

# סלה Selah

Newsletter of  
**MESSIANIC TESTIMONY**  
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## 2018: Why is this year different from all other years?

Throughout the year, the timings of Jewish holidays are reminiscent of the proverbial London Bus: quiet gaps, followed by several holidays coming in quick succession! Because the Hebrew calendar is a lunar one, Jewish holidays and observances will be 'early' this year, compared to the Western, solar calendar.

So, by the time this magazine reaches you, the holiday of Purim will already have been celebrated. The story of Esther, Mordecai and Haman – with its details of God's wonderful and amazing intervention and deliverance – is always a faith-building source of hope and joy. One would think the tale was pure fantasy, if it wasn't for the fact that it is in the Bible! But God is the God of the impossible. (Read the book of Esther)

Similarly, the whole story of the Passover (First night, this year, on March 31) is another saga of miraculous deliverance that defies human invention and ingenuity. God told Abram (Genesis 15:13-16) that his descendants would be exiled, afflicted and

then brought out from a strange land. But in that prophecy, Abram was told little of the details. Then, from the episode of God meeting Moses at the burning bush, to the Ten Plagues, to the crossing of the Red Sea, well, even if one *could* make it up, let's face it: mere human beings could not pull it off! God promised it and performed it.

Fast-forward to modern days: This year, Israel celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> year of existence as a modern, independent state (April 19, 2018, this year). This is also nothing less than a modern miracle – AND a fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. (Please see our recent leaflet, 'Israel...Accident of History or Fulfilment of Prophecy?' available through the MT office.)

It is stating the obvious to say that the creation and continued existence of Israel and the Jewish people are, plainly, miracles. We know the story of King Louis XIV asking Pascal to give proof of the existence of God. Pascal's reply was, 'The Jews, your Majesty!' David Ben Gurion, first Prime Minister of the modern state of



Israel, famously said, 'A Jew who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.'

This year, while we consider the events of Purim and Passover, and think about Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we will also be commemorating the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, which was founded in 1893 by David Baron and C.A. Schönberger (two Jewish men who were influenced by John Wilkinson) and which merged with the Mildmay Mission to form Messianic Testimony.

These anniversaries all have something in common: They all speak of God's sovereign deliverance of His People and Land; Israel. In consideration of this, I have been reflecting on part of the Passover Seder, when the Second Cup is elevated (before the 10 Plagues). It is the section 'V'Hi She'Amda' (וְהִיא שֶׁעָמְדָה). The declaration states: 'And it is that promise (referring to Genesis 15:13-16) which has been the support of our ancestors and of ourselves, **for not one only has risen up against us,**



**but in every generation some have arisen against us to annihilate us, but the Most Holy, blessed be He, always delivered us out of their hands.'**

We can make a long list of attempts throughout history, by Israel's enemies, to destroy both the people and the land. These attempts have also continued *since*

the State of Israel's rebirth in 1948, until now. But the **Holy One of Israel** is also the **Keeper of Israel**, Who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121), hallelujah!

The very next portion in the Passover Haggadah (order of service) goes on to say, 'Go forth and learn what Laban, the Syrian, intended to do to our father, Jacob. Pharaoh decreed the destruction of the males only, while Laban designed to root out the whole, as it is said, 'An Aramean destroyed my father.' (Deuteronomy 26:5) This is the literal translation of the Hebrew verse (אֲרָמִי אֲבָד אָבִי). While we know that Laban did not succeed in wiping out Jacob, Rashi (well-known Jewish Bible scholar) comments that because it was Laban's intention, God accounted it as a done deed.

What a thought! According to this declaration, the deeds of Laban were accounted as more serious than those of Pharaoh!!!! Though much could be said of this idea, a quick review of the story of Laban and Jacob shows how Laban, at first, seems friendly. Yet, it turns out that he treats Jacob with deceit, cunning, exploitation and deals with him as an unpaid slave, considering all of Jacob's possessions as his own (Genesis 31:43) and Jacob, a non-entity.

He meddles in Jacob's private life, deceiving him regarding his marriage to Rachel and Leah. By doing this, Laban nearly did root out the whole: If Jacob had married Rachel first, as he'd desired, Joseph would have been their first born son (perhaps that was a reason for Jacob to show such tenderness to Joseph). It was *Joseph* who became the deliverer of his family when famine threatened their

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survival. By interfering in this way, Laban *could have* rooted out the whole of the nation. In the end, Laban and his sons did pursue Jacob and try to lay claim to ALL that belonged to Jacob, including his children! But Jacob managed to escape with all that belonged to him.

Jewish tradition speaks of a 'Messiah Ben Joseph', a messianic figure who would come out of the tribe of Ephraim, through Joseph. There is only tenuous Scriptural support for this theory... The Bible is very clear, though, that the Messiah will be of the tribe of Judah! However, there is no doubt that Joseph is a *type* of the Messiah: he was despised and rejected by his brothers, falsely accused, sold as a slave, 'delivered up to death' (by his brothers covering up his fate), not recognised by his brothers but became the saviour of the nation.

Anti-Semitism is still a present and potent threat today; against the people, the Land and their salvation. Whether it's blatant, or by stealth - like Laban's feigned friendship and meddling - the intent is to marginalise, imprison or eradicate the Jewish people, all while apprehending their *possessions* and *birthright*.

In thinking of the astounding and miraculous works of God, in rescuing and delivering His People and His Land, and we could sing 'Dayeinu' – 'It would have been enough' (part of the Passover celebration), if God had stopped there! But God always works toward – 'unto' - something greater: not just the deliverance of His people from enemies, but their salvation as well. This is nothing less than the coming of the

Messiah, Himself. *This* is the purpose of Israel's existence and preservation!

According to Israel's national anthem, 'the hope' is only 2000 years old (Hebrew lyrics of Ha Tikvah) and only relates to the Land of Israel (possession). However, the true Hope of Israel – the Messiah – was promised to Abram and involves the spiritual salvation of the people (birthright)!

David Baron, a Talmudic scholar from Russian Poland, was seeking salvation, forgiveness and kapparah (כפרה - covering) for his sins. He despaired because there was no Temple in which to bring a sacrifice according to God's law. He eventually came into his full, Jewish inheritance, finding atonement and forgiveness through the One whom he'd previously despised: the Promised Messiah - Yeshua – the Hope of Israel! We commend his writings and testimony to you.

We also invite you to attend any local meetings that will be held in your area, as well as the annual London Rally, in May. We need renewed vision and understanding in these dark days, so that we may say with Paul, 'my heart's desire and prayer to God, for Israel, is that they might be saved.' (Romans 10:1)

*Chrissy Rodgers*



## David Baron 1855 - 1926

David Baron was born in 1855, in Suvalki, Russian Poland; the last of 7 children born to Mordecai and Sarah Baron.

From a young age, David exhibited remarkable intelligence. He began school at the age of 4 and within 6 months was able to read Russian, Polish and Hebrew! Before the age of 7, he began to study the Talmud. Two and a half years later, his father sent him to the town of Raczk, to continue his studies. At 13, he became Bar Mitzvah – a 'son of the commandment'.

The town elders were impressed by David's abilities and many thought that he was destined to become a great rabbi. But David sensed an uncertainty: How could a person truly be righteous before a Holy God? This question, and his knowledge of his own fickle heart, left him increasingly troubled. He realised that sin separated him from God and that the Jewish people had 'no sacrifices, no Temple and no Priest.'

While still young, David was involved in a freak accident when some horses suddenly spooked and ran two wheels of a wagon over David's body. For weeks, David hovered between life and death. During brief periods of consciousness, David cried to his mother that he was not ready to die and meet God, as he knew that his own goodness would not be enough to merit God's favour. The doctors expected him to die of his internal injuries, but miraculously, he recovered!

In 1870, because of a political situation, David and his brother-in-law ran away from Suvalki. They planned to flee to America, and then send for David's sister. They got to Berlin, when David's brother-in-law was robbed of all his money. Without enough funds to sail to America, they found a ship to Hull! David gave the rest of his money to his brother-in-law, who sailed for America, leaving David alone and nearly penniless. During the next three years of hardships and difficulties, David was able to gain an apprenticeship as a cabinet maker. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1873, an acquaintance walked into David's

workshop, accompanied by John Wilkinson (founder of the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, London). That day, and in the days that followed, David engaged in discussion with John about the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah. These discussions re-awakened David's restlessness regarding his own spiritual condition.

After moving to Manchester, in 1874, David began to study the New Testament in Hebrew. This only served to highlight the conflict in his soul. He was, on the one hand, convicted of his own sinfulness, but on the other hand, how could a 'good Jew' believe in Jesus as Messiah??

In September 1875, in desperation, he travelled to London to visit John Wilkinson. After further discussion and examining the Scriptures, David Baron was convinced that Jesus (Yeshua) was the Jewish Messiah and the remedy for the sin of mankind.

After David's coming to faith in Jesus, he wrote and travelled extensively, as a worker with the Mildmay Mission to the Jews. In 1893, David Baron, together with C. A. Schönberger, founded the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel. The small work soon grew to become one of the best-known and highly respected Jewish missions in the world, with branches of HCTI being established in many countries.

*David Baron's writings remain today as benchmarks of Biblical exposition on the subject of Israel, the prophets and the Messiah. In future issues, we will be sharing more about this man and his colleague C.A. Schönberger, as we celebrate and give thanks for this 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Ed.*

