (see Lk. 19).

Between the 69th and 70th Weeks: A Pause of an Unknown Period of Time - The Time or Age (i.e., Dispensation) of the Church: According to this view, the first sixty-nine weeks in Daniel's prophecy is clearly separated from the seventieth and last week. The period in between is called "the Church Age," and/or *the times of the gentiles*. During this pause, Israel as a nation, is "set aside" and awaits God to fulfill Daniel's last, or seventieth, week. Just before He does, i.e., before the seventieth week starts, the church is Raptured, so she can take part in the heavenly *marriage of the Lamb*, which will last seven years (i.e., the seventieth week in Daniel's prophecy).

The Last Week: This week is all about the Anti-Messiah and the nation of Israel. It starts with the *confirming a covenant* with the Jews, which is being broken in the middle of that last week. He then lays heavy persecution on the Jews, which eventually leads to the battle of *Armageddon* (Rev. 16), bringing forth Yeshua's glorious return

³²⁰ See Precept Austin's "Daniel Commentary" at https://www.preceptaustin.org/daniel_924. See chapter 2 – appendix 3: illustrations.

together with those who were Raptured, to *restore the Kingdom to Israel* for one thousand years (Acts 1:6, Rev. 20:1-6).

What we can clearly see so far is that Daniel's well-known prophecy is not as easy to understand as it seems! When looking at this prophecy with as objective a lens as possible (or open minds), we can see that the more commonly accepted interpretation held by those who believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture, is not the only possible interpretation. There is indeed more than one legitimate (i.e., contextual, and linguistic) way to understand Daniel 9:24-27.

Different Presuppositions

In the following paragraphs, I would like to go back – now in greater detail – to our previous discussion about four views in Bible interpretation as related to time.

As I previously mentioned, the way one interprets Scripture, especially End Time prophecies, is connected to the “cultural lenses” he/she wears.

Since Yeshua's First Coming, there have been different theological takes or forms of interpretation within Yeshua's global body, especially when dealing with End Time prophecy. Here are, again, some of the main presuppositions upon which the different End Time interpretations are based.

Historicism: While attempting to interpret prophecies, *Historicism* considers past historical events, while connecting them with events throughout the history of humanity (i.e., those which are not necessarily described in Scripture). For example, *Historicism* sees the prophecies of Daniel as being fulfilled throughout history, extending from the past (biblical times) through to the present and into the

future. Those holding to *Historicism* apply this method to ancient Israel, Romans, Catholics or the Papacy, and Islam, all the way to the End Times. An almost integral part of *Historicism* is ***Literalism***, a method of interpretation described earlier in this book.

Preterism: *Preterism* interprets some (*partial Preterism*) or all (*full Preterism*) prophecies as events which have already been fulfilled. For example, preterists interpret Daniel's prophecies as referring to events that happened from the 7th century BCE until the first century CE and claim that, consequently, they will not be fulfilled again in the future! For example, in their view, prophecies in the Book of Revelation were already fulfilled in the first century CE. *Preterism* holds that the nation of Israel can find its continuation, or fulfillment, only in Yeshua's global body, especially since the destruction of Jerusalem and the second Temple in 70 CE.

Futurism: *Futurism* interprets portions of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation as events which will be fulfilled only in the future! According to this position, these future events will literally be fulfilled in a physical, apocalyptic and global context.

Dispensationalism: *Dispensationalists* have a close association with *Futurists*. They consider biblical history as divided by God into dispensations—defined periods or ages, in which God relates to distinct people, giving them special and distinct responsibilities. In other words, each period or age in God's calendar is different, accompanied by different goals to be executed. Dispensationalists believe that biblical history does not necessarily have a continuation but is instead divided with possible pauses in between.

I believe this is the place to elaborate some more on two of the four above presuppositions, *Preterism* and *Futurism*. They both are

particularly connected to Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy, and more specifically with the seventieth and final week.

The Birth of *Preterism* and *Futurism*

Up until the 14th-16th centuries (the Protestant Reformation), the Pope and his clergy were secure in their positions as God's appointed leaders of the international "Mother Church." However, when their positions and doctrines started to be challenged by the first Protestant leaders, they tried their very best to combat this "new apostate teaching," with severe persecution of anyone who didn't line up with Roman Catholic theology and dogmas. Many times it included even death at the stake!³²¹ When they saw that severe persecution alone did not have a real effect, and to the contrary, more devoted Roman Catholics began to leave the mother church and join this new movement of "Roman Catholic protestors" (i.e., Protestants), the Pope and his clergy decided to fight this growing new movement in a completely different way—by presenting the only "correct" End Time theology. They called it "the Counter-Reformation." They started to present new interpretations of End Time prophecies, interpretations that would confront and contradict the Protestant interpretation, especially as it related to the identity of the Anti-Messiah and his system. Here is how it was applied practically.

In 1540, a devoted Spanish Roman Catholic named *Ignatius of Loyola* founded the Society of Jesus, which later became known as *the Jesuit Order*. It was (and still is) a very secretive and militant order.³²² Two

³²¹ See for example, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and others. Refer to Fox's *Book of Martyrs*.

³²² This is not the place to discuss whether or not the Jesuits did some good as well. Historians still debate this. For sure, while some uphold their Christian devotion,

devoted Jesuits, named *Alcázar of Seville* and *Francisco Ribera of Salamanca*, were chosen to introduce new interpretations of well-known End Time prophecies to the world, especially those regarding the identity of *the man of sin*, *the little horn*, and *the beast*.

Alcázar was the first to present the world with *Preterism*, and Ribera was the first to present the world with *Futurism*. Note that both Preterism and Futurism had one goal in mind - to divert attention concerning the identity of the Anti-Messiah and his system or government, distancing itself from the Pope and the Vatican in Rome! Alcázar did that by diverting attention to the past, and Ribera did that by diverting attention to the future. Even though the differences between these two presuppositions seemed huge, the fact is that both achieved the same desired goal, *the man of sin*, *the little horn*, and *the beast* had nothing to do with Rome and the Pope!

Dispensationalism, which is connected to *Futurism*, as stated above, also originated in this old 16th century CE tense and bitter theological debate between two of the main denominations within Christianity—the New Reformation movement led by Martin Luther and the Counter-Reformation led by the Catholic Church! Until this 16th century theological debate, End Time prophecies were interpreted mainly through different variants of *Historicism*.³²³

much was written about their dark side as well, especially as it relates to the severe persecutions of early Protestants led by these Jesuits.

³²³ This is not the place to discuss other theological presuppositions such as, “covenant theology,” “critical scholarship” theology, “symbolic messianic” (which is actually a “contemporary evangelical”) theology, and others. In this appendix, I’m trying to explain the main ways in which Daniel’s seventy weeks prophecy was interpreted up until the 17th to 18th centuries.

Daniel's Seventieth Week, Messiah, and the Anti-Messiah Until the 17th-18th Centuries

As you could already see when I presented you with the four main views regarding Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy, while most modern-day End Time prophecy teachers connect this seventieth week to the Anti-Messiah and his relationship with the Jews, most Bible commentators of the Reformation, from around the 14th century CE, continuing with Martin Luther into the 16th century CE, and up until the 17th-18th centuries CE, understood this week as referring to Messiah Yeshua Himself! They saw His crucifixion on that tree at Golgotha (at the end of His three and a half year ministry), as the very fulfillment of *he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering*. They understood the events described in that last (seventieth) week as a description of both Yeshua's crucifixion along with the persecution of His first followers after His death, as well as that which continued all the way to the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. You heard it right! Most Bible commentators up until the 17th-18th centuries CE, believed that Daniel's seventieth week had nothing to do with the Anti-Messiah and that (a) the Anti-Messiah system was nothing but the Roman Catholic or papal system; and (b) the Anti-Messiah was no one other than the Pope himself!

Back to the Middle Eastern Hebraic Lens

Earlier, we discussed the different lens through which Western theologians view or approach Scripture—especially End Time prophecies. As Daniel's famous prophecy was not given to us through a Western lens but rather, through a Middle Eastern Hebraic lens, it is important for us to return, once again, to some of the main characteristics of these original lenses.

Numbers

As mentioned previously, in Western cultures, numbers are merely perceived as quantities. In Middle Eastern cultures, numbers often serve as symbols bearing spiritual significance. As already discussed in the previous chapter, the number 3 is often associated with double blessings and/or with resurrection, the number 4 usually points to the whole world, the number 6 is connected to mankind while the number 7 is associated with God and perfection.

Through the Middle Eastern Hebraic lens, apparent mathematical contradictions, as they relate to the numbering of days and years, can be explained conceptually with no issue or risk to the reliability of the scriptures which contain them. The symbolic nature of numbers would enable the Jewish sages to find further layers of meaning within the biblical text (including Daniel 9).

Multiple and Progressive Fulfillments of Prophecies

To most Westerners it might sound completely inaccurate for one to suggest that Bible prophecies have more than one fulfillment. In general, prophets in the Bible first addressed their own generation, although their prophecies included predictions which related to future generations, as well! Here are a few examples to consider:

Zechariah 14

The main objectives to be fulfilled according to this prophecy:

- a. God will gather *all the nations to battle against Jerusalem...* (14:1).
- b. There would be chaos and hardships inside Jerusalem (14:2).

- c. God Himself will fight against these nations, and *His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...* (14:3-4).
- d. The Mount of Olives will split in two and a river of *living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half toward the eastern sea and half toward the western sea...* (14:13, 8).
- e. *The Lord will be King over all the Earth...* (14:9).

There are those who think that this passage in Zech. 14 must be an End Time prophecy, as the three last objectives clearly point to Yeshua's glorious Second Coming and the millennial kingdom. This is true! Yet, a careful reading of the prophecy reveals that the first two objectives have already had at least two other fulfillments: (1) Before Zechariah's time,³²⁴ when the Babylonian Empire besieged Jerusalem and eventually conquered it and destroyed the first Temple, sometime around 587-6 BCE, and (2) after Zechariah's time, when the Romans besieged the city, conquered it, and eventually destroyed the second Temple.³²⁵

³²⁴ Zechariah was among the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity around 520 BCE. He prophesied together with Haggai and Malachi, trying to encourage his contemporaries to continue to build the second Temple, though amid hardships and in the face of enemies. In addition to his own scroll, he is mentioned in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14.

³²⁵ Notice please that *all nations*, used here and in other scriptures, does not necessarily mean that all individuals, from every nation throughout the world, would be present at the given time of the fulfillment of this prophecy! A careful reading of the word *all* in Scripture reveals that it points to *all* that are present in each situation. *All* can be army units and/or delegations from all the nations; *all* can be individuals, families and groups of people who represent *all* the tribes of Israel, and so on. The two examples above, of *all nations* besieging and destroying Jerusalem, did involve all nations as they were counted back then. These great empires controlled vast areas, and thus, *all people* under their jurisdiction were involved in their conquests. See a few examples of the use of *all* in the Scriptures:

And so, we see that there are still three objectives to be fulfilled in the future. This does not mean that these will be the only objectives fulfilled, but (most likely) all five will be fulfilled at the same time. In other words, Jerusalem once again will be besieged, conquered, and destroyed; but this time, God Himself will fight against our enemies, and (Yeshua) will stand on the Mount of Olives, which will be split into two, etc.

Joel 2:8-32³²⁶

The main objectives to be fulfilled in this prophecy:

- a. God's Spirit will be poured out upon *all flesh*. *Sons and daughters shall prophesy. Old men shall dream dreams. Young men shall see visions.* God's Spirit will be poured out also on *manservants and maidservants*.
- b. There will be *wonders in the Heavens and on the Earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.*
- c. *Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, for in Mount Zion and Jerusalem shall be deliverance.*

Judg. 6:33—here this certainly does not include women and children, and not even all the soldiers; 1 Sam. 17:24—from the immediate context, it is clear that *all Israel* did not mean every individual Israeli, but only those soldiers who were with King Shaul on the battlefield. The same is true regarding King Solomon at the dedication of the first Temple in Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 8:5, 14, 62).

³²⁶ Bible scholars are not sure when Joel prophesied. Some say it was around the time of the first exile (of the ten tribes), in the eighth century BCE; some place him around the Babylonian exile; yet a few others say he prophesied much later, around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

From an initial look, it is clear that at least one fulfillment took place two thousand years ago during Shavuot (i.e., Pentecost. See Acts 2:14-21). The question is: will this specific prophecy, as other End Time prophecies, be fulfilled yet again in the future? The answer clearly is yes. Why? Simply because as we discussed in chapter one, the term *the Latter Days* (in Hebrew, *Acharit Hayamim* — אחרית הימים) speaks of a time period that started at Yeshua's First Coming, and ends with His Second Coming (See again, Heb. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:20. Compare with Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Deut. 4:30, 31:29; Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Micah 4:1; Dan. 10:14).

While it is a typical End Time prophecy, we can see that at least a few of its objectives were fulfilled in that well-known Shavuot event two thousand years ago (objectives “a” and “c”), while others have not been completely or ultimately fulfilled yet (see objective “b”). It is my understanding that all the objectives above will receive their final fulfillment at the end of this period of *the Latter Days* - at Yeshua's Second Coming.

Daniel 11:31 & 12:11:

The only objective to be fulfilled in this prophecy is the well-known *abomination that causes desolation*.

Daniel's prophecy (in the sixth century BCE) was also mentioned by Yeshua (see Matt. 24:15 and Mk. 13:14). Now, while most of us are familiar with the traditional interpretation of this *abomination* which applies it to the Anti-Messiah at the very end of the age, not too many of us are aware of the fact that this specific prophecy was already fulfilled twice: (1) just a few centuries following Daniel's time, when Antiochus the Fourth (Epiphanes) placed a statue in the Temple in Jerusalem, around 167 BCE; and (2) shortly after Yeshua's death,

burial and resurrection—this time at the hand of Titus, the Roman general who destroyed the second Temple in 70 CE.³²⁷

Will this prophecy be fulfilled once again in the future, just before Yeshua returns? It might very well be! Yet, we must also consider that for almost two thousand years now, God has dwelt in a spiritual Temple—that is, in us, His true followers, the body of Messiah here on Earth!³²⁸ And so, it is my understanding and personal conviction that while it is good to keep our eyes on a physical (third) fulfillment of this well-known prophecy, we must first look and examine our own hearts, to see that there is no “abomination” that resides there, in God’s very (spiritual) Temple!

Daniel Chapters 2, 7, 8 and 10-12:

Daniel describes four kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, all of which are included in one image or statue (see Dan. 2:31-45). Later, Daniel is given much greater detail concerning two of these, especially as they relate to his people, Israel, and *the Latter Days* (see Dan. 7:1-27, 8:3-26 and chapters 10-12).

Here are the main objectives to be fulfilled in these chapters: the first two are described in chapters 2 and 7, and the others in chapters 8, and 10 through 12:

³²⁷ Notice please that the Temple in Jerusalem is described as *the sanctuary fortress* (in Hebrew, *hamikdash hamaoz* — המקדש המעוז). This is probably because of God’s very Presence which dwelt in the Temple in Jerusalem and which is often described as *my strength and power* (see 2 Sam. 22:33 — in Hebrew, *HaEl Ma-uzi* — האל מעוזי), *a strength to the poor* (see Isa. 25:4 — in Hebrew, *Maoz La’dal* — מעוז לדל); and *the strength of Israel* (as in Joel 4:16 — in Hebrew, *Maoz LeIsrael* — מעוז לישראל). See also Ps. 27:1, 28:8, 31:3, 31:5 and others. It goes to suggest that *the sanctuary fortress* is indeed the Temple in Jerusalem.

³²⁸ See 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; 2 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 21:3.

- a. Nebuchadnezzar, the head of this statue, is the king of the first kingdom—Babylon. His kingdom would be taken by *a lesser kingdom* – Medo-Persia – which would then be taken by Greece. The last and fourth, a most terrible kingdom, would be Rome.
- b. In the days of the fourth kingdom (Rome), God's Kingdom will put an end to the four kingdoms and will be established forever and ever.
- c. The four kingdoms are described, too, as *a lion with eagle's wings, a bear with three ribs in its mouth, one like a leopard with four wings*, and lastly, the fourth, *dreadful, and terrible, exceedingly strong ... different from all the beasts that were before it*.
- d. The third kingdom, or beast, who has *four wings on its back*, is also described as having *four heads* (see 7:6).
- e. This third kingdom also has the infamous *little horn* that would cause many problems and hardships to God's nation, Israel (see 8:9-14, 19-26).

Interestingly enough, a very similar description of that *little horn* is also given in connection to the fourth kingdom, or beast (see 7:8-9, 11, 20-27).

It is quite easy to see that there was at least one fulfillment which involved all four kingdoms, or beasts -- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, were all in existence from the time of Daniel and continuing all the way through to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Rome in the year 70 CE (points "a" & "b"). We also know that God's Kingdom had already been established in the first century, although not to its optimal and maximum fulfillment; as that *stone*,

that was cut out without hands and that became *a great mountain that filled the whole Earth* clearly speaks of Yeshua, whose Kingdom was established in the first century and since then, has truly been filling the whole Earth (point “b”). We also know from history that at least one person fits the *little horn* description -- Antiochus Epiphanes, from the second century BCE, of whom we have spoken more than once (point “d”). Lastly, we know that another *little horn* – Titus – caused many problems for God’s people and eventually destroyed their (second) Temple in Jerusalem (point “e”).

Once again, were the above fulfillments meant to be “one-time,” sort of, “once-and-for-all” fulfillments? Should we expect at least one more fulfillment in our own time or soon after?

According to the above examples of prophecies which had more than one fulfillment, the answer should be a clear, yes. And indeed, it is my understanding that we can see the four beasts – united in one body, i.e., the statue (Dan. 2) – rising again in our own generation. Just as an example, did you know that one of the main symbols of Great Britain is a *Lion*? And what about Russia? Could she be the *Bear*? What about Germany of the last century with its third Reich and the *Leopard* as one of its symbols? Moreover, could Hitler fit *the little horn* description of that (third) beast or kingdom? And lastly, what about world organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the WEF (World Economic Forum), the WHO (World Health Organization) and the Vatican, collaborating as one united entity? Could they be a representation of the fourth and last beast—Rome? Could it be that what we have been awaiting in these very days is yet another (final) *little horn* – the Anti-Messiah – who is going to arise from this last and terrible beast? It is my opinion that the answer to the above questions is a resounding, yes.

Matt. 24:

Within His classic End Time prophecy context, Yeshua said, *Assuredly I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place!* (Emphasis added). Let us look at some of the main objectives that needed to be fulfilled within the immediate context:

- a. Many will come in Yeshua's name and say, *I am the Messiah* (see verse 4. See also verse 11).
- b. *Wars and rumors of war* (verse 6).
- c. *Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...* (see verse 7).
- d. There will be *famines, pestilences, and earthquakes...* (see verse 7).
- e. As for Yeshua's followers, *you will be delivered up to Tribulation and they will kill you, and you will be hated for my namesake. Moreover, many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another...* (see verses 9-10).
- f. *The love of many will grow cold* (see verse 11).
- g. The good news of God's Kingdom *will be preached in all the world... and then the end will come* (see verse 14).
- h. An *abomination of desolation* (Dan. 11:31), which will be placed *in the Holy place*, will be a sign for many in Judea to *escape to the mountains*, as it will trigger *a great Tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall be!* Unless these days are *shortened for the elect's sake*, no one would survive that Tribulation (see verses 15-22).

- i. The coming of Yeshua – *the Son of Man* – will take place only after the culmination of certain things that must first be fulfilled: *The Sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from Heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken!* His coming will be *as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west* (see verses 27-29).
- j. At His coming, *all the tribes of the Earth will mourn; He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other* (see verses 30-31).

And lastly,

- k. As mentioned above, all the above points will be observed and experienced in a single *generation* (see verse 34).

Were all the above objectives fulfilled in Yeshua's own generation, or were they only partially fulfilled?

A simple study of history clearly shows that objectives "a" to "h" have already been fulfilled to some extent. *False prophets* and teachers had already been in existence during the first century (see 2 Pet. 2:1, 1 Jn. 4:1). There were also some *wars and rumors of wars* during Yeshua's ministry and certainly when the Great Jewish Revolt led to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.

Famines, pestilence, and earthquakes had already occurred before Yeshua's generation and continued throughout time to our present day. The love of many, at least within Yeshua's first century body, had already grown cold; otherwise, why would the apostles have needed to encourage and emphasize the great need for the believers to love one another (see Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17, 4:8; 1 John, Rev. 2:4)? Even the good news of the kingdom had been preached (at that time) to

the then-known world (see Col. 1:23)! Lastly, the *abomination* or more correctly, *the complete desecration* – i.e., destruction of God's Temple took place in the year 70 CE!

Nevertheless, we can clearly see that objectives “i” through “k” had not yet been fully fulfilled. We know Yeshua's glorious Second Coming has not yet occurred! We know that, even though Yeshua's generation could have thought that the greatest Tribulation of all times had arrived during their own period, still, not all of them were killed or consumed during those hard times preceding the destruction of the second Temple; as well as the other tribulations and hardships that ended up being perpetrated upon God's people in the first century and continuing throughout their long years of exile (culminating in the Holocaust). Moreover, we know with assurance, that *the powers of the heavens* have not yet been *shaken*!

Since Yeshua spoke of *this generation*, it is pretty clear that He was indeed pointing to only *one generation*, which I believe points to both the first century, Yeshua's own generation, and *the last generation* which will exist at the time of His glorious Second Coming. I firmly believe that this last generation spoken of in Scripture is ours, and it *will, by no means, pass away until all these things take place*!

The last legitimate question we should all ask is: when Yeshua returns, will all the above objectives be fulfilled again? Will only the few that have not yet been fulfilled, finally be fulfilled? In my opinion, most, if not all the objectives will be fulfilled within this last generation.

After this lengthy explanation of the specific lens which I have used while attempting to interpret Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy, I would like to share my personal view with you.

Author's View

It is my opinion that to better understand this well-known prophecy, one first needs to understand the different meanings of a few Hebrew words and terms shown in this prophecy. The following are three examples:

1. **The command** — Dan. 9:25 reads, *know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem, until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks...* In this specific verse, there are three Hebrew words to which I would like to draw your attention: *min motzah davar* (מן מוצא דבר). These words are translated as *from the going forth of the command*. When reading it in Hebrew, it actually states, *from the coming out of the word*. In Deut. 8:3, we see a similar wording -- *motzah Pi Adonai* (מוצא פי ה'), which literally means, *[whatever] comes out of God's mouth*. The question that arises is, to what did the Archangel Gabriel refer when he said, *from the coming out of the word*? Which exact *word* was it, and specifically, from where did it come? In other words, who spoke that *word* and when? Was Gabriel referring to the word which came out of Jeremiah's mouth?³²⁹ Was he referring to the word which came out of King Cyrus' mouth?³³⁰ Was he referring to Daniel's own

³²⁹ See Jer. 25:11-12, 29:10: *And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years... I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation... For thus says the Lord, after seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you...* Notice, the seventy years directly relate to the king of Babylon and, at Babylon.

³³⁰ See Ezra 1:1-4 — *Thus says Cyrus King of Persia ... He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem...* Isa. 45 — *he shall build My city*. Thus, both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem are mentioned and related to king Cyrus.

words?³³¹ Was he referring to King Artaxerxes' words, given around 457 BCE, after years of delay in the building of the walls of Jerusalem?³³²

2. **Messiah and Prince** — In the Hebrew scriptures, Messiah (Hebrew, *Mashiach* — משיח) and Prince (Hebrew, *Nagid* — נגיד) do not apply only to *the* Messiah—the One we believe to be Yeshua of Nazareth! *Messiah* is based on the Hebrew root *Mem, Shin, Chet* (מ.ש.ח), which has to do with the use of the anointing oil (in Hebrew, *shemen hamishchah* (שמן המשחה), used for crowning kings and consecrating priests. Every king and priest in Israel was “a Messiah,” as he was anointed with that consecrating ointment.³³³ Similarly, *a prince* could describe a king, leader, commander, or even someone who is in charge of something in God's Temple.³³⁴ Based on this

³³¹ See Dan. 9:21 — *Now while I was speaking* (in Hebrew, *medaber*, which is connected to *davar* — word). See also verse 23 — *At the beginning of your supplications, the command* (in Hebrew, *davar* — word) went out...

³³² See Ezra 7:11-26.

³³³ Actually, not every king or priest in Israel, as King Cyrus was not an Israelite king — see Isa. 45:1. As we know, this anointing oil was a symbol of God's protection and guidance through His Holy Spirit (see Lev. 4:3). *Anointed* in Hebrew is *mashiach* (see 1 Sam. 24:7, 11), where King Shaul is called *mashiach Adonai*—*God's anointed one*. See also 2 Sam. 1:14, 16 and many others. See also Strong's H4886: A primitive root; to *rub* with oil, that is, to *anoint*; by implication to *consecrate*; also, to *paint*: *anoint*, *paint*; and H4899 — *anointed*; usually a *consecrated person* (as a king, priest or saint).

³³⁴ See King Shaul in 1 Sam. 10:1; David in 2 Sam. 5:2, 6:21, 7:8; King Solomon in 1 Kings 1:35. See also Jer. 20:1; 1 Ch. 26:24; Neh. 11:11; and 1 Ch. 13:1. See this term as applied to Messiah Yeshua in Isa. 55:4 and many other places. See Strong H5057 and H5046: a *commander* (as occupying the *front*), civil, military, or religious; generally (abstract plural), *honorable* themes: *captain*, *chief*, *excellent thing*, (*chief*) *governor*, *leader*, *noble*, *prince*, (*chief*) *ruler*.

simple data, the questions we should ask are: who is this *Messiah, the Prince* in Dan. 9:25? Is he the same person mentioned in the following verse as the one being *cut off*?

3. ***The one who confirms a covenant with the many*** — Dan. 9:27 reads: *Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week* (Hebrew, *v'eegbir brit larabim shavua echad* — והגביר ברית לרבים שבוע אחד). The Hebrew word for *confirm* in this specific verse, is *v'eegbir*.³³⁵ It has to do with “strengthening” or “making something stronger,” rather than just “confirming” it. And so, we should ask firstly: what exactly is this specific *covenant* that needed to be strengthened? Secondly: who is this one who makes this covenant stronger? As I mentioned previously, while most of us today believe “it must be the Anti-Messiah,” up until recent centuries, most Bible commentators applied it to Messiah Yeshua Himself!

Israel is in the Very Center of Daniel’s Prophecy

As I have previously said, Daniel’s seventy weeks prophecy cannot and should not be separated from its immediate context—namely, Daniel’s long prayer and supplication on behalf of his people, Israel. As I have already mentioned, Israel as a nation and a land (more specifically, Jerusalem and Judea) are in the very center of this well-known prophecy, and no one can ignore that!

³³⁵ *V'eegbir* comes from the root *Ga-Va-R*, which has to do mainly with strength, making someone or something strong or powerful. Actually, the very name of the Archangel Gabriel in Dan. 9 is derived from this Hebrew root! See Strong H1396: *to be strong*; by implication *to prevail, act insolently: exceed, confirm, be great, be mighty, prevail, put to more [strength], strengthen, be stronger, be valiant*.

The Number 70 Cannot Be Taken Literally

It is my understanding that the number 70, especially in this specific prophecy, cannot be taken literally. When attempting to take it literally and insert it into a mathematically precise chronological order, we quickly find ourselves with some inconsistencies, and this is true concerning all the main other views I have presented to you above! Let me try and prove this important point to you by using the views we have previously examined:

- a. Placing the starting point around 588 BCE (Jeremiah's prophecy), the seventy weeks should have ended – if taken literally – around 98 BCE! Those who hold to this starting point are correct only regarding the first week, as it points to Cyrus who can be understood as *Messiah the Prince* (see above). The rest of the weeks (sixty-nine) are contrived in order to use real historic events so that they adapt and fulfill the other objectives of the prophecy.
- b. Placing the starting point around 538 BCE (Daniel's own words) – if taken literally – the seventy weeks should have ended around 48 BCE. Even though the first week, according to this starting point, might fit into historic events such as the times of Ezra, Nehemiah, Joshua or Unio (Chunio) the high priest, here, one also needs to manipulate the amount of the remaining weeks, so that they comply with and fulfill the other objectives of the prophecy.
- c. Placing the starting point around 457 BCE (King Artaxerxes), they should have ended – if taken literally – around 33 CE! This would have actually been the only view that would have fit most of the Daniel 9:24-27 objectives! Yet, here also there is a need to stretch and manipulate the numbers to literally match

everything (see the Protestant and the Seventh-Day Adventists' views above). Why? Simply because while it is true that Yeshua was anointed by the Holy Spirit (John's baptism, see Matt. 3), and/or that Yeshua's crucifixion took place around 30 CE, there is still a great need to play with the numbers to literally make them fit with the destruction of Jerusalem and the second Temple, since these events took place approximately 40 years later!

As we can see, not even one of the views or commentaries we have presented in this appendix, can actually and literally employ the number 70. It is simply mission impossible! No wonder the Jewish sages (and some of the Roman Catholic theologians following their example) chose not to take the numbers in this well-known prophecy too literally. They stretched and manipulated it in order to correspond with respective interpretations.

As I have previously displayed, in the Middle Eastern Jewish/Hebraic mindset (or, lens), numbers are not only mere quantities. They do have symbolic and spiritual significance! In this specific context of the Daniel 9:24-27 prophecy, we can see that the number 7 – God's Number – is very central throughout the prophecy, thus reminding us that He is the One who is in full control—with a particular focus on the destiny of His beloved Chosen Nation - Israel!³³⁶

³³⁶ There two good examples of the symbolic and spiritual meanings of the number 7 in Scripture, especially when considering Messiah's own words concerning that *generation that will not pass...* (1) The length of a *generation* is usually *seventy* years, or eighty (see Ps. 90:10). (2) In the gospel of Matthew 18:22, where Simon Cephas (better known as Peter) asked Yeshua, *Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?* Please notice Yeshua's answer: *I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven!* (Emphasis added). Yeshua – an Israeli-born Jew – did not expect His faithful disciple to start counting and be mathematically precise when calculating the sins of his brother

Messiah Yeshua and Daniel 9:24

As mentioned above, Israel as a nation and a land, and - Yeshua – her Messiah – are in the very center of this well-known prophecy. Here are, once again, the six objectives according to Daniel 9:24:

1. *Finishing transgression*
2. *Making an end of sins*
3. *Making reconciliation for iniquity*
4. *Bringing in everlasting righteousness*
5. *Sealing up vision and prophecy*
6. *Anointing the Most Holy*

According to the New Covenant writings, the death of Yeshua was the ultimate solution to sin (objectives 1 through 3). Yeshua causes those who are *in Him* to be righteous (objective 4). He is the optimal fulfillment of prophecy (objective 5). Lastly, He, as *Immanuel* (God with us), and our very heavenly High Priest, is the One who sanctifies or *anoints the Most Holy* in the heavenlies (objective 6).

Messiah Yeshua and Daniel 9:26-27

As we have already established, up until the 17th-18th centuries CE, most Bible commentators had not distinguished the sixty-ninth week from the seventieth! Most agreed that verse 27 was actually an elaboration (a kind of explanation) of verse 26, as it was placed within the immediate context of the seventieth week. Thus, most believed

against him and his forgiveness thereof all the way until he reached the number 77! Again, we see that Yeshua rather pointed to an endless number and a perfect number, God's number!

that the one who *confirms a covenant with many for one week*, is none other than Yeshua Himself!

I do think that this is very possible since the New Covenant writings would seem to support it. In Matt. 26:28, Yeshua says, *this is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*. Heb. 9:28 teaches us that *Messiah was offered once to bear the sins of many*.³³⁷ (emphasis added).

With His own precious blood, Yeshua sealed a *New Covenant* with His Chosen People, Israel.³³⁸ While doing it, He *confirmed (made stronger)* God's first covenant that was given on Mount Sinai. Note, that although this *New Covenant* brought about some changes, especially in relation to the external way of keeping the Old (Mt. Sinai) Covenant, it did not *abolish* its very heart (principles)! Rather, the New Covenant *confirmed* the Old Covenant's truthfulness, righteousness, goodness, and holiness! Thus, the New Covenant *strengthened* God's holy and just Torah, by way of providing it with its correct, perfect and Spirit-filled interpretation!³³⁹

Once it was understood that verses 26 and 27 were indeed connected (i.e., verse 27 elaborates on and explains verse 26), it led most Bible scholars and commentators to agree that Yeshua's earthly ministry, which lasted around three and a half years, perfectly fit the first half of that last seventieth week in Daniel's prophecy. Why? At the very

³³⁷ See also Mk. 14:24; Rom. 5:16-19.

³³⁸ See again Jer. 31:31: Only the *two houses of ISRAEL* are mentioned! As we stated previously, this is not to say that gentiles are not *welcome* to join together with *the Olive Tree* of ISRAEL!

³³⁹ See Matt. 5:17–7:29. See also Rom. 3:31, 7:12; and Heb. 7:11-19. See also in "Building the Foundations Part 3" in Chapter two, the discussion on "The First century Believers and the Old Covenant."

end of this half a week, Yeshua was nailed to that tree at Golgotha as the ultimate sacrifice, which satisfied all of God's holy requirements in the Old Covenant, marking the *strengthening* and *confirmation* of it! Yeshua perfectly fit the description in Daniel 9:26-27, as His three and a half years of ministry ended right in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week, also marking the very end of the old sacrificial system at the Temple—as far as God was concerned. This Levitical Order now *ceased* so that the new *Malki-tzedek* (Melchizedek) Order would take effect!³⁴⁰

It's important to remember that all six objectives in verse 24 had to do with Messiah Yeshua, and all were meant to be fulfilled within the timeframe of seventy weeks! Daniel 9:24 did not make any distinction between the first sixty-nine weeks and the seventieth! Please note that without the old earthly sacrificial system ceasing, the first three objectives of the prophecy could not have been fulfilled!

The Anti-Messiah and Daniel 9:26-27

Is the Anti-Messiah mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27? According to the accepted view of most of today's Protestants (as well as most Messianic Jewish believers), the answer is a resounding yes! Yet, a careful reading of the entire prophecy, free from any preconceived ideas or presuppositions, shows the two following facts:

- a. Up until *Messiah shall be cut off* (verse 26), accepted by all of us to be Messiah Yeshua, there is no mention of any "Anti-Messiah."
- b. Though the destruction of *the city and the sanctuary* (by Titus in 70 CE) immediately follows the verse stating, *Messiah shall*

³⁴⁰ See Matt. 27:50-51. See also Heb. chapters 7–10.

be cut off, a simple study of history confirms that there were forty years between the two parts of this same verse. And so, we cannot with any certainty connect Messiah Yeshua with the deeds of the Anti-Messiah in a literal way.

Do the above points prove, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the Anti-Messiah is not at all mentioned in Daniel 9? Could it be that even though the central figure of this prophecy is Israel's Messiah, the Anti-Messiah is mentioned "behind the scenes" as well? Is it a possibility that the very same biblical reference, which clearly points to Israel's Messiah, also points to the Anti-Messiah, yet in a more "hidden way?" Well, it really depends on whom you ask. If you ask someone who is detached from the Hebraic/Jewish Middle Eastern lens, the answer would be "certainly not!" Yet, if you ask someone who is fully connected to his/her Hebraic/Jewish Middle Eastern lens, you might be surprised to hear a big, yes!

This is, indeed, one example that demonstrates the beauty and the depth of the Hebraic/Jewish Middle Eastern culture. Together with all that I have previously said regarding the connection between verses 26 and 27, and accepting that *confirms a covenant*, most likely refers to Messiah Yeshua, there are some "hints hidden within the text" that also connect the Anti-Messiah to Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy. Allow me to elaborate.

Descriptions, such as *on the wing of abominations* and *desolate*, (verse 27) might very well be associated with *the abomination of desolation* mentioned in Dan. 11:31, especially when considering Yeshua's own words (see Dan. 11:31 and Matt. 24:15). As we have established, historically speaking, these descriptions point to two events within Jewish history: Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration of the Temple in the second century BCE (see above), and Titus - the Roman's desecration

and destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. It is my understanding that both Antiochus and Titus are a sort of prototype or foreshadowing of the Anti-Messiah (see above: the similarities between the descriptions of *the little horn* within the two last kingdoms—Greece and Rome).

Anti-Messiah attempting to imitate Messiah Yeshua

One of the main characteristics of the Anti-Messiah is that he greatly desires to take God's throne. How does he go about achieving that ungodly goal? He tries his very best to imitate and fake God's goodness and likeness. One example of this is Satan (represented by the snake, or serpent) in the Garden of Eden. Note that he did not threaten Eve nor shout at her. He did not mistreat or dishonor her in any shape or form! He sounded like one who very much cared for her good, only wishing her the best, which would make him appear to be as God Himself (see Gen. 3:5: *and you will be like God, knowing good and evil...*). Another example of him trying to imitate and take God's very throne, is his attempt to have this world go through "the Great Reset" to usher in his satanic "New World Order" (see chapter one – "Covid 19 – the beginning of the end?").

Yes, the best description I can give for Satan, and thus, also his soon-coming representative, the Anti-Messiah, is that he is indeed "the best imitator of God."

Could it be that at the very end of what Scripture calls *the latter days*, Satan will try to fulfill Daniel's prophecy while presenting himself as "the ultimate solution to all of humanity's problems?" Could it be that he will indeed *confirm a covenant* with (some) of God's Chosen People and later reveal his true colors, following the pattern set by his ancient prototypes (Antiochus and Titus)? I think it is very possible, especially when reading this well-known prophecy through the Middle Eastern Hebraic lens.

Daniel's Seventy Weeks Has Multiple Progressive Fulfillments

It is my understanding that like many prophecies in the Bible, Daniel 9:24-27 has its own multiple progressive fulfillments. This would be especially true if we look at the prophecy within the broader context of the other End Time prophecies presented in Daniel. I speak especially concerning the *four kingdoms, or beasts* and their relationship to God's Chosen Nation.

Besides the six objectives mentioned in verse 24, there are others which need to be fulfilled within these seventy weeks (490 years). Let's look at all of them again:

- a. *Finishing the transgression*
- b. *Making an end of sins*
- c. *Making reconciliation for iniquity*
- d. *Bringing in everlasting righteousness*
- e. *Sealing up vision and prophecy*
- f. *Anointing the Most Holy*
- g. *Messiah shall be cut off*
- h. *The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.*³⁴¹
- i. *The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.*

³⁴¹ Note that while many commentators combine the first seven and the following sixty-two weeks, it is quite clear that in the original Hebrew, they are divided into two separate groupings.

- j. *There will be a 'war of desolation'.*
- k. *He shall confirm a covenant with many.*
- l. *In the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.*
- m. *On the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, and the consummation ... is poured out of the desolate.*

If we see at least some of the numbers symbolically, and try to fit them into real historical events connected in some way or another to Jewish history, we can see the following:

Points "a" through "g" were fulfilled by Yeshua's First Coming two thousand years ago (see above). As far as foreshadowing, pictures and patterns that point to Messiah Yeshua, some biblical figures did serve as prototypes of Yeshua throughout Jewish history. People, such as Joshua the high priest in Nehemiah and Ezra's time, Zerubbabel, and Unio (Chunio), the high priest who was murdered in the second century BCE.

Moreover, we can see that some of the first six objectives are still being fulfilled to this very day within Yeshua's body. We are called to *finish transgressions and make an end of sins* in our own lives.³⁴² We are to be *ambassadors of reconciliation for iniquity*.³⁴³ We are called to live righteously through His righteousness.³⁴⁴ We are called to *anoint the most high* (both Yeshua our Messiah King, and us – His body – being holy unto Him).

³⁴² See Rom. 6:1-14; 1 Jn. 2:1, 3:6, 5:18.

³⁴³ See 2 Cor. 5:18-19.

³⁴⁴ See 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Pet. 1:5; 1 Jn. 2:29, 3:7.

As far as points “h” through “m,” Jewish history shows a few more of these multiple progressive fulfillments. Jerusalem was indeed built *in troublesome times*, more than just once - initially, when the first wave of Jews returned from the Babylonian Exile,³⁴⁵ and later, in the days of the Maccabees, in the second century BCE. As we have seen previously, the *abomination of desolation* was fulfilled at least twice, by Antiochus Epiphanes, who also made *a covenant* with some of the Jewish elites of his time, breaking it *in the middle*; and, by Titus, who, three and a half years before destroying the Temple, also interrupted the sacrifices.

And so, we should not at all be surprised at the possibility that we might be the final generation just before Yeshua’s glorious return, witnessing the very last fulfillment of Daniel’s seventy weeks prophecy taking place. I personally believe that as Yeshua *confirmed a covenant with many* two thousand years ago by His atoning death on that tree at Golgotha, some of us – His true followers – will be martyred for His Holy Name’s sake, in order to *confirm/strengthen* the truthfulness of the Gospel—His New Covenant with Israel. I do believe that He will give us all His power through the Holy Spirit to minister His truth and the gospel of the kingdom to people for *three and a half years*. I also am convinced that it will happen concurrently to the revelation and acts of the Anti-Messiah, who will first try to imitate Him, and then show his ugly, true colors, while persecuting us (Yeshua’s true followers), some even unto a martyr’s death! Sadly, I suspect the Anti-Messiah will cause the death of many of Messiah’s true followers and destroy a good portion of Jerusalem.

To summarize, it is my opinion that all the objectives of Daniel 9:24-27 have multiple, progressive fulfillments. Many were fulfilled before

³⁴⁵ See Ezra 4:5; Neh. 2, 4, 6.

Yeshua's First Coming. Some were fulfilled in Yeshua's time, two thousand years ago; and some will be fulfilled once again during the time of the last generation (likely our own).

May we all be found worthy of His specific calling on our lives during the coming days. Amen!

Appendix 2:

Respected Traditional Commentaries on Daniel 9:24-27 Up Until the 19th Century CE³⁴⁶

160 CE — Clement of Alexandria: From the captivity of Babylon, which took place during the time of Jeremiah the prophet, what had been spoken of by Daniel the prophet was fulfilled. Daniel 9:24-27 in the original manuscript says, *That the Temple, accordingly, was built in seven weeks, is evident; for it is written in Esdras. And, thus, Messiah became King of the Jews, reigning in Jerusalem in the fulfillment of the seven weeks.* And in the sixty and two weeks the whole of Judaea was quiet, and without wars. And Messiah our Lord, ‘the Holy of Holies,’ having come and fulfilled the vision as well as the prophecy, was anointed in His flesh by the Father’s Holy Spirit. In those ‘sixty-two weeks,’ as the prophet said, and ‘in the one week,’ was He Lord? *The half of the week Nero... in the holy city Jerusalem placed the abomination; and in the half of the week, he was taken away, and Otho, and Galba, and Vitellius Vespasian rose to become the supreme power, and destroyed Jerusalem, desolating the holy place.* These are the facts,

³⁴⁶ Note that (a) all quotations are as usually in a different font. (b) I certainly do not agree with every statement and interpretation by the Church Fathers or other respected theologians! I am only sharing *excerpts* to demonstrate that there are other ways to interpret Daniel’s famous prophecy and to show how far off these ancient interpretations were from the ones of the last 200–300 years. (c) I am not amillennialistic in my theology! As I have said numerous times throughout this book, I believe that most Scripture conveys the “cyclical character” of the Middle Eastern Hebrew mindset. Accordingly, most prophecies have more than one fulfillment, and the different fulfillments are progressive—i.e., not all aspects of a prophecy are fulfilled each time; rather, they are fulfilled in stages, until the very last detail is completed in the last, complete fulfillment! Thus, there is yet one more fulfillment to expect within the Daniel 9:24-27 prophecy, a fulfillment I believe we have already seen as it has taken place over the last few centuries.

making it clear to whoever is able to understand, as the prophet said (*Stromata*, book 1, chapter 21).

220 CE — Sextus Julius Africanus: This passage touches on many marvelous things. At present however, I shall speak only to the things contained which impact the chronology, as well as associated matters. It is evident that the passage speaks of the advent of Messiah, who was to manifest Himself after seventy weeks. For in the Savior's time, or from Him, are transgressions repealed and sins brought to an end... For before the advent of the Savior these things had not yet occurred and were therefore, only awaited. And the beginning of the numbers, as it pertains to the seventy weeks which make up 490 years, the angel instructs us to take from the going forth of the commandment to answer and to build Jerusalem. This happened in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia... It is by calculating from Artaxerxes, up to the time of Messiah that the seventy weeks are comprised, according to the calculation of the Jews...

225 CE — Origin: The weeks of years, which the prophet Daniel had also predicted, extending to the leadership of Messiah, have been fulfilled.

17th-18th Century CE — Matthew Henry, Bible commentator: Concerning the termination of them (*the 490 years/seventy weeks*); and here likewise interpreters are not agreed. *Some make them to end at the death of Messiah* and think the express words of this famous prophecy will warrant us to conclude that from this very hour when Gabriel spoke to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Messiah died, which was towards evening too, it was exactly 490 years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion. But others think, because it is said that *in the midst of the weeks* (that is, the last of the seventy weeks) *he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, they end three years and a half after the death of Messiah*, when the Jews having rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the gentiles. *But those who*

make them to end precisely at the death of Messiah read it thus, 'He shall make strong the testament to the many; the last seven, or the last week, yea, half that seven, or half that week (namely, the latter half, the three years and a half which Messiah spent in his public ministry), shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation.' Others make these 490 years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem, about thirty-seven years after the death of Messiah, because these seventy weeks are said to be determined upon the people of the Jews and the holy city; and much is said here concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and one week; and the reason of this is as hard to account for as anything else. *In the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week Messiah preached his gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations were laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.*³⁴⁷

18th-19th Century CE — Adam Clarke, Britain: From the coming of our Lord, the *third period* is to be dated, viz., 'He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week,' that is seven years. This confirmation of the covenant must take in the ministry of John the Baptist with that of our Lord, comprehending the term of seven years, during the whole of which he might be well said to confirm or ratify the new covenant with mankind... These seven years, added to the four hundred and eighty-three, complete the four hundred and ninety years, or seventy prophetic weeks; so that the whole of this prophecy, from the times and corresponding events, has been fulfilled to the very letter. Some imagine that the *half* of the last seven years is to be referred to the total destruction of the Jews by *Titus*, when the daily sacrifice for ever ceased to be offered; and that the intermediate space of *thirty-*

³⁴⁷ See his whole interpretation at:
<https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary/mh/daniel/9>

seven years, from our Lord's death till the destruction of the city, is passed over as being of no account in relation to the prophecy, and that it was on this account that the last seven years are *divided*. But Dean Prideaux thinks that the whole refers to our Lord's preaching connected with that of the Baptist. Vachetzi, says he, signifies in the half part of the week; that is, in the latter three years and a half in which he exercised himself in the public ministry, he caused, by the sacrifice of himself, all other sacrifices and oblations to cease, which were instituted to signify his.³⁴⁸

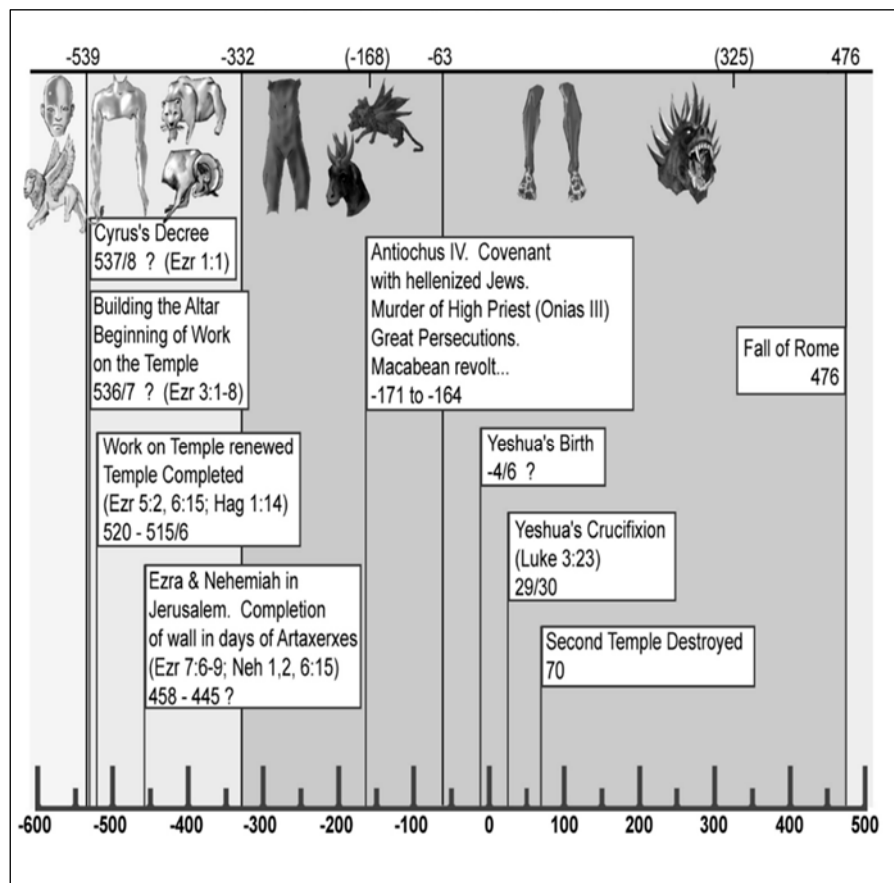
³⁴⁸ See the full commentary at:

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/acc/daniel-9.html>. See another 19th century perspective, a critical and explanatory commentary, titled "The 70th Week of Daniel: The total failure of Dispensational theology," with notes on Daniel 9:24-27 at: <https://www.rivalnations.org/70th-week-of-daniel/>.


Note that these old commentaries are made by "Amillennialists" who see everything through the Western, Greek (linear) lens! If they would be able to see through Middle Eastern Hebraic eyes, they would understand that there is more than one fulfillment of biblical prophecy! See Yeshua's own words, yet again, in Matt. 24:34: *Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and Earth will pass away but my words will not pass away!* Now, if indeed He meant to speak only of His first century generation, then we have nothing to expect in our generation or the generations to come, as all has already been fulfilled! But the re-establishment of Israel, God's ancient chosen people in the 20th century, shows that there is still another final fulfillment to Daniel 9 as well as other prophecies throughout the Bible!

Appendix 3: Illustrations


Book of Daniel – Timetable



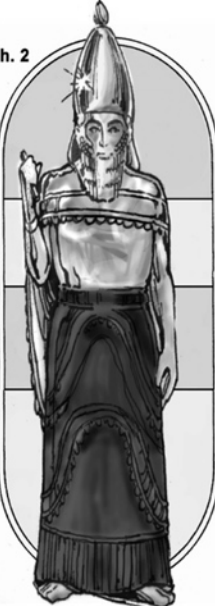
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Ch. 7

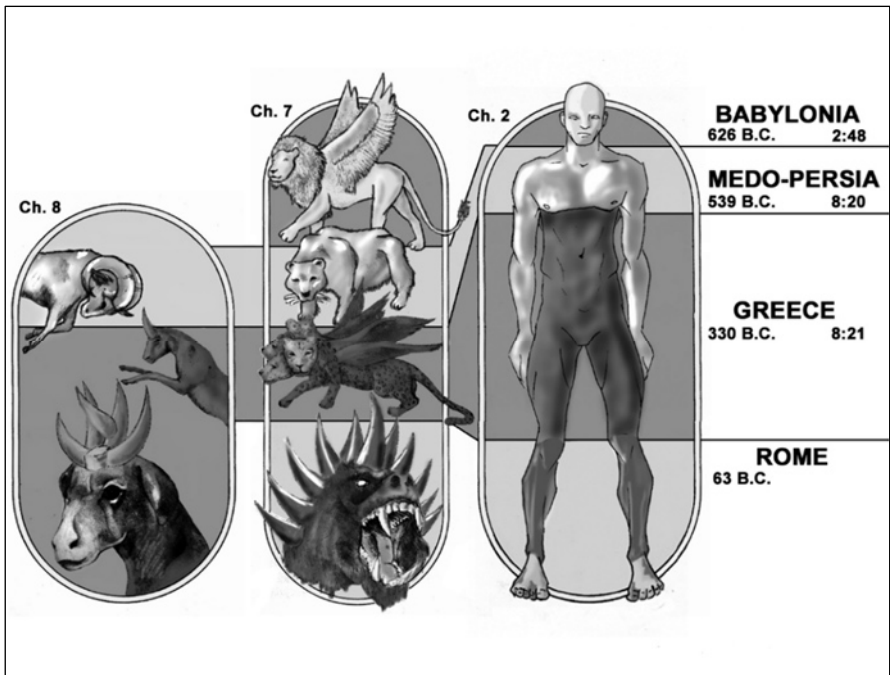


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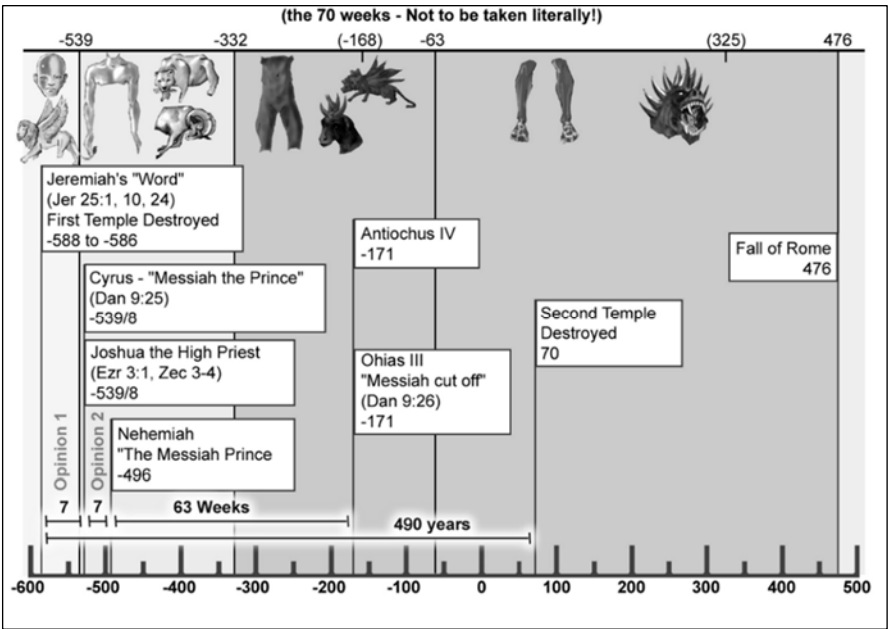


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MEDO-PERSIA 539 B.C. 8:20
GREECE 330 B.C. 8:21
ROME 63 B.C.

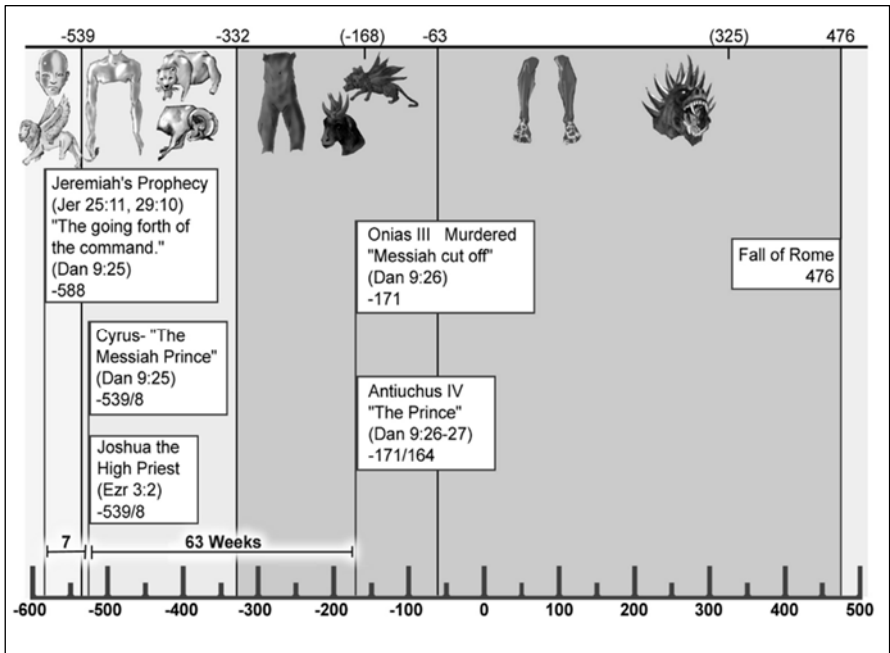
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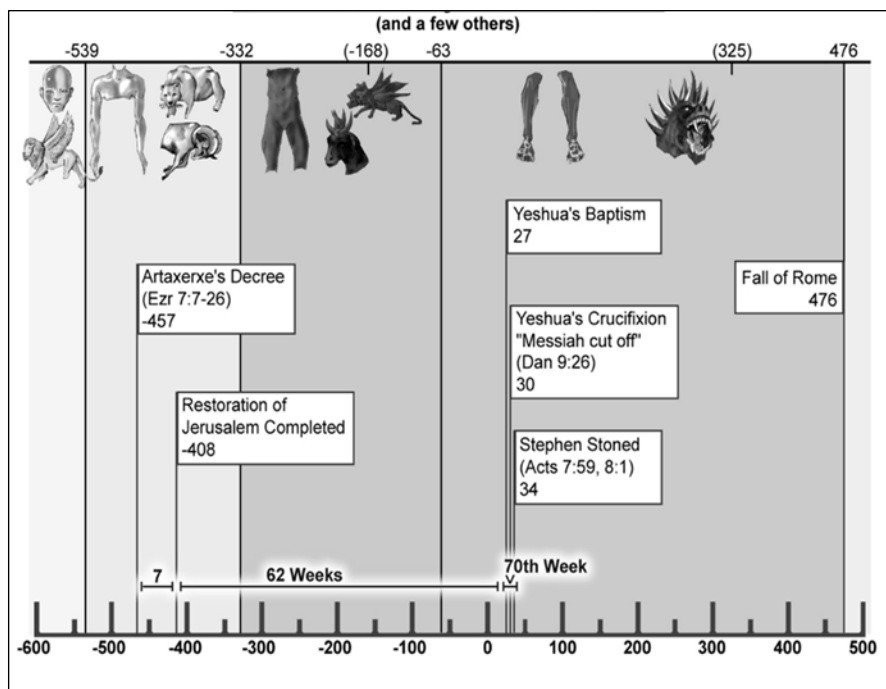
The Jewish Sages View



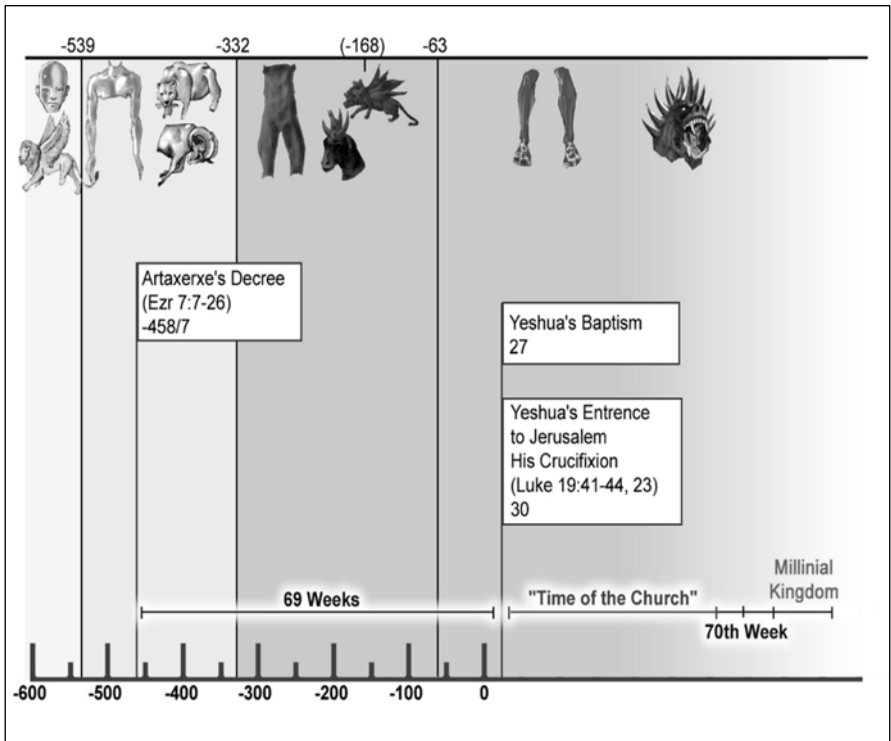
The Catholic View



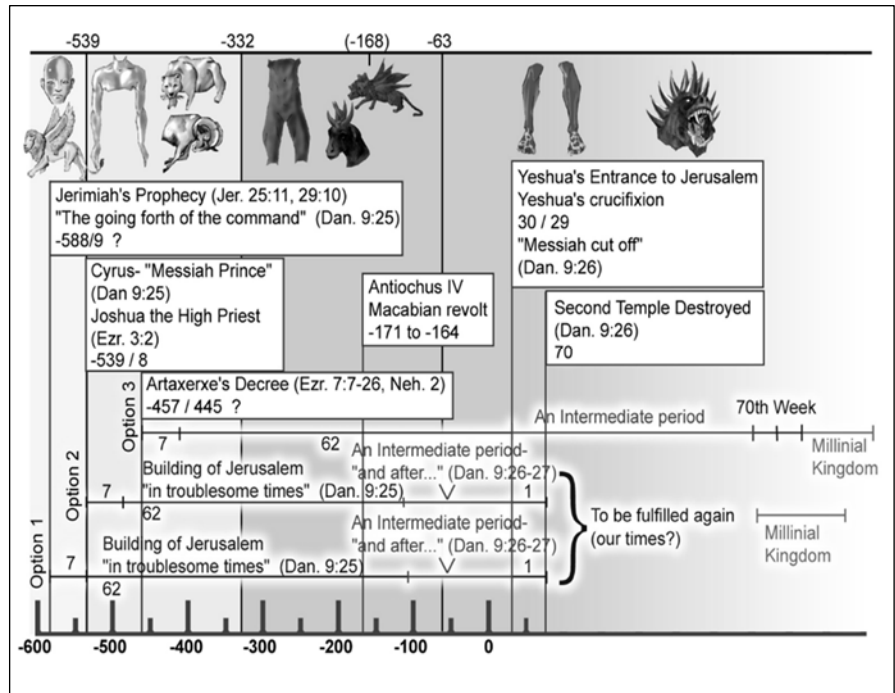
The Seventh Day Adventist View

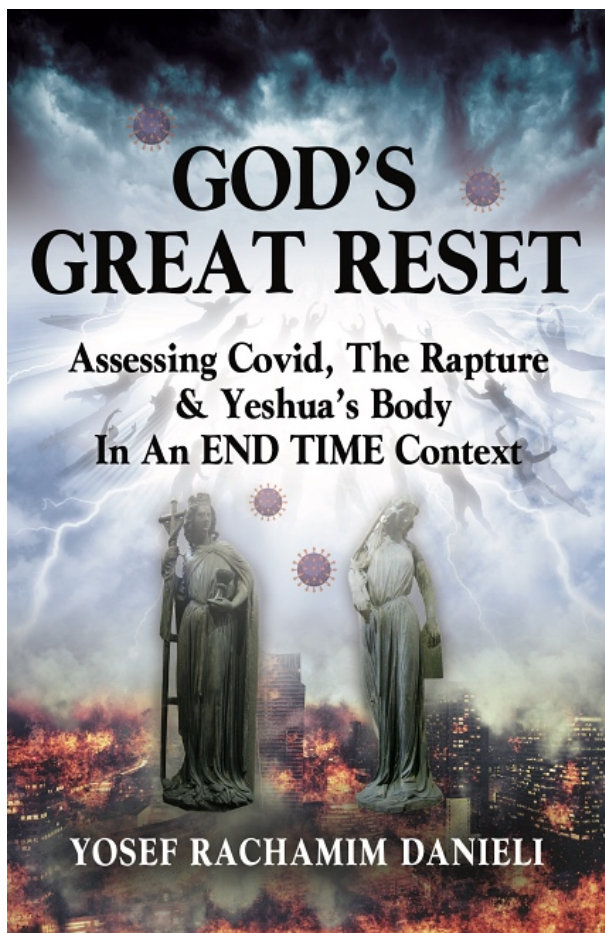


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