



# בשורה *Besorah!*

Newsletter of  
MESSIANIC TESTIMONY  
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## *Birthpangs of the Messiah*

This month, Jewish people will be celebrating Chanukah (11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Dec.); the holiday that celebrates the victory of the Maccabees during the Seleucid domination of Israel, circa 165 BC. As I've mentioned before, the annual Jewish festivals seem to arrive with remarkable prophetic significance – especially lately.

For me, Chanukah always carries a sober warning. Even though it is a festival not found in the Tanach (Old Testament), we find that Jesus specifically alludes to it when declaring events that will signal His return (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21).

Many people are referring to Bible prophecy today, hoping to find answers to today's perplexities. Besides the book of Revelation, they are turning to Matthew 24, as this chapter begins, '...what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?' (Matt 24:3) Jesus' reply is lengthy, but I would like to highlight some of the things He mentions.

### **Abomination of Desolation**

First, Jesus practically retells the story of the Maccabees in His warning, so Chanukah is pretty much the backdrop for His discourse. He refers to the dilemmas the

Maccabees faced, in winter, when they had to decide whether to flee for their lives or break the Sabbath. Regarding the woes to those with child or giving suck, circumcision had been made illegal and mothers with circumcised baby sons were horribly tortured and murdered.

Jesus also gives instruction regarding the 'abomination of desolation'. This expression is found in the apocryphal story of Chanukah, referring to the statue of Zeus that was erected in the Temple and the pig that was sacrificed on the altar by Antiochus Epiphanes. But Jesus also refers specifically back to Daniel the prophet and exhorts, 'whoso readeth, let him understand.' (Matt 24:15)

In Daniel, we find 3 references to 'abomination of desolation' (Daniel 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11). They all differ slightly from each other, grammatically, but they indicate something blasphemous being done and are connected with a powerful ruler that would arise.

### **The Abomination and the Anti-Christ**

The Maccabees certainly viewed the pig and the statue as the abomination of desolation. But Antiochus also demanded to be

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worshipped as God, claiming the **blasphemous titles** of Epiphanes ('God Manifest') and 'Baal ha Shamayim' (The Lord of Heaven). In that way, Antiochus was a *type* of the Antichrist. During the 1930s and 1940s, some believed that Hitler was the Antichrist because of what he did and how he also demanded worship as a messiah. We can see this in the following: Psalm 27:1 reads, 'The Lord is my light and my **salvation**.' The Hebrew word for salvation, as many of you know, is **Yeshua** (ישוע). In German, the verse reads, 'Der HERR ist mein Licht und mein **Heil**.' While Hitler was, without doubt, a *type* of the Antichrist, the significant missing factor at that time, was that Israel was not a nation (Matt 24:32). But it is now!

### Days of Noah

Further in Matt 24:37-39 we read, 'But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.'

Genesis 6 mentions corruption and violence, but Jesus mentions eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage! To our ears, eating and drinking seems to be a natural – even necessary – activity, implying that life will just be carrying on as normal. However, there may be other, darker, implications. In Job, we find that his sons and daughters engaged in 'eating and drinking' regularly and that Job, who lived soon after the flood, was so concerned that he 'sent and sanctified them and offered burnt offerings...lest they...' If people were 'eating and drinking before the flood' then perhaps there *was* some potential in this activity that sent a shiver up Job's spine, causing him to intercede for his children. As it happened, all of the calamities that befell Job happened 'while [his children] were eating and drinking...'

(Job 1:13, 18). Sometime later, eating and drinking also characterised the idolatry and blasphemy of the Golden Calf episode (Ex. 32:1-6).

The mention of 'marrying and giving in marriage' before the flood, should cause our ears to tingle, for we do have some evidence of what was going on. Gen 6:1-4 tells us of a wholly unnatural kind of union that corrupted the gene pool of humanity, except for the immediate family of Noah, who was 'perfect in his generations'. Surely this was what necessitated the wiping out of all living things? The flood did not eradicate violence, but when we consider what is being done today, regarding gene driving, trans-humanism and the genetic 'editing' and engineering of *all types of life* on a global scale, we are truly living in fearful times. Eugenics have always been part of demonic systems, the heart of which is the agenda to wipe out the Jewish people.

### Birth Pangs

Early in Jesus' discourse, He mentions various upheavals that will occur (wars, famines, pestilences, etc.). However, He also hints at something significant when He says, 'All these are the beginning of sorrows' (Lit. 'birth pangs', Matt 24:8). The concept of increasing catastrophes being 'birth pangs' is well understood in Judaism. These are referred to as the Birth Pangs of the Messiah (Chevlei ha Mashiach חבלי המשיח), which signal Messiah's arrival. Today, this phrase is appearing in Jewish media all over the world! *Many* rabbis are declaring that we're now in the days of Chevlei ha Mashiach and calling for their congregants to repent and keep Torah.

The Jewish sages list some of the things which will constitute birth pangs. These remarkably match some of the things that Jesus warns about in Matthew 24, including natural disasters, lawlessness, growing hatred, family divisions, betrayals, increase in technology (to the detriment of the world),

references to the flood and the return of Jewish people to the Land!

Of course, birth pangs indicate an imminent birth; in Scripture they are specifically linked to Israel. Jeremiah 30 gives a detailed description of a time of great distress and trial – so great that there is none like it - to come upon the Jewish nation. In verses 6 and 7, the prophet uses the motif of a pregnant woman in extreme labour and calls it ‘the time of Jacob’s **trouble**’. (Note the use of the word ‘trouble’ in these prophecies, in connection with birth pangs.)

When Hezekiah was king of Judah, the king of Assyria came against Judah, blaspheming the Lord as he did so. Hezekiah sent to Isaiah for help with the words, ‘This day *is* a day of **trouble**, and of **rebuke**, and **blasphemy**: for the children (Lit: sons) are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.’ (2 Ki 19:3) Part of the problem was that there was much spiritual corruption in Israel (hence, ‘**rebuke**’), rendering them impotent before the enemy. So Hezekiah had to appeal to the prophet for help and intercession: ‘...**wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.**’ (2 Ki 19:4)

In another reference to birth pangs, Isaiah 66: 7-10 seems to indicate two different births: The first phrase reads, ‘before she travailed, she brought forth, she was delivered of a man child.’ Jesus came before any birth pangs! But the second phrase is, ‘as soon as ZION travailed, she brought forth her sons.’ The spiritual birth

of the nation of Israel is brought forth by the intercession of the church!

When Paul exhorts the Roman believers regarding the mystery of Israel (Rom 11:31), he explains: ‘Even so have these also now not believed, *that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*’ Did you know that the Hebrew word for mercies (rachamim, רַחֲמִים) comes from the word for womb (rechem, רֶחֶם)!

The birth pangs (leading to the return) of the Messiah, and the birth pangs of Jacob’s trouble (leading to the *spiritual rebirth* of the Nation of Israel) are bound up together and the church is the means which God has chosen to use in Israel’s national salvation.

‘Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.’ (Isa 66: 9,10)

The Lord will do it, but will the church understand this mystery and be fit for the perilous times ahead? Chanukah is a time of rededication. ‘I beseech you **therefore**, brethren, **by the mercies of God**, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,’ (Rom 12:1) and let us lift up our prayer for the remnant that is left!

Chrissy Rodgers



\* Front painting: Martyrdom of the Seven Maccabees, by A Ciseri

# Freda Leaman - 1930-2020

Freda was born in Blackfriars, London on Monday 12<sup>th</sup>, May 1930. She was one of 7 children born to Isaac and Mina Obermeister. The family later moved to Westcliff on Sea, Essex.

A keen dancer, she met Samuel at the Kursall in Southend, where they regularly went. After a short engagement, they married on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1951, at the local Orthodox Synagogue. They went on to have three children: Barbara, Janice and Paul.

Freda's brother, David, became a believer in Jesus as Messiah, and was such an influence on Sam & Freda's lives that they, too, became believers.

Freda's connection with MT (then, the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel) began in the 1960s. She was baptised by Herman Newmark (director of HCTI) in 1965. In 1972, she and Sam joined the work of HCTI, as they wanted to share the gospel with other Jewish people. Jack Barkey was the director then. He told them, *"I can't tell you what to do. You will have to ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance,"* and for the next 32 years - until their retirement - that's exactly what they did!

In those days, the HQ was in Whitechapel. Workers attended a staff meeting each Monday to report on their activities. So, each week Freda & Sam made the journey into London. Freda also looked to the welfare of the younger ladies of the Mission, whether they worked at the 'coalface' or in the office.

Sam and Freda's home was open to all and over the years many found refuge there. Freda - ever the balabusta - provided food, friendship and testimony. She and Sam visited homes in the area and the local Market. They took deputation meetings in

supporting churches, held bible studies and 'At Home' evenings. Once a month, they had a prayer meeting in their house to pray for the outreach in Westcliff on Sea.

Later, they held studies with Theodore Bendor Samuel, when he directed the Mission (which later became The Messianic Testimony). Throughout the year, Freda and Sam represented MT at the annual meetings such as the ones in South Wales, London and the Filey Christian Holiday Convention. At the 2 annual London meetings, Freda was part of a team that provided the renowned 'Jewish Tea' for 300 people!

We must not forget that during all this, Freda found time to bring up their three children!



Sam and Freda

'In retirement' Freda continued her witness, supporting Gary Shapiro (son in law), when he joined the staff of MT and, along with Barbara, formed the local Messianic Fellowship. There, she was known as the 'Mama of Israel'!

She loved and served her Lord with fervour, praying for all her family and the

wider Body. She spoke to people she met about the Lord and encouraged many in their walk with Yeshua.

Freda was a generous lady, always wanting to bless others with acts of kindness and hospitality, accompanied by delicious meals. She showed unconditional love and affection to many she encountered and has left her family - and countless others - an enormous legacy.

Sam and Freda were one, in the Lord and in His work. Please pray for Sam, Barbara, Janice, Paul and their families (seven grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren), as they mourn their loss, while rejoicing that Freda is with her Lord and Messiah.