

Lessons from the Tanach

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Nazarene Israelite Two House Congregation of Port Elizabeth.

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This book is not to be sold. We are told in the second part of Matthew 10: 8 *“freely you received, freely give.”*
The book contains 7 sermons that I gave over the past few weeks and is intended as a reference manual for like-minded Nazarene Jewish/Israelite believers.

Note: All Scriptures used are from the ‘NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE’, unless otherwise indicated. Set-apart Names corrected in quotes used, in accord with this Bible’s ‘Principles of Translation’.

Published by the Nazarene Israelite Two House Congregation of Port Elizabeth. December 2011.

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Chapter 1: Important lessons to learn from David king of all Israel.

Most of us remember King David as the shepherd boy who slew Goliath the Philistine giant and later became king over the united nation of Israel. But do we remember David *‘as a man after Elohim’s own heart’* who will once again rule over the restored kingdom of Judah and Israel during the world to come, as prophesied in Jeremiah 30: 4 – 9, in this way: ***‘Now these are the words which YHVH spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. (5) “For thus says YHVH, ‘I have heard a sound of terror, of dread, and there is no peace. (6) Ask now, and see, if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? (7) Alas! For that day is great, there is none like it; and it is a time of Jacob’s distress, but he will be saved from it. (8) And it shall come about on that day,’ declares YHVH of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from off their neck, and will tear off their bonds; and strangers shall no longer make them their slaves. (9) But they shall serve YHVH their Elohim, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.’”*** This is talking about the end-time great tribulation that Yahshua warned us about in Matthew 24 and Luke 21.

Israel’s first king was Saul, a man whom Elohim eventually rejected as king, because of his disobedience to specific instructions. At that point in time Elohim told Samuel to anoint David as the king over Israel. But David did not become the ruler of Israel immediately, as Elohim needed to test him to make sure that he will remain loyal and obedient during his reign over Elohim’s chosen people. Because David respected the office of the king and since he realized that Elohim is the one who removes disobedient rulers from office and gives such positions of authority to others, he did not try to remove King Saul himself. In fact David spared Saul’s life twice; the first time when Saul pursued David and his men, with 3,000 soldiers, as we read from 1 Samuel 24: 2 – 4, as follows: ***‘Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. (3) And he came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. (4) And the men of David said to him, “Behold, this is the day of which YHVH said to you, ‘Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.’” Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul’s robe secretly.’*** Saul not aware of what happened went out of the cave and joined his soldiers to continue their search for David and his men.

Afterwards David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s robe. We read accordingly from verses 6 & 7 of 1 Samuel 24: ***‘So he said to his men, “Far be it from me because of YHVH that I should do this thing to my lord, (YHVH)’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is (YHVH)’s anointed.” (7) And David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way.’*** David went out of the cave and confronted King Saul telling him that he could take his life if he wanted to, but it was never his intention to harm the king in any way. We read David’s concluding statement and Saul’s response in verses 15 – 21 of 1 Samuel 24, in this way: ***“YHVH therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand.” (16) Now it came about when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. (17) And he said to David, ‘You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. (18) And you have declared today that you have done good to me, that YHVH***

delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me. (19) For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May YHVH therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day. (20) And now, behold I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. (21) So now swear to me by YHVH that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's household.'" David swore to Saul and Saul went home.

Saul's promise did not last very long and he pursued David again with three thousand men, as we read from 1 Samuel 26: 1 & 2, as follows: *'Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?" (2) So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having with him three thousand chosen men of Israel to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph.'* To summarize the events that followed: While Saul camped in the hill of Hachilah with his 3,000 men, David and Abishai, Joab's brother crept up to Saul's camp by night. Saul was fast asleep in the center of the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head. We pick up the account in verse 8 – 11 of 1 Samuel 26, in this way: *'Then Abishai said to David, "Today Elohim has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him a second time." (9) But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against (YHVH)'s anointed and be without guilt?" (10) David also said, 'As YHVH lives, surely YHVH will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. (11) YHVH forbid that I should stretch out my hand against (YHVH)'s anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go.'"* David then went to the top of the mountain and called back to Saul, telling him how easily he could have killed him, if he so wished. A second time, Saul confessed to sinning against David and blessed him, as recorded in verses 21 and 25 of 1 Samuel 26: *'Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error." (25) Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely will prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.'*

Later Saul died with three of his sons in battle, as we read from 1 Samuel 31: 1 - 6, in this way: *'Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. (2) And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul. (3) And the battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was badly wounded by the archers. (4) Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and pierce me through and make sport of me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it. (5) And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him. (6) Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together.'*

David did not rejoice over the downfall of Saul, instead we read in 2 Samuel 1: 11 & 12 that David was heartbroken when he heard the news about the death of Saul and his three sons, as follows: *'Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also did all the men who were with him. (12) And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of YHVH and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.'* In fact David composed a special psalm to show his respect for Saul and his love for his friend Jonathan in verse

17 – 27 of 2 Samuel 1. Afterwards David enquired of YHVH, if he should go back to the cities of Judah, and YHVH told him to go up to Hebron. David took his two wives and immediately left for Hebron, where he was anointed as king over the house of Judah. David ruled Judah for 7 and a half years, but the cities of the house of Israel did not accept him as king yet, because Abner, Saul's commander appointed Ishbosheth another of Saul's sons as king over the house of Israel.

Jealousy soon arose between the supporters of the two kings and Abner the son of Ner and Joab the son of Zeruiah, a servant of David went out and met by the pool of Gibeon. Abner and Joab decided to have a contest where 12 of Ishbosheth's men came against twelve of David's servants. We pick up the account in 2 Samuel 2: 16 & 17, in this way: ***'And each one of them seized his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-Hazzurim (meaning, the field of sword-edges), which is at Gibeon.'*** This resulted in a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David and in the ensuing battle Abner killed Asahel, Joab's brother.

Eventually Joab and Abishai his other brother, caught up with Abner and killed him, as we read from verses 30 - 32 of 2 Samuel 3, ***'So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle of Gibeon. (31) Then David said to Joab and the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes and gird on sackcloth and lament before Abner." And King David walked behind the bier. (32) Thus they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept.'*** A short while after this two of Ishbosheth's commanders killed Ishbosheth whilst he was lying on his bed. They beheaded him and took his head to King David at Hebron. This angered David and he commanded that his servants kill them, cut off their hands and feet, and hang them beside the pool in Hebron. They also took Ishbosheth's head and buried it in Abner's grave. Having thoroughly tested David's attitude and ability to rule His people, YHVH allowed all the tribes of Israel to accept David as their king and he reigned a further thirty three years over Judah.

King David's first undertaking after he became king over all Israel, was to capture the Jebusite city of Jerusalem, and because Jerusalem was located in the central part of Israel, it became the nation's capital. King David's kingdom thrived and David succeeded militarily, administratively, as well as spiritually. The Philistines heard about King David's fame and prepared to fight against his army in the valley of Rephaim near Jerusalem. We read David's response to this in 2 Samuel 5: 19, as follows: ***'Then David inquired of YHVH, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Wilt Thou give them into my hand?" And YHVH said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand."*** David did as YHVH told him and struck down the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer. After defeating the Philistines, David thought it an ideal time to bring the ark of Elohim to Jerusalem. He assembled 30,000 chosen men from Israel, including soldiers, priests and musicians and went to Abinadab's house, where they put the ark on a cart to bring it to Jerusalem.

Uzzah and Ahio the sons of Abinadab were leading the cart and on the way to Jerusalem, the procession went singing and dancing before the ark. Then suddenly the oxen stumbled and the cart tilted to the one side and Uzzah reached out towards the ark of Elohim and took hold of it, and the anger of YHVH burned against Uzzah and He struck him down; and he died by the ark of Elohim. Now this must be shocking to most of us – here Uzzah was trying to prevent the ark from possibly falling and is killed for his action. But, no matter how innocently his actions appear, we know that touching

the ark of Elohim was a direct violation of a Torah command, which will result in death, as may be read in the first part of Numbers 4: 15, as follows: ***‘And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the set-apart objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them, so that they may not touch the set-apart objects and die.’***

We read further from 2 Samuel 6: 8, ***‘And David became angry because of (YHVH)’s outburst against Uzzah, and that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day.’*** It is important to understand that David’s anger was directed at himself, in the knowledge that this calamity was as a result of his carelessness. We see from verse 9 that David became afraid of YHVH that day, and decided not to continue with the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem. In verse 10, we see that David takes the ark to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite: The reason for so doing was that Obed-edom was a Levite as may be read from 1 Chronicles 15: 17 & 18. The ark of Elohim remained in Obed-edom’s house for three months, during which time Elohim blessed Obed-edom and his household. When David noticed how Elohim blessed them, he decided to bring the ark into Jerusalem with gladness. David’s second attempt to transport the ark to Jerusalem was more successful, because he ensured that it was transported in the way prescribed in the Torah. David was wearing a linen ephod (a sleeveless outer garment in the shape of a long vest, usually worn by priests for service in the temple) and was dancing before YHVH with all his might. This was a physical expression of religious joy praising YHVH. One lesson we can learn from this incident is that YHVH expects those whom he has called to know and obey His commandments – if we break them, we will suffer a penalty for doing so. In addition, we need to know that Elohim loves us, and will forgive us if we repent before Him.

However, from the next few verses we see that David’s wife Michal the daughter of Saul despised him, as may be seen from her remark in verse 20 of 2 Samuel 6, as follows: ***‘But when David returned to bless his household, Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “How the king of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered Himself today in the eyes of his servant’s maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself!”*** David explained that his actions were for the delight of YHVH and not for the ladies. We read in verse 23 that Michal had no children to the day of her death. We are not told if this was because David ceased to have marital relations with her, or if YHVH withdrew His blessing from her because of her disrespect for David the king of Israel.

We read about the covenant promise that YHVH made with David in 2 Samuel 7: 1 - 17, telling David that He will raise-up a descendant after him and will establish his throne forever. We know that this will ultimately happen when Yahshua returns to rule the world from Jerusalem for a thousand years and onto eternity. The covenant that YHVH made with David is the fourth of 5 irrevocable covenants that YHVH made with mankind. The first being the Noahic Covenant in Genesis 9: 8 – 17; the second the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 15: 18 – 21; the third the Levitical Covenant in Numbers 3: 1 -18; the fifth or New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31: 31 was accomplished through Messiah, and even though it was accomplished by His death and resurrection, it will only be fully realized in the kingdom of Elohim. At this time YHVH also tells David that he will not build a house for Him during his lifetime, but that his son Solomon will, as we read from verses 12 to 16 of 2 Samuel 7, as follows: ***“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers (note: this does not say that David was going to heaven, after his death), I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for***

My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (This is not saying that King Solomon will live eternally, but that his throne will be established forever – this is the very same throne which Yahshua will occupy at His return one day) (14) ***I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,*** (15) ***but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.*** (16) ***And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.***” We read in Luke 1: 32 and 33 where Elohim spoke to Miriam about Yahshua using virtually the same words that He spoke to David through Nathan, saying: ***“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and YHVH Elohim will give Him the throne of His father David; (33) and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.”***

The reason that YHVH did not allow David to build the temple was that David was a man of war as witnessed in 1 Chronicles 28: 3, in this way: ***“But Elohim said to me, ‘You shall not build a house for My name because you are a man of war and have shed blood.’”***. But it was as a result of David’s attitude of humility and meekness that YHVH called him a man after his own heart, as we read from Acts 13: 21 & 22, in this way: ***“And then they (Israel) asked for a king, and Elohim gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. (22) And after He removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, ‘I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.’”*** The victories that Elohim continued to give Israel caused David to be feared and respected by his enemies. David collected a considerable amount of gold, silver and other valuable items to be added to the treasury for later use by Solomon, in the building of the Temple.

Even so, David was only human and was prone to stumble. Early one evening David walked on the roof of the palace when he saw a woman in a distance taking a bath. Instead of forgetting about her, he started thinking about her more and more and eventually his thoughts turned to lust. David found out that she was Bathsheba the daughter of Elam, the wife of Uriah. David immediately sent for her and when she arrived he lay with her, and after purifying herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. A few months later she informed David that she was pregnant. David was shocked when she told him and instead of repenting, he tried to cover up his sin. He immediately sent for Bathsheba’s husband Uriah, who was a brave soldier fighting in Israel’s army. David thought if only he could get Uriah to stay with his wife for a few days, Uriah will think the baby is his. However, David’s plan failed, as Uriah refused to sleep with his wife, whilst his fellow soldiers were out in the field fighting. David feeling trapped, plotted to cover up his adultery. He sent Uriah back to battle informing Joab, as we read from 2 Samuel 11: 15, ***‘And he had written in the letter, saying, “Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”’*** As a result Uriah was killed by the enemy.

We read from 2 Samuel 11: 27, that Elohim was not pleased with what happened, in this way: ***‘When the time of mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of YHVH.’*** Then YHVH sent Nathan to David and when he came to David he said (as is recorded in verses 1 – 4 of 2 Samuel 12): ***“There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. (2) The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. (3) But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his***

bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. (4) Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." This story angered David and he demanded to know who the wicked man was; since he was of the opinion that such a man should be put to death. Nathan's answer stunned David, when he told him that he (David) is the man. YHWH punished David in different ways; the first was to cause the child born to Bathsheba to die. David was grief-stricken when the prophet Nathan informed him that Elohim was going to take the life of his child. He prayed and fasted for seven days, hoping that YHWH would change His mind and let the child live, but the child died.

Nathan also told David that YHWH will punish him in other ways as well, as we read from 2 Samuel 12: 10 – 12, as follows: **"Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. (11) Thus says YHWH, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household: I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. (12) Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'"** This was the turning point in David's life. Elohim's punishment of David for his adultery and murder was the start of David's problems. David immediately repented, taking the full blame for what he had done. His repentance as recorded in Psalm 51 is an inspiring example of not blaming others for his personal sins.

Another major event in David's life involved two of his sons, Ammon and Absalom. Ammon dishonored his sister by raping her and in retribution Absalom killed Ammon and fled. After Absalom was brought back to his father they were not reconciled. Absalom then started a campaign, rebelling against David his father. As the years went by the nation began to admire Absalom, since he was a very handsome man. He eventually won the hearts of the people to his side and once his conspiracy gained momentum, he gathered his followers and planned to attack Jerusalem. David and his household had to flee Jerusalem and seek refuge somewhere else. Absalom planned to increase the size of his army, and he confided in Hushai, a trusted counselor, sent by David to infiltrate Absalom's ranks. This provided David additional time to gain support to defend himself. Elohim was on David's side since Absalom was dishonoring his father in his rebellion. Absalom's army was soon defeated and he fled before David's army, but David instructed his men not to harm Absalom. Absalom had beautiful long hair and whilst fleeing from David's men his hair got caught in the branches of an Oak tree. Joab, who heard that Absalom was hanging from the tree, disregarded David's request not to harm Absalom and killed him. David was grieved at the death of his son. After Absalom's death, it took a while for David to be accepted by the nation again. It was only after Amasa was killed by Joab that Judah and Israel were united under King David once more.

If we consider all the problems that David experienced, some might be surprised that YHWH thought so highly of him. The reason for this being that David always sought to do Elohim's will, and that he never blamed others for his mistakes. David remained faithful to Elohim all his life and his devotion to YHWH could never be questioned, as may be read throughout the many psalms that he wrote. David composed numerous psalms attesting to his faith in YHWH and ascribing greatness to Elohim, one of which is recorded in 2 Samuel 22: 2 – 23: 7. This psalm depicts David's attitude throughout his

life. However, during the next period of relative peace David began to feel powerful and secure. We read from 1 Chronicles 21: 1, ***'Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.'*** David called upon Joab and instructed him to count the men fit for military service. Initially Joab and the other captains did not want to number the people, but David compelled them to do it anyway. After the census was taken, Joab informed David that there were 1, 570,000 men who drew the sword in both Israel and Judah, We see from verse 7 of 1 Chronicles 21, ***'And Elohim was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel.'*** When it came to David that he had done wrong, he realized that in counting his people he was depending on his own arm for the defense of Israel, instead of trusting in YHVH for protection. YHVH was not pleased with him, because he had forgotten that it was YHVH who defeated Israel's enemies and not the strength of his army. YHVH had to punish King David again, but allowed him to choose between one of three punishments. We read about the three choices that David was given in 2 Samuel 24, namely:

- 7 years of famine;
- Flee from his foes for three months; and
- 3 days pestilence in the land of Israel.

David chose the 3 days pestilence, as he did not want to fall into the hands of another man, but would rather be punished by YHVH. King David, but also the nation had to learn to put their trust in YHVH, so his choice was most appropriate in this case. When he saw the effect of his choice, he responded as we read from 2 Samuel 24: 17, as follows: ***'Then David spoke to YHVH when he saw the angel who was striking down the people, and said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Thy hand be against me and against my father's house."*** David was willing to pay for his own sin and was also prepared to give his life so that others need not die. YHVH heard David's prayer to Him and stopped killing the people under David's rule. King David saw the angel over the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, where grain was sorted out. The angel of YHVH said to Gad, King David's seer that he should buy the threshing floor from the owner and build an altar to YHVH on it. So David bought the threshing floor from Ornan for 600 shekels of gold and sacrificed burnt and peace offerings to YHVH. This is the same location on which the Temple of Elohim was later built.

We conclude with David's advice to his son Solomon before his death, in 1 Kings 2: 2 – 3, saying: ***'I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. (3) And keep the charge of YHVH your Elohim, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, his ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn.'***

Chapter 2: An important lesson to learn from ancient Israel.

What went wrong with the ancient nation of Israel? Knowing the answer will provide us, the latter day descendants of the lost ten tribes with very valuable information about the way in which to serve YHVH our Elohim. Most believers are aware that matters really started going wrong before King Solomon's death. Prior to his death King Solomon appointed Jeroboam over all forced labor of the house of Joseph, as we read from 1 Kings 11: 26 – 28: ***'Then Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king. (27) Now this was the reason why he rebelled against the king: Solomon built the Millo (or citadel), and closed up the breach of the city of his father David. (28) Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph.'***

Continuing with the account given in 1 Kings: 11, we read from verses 29 – 39, ***'And it came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. (30) Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. (31) And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says YHVH, the Elohim of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes (32) (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), (33) because they have forsaken Me, and have worship Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David did. (34) Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes; (35) but I will take the kingdom from his son's hand and give it to you, even ten tribes. (36) But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name. (37) And I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel. (38) Then it will be, that If you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. (39) Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always.'*** Notice that Jeroboam was chosen by Elohim to rule the ten tribe nation of Israel, provided he obeys YHVH the Elohim of Israel, the way King David did before him.

After Solomon's death his son, Rehoboam reigned in his place. King Solomon ruled the united nation of Israel (all twelve tribes) for forty years. During his rule, the nation lived very well, because he demanded heavy taxes from the citizens allowing Israel to dominate its neighbors both economically and militarily. However, this heavy tax burden caused significant resentment among the citizens of Israel. Because of Jeroboam's effective administration over the forced labor in Israel, the nation called upon him to be their spokesman to try and lighten the tax burden under Rehoboam. We pick up the account in 1 Kings 12: 4, where Jeroboam said to Rehoboam, ***"Your father made our yoke hard; therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and***

we will serve you.” Rehoboam required some time to consider the nation’s request through Jeroboam and told them to return three days later.

Rehoboam consulted with the elders who served under his father, who advised him as recorded in verse 7 of 1 Kings 12, saying: ***“If you will be a servant to this people today, will serve them, grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.”*** However, Rehoboam did not listen to the counsel of the elders, but consulted with the young men who grew up with him. We read the young men’s counsel to Rehoboam from verses 10 & 11, as follows: ***“Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!’ But you shall speak to them. ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins! (11) Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”*** When the nation of Israel saw that Rehoboam did not listen to them they answered the king, as recorded in verse 16 of 1 Kings 12, in this way, saying: ***“What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; to your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!” So Israel departed to their tents.’*** We see further from verse 20 that Israel subsequently made Jeroboam king over all Israel and none but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.

Rehoboam immediately assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin to fight against the house of Israel. However, we read from 1 Kings 12: 22 – 24, ***‘But the word of Elohim came to Shemaiah the man of Elohim, saying, (23) “Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the rest of the people, saying, (24) ‘Thus says YHVH, “You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me.””’*** Even so, we see that despite the fact that YHVH informed Jeroboam that He has chosen him to rule over the ten tribes of Israel (provided he does what is right in (YHVH)’s sight), Jeroboam feared that if the house of Israel returned to Jerusalem to keep Elohim’s Feast days, they will want Rehoboam to be their ruler once again.

We read from verse 28 – 33 of 1 Kings 12, how Jeroboam went off the track, because of his fear motivated by jealousy, as follows: ***‘So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them (the house of Israel), “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.” (29) And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. (30) Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. (31) And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. (32) And Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah¹, and he went up to the altar; thus he***

¹ The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles kept by Judah is as given in Leviticus 23: 33 – 36, as follows: ***‘Again YHVH spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to YHVH. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to YHVH. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to YHVH; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.”’*** Moses and subsequently the Levites who remained with Judah were responsible to proclaim the Feast Days of Elohim, at the times (or seasons) appointed for them, as testified in the blessings that Moses gave the tribes in Deuteronomy 33 and specifically in verses 8 – 11, in this way: ***‘And of Levi he said, “Let Thy Thummim and Thy Urim belong to Thy godly man, whom Thou didst prove at Massah, with whom thou didst contend at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and his mother, ‘I did not consider them’; and he did not acknowledge his brothers, nor did he regard his own sons, for they observed Thy word, and kept Thy***

did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. (33) Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel, and went up to the altar to burn incense.'

King Jeroboam's personal agenda led to spiritual mistakes that would bring untold misery to the house of Israel and their descendants. Soon after taken over the leadership of Israel, Jeroboam led the nation away from worshipping YHVH the Elohim of Israel, in the way that He prescribed in the Scriptures. Jeroboam's counterfeit worship, with its own festivals and priesthood was the primary reason for the house of Israel's downfall. Jeroboam like us was specifically chosen by Elohim to rule His people, but he failed to use the opportunity given him by YHVH our Elohim. Similarly today, there are some leaders whom YHVH specifically called to lead His people, by teaching them to keep His Sabbaths (weekly and annual) as specified in the Scriptures, but because of their personal agendas, motivated by fear and jealousy of other leaders, or because of anti-Semitism, they contradict what the word of Elohim teaches. Elohim pronounced a sobering judgment against Jeroboam, through Ahijah the prophet in 1 Kings 14: 7 – 10, as follows: ***"Go say to Jeroboam, 'Thus says YHVH Elohim of Israel, "Because I exalted you among the people and made you leader over My people Israel, (8) and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight; (9) you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast me behind your back— (10) therefore behold, I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone."*** Because of Jeroboam's sin, YHVH also rejected Israel as is recorded in verses 14 – 16, in this way: ***"Moreover, YHVH will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on. (15) For YHVH will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they have made their Asherim (wooden symbols of a female deity), provoking YHVH to anger. (16) And He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed and with which he made Israel to sin."***

A second witness is recorded in Psalm 78: 58 – 68, as follows: ***'For they provoked Him with their high places, and aroused His jealousy with their graven images. (59) When Elohim heard, He was filled with wrath, and greatly abhorred Israel; (60) So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, the tent which He had pitched among men, (61) and gave up His strength to captivity, and His glory into the hand of the adversary. (62) He also delivered His people to the sword, and was filled with wrath at His inheritance. (63) Fire devoured His young men; and His virgins had no wedding songs. (64) His priests fell by the sword; and His widows could not weep. (65) Then YHVH awoke as if from sleep, like a warrior overcome by wine. (66) And He drove His adversaries backward; He put on them an everlasting reproach. (67) He also rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, (68) but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved.'***

covenant. "They shall teach Thine ordinances to Jacob, and Thy law to Israel. They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt offerings on Thine altar. O YHVH, bless his substance, and accept the work of his hands; shatter the loins of those who rise up against him, and those who hate him, so that they may not rise again."

The sins committed by Jeroboam were very serious in (YHVH)'s sight and it and its result, is recorded a second time in 2 Kings 17: 20 – 23, in this way: ***'And YHVH rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight. (21) When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following YHVH, and made them commit a great sin. (22) And the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, (23) until YHVH removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.'***

It is important for us to understand that the sins of Jeroboam had widespread consequences. We who are called at this time to follow the way of Elohim need to learn from these mistakes, so as not to make similar mistakes. Elohim does not give us a choice of how to worship Him, as we read from Deuteronomy 12: 32, where YHVH says: ***"Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it."*** Even so, He does give us a choice as to whether we will worship Him according to the instructions that He has given us in His word, or not. We all know that the Feast of Booths are to be kept in the seventh month like it is observed in Judah, and not a month or even a few days later. The practices that Jeroboam set in motion, by substituting (YHVH)'s Set-apart Days with His own have continued to this day. Elohim tells us in the Scriptures how and when to worship Him. He does not want us to invent our own feast days or practices to worship Him. In fact by keeping the feast Days of Elohim, we get to understand His plan of salvation for all mankind. Elohim's plan of salvation for all mankind will happen exactly as planned, whether we believe in it or not. The fact that He has called us at this time, presents us with the tremendous opportunity of becoming kings and priests ruling under Yahshua in His coming Kingdom. It is important for us to learn from the mistakes of ancient Israel, if we want to enter (YHVH)'s millennial rest, as we read from Hebrews 4: 1 & 2, as follows; ***'Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. (2) For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also, but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.'***

We are aware that the nation of Israel was split into two separate nations during the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. But, Elohim clearly shows that the 12 tribes of Israel will one day soon be united again. We read accordingly from Jeremiah 50: 4 & 5, ***"In those days and at that time," declares YHVH, "the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well: (Yes those who believe that they will go back without Brother Judah are mistaken.) they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be YHVH their Elohim they will seek. (5) They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to YHVH in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten."*** We read further from Ezekiel 37: 21 – 28, ***"And say to them, 'Thus says YHVH Elohim, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; (22) and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. (23) And they will no longer defile themselves with idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their Elohim. (24) And My servant David will be king over them, and they will have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. (25) And they shall***

live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. (26) And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. (27) My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their Elohim, and they will be My people. (28) And the nations will know that I am YHVH who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.'"

This will happen after Messiah's return to earth, during which time all the first-fruits will be resurrected as may be read from 1 Thessalonians 4: 14 – 17, in this way: ***'For if we believe that Yahshua died and rose again, even so Elohim will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yahshua. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Master, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Master, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep (such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, the prophets and others called specifically by YHVH to follow Him during their physical existence on earth). (16) For the Master Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of Elohim; and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Master in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Master.'*** It is at that time that David and all those who did what was pleasing in (YHVH)'s sight be given eternal life as witnessed in Revelation 20: 6, as follows: ***'Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of Elohim and of Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years.'***

The fact that YHVH has called us at this time is no guarantee that we will one day be in the kingdom of Elohim. YHVH has personally chosen Jeroboam to rule over the ten tribe nation of Israel and he failed to make it, because of his own agenda. Similarly did Yahshua personally choose His twelve disciples, one of whom betrayed Him. We see that being called and even chosen does not guarantee our final success, but those who will be with Yahshua when He returns will require an additional qualification to make it into the kingdom of Elohim, as witnessed in Revelation 17: 14, in this way: ***'These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Master of master and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.'*** Yes, being called at this time is significant, but we need to wash our robes in the word of Elohim, by keeping Elohim's commandments if we want to be chosen, as may be read from Matthew 22: 1 – 14. In addition we need to remain faithful to the end, if we finally want to make it into the Kingdom of Elohim. Think about it!

Chapter 3: Important lessons to learn from king Hezekiah of Judah.

After King Solomon, there were a number of evil kings in both Israel and Judah. But one of the most notable kings of Judah after King Solomon was Hezekiah. The life and reign of king Hezekiah is discussed in detail in the books of Kings; Chronicles and Isaiah. We also read about Hezekiah in Ezra, Nehemiah, Proverbs, Jeremiah, Micah and Hosea. King Hezekiah is also mentioned in the genealogy of our Master and savior Yahshua Messiah.

Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king over Judah. He reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem and did what was right in the sight of YHVH. Hezekiah started his reign by destroying the pagan altars that his father and the wicked kings before him built. He worked fervently to get rid of all the pagan worship in the kingdom of Judah, as we read from 2 Kings 18: 4 – 6, ***‘He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Neshustan. (5) He trusted in YHVH, the Elohim of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. (6) For he clung to YHVH; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which YHVH had commanded Moses.’***

King Hezekiah’s reign was distinguished as one of spiritual rejuvenation, since he was responsible to restore Temple worship and a return to keeping the Feast Days of Elohim, as we read from 2 Chronicles 29: 3 – 11, in this way: ***‘In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of YHVH and repaired them. (4) And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them into the square on the east. (5) Then he said to them, “Listen to me, O Levites. Consecrate yourselves now, and consecrate the house of YHVH, the Elohim of your fathers, and carry the uncleanness out from the holy (set-apart) place. (6) For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of YHVH our Elohim, and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of YHVH, and have turned their backs. (7) They have also shut the doors of the porch and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the Elohim of Israel. (8) Therefore the wrath of YHVH was against Judah and Jerusalem, and He has made them an object of terror, of horror, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. (9) For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. (10) Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with YHVH Elohim of Israel, that His burning anger may turn away from us. (11) My sons, do not be negligent now, for YHVH has chosen you to stand before Him, to minister to Him, and to be His ministers and burn incense.”’*** Note that Hezekiah did not appoint his own priesthood, but called on the Levites to do what Elohim has ordained for them to do. In the next few verses we see that the Levites got together; sanctified themselves and cleansed the Temple.

We see from 2 Chronicles 30, how Hezekiah returned to Torah obedience, because the Priests and Levites could not sanctify themselves in time for the first Passover during his reign, he decreed that the nation observe the second Passover on the fifteenth of the second month (in accordance with Numbers 9: 9 – 12²), as is recorded in verses 1 – 3, ***‘Now Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah and***

² Numbers 9: 9 – 12, ***‘Then YHVH spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘If any one of you or of your generations becomes unclean because of a dead person, or is on a distant journey, he may, however, observe the Passover to YHVH. In the second month of the fourteenth day at twilight, they shall***

wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of YHVH at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to YHVH Elohim of Israel. (2) For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had decided to celebrate Passover in the second month, (3) since they could not celebrate it at that time, because the priests had not consecrated themselves in sufficient numbers, nor had the people been gathered to Jerusalem.’ We see further from verses 10 – 13 of 2 Chronicles 30 that the king also invited the remnant of the 10 tribes of Israel who were not taken captive and were still living to the north of Judah, as follows: **‘So the couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulon, but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. (11) Nevertheless some men of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulon humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. (12) The hand of Elohim was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of YHVH. (13) Now many people were gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feats of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very large assembly.’** We see that some of those who kept the Passover with Judah did not prepare themselves before partaking of the same, but that Hezekiah prayed for them as we read from verses 18 – 21 of 2 Chronicles 30, in this way: **‘For a multitude of the people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulon, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May YHVH pardon (19) everyone who prepares his heart to seek Elohim, YHVH Elohim of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary.” (20) So YHVH heard Hezekiah and healed the people. (21) And the sons of Israel present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy, and the Levites and the priests praised YHVH day after day with loud instruments to YHVH.’**

The reason for Hezekiah’s success may be found in 2 Chronicles 31: 21, as follows: **‘And every work which he began in the service of the house of Elohim in law and in commandment, seeking His Elohim, he did with all his heart and prospered.’** This was the key to Hezekiah’s success and will also ensure the success of any one who does likewise. Hezekiah became the king of Judah, during the time the kingdom of Israel to its north was receiving punishment from Elohim at the hand of the Assyrians. In the sixth year of Hezekiah’s reign Israel was removed from their homeland by the Assyrians. Hezekiah grew concerned, as he saw the destruction of the kingdom of Israel to the north. He knew that the Assyrians would attack Judah next. We read from 2 Kings 18: 11 – 13, **‘Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and put them in Halah and on the Habor, the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, (12) because they did not obey the voice of YHVH their Elohim, but transgressed His covenant, even all that Moses the servant of YHVH commanded; they would neither listen, nor do it. (13) Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennaherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.’** With the Assyrian army on his doorstep, Hezekiah tried to buy his way out of trouble, as we read from verse 14 - 16: **‘Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.” So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. (15) And Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of YHVH, and in the treasuries of the king’s house. (16) At that time Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of YHVH, and from the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.’**

observe it; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.”

Hezekiah paid Sennacherib more than what he demanded and because he thought that there was much more available in Judah, he broke the agreement with Hezekiah and surrounded Jerusalem. Judah's army was too weak to fight, but Hezekiah had faith. We see from 2 Kings 18: 28 – 35 that the delegates of the Assyrian king spoke in Judean (meaning Hebrew) threatening the soldiers defending Jerusalem, in this way: ***'Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean (i.e. Hebrew), saying, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. (29) "Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you from my hand; (30) nor let Hezekiah make you trust in YHVH, saying, "YHVH will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." (31) 'Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, "Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, (32) until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die." But do not listen to Hezekiah, when he misleads you saying, "YHVH will deliver us." (Woe, Rabshakeh was actually offering Judah a new promised land here; he like the agents of Satan today was trying to mislead the true servants of YHVH.) (33) 'Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? (34) Where are the gods of the Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? (35) Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that YHVH should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'"*** Like the many agents of Satan today, Rabshakeh was a master at psychological warfare and by his intimidating tactics, he tried to scare the nation of Judah to capitulate without a fight. He told them that they had only two choices; either death or deportation. They could decide to fight and die at war, or be taken many miles away to a foreign country. Through Rabshakeh the Assyrian king asserted that YHVH the Elohim of Israel was powerless against him, the most powerful king in the region at that time.

The house of Judah must have been terrified. However, we read faithful Hezekiah's response to these threats in 2 Kings 19: 1 – 4, as follows: ***'And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of YHVH. (2) Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. (3) And they said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah. 'This is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. (4) Perhaps YHVH your Elohim will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the Living Elohim, and will rebuke the words which YHVH your Elohim has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'"*** We continue reading about the account from Isaiah 37, where we read from verse 5 – 7: ***'So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. (6) And Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master. 'Thus says YHVH, "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. (7) Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'"*** Jerusalem was in a desperate situation, but YHVH proved true to His word and intervened for Hezekiah and its trapped citizens. We read accordingly from verses 35 – 37 of 2 King 19, ***'Then it happened that night that the angel of YHVH went out, and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead. (36) So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home, and lived at Nineveh. (37) And it came about as he was worshipping in the***

house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.' In the end the Assyrian king was assassinated by two of his sons whilst worshipping his pagan god.

We read from verse 1 of 2 Kings 20, **'In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says YHVH, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'"** We read Hezekiah's response in verses 2 & 3, as follows: **'Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to YHVH, saying, (3) "Remember now, O YHVH, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Thy sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.'** Before Isaiah left, YHVH came to him saying, as we read in verses 5 & 6: **'Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says YHVH, the Elohim of your father David, 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of YHVH. (6) And I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'"** Even though Hezekiah believed what Isaiah told him, he asked Isaiah for a sign. As we read from verse 9 of 2 Kings 20, Isaiah presented Hezekiah with two miracles to choose from, in this way: **'And Isaiah said, "This shall be the sign to you from YHVH, that YHVH will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?"'** Hezekiah chose the latter, because he reasoned that a shadow moves forward anyway. So Isaiah cried to YHVH and He brought the shadow back ten steps. Here YHVH our Elohim, performed another miracle, he not only healed Hezekiah, but also made the shadow go back 10 degrees.

However, we read from 2 Chronicles 32: 25 & 26, **'But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. (26) However, Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of YHVH did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah.'** YHVH spared Hezekiah and his kingdom for the remainder of his lifetime and when he died the citizens of Judah buried him in the upper section of the tombs of the sons of David; and all of Judah honored him at his death. The most important lesson that we can learn from Hezekiah's life, is that Elohim's mercy is always available to those who acknowledge their sins and inadequacies and return to Him in obedience.

Chapter 4: King Josiah returns to worshipping Elohim.

After King Hezekiah's death his son Manasseh became king in his place. Manasseh was twelve years old when he started reigning as king over Judah; he did what was evil in the sight of YHVH and spilled much innocent blood during his reign. Manasseh built altars for Baal, worshipped Astarte and offered his son to Molog, a hollow god made from copper. It is believed that he was responsible for removing the name of YHVH from all public notices as well as from all Scriptures. Many true worshippers including the prophets were killed during Manasseh's reign. For example; according to the Talmud, the prophet Isaiah was put to death at the age of ninety, when he was sawn into two, as is confirmed in Hebrews 11: 37 & 38, in this way: ***'They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (38) (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.'***

The sins of Manasseh was a direct cause of Judah's eventual captivity, as we read from 2 Kings 24: 3 & 4, as follows: ***'Surely at the command of YHVH it came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, (4) and also for the innocent blood which he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and YHVH would not forgive.'*** Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem, and when he died his son Amon became king in his place. Amon, like his father Manasseh, did what was evil in the sight of YHVH. Amon reigned for only two years and was killed by his servant. Then the people of Judah killed all those who conspired against King Amon, and made Josiah his son king in his place.

(YHVH)'s plan of salvation for all mankind includes getting both Israel and Judah back to worshipping Him as He originally set out in His word. We turn to the book of Jeremiah, where Jeremiah prophesied during King Josiah's reign, about a century after the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity by the king of Assyria. We read a prophecy about Israel from Jeremiah 3: 1 – 18, in this way: ***'Elohim says, "If a husband divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and belongs to another man, will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; yet you turn to Me," declares YHVH. (2) Lift up your eyes to the bare heights and see; where have you not been violated? By the roads you have sat for them like and Arab in the desert, and you have polluted a land with your harlotry and with your wickedness. (3) Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no spring rain. Yet you had a harlot's forehead; you refused to be ashamed. (4) Have you not just now called to Me, 'My Father, Thou art the friend of my youth? (5) Will He be angry forever? Will He be indignant to the end? Behold, you have spoken and have done evil things, and you have had your way.' (6) Then YHVH said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. (7) And I thought, 'After she has done all these things, she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. (8) And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. (9) And it came about because of the lightness of her harlotry, that she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. (10) And yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception," declares YHVH. (11) And YHVH said to me, "Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. (12) Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, 'Return, faithless Israel,' declares***

YHVH; I will not look upon you in anger, for I am gracious,’ declares YHVH; ‘I will not be angry forever. (13) Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against YHVH your Elohim and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,’ declares YHVH. (14) “Return, O faithless sons,” declares YHVH; ‘For I am a master to you, and I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.’ (This is specifically talking about us, the remnant of the lost ten tribes.) (15) Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. (16) And it shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares YHVH, “they shall say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of YHVH.’ And it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again. (17) At that time they shall call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of YHVH,’ and all nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of YHVH; nor shall they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. (18) In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.” For the past number of years YHVH has been calling a remnant from the lost ten tribes to return to Him in obedience and as we’ve read from verse 18, the house of Israel will walk with the house of Judah once again.

We return to 2 Kings 22: 1 & 2 to read about Josiah, as follows: ***‘Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. (2) And he did right in the sight of YHVH and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left.’*** We read further about King Josiah from 2 Chronicles 34: 3 - 7, ***‘For in the eighth year of his reign while he was still a youth, he began to seek the Elohim of his father David; and in the twelve year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images. (4) And they tore down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars that were high above them he chopped down; also the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images he broke in pieces and ground to powder and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. (5) Then he burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. (6) And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, even as far as Naphtali, in their surrounding ruins, (7) he also tore down the altars and beat the Asherim and the carved images into powder, and chopped down all the incense altars throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.’***

Next Josiah focused on restoring the faith of Judah to worshipping YHVH the one and only true Elohim. We read from verses 3 – 7 of 2 Kings 22, as follows: ***‘Now it came about in the eighteenth year of King Josiah that the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam the scribe, to the house of YHVH saying, (4) “Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest that he may count the money brought in to the house of YHVH which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. (5) And let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of YHVH, and let them give it to the workmen who are in the house of YHVH to repair the damages of the house, (6) to the carpenters and the builders and the masons and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the house. (7) Only no accounting shall be made with them for the money delivered into their hands, for they deal faithfully.”*** It was during the repairs and maintenance to the house of Elohim, that Hilkiyah found a scroll of the law of Elohim (the Torah), a discovery that cause Judah to return to the way of Elohim. It is sad to realize how far Judah must have fallen spiritually, to have actually mislaid the Torah scroll.

Josiah was very glad to have found the Torah and was eager to practice what Elohim taught. When the Torah was read to Josiah, he realized how far away from Elohim Judah had gone. We see in 2 Chronicles 34: 21 how Josiah asked among others, the scribe Shaphan and his servant Asaiah, saying: ***“Go, inquire of YHVH for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of YHVH which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of YHVH, to do according to all that is written in this book.”*** Elohim sent word to Josiah that Judah would also go into captivity because of their disobedience as prophesied in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. However, because Josiah was so diligent in trying to serve Elohim, the punishment would only come after his death. We read accordingly from verses 22 – 28, ***‘So Hilkiah and those whom the king had told went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, the keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her regarding this. (23) And she said to them, “Thus says YHVH, the Elohim of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to Me, (24) thus says YHVH, “Behold, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the curses written in the book which they have read in the presence of the king of Judah. (25) Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and it shall not be quenched.”’ (26) “But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of YHVH, thus you will say to him, ‘Thus says YHVH Elohim of Israel regarding the words which you have heard, (27) because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before Elohim, when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes, and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,” declares YHVH. (28) Behold, I will gather you to your fathers and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, so your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring on this place and on its inhabitants.”’” And they brought back word to the king.’*** We read from verse 33 how Josiah reacted to the bad news, in this way: ***‘And Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel to serve YHVH their Elohim. Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following YHVH Elohim of their fathers.’***

Josiah and the nation of Judah did not keep Elohim’s Set-apart days, because they have forgotten about them. Part of Elohim’s instructions which were ignored during Judah’s abandonment of the true faith, was the commandments about observing Elohim’s Set-apart Days. We read in 2 Chronicles 35: 1, that Josiah immediately started keeping the first feast day, as follows: ***‘Then Josiah celebrated the Passover to YHVH in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover animals on the fourteenth day of the first month.’*** Josiah restored the priests to their duties and had the Levites return the Ark of the Covenant to the Temple. Josiah gave the people 30,000 Passover offerings and 3,000 bulls and other officers contributed 2,600 Passover offerings and 300 bulls. It was a very special time for King Josiah and for Judah, as well as the remnant of Israel who remained in the northern part of the country. We read accordingly from verses 18 & 19 of 2 Chronicles 35, in this way: ***‘And there had not been celebrated a Passover like it in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet; nor had any of the kings of Israel celebrated such a Passover as Josiah did with the priests, the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (19) In the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign this Passover was celebrated.’***

Throughout his life, Josiah remained faithful to the way of Elohim. However because even the righteous amongst us are prone to mistakes, Josiah also fell prone to a serious mistake, which cost

his life. It happened when Pharaoh Neco of Egypt led his army up the coast to join forces with the Assyrian king, against the Babylonians. We read accordingly from 2 Chronicles 35: 21 – 24, as follows: ***‘But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, “What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and Elohim has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with Elohim who is with me, that He may not destroy you.”*** (It is necessary for us to realize that Elohim sometimes use gentile leaders to carry out His will. At this point we know that YHVH used the king of Assyria to punish the rebellious house of Israel.) (22) ***However, Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to make war with him; nor did he listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of Elohim, but came to make war on the plain of Megiddo.*** (23) ***And the archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, “Take me away, for I am badly wounded.”*** (24) ***So his servants took him out of his chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem where he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.’*** After Josiah’s death Judah returned to its evil ways. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon attacked Jerusalem, breaking down its walls, destroying the city and the Temple that Solomon built. The Babylonians took the nation of Judah captive to Babylon, where they remained for 70 years. However, the Babylonians did not try to take away the identity of the Jews; they retained their language, culture and Laws, and after 70 years, king Cyrus of Persia allowed them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple.

Josiah was a very good ruler in Judah; he like Hezekiah turned Judah back to the way of YHVH the Elohim of Israel. Like Josiah, we as Nazarene Israelites are responsible to turn Israel back to the way of Elohim, as we are also told by YHVH through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 58: 1, in this way: ***“Cry loudly, do not hold back; raise your voice like a trumpet, and declare to My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins.”*** If Josiah conferred with YHVH regarding his venture against Pharaoh Neco, rather than relying on his own judgment, he could have lived until a ripe old age. His problem, like with most other human beings, is that too much success often leads to arrogance and self-reliance. Those of us living in the end time, live in very dangerous times and should only rely on Elohim for help and avoid thinking that we can make it into the kingdom of Elohim all on our own steam. Think about it!

Chapter 5: Important lessons to learn from the life and times of Daniel.

The account of Daniel starts in the year 605 BCE when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon and Daniel together with 3 of his friends was exiled with the house of Judah. It lasts until the eventual downfall of the Babylonian empire in 539 BCE, when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon and continues beyond 536 BCE. After Daniel was deported to Babylon, the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in two stages; i.e. during 597 and 586 BCE. Every time the Babylonians deported progressively more of the Jewish people. Elohim allowed Judah to be taken captive because of their numerous sins, but was also providently working out His purpose toward the eventual display of the coming Kingdom of Elohim.

Elohim allowed Gentiles to dominate the Jewish nation, specifically Babylon (605 – 539 BCE); Medo-Persia (539 – 331 BCE); Greece (331 – 146 BCE); and Rome (146 BCE – 476 CE) right up to the time when Yahshua our Messiah will return one day. The Key of Elohim's kingly control is vested in Messiah's return to rule the world from Jerusalem. He is pictured as a stone who will return to crush and put an end to the kingdoms of the world, but His kingdom will endure forever. The book presents a number of challenges around the interpretation of passages about a future tribulation. Though many archeological findings confirm the date of writing of the book, there are some skeptical interpreters, unwilling to acknowledge the supernatural prophecies of which numerous were already fulfilled. They consider these prophecies simply as observations of a later writer, who penned the events during the days of Antiochus Epiphanes between 175 - 164 BCE. Without going into too much detail, we only need to look at the prophecies of Daniel to establish the accuracy of the Scriptures. The prophecies of Daniel provide so many details about specific events that it is impossible to refute.

It was during the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, son of Josiah, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem. At that time King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his officials to bring some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and the nobles and youths in who was no defect, who were good-looking, intelligent and endowed with understanding, who had the ability to serve in his court. They were taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans. Among these sons of Judah were Daniel and his three friends. In verse 7 of Daniel 1, we see that the commander of the officials assigned new names to Daniel and his friends. Key in the process of their Babylonian training was a name change. This was to tie the inductees to local gods rather than to support their former religion. Whereas the name Daniel means *'Elohim is my Judge'*, his new name Belteshazzar meant *'Bel protects the king'*; whereas Hananiah's name means, *'YHVH is gracious'*, his new name Shadrach meant *'command of Aku,'* another Babylonian god; whereas Mishael's name means *'who is like Elohim'*, his new name Meshach meant *'who is what Aku is'*; and finally whereas Azariah's name means *'YHVH is my helper'*, his new name Abednego meant *'servant of Nego'*, yet another Babylonian god.

Daniel and his friends were given daily rations of the king's choicest food and wine, and it was appointed that they be educated three years, at the end of which they would enter the king's personal service. However, Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's food or wine, so he obtained permission for him and his three friends to only eat vegetables and drink water. After their period of training was over, the king appointed Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in his personal service. We read about this in Daniel 1: 18 – 20, in this way: ***'Then at the***

end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. (19) And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. (20) And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.'

During the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he had a dream and his spirit troubled him. At first the king ordered the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the master astrologers to tell him the meaning of his dream. However, there was a catch; the king not only wanted to know the meaning of his dream, but demanded that they also tell him what he dreamt. Even though the king knew what he dreamt, he also wanted to test these so-called wise men. In the end these men told him that there is no one on earth who could help him, except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh. This angered the king and he gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. Arioch acting on the king's instructions came to arrest Daniel and his friends and escorted them to await execution. In thinking that Daniel might be able to make sense of the king's dream, Arioch related the morbid situation to Daniel. This was because the king and others in the administration believed that Daniel was more competent than any of the other magicians in his empire. This is when Daniel requested for more time to discover the dream and its interpretation. We read consequently from Daniel 2: 13 – 16, ***'So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them. (14) Then Daniel replied with discretion, and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; (15) he answered and said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. (16) So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.'***

With the king's permission Daniel went home, where he informed his three friends about what happened, in order that they might pray and request help from Elohim concerning the matter. We read from Daniel 2: 19 - 23, ***'Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the Elohim of heaven; (20) Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of Elohim be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. (21) And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to men of understanding. (22) It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. (23) To Thee, O Elohim of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for Thou hast given me wisdom and power; even now Thou hast made known to me what we requested of Thee, for Thou hast made known to us the king's matter.'"***

Because of Daniel's life long relationship with YHVH the Elohim of Israel, he was confident that YHVH revealed not only what the king dreamt, but also the meaning of the dream, as we read from verses 24 & 25 of Daniel 2, ***'Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king." (25) Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"*** Even though skeptical, the king questioned Daniel. But instead of revealing the dream and its

meaning immediately, Daniel first told the king the reason why the other wise men could not interpret his dream. We read his response to the king in verses 27 - 30, in this way: ***“As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. (28) However, there is an Elohim in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. (29) As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. (30) But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.”***

After this Daniel began telling the king what he dreamt, as we read from verses 31 – 35 of Daniel 2, as follows: ***“You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. (32) The head of the statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, (33) its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. (34) You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. (35) Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*** Daniel continued to reveal the meaning of the king’s dream in verses 36 – 45, in this way: ***“This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king. (37) You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the Elohim of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; (38) and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. (39) And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. (40) Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. (41) And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. (42) And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. (43) And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. (44) And in the days of those kings the Elohim of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. (45) Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great Elohim has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy.”*** In addition to keeping Daniel safe, Elohim also inspired King Nebuchadnezzar to make Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon and the chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Even though Daniel taught Nebuchadnezzar about the supreme Elohim of heaven, the king did not worship Him. Instead he made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; and he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Next king Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone in his kingdom to bow down and worship the image, upon hearing the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music. He further decreed death in a furnace for anyone who refuses to bow down to this image. Because the people of Elohim are forbidden to bow down and worship images, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not worship the image. When the king found out about their refusal to worship the image, he commanded that they be brought before him. When the guards brought them before the king and he asked them if it was true that they would not worship the image, they respectfully answered as recorded in verses 16 – 18 of Daniel 3, saying to the king: ***“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this. (17) If it be so, our Elohim whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. (18) But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”*** When Nebuchadnezzar heard this he became very angry and commanded that the furnace be heated seven times more than usual. Then he commanded that certain valiant warriors tie up the three men and throw them into the furnace. We read from verse 21, ***‘Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.’*** At this point I need to mention that there are some in our Nazarene/Messianic faith, who insists that the custom of wearing a kippah or cap comes from Babylon. Even so, we are aware that King David wore a head-covering whilst praying, as may be read from 2 Samuel 15: 30 & 32. We also know that King David was never in captivity in Babylon. In addition we know that Aaron and the priests all wore head-coverings as commanded in the Torah. From verse 21 of Daniel 3, quoted here we notice that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the fire, wearing all their clothes, including caps, because they were defying king Nebuchadnezzar for not worshipping the image that he set up. I therefore do not agree that these Jewish men, who were in defiance of king Nebuchadnezzar, adopted the custom of wearing head-coverings from the Babylonians, but that it was an Israelite custom all along.

The king’s soldiers grabbed the three men and threw them into the fire, and because the flames were so intense the soldiers were killed instantly. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego fell into the fire still tied up. Nebuchadnezzar was astounded at what he saw and he asked his high officials, as we read from verses 24 & 25, ***“Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “Certainly, O king.” (25) He answered and said, “Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!”*** Then the king called upon Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to come out of the fire and the king’s officials were utterly amazed that not a hair of the heads of Daniel’s friends was singed. Immediately upon seeing this Nebuchadnezzar said (as recorded in verse 28), ***‘Blessed be the Elohim of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies so as to serve or worship any god except their own Elohim.’*** Again Elohim used Daniel’s three friends to remind Nebuchadnezzar that there is a supreme Ruler in heaven.

One night king Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, in which he saw a big tree that reached into heaven and provided food and shelter for many animals. But an angelic being from heaven caused the tree to be chopped down, leaving only a stump. The angelic being also said as recorded in verse

16 of Daniel 4, ***“Let his mind be changed from that of a man, and let a beast’s mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him.”*** When the king told Daniel about his dream, he immediately knew its meaning, but he hesitated to tell the king. When the king insisted, Daniel told the king what he dreamt and then gave him the interpretation saying as we read from verses 24 – 27, ***‘This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: (25) that you be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes. (26) And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules. (27) Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’*** King Nebuchadnezzar did not change his ways and within a year his dream came true, He was driven away and began eating grass. His hair grew like eagles feathers and his nails became like bird claws. However, at the end of the seven years Elohim restored his sanity and he realized that he was dealing with the Most High. He blessed and praised Elohim, as recorded in verse 37 of Daniel 4, as follows: ***“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”*** Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom lasted a few more years until Belshazzar became king in his place.

Whilst Belshazzar was feasting with his officials one evening, he gave orders that the gold and silver vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, be brought out so that the nobles and their wives, and concubines might drink from them. Suddenly a finger of a man’s hand appeared and began writing on the wall of the king’s palace. The king’s face grew pale and he called for the conjurers, diviners and the astrologers to read what was written on the wall. But the king’s wise men could not read the inscription on the wall. The queen entered the banquet hall and told the king that there is a man who served under his father, who will be able to interpret the message. So the king called for Daniel and told him that he heard about his abilities. He immediately offered Daniel expensive gifts and the position of the third ruler in the kingdom. However, Daniel refused the gifts but added that he will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. We read Daniels interpretation of the kings dream, after explaining to the king, that the Most High Elohim is ruler over all mankind, and He sets over it whomever He wishes, from verses 25 – 28 of Daniel 5, in this way: ***“Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.’ (26) This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’ – Elohim has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. (27) ‘TEKEL’ – you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. (28) ‘PERES’ – your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and the Persians.”*** Even though Belshazzar honored Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and made him the third ruler in his kingdom, the king was slain that night.

Darius the Mede became the next ruler over Babylon. King Darius decided to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom that they should be in charge of the entire kingdom. He further appointed three commissioners, of whom Daniel was one over these satraps. At that time Daniel distinguished himself among his peers because he possessed an extraordinary spirit and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. As a result Daniel’s fellow government officials became jealous of him. So, Daniel’s colleagues tricked the king into signing a decree which outlawed anyone from

making a petition to any god or man besides king Darius; else such a person would be thrown into the lion's den. This was a severe test for Daniel, as it was his habit to pray to YHVH three times a day, whilst kneeling by an open window facing Jerusalem. This decree meant that it became unlawful for Daniel to worship YHVH in prayer. Even so, this did not stop Daniel from praying to YHVH as may be read in the second part of Daniel 6: 10: ***'and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his Elohim, as he had been doing previously.'*** His colleagues caught him praying and reported him to the king. The king was deeply distressed and he tried saving Daniel. However, the decree was in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, meaning that no injunction or statute which the king established may be changed, so Daniel was duly thrown into the lion's den. In addition, the den was sealed by a stone, which the king sealed with his signet ring. But, we see that when the king entered his palace he started fasting for his servant Daniel. Later when he could not fall asleep, he went to the lion's den. We read what happened next from verse 20 of Daniel 6, ***'And when he (the king) had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living Elohim, has your Elohim, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"*** We read about the end result of Daniel's faith, from verses 21 - 23, as follows: ***'Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! (22) My Elohim sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."*** (23) ***Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his Elohim.'*** The king publicly acknowledges the supremacy of Daniel's Elohim by relating His deliverance of Daniel from the lions. Daniel's faith in Elohim saved his life and as we read from verse 28 of Daniel 6, ***'So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.'***

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Elohim revealed events which will happen many years in the future. Daniel wrote these visions down, as may be read from Daniel 7: 1 to 8: 2. Daniel wrote that he saw four great beasts coming up from the sea, different from one another. The first beast was like a lion, the second like a bear and the third was like a leopard with wings. However, the fourth beast appeared very strong and different from the animals that we are familiar with, and had ten horns. In Daniel's vision a little horn came up among the ten and uprooted three of the ten horns. Elohim revealed to Daniel that these four beasts symbolized four world ruling kingdoms. From history we know that these were the Persian Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire under Alexander the Great and the Roman Empire. The ten horns of the fourth beast symbolized ten successive kings and their governments which would arise out of the Roman Empire. Elohim told Daniel that the little horn will cause His people much trouble in the last days. But Elohim the ruler of the universe will take away the little horn's power, and will at that time set-up His eternal Kingdom on earth.

Another prophecy of Daniel's that played out exactly as he prophesied is in Daniel 8: 14, as follows: ***'And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the Set-apart place will be properly restored."*** The *'and'* between the evenings and mornings in this verse is written in italics in the New American Standard Bible, showing that it does not appear in the original Hebrew texts from which this is translated, and refers to 2,300 total units or days. The total period involved here is about 6½ years of sacrificing a lamb, twice a day, as per Exodus 29: 38 & 39. This prophecy accurately identifies the time of Antiochus' persecution, between September 6, 171 BCE and December 25,

165/4 BCE. After his death Jews celebrated the cleansing of the Temple in the Festival of Lights or Chanukah; in celebration of the restoration led by Judas Maccabeus.

Daniel wrote the prophecy in Daniel 9, about the seventy weeks, during the first year of Darius's reign about 539 BCE. Daniel predicts Messiah's ministry to commence during the Spring of 27 CE and end three and a half years later in the middle of the week. Yahshua was almost 30 years of age when He was immersed. Most competent Bible scholars know that Messiah's ministry was 3 ½ years in length. Yahshua was impaled as our Passover Lamb during the spring of 31 CE according to the Roman calendar. Both the British and U.S. Naval Observatories agree that 31 CE was one of only a few erratic years which had a mid-week Passover. Yahshua was in the grave for three full days and three full nights, thereby proving that He was indeed our Savior, as He confirmed in Matthew 12: 38 – 40, as follows: ***“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” (39) But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; (40) for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*”**

Elohim called Daniel a righteous man as may be read from Ezekiel 14: 14. Daniel set a great example for us in that he was constant in prayer and thankfulness; courageous enough to speak the truth, even if it meant persecution at times; and faithful to Elohim and His Torah throughout his life. If we like Daniel commit our lives to Elohim, despite the difficult circumstances in which we live, we will definitely make it into the coming Kingdom of Elohim.

Chapter 6: Important lessons to learn from the life and times of Nehemiah.

True to Elohim's word, He brought the Assyrians and Babylonians to chastise the rebellious houses of Israel and Judah. The Assyrians deported the 10 tribe house of Israel during the years 718 – 721 BCE and eventually scattered them throughout the then known world, as is witnessed in 2 Kings 17: 21 – 23, in this way: ***'When He (YHVH) had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following YHVH, and made them commit a great sin. (22) And the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, (23) until YHVH removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.'*** A few centuries later, during the years 605 – 586 BCE Elohim used the Babylonians to destroy the city of Jerusalem including the Temple that King Solomon built and deported Judah to Babylon, because she persisted in her unfaithfulness to Elohim's covenant. Elohim chastised Judah with 70 years of captivity in Babylon as may be read from 2 Kings 25. Whilst the Jews were in captivity, world leadership changed hands from the Babylonians to the Persians, as may be read from Daniel 5.

Although most of the book of Nehemiah was obtained from his personal diaries and therefore written from his personal perspective, both the Hebrew and Christian customs agree that Ezra was the Author. Even though the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are separate in most Christian Bibles, they have once been joined together in a single book, as currently in the Hebrew Scriptures. The book of Ezra begins where king Cyrus of Persia decreed to return Judah to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of Elohim in the year 539 BCE and records the reestablishment of Judah's national calendar of feasts and sacrifices. At that time the Persian empire ruled the entire near East from India to Ethiopia. Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem posed an obvious threat to the Persian administration and only a close confidant of the king could be trusted with such a daunting task. At this time Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer and therefore also his closest confidant. In ancient times a cupbearer was an officer of high rank, whose duties included serving wine at the king's table. In those days the office of king was in constant danger of conspiracies and plots to overthrow his administration, and the person serving drinks at a king's table had to be completely trustworthy. He had to guard against people trying to poison the king and his duties included drinking some of the wine, before serving it. Like Joseph and Daniel, Nehemiah attained a significant position in the palace, a position in which he developed the characteristics which Elohim could use, to lead the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, despite Persian control over the city. A major theme of the book of Nehemiah is around the obedience of Nehemiah, which is noticeably documented throughout the book. Elohim clearly worked through the obedience of Nehemiah. Another theme throughout the book is opposition to Judah's rebuilding of Jerusalem: Judah's enemies wanted to intimidate them into preventing them from rebuilding the city. But in spite of stiff opposition from both within and outside, they completed the walls of Jerusalem in only 52 days.

Before continuing with the account of Nehemiah's life, it is perhaps important to note that Queen Esther was Artaxerxes's stepmother and could possibly have influenced him to look favorably upon Nehemiah and the Jews. It is also important for the reader of the book of Nehemiah to understand the time line of chapters 1 to 12 during 445BCE, followed by a gap of 20 years after Chapter 12 and before chapter 13. In addition Nehemiah actually served two governorships in Jerusalem, the first during 445 – 433 BCE and a second possibly commencing 424BCE extending to about 410BCE.

Reading from Nehemiah 1: 1 – 3, we discover why Nehemiah decided to go to Jerusalem, as follows: ***‘The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev (Kislev), in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, (2) that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. (3) And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.”’*** Nehemiah tells the reader that at the time when the news about his countrymen reached him, he was the cupbearer to the king. At that time, he knew that Ezra the scribe departed to Jerusalem with just short of 50,000 Jews to rebuild Jerusalem, 15 years earlier. He also heard that powerful enemies were hindering the reconstruction of the city and there was a possibility that Jerusalem might never be rebuilt again.

Upon hearing the bad news, Nehemiah mourned, fasted and prayed before YHVH the Elohim of heaven. In his prayer Nehemiah reminded YHVH about the promises that He made to Moses, as we read from verses 5 – 11 of Nehemiah 1, in this way: ***‘And I said, “I beseech Thee, O YHVH Elohim of heaven, the great and awesome Elohim, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, (6) let Thine ear now be attentive and Thine eyes open to hear the prayer of Thy servant which I am praying before Thee now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Thy Servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against Thee; I and my father’s house have sinned. (7) We have acted very corruptly against Thee and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which Thou didst command Thy servant Moses. (8) Remember the word which Thou didst command Thy servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; (9) but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.’ (10) And they are Thy servants and Thy people whom Thou didst redeem by Thy great power and Thy strong hand. (11) O YHVH, I beseech Thee, may Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant and the prayer of Thy servants who delight to revere Thy name, and make Thy servant successful today, and grant him compassion before this man.”’*** This prayer of Nehemiah sounds like a prayer that we the remnant of the lost ten tribes who are returning to the way of Elohim, should be praying at this time!

About four months later during the month of Nisan, Nehemiah recorded what we read from chapter 2: 1, in this way: ***‘And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.’*** When asked by the king why he was sad, Nehemiah explained the reason for his sorrow, adding that he needed to go to Jerusalem to help with the reconstruction work being done there. We read the king’s response in verse 6 of Nehemiah 2, as follows: ***‘Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.’*** Nehemiah’s journey would take him through countries hostile to Judah, so he requested that the king give him letters transferring some of the king’s authority to Nehemiah, thus allowing him to pass through these countries, without any trouble. On the way to Jerusalem, these letters would be inspected for Nehemiah’s passage. In addition to the letters King Artaxerxes send captains of the army and horsemen with Nehemiah for his protection. The king also gave Nehemiah a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest to allow Nehemiah to cut down trees for lumber needed to build the Temple.

So Nehemiah and his entourage left for Jerusalem about a thousand miles away, as the new governor. He arrived in the devastated city of Jerusalem a little over two months later. Three days after his arrival, Nehemiah arose from his sleep during the night and went to inspect the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates which were destroyed by fire. After he inspected the state of affairs, Elohim inspired him to put together a plan for the reconstruction of the fortifications of the city. The next morning Nehemiah approached the officials, as recorded in verses 17 & 18, in this way: ***‘Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach.” (18) And I told them how the hand of my Elohim had been favorable to me, and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good work.’*** We see further from verses 19 & 20, that the opposition did not give them any respite, as follows: ***‘But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, “What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” (20) So I answered them and said to them, “The Elohim of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.”’***

As the project leader Nehemiah allocated duties to his helpers, which included the High Priest and the priests; they build the Sheep Gate, consecrated the same and hung its doors, build and consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. They were assisted by Zaccur the son of Imri and the sons of Hassenaah in rebuilding the Fish Gate; laid its beam and hung its doors. In the rest of chapter 3, Nehemiah assigned the rebuilding of the various parts of the walls of Jerusalem to the Jewish families who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra to rebuild the city. We see from chapter 4 that those opposed to the rebuilding of the walls, continued to ridicule the builders throughout the building process. Eventually they conspired together to fight against Jerusalem to put an end to the rebuilding project. However we see from verse 9 that Nehemiah and his team prayed to our Elohim and set up a guard against their adversaries, day and night. We read from verses 21 – 23 of Chapter 4 how Nehemiah both led and worked with his team, in this way: ***‘So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared. (22) At that time I also said to the people, “Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.” (23) So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, even took his weapon even to water.’***

The problem facing Nehemiah and his team did not end there, for there was also a famine in the land at the time and some of the people had to mortgage their fields, vineyards and houses for food. They also had to borrow money in order to pay tax to the king and their children were forced to be slaves. This angered Nehemiah and as we read from verses 7 – 11 of Chapter 5, ***‘And I consulted with myself, and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, “You are exacting usury, each from his brother!” Therefore, I held a great assembly against them. (8) And I said to them, “We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us?” Then they were silent and could not find a word to say. (9) Again I said, “The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our Elohim because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? (10) And likewise I, my brothers and my servants, are lending them money and grain. Please let us leave off this usury. (11) Please give back to them this very day their fields, their***

vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money and of the grain, the wine, and the oil that you are exacting from them.” The response from the nobles and rulers were positive as is recorded in verse 12, as follows: **‘Then they said, “We will give it back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say.”** Knowing the minds of men, Nehemiah got the priests to take an oath from the rulers and the nobles to ensure that they do as promised. In addition we see that he personally fed a hundred and fifty of his countrymen at his table, as well as those who came from the surrounding nations. In verse 18 he mentions the food and wine that was prepared for these guests daily, adding that for all this, he did not demand the governor’s food allowance. In other words he personally contributed to the wellbeing of his people – no wonder he had the full cooperation of his workforce.

Once the wall was rebuilt, Nehemiah’s enemies sent him a message to come and meet them in the plain of One. But Nehemiah knowing that they were planning to harm him, send a message back, saying that he could not come down to them, as he was busy working. His enemies continued to send messages and each time Nehemiah sent them the same answer back. Next his enemies tried to implicate Nehemiah to his Persian overlords by implying that he had rebellious motives for wanting to rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah responded to this disinformation, by denying their charges and at the same time asking Elohim to strengthen his hands. Next Nehemiah’s enemies hired a man to scare him into entering the Temple so that he may sin and that they may have an evil report against him and so accuse him. But, Nehemiah did not fall for their tricks and the wall around the city was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month of Elul, in only fifty-two days. If Nehemiah showed fear he could have discouraged his workforce and by entering the Temple, he would have been disobedient to Torah, as only the priests and the Levites were permitted to enter the Temple.

Nehemiah did not take credit for all the work and knew that it was accomplished by help from Elohim, as we read from verses 16 of Chapter 6, in this way: **‘And it came about when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our Elohim.’** Next Nehemiah turned his attention to reviving the spiritual foundation of the city, under the spiritual leadership of Ezra as we read from Nehemiah 7: 5, 65 and 73, as follows: **‘Then my Elohim put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be enrolled by genealogies. Then I found the book of genealogy of those who came up first in which I found the following record:** (verses 6 – 73 is a list of the people who returned from Persia to Jerusalem with Ezra in 538BCE.) (65) **And the governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest arose with Urim and Thummim. (73) Now the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel, lived in their cities. And when the seventh month came, the sons of Israel were in their cities.’** We see that the spiritual revival mentioned earlier started with the exposition of Elohim’s word. On the first day of the seventh month (Tishri) the Feast of Trumpets was kept. But we see that like we and our Jewish Brothers of today do, the second day of the month was also kept, when the heads of household, the priests, and the Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe that they may gain insight into the words of the law. They found written in the law that they should also observe the feast of booths during Tishri, so the people made booths for themselves and they kept the Feast of Booths for seven days, followed by the Last Great Day on the eighth day in accordance with the ordinance.

Once again the Jewish nation started growing spiritually by keeping Elohim's Feast days and walking according to His Torah. Starting in chapter 9, we see that on the twenty-fourth day of Tishri the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them. The people separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquity of their fathers. From verses 4 – 9 of Chapter 9, we read a long confession by the Levites in the context of the recitation of Elohim's mighty redemptive acts on Israel's behalf. At the end of the confession they made a covenant agreement to continue to serve YHVH our Elohim, as we read from verse 38, as follows: ***"Now because of all this we are making an agreement in writing; and on the sealed document are the names of our leaders, our Levites and our priests."*** Nehemiah was the first person to sign the document and his example served as a lasting inspiration for Elohim's people. After the physical task of rebuilding the walls and restructuring society, the city had to be repopulated. Those who lived outside the city, surrendered their comfortable lives outside the city, to come and live in the city. We read from verse 2 of Nehemiah 11, ***'And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.'*** With the city once more repopulated, Nehemiah went back to Persia.

However, Nehemiah no sooner left Jerusalem, when a power struggle took place. Eliashib, the priest appointed over the chambers of the house of Elohim, being related to Tobiah, Nehemiah's worst enemy and an ally of the Samaritans, prepared a room for him to live in. As a result of this bad influence the Jews began socializing with the Samaritans again; they stopped paying tithes and keeping the Sabbath. Immediately upon hearing this Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, as we read from Nehemiah 13: 6 – 12, in this way: ***'But during all this time I was not in Jerusalem, for the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king, (7) and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of Elohim. (8) And it was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room. (9) Then I gave an order and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned there the utensils of the house of Elohim with the grain offerings and the frankincense. (10) I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field. (11) So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of Elohim forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts. (12) All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses.'***

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he also noticed that some in Judah were treading wine presses on the Sabbath and loaded their donkeys with wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of produce and brought them into the city. So he admonished them on the day they sold the produce. We see further how he reprimanded the priests for allowing these evils to occur on the Sabbath, as recorded in verses 16 – 19 of Nehemiah 13, ***'Also men of Tyre were living there who imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold them to the sons of Judah on the Sabbath, even in Jerusalem. (17) Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the Sabbath day?" (18) Did not your fathers do the same so that our Elohim brought on us, and on this city, all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.' (19) And it came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the Sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates that no load should enter on the Sabbath day.'*** Verse 19 is one of the testimonies that the Sabbath starts in the evening. We

continue in verse 22, where Nehemiah wrote: ***‘And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the Sabbath day. For this also remember me, O my Elohim, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Thy lovingkindness.’*** From the action that Nehemiah took to stop his countrymen from breaking the Sabbath, we understand that he fully understood the principle taught by Rav Yaa’cov in James 2: 24; i.e. ***‘that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.’***

Nehemiah had one more problem to resolve: he discovered that some of the Jews married women from Asdod, Ammon and Moab, and their children could only speak in the language of their mother’s, but could not speak Hebrew at all. Nehemiah severely reprimanded these Jews and even manhandled them, quoting from the Torah, as we read from verses 25 – 27: ***“You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. (26) Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his Elohim, and Elohim made him king over Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin. (27) Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our Elohim by marrying foreign women?”*** We see from verse 28 that even one of the sons of the high priest, was married to Sanballat the Horonite’s daughter, so Nehemiah drove him out praying, as is recorded in verses 29 – 31: ***‘Remember them, O my Elohim, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. (30) Thus I purified them from everything foreign and appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in His task, (31) and I arranged for the supply of wood at appointed times and for first fruits. Remember me, O my Elohim, for good.’***

We see that after 70 years in captivity our Jewish Brothers returned to the Promised Land to worship YHVH our Elohim, as He promised. Those of us called at this time should like Nehemiah put in every effort as potential leaders in the coming Kingdom Of Elohim, to hold up the Torah as a mirror for those amongst us, who stumble at times. In addition we need to practice what we preach, by being fully Torah obedient ourselves, since we the remnant of the lost ten tribes will soon be taken back to the land of Israel to be ruled by Yahshua our Messiah, the root and offspring of David. HalleluYah!

Chapter 7: The house of Judah – where are they today?

Over the past six weeks I purposely covered the following six topics:

- Important lessons to learn from David king of all Israel.
- An important lesson to learn from ancient Israel.
- Important lessons to learn from king Hezekiah of Judah.
- King Josiah returns to worshipping Elohim.
- Important lessons to learn from the life and times of Daniel.
- Important lessons to learn from the life and times of Nehemiah.

The reason for so-doing was two-fold: **the first reason** was to remind us why both the houses of Israel and Judah were taken into captivity. Even though the sequence in which I delivered these sermons was different to the way in which it is presented here; this list is in the order in which these accounts occurred in history. The house of Judah returned to Israel more than 400 years before the birth of Messiah. In fact the list of genealogies mentioned in Nehemiah 7: 5³ was kept up to date from that time forward, making it possible at Yahshua's birth to ascertain that He was from the tribe of Judah.

Many years after the house of Judah returned to the land of Israel from Persia, different sects or branches of Judaism developed. From about 150 BCE there were three main branches of Judaism; namely the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes, of which the Pharisees were the most numerous. The name Pharisee means '*the separated ones*' and they were especially meticulous in observing the written and oral Torah. They taught in synagogues and their beliefs in the resurrection of the dead and the coming of Messiah to come and rule all Israel, influenced the majority of the Jewish nation. They came into conflict with the Sadducees and were at one stage excluded from the Sanhedrin. After the destruction of the Temple the sacrificial system came to an end, and the Pharisees became the dominant group in the Jewish community. They are in fact the modern day Rabbinic Jews of today.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and only kept to the written Torah. In fact, their opposition to the oral Torah was the main reason for their existence. However, the Karaite Jews, who believe that they are the modern day successors to the Sadducees, also developed a sizable body of laws outside of Torah. The Essenes on the other hand was a very basic sect at the end of the second Temple period. Their religious outlook was closer to that of the Pharisees, but even so, they formulated their own specific beliefs and observances. Their beliefs are described in detail in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This sect appears to have been completely destroyed in the Jewish War of 66 – 70 CE. The question at this point is: Which of these sects did Yahshua authenticate? We read what He said about the Sadducees when some of them questioned Him in Matthew 22: 23 - 28, about the resurrection in which they did not believe, as recorded in verse 29, like this: ***'But Yahshua answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of Elohim."*** If we follow Yahshua, we should not believe what the Sadducees teach, as they do not understand the Scriptures or the power of Elohim. Yahshua later explained the resurrection power

³ Nehemiah 7: 5, ***'Then my Elohim put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be enrolled by genealogies. Then I found the book of genealogy of those who came up first in which I found the following record:*** (verses 6 – 73 is a list of the people who returned from Persia to Jerusalem with Ezra in 538 BCE.).'

of Elohim to Nicodemus in John 3, telling him that we need to be immersed in water to receive the Set-apart Spirit, if we want to be resurrected (or born again) as spiritual children of Elohim, at His return. But, what did Yahshua say about the Pharisees? We read from Matthew 23: 1 - 3, ***'Then Yahshua spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, (2) saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; (3) therefore all they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them."*** So, we should listen and believe what the Pharisees tell us, but should not do what they do, as they tell us to keep the Torah, but do not always do as they teach. Their problem was hypocrisy, in that they wanted to look better than what they really were, as we read from Matthew 23: 28. This is a typical problem with many 'pious' people, even today.

During the third decade of the first century CE, Yahshua and His followers established Nazarene Judaism. At that time all these sects of Judaism considered Torah as supreme Law, but they differed in matters of interpretation and living out the Torah. The way in which the different sects of Judaism interpreted the way in which they applied the Torah is known as their specific '*halakah*'. The Nazarenes were essentially a sect of the Pharisees, as may be seen from Acts 15: 5; 24: 5, 14; and 26: 5. So they basically agreed with the Pharisees in the way they interpreted Torah, but for the fact that they followed Yahshua, who's '*halakah*' was stricter in a number of instances.

Before going into the second reason, I need to inform you that in doing so I will of necessity have to repeat a great deal of what I taught in previous teachings, as it is necessary to put things into perspective. Let's therefore discuss **the second reason** for having examined the history of the two houses of Israel in the listed sermons: There are some in our Nazarene faith (or more specifically some of the Assemblies of YHVH) who insists that the Jews of today are not the authentic Jews of Scriptural Times, but that they are in fact Edomites. They hold that the Karaite Jews, who admit that they are modern day Sadducees, are the authentic Jews, who have been given the Oracles of Elohim. These are the same people who insinuate that some of the customs of the Jews such as Tashlich (the casting of one's sin into a body of water on Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah) or the lighting of candles before the commencement of a Sabbath or Set-apart Day among others is adopted from pagan practices. I can attest that, that is utter nonsense! In fact it is similar to the story that Christians in the middle ages used to tell about the Jews who were supposed to have killed Christian babies to drink their blood for whatever reason. Torah observant Jews will never do such things, since the drinking of any blood is specifically forbidden in Torah (see Leviticus 3: 17). In addition the adoption (or adapting) of pagan practices is expressly forbidden by the Torah in Leviticus 20: 23 and Deuteronomy 12: 30. At this time Judah is fully aware of their past sins, as well as all their sufferings as a result thereof and are presently keeping the Law because it is in their documentation and since YHVH has written their sins on their hearts, as we read from Jeremiah 17: 1, ***'The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus; with a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars.'*** They obey Torah because of fear of persecution.

(YHVH)'s plan of salvation for all mankind includes getting both Israel and Judah back to worshipping Him as He originally set out in His word. We read from Jeremiah 3: 1 – 18, where Jeremiah prophesied about a century after the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity by the king of Assyria, in this way: ***'Elohim says, "If a husband divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and belongs to another man, will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But***

you are a harlot with many lovers; yet you turn to Me,” declares YHVH. (2) Lift up your eyes to the bare heights and see; where have you not been violated? By the roads you have sat for them like and Arab in the desert, and you have polluted a land with your harlotry and with your wickedness. (3) Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no spring rain. Yet you had a harlot’s forehead; you refused to be ashamed. (4) Have you not just now called to Me, ‘My Father, Thou art the friend of my youth? (5) Will He be angry forever? Will He be indignant to the end? Behold, you have spoken and have done evil things, and you have had your way.” (6) Then YHVH said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. (7) And I thought, ‘After she has done all these things, she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. (8) And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. (9) And it came about because of the lightness of her harlotry, that she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. (10) And yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,” declares YHVH. (11) And YHVH said to me, “Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. (12) Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, ‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares YHVH; I will not look upon you in anger, for I am gracious,’ declares YHVH; ‘I will not be angry forever. (13) Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against YHVH your Elohim and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,’ declares YHVH. (14) “Return, O faithless sons,” declares YHVH; ‘For I am a master to you, and I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.’ (This is specifically talking about us, the remnant of the lost ten tribes.) (15) Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. (16) And it shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares YHVH, “they shall say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of YHVH.’ And it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again. (17) At that time they shall call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of YHVH,’ and all nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of YHVH; nor shall they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. (18) In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.” For the past few decades YHVH has been calling a remnant from the lost ten tribes to return to Him in obedience and as we’ve read from verse 18, the house of Israel will walk with the house of Judah once again.

YHVH divorced Israel and even though Judah followed Israel in harlotry, He did not divorce her, as is explained in Malachi 2: 11 – 17, as follows: “*Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of YHVH which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. (12) As for the man who does this, may YHVH cut off the tents of Jacob everyone who awakes and answers* (meaning those of us called at this time), *or who presents an offering* (grain offering) *to YHVH of hosts. (13) And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of YHVH with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accept it with favor from your hand. (14) Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because YHVH has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. (15) But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do*

while he was seeking godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. (Yes, those of us called now, should be careful and not commit adultery.) (16) **For I Hate divorce,” says YHVH, the Elohim of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” says YHVH of hosts. ‘So Take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.’** (17) **You have wearied YHVH with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied Him?” In that you say, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of YHVH, and He delights in them,’ or, “Where is the Elohim of justice?”** Malachi 2: 17 quoted here is aimed specifically at those who question why YHVH did not divorce Judah as well.

But, the point is, that YHVH is the potter and we are the clay—consequently we do not have the right to question His motives, as we read from Isaiah 45: 9, as follows: **“Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—an earthenware vessel among the vessels of the earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands?’** We read further from Jeremiah 18: 6, **“Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares YHVH. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.”** In fact it is as YHVH says at the beginning of Malachi, in verses 1 – 4 of chapter 1, in this way: **‘The oracle of the word of YHVH to Israel through Malachi. (2) “I have loved you,” says YHVH. But you say, “How hast Thou loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares YHVH. “Yet I have loved Jacob; (3) but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation, and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.” (4) Though Edom says, ‘We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins’; thus says YHVH of hosts, “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom YHVH is indignant forever.”**

Yahshua’s main purpose was to come and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel as He also instructed His disciples in Matthew 10: 5 & 6, and to ultimately remarry His bride, as may be understood from Romans 7: 1 - 4, as follows: **‘Or do you not know, Brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law {the law of divorce and remarriage}), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? (2) For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning her husband. (3) So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. (4) Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the law through the body of Messiah** (when we are immersed into His death as may be seen from Romans 6: 1 – 7⁴), **that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for Elohim.’** When Yahshua died on the impalement stake, His final words as recorded in John 19: 30 were: **“It is finished”** which is transliterated in Hebrew as ‘Kallah’, but may also mean ‘my bride’. Yahshua died for us, His unfaithful bride and when He died He said ‘Kallah’, indicating that He was

⁴ Romans 6: 1 – 7: **‘What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been immersed into Messiah Yahshua have been immersed into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through immersion into death, in order that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.’**

once again free to remarry His bride. Yahshua is YHVH who is coming back to remarry the bride whom He married at Mount Sinai and later divorced.

Even so, anti-Semitism remains a major problem throughout the world and has at times taken on such proportions that even the translators of modern Bibles have been influenced by it. A case in point is found in some of the modern English translations listed below:

1. A test verse namely Hosea 11: 12 correctly translated in the King James Version, as follows: ***'Ephraim (a name used for the 10 lost tribes of Israel in many places throughout the Scriptures) compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with G-d (Elohim) and is faithful with the saints (believers).'***
2. The same verse in the Revised Standard Version correctly reads: ***'Ephraim has encompassed me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah is still known by G-d, and is faithful to the Holy (Set-apart) One.'***
3. But this verse is incorrectly translated in the New American Standard Bible, as follows: ***'Ephraim surrounds Me with lies, And the house of Israel with deceit; Judah is also unruly against G-d, even against the Holy One who is faithful.'***
4. And the New International Version incorrectly translates the same verse, in this way: ***'Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, the house of Israel with deceit. And Judah is unruly against G-d, even against the faithful Holy One.'***

Due to mistranslations such as these many of the modern day descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel have become very arrogant, believing that by rejecting Yahshua, our Jewish brothers are lost forever. However, we should not forget Yahshua's words in Matthew 15: 24, saying: ***"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** This means that Yahshua came specifically for the lost ten tribes of Israel and not for the Jews. We like the prodigal son have left our heavenly Father, whilst they remained loyal to Him. YHVH has blinded their minds to the identity of the true Messiah for almost 2000 years now. The reason for their blinding is given in Romans 11: 1 – 12, as follows: ***'I say then, Elohim has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. (2) Elohim has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with Elohim against Israel? (3) "YHVH, THEY HAVE KILLED THY PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN THINE ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." (4) But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." (5) In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to Elohim's gracious choice. (6) But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (7) What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; (8) just as it is written, "ELOHIM GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." (9) And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. (10) LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOR EVER." (11) I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. (12) Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!"***

By blinding the Jews to Yahshua's identity at this time, and by calling the remnant from the lost ten tribes, (YHVH)'s intention for us is to provoke our Jewish brothers to jealousy by keeping the same Sabbath, Set-apart Days, kosher and other Torah commands that they do. Whereas keeping the same Feast Days as our Rabbinical Jewish Brothers do, make them jealous – as some even told my wife, keeping the same calendar as the Karaite Jews do, make them feel honored. The reason is that it increases the numbers of those who follow their calendar, in place of the 'rival' Hebrew calendar. In fact they regularly inform those assemblies who follow their calendar when the crescent moon is sighted in Israel, despite the fact that they (the Karaites) do not believe in Yahshua. Continuing on in Romans 11: 15 – 21, we read: ***'For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (16) And if the first piece of dough (Bikkurim or First-fruit Offering) be Set-apart, the lump is also; and if the root be Set-apart, the branches are too. (17) But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partakers with them of the rich root of the olive tree, (18) do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. (19) You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." (20) Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; (21) for if Elohim did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.'*** The last thing that we can afford to do at this time is to be conceited or arrogant.

An example of how most of our Jewish Brothers will come to believe in Yahshua after His return, is given in John 20: 25 to 29, where He appears to His disciples after His resurrection, as follows: ***'The other disciples therefore were saying to him, "We have seen the Master!" But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprints of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (26) And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Yahshua came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be with you." (27) Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." (28) Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Master and my Elohim!" (29) Yahshua said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."*** Note that Yahshua did not rebuke Thomas for calling Him Elohim. Instead He said that we, who have not seen Him and believe that He is our Elohim, are indeed blessed. (I wonder what those who agree that Yahshua is YHVH, but in a recent article wrote He is definitely not ELOHIM, have to say about this verse – I suppose they will say that it is a mistranslation).

In exactly the same way that un-believing Thomas recognized Yahshua, so will our Jewish brothers get to know the real Messiah at His return to come and rule us from Jerusalem, as we read from Zechariah 12: 9 – 14, ***"And it will come about in that day that I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. (10) And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. (11) In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (12) And the land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves;***

(13) the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; (14) all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.' This will happen on Yom Teruah (also known as Rosh Hashanah), when Yahshua returns, finding our Jewish brothers observing this important Feast Day in their synagogues; with the men sitting separate from their wives, as per their custom.

Today Yahshua is referred to by Jewish Rabbis as the 'G-d of the Gentiles', but soon now at His second coming, everything will change: Yahshua will return to save His people from their adversaries; He will then fulfill His role of the King of Israel and indeed the whole world. Similar to the way in which Joseph ruled and saved Egypt from famine, Yahshua will fulfill His role as ruler of the world, who will save us from self-annihilation; that is when our Jewish brothers will acknowledge Yahshua as the Messiah. But, at this time YHWH has shut them up in disobedience, until the fullness of the Gentiles (we the remnant of the lost ten tribes, including some actual Gentiles), have returned to the faith of our father's in the faith, then all Israel will be saved as may be seen from Romans 11: 25 - 27 and 32; as follows: **'For I do not want you, brethren to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening to Israel** (in this case meaning the Jews) **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; (26) and thus all Israel** (both houses) **will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."** (27) **"AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."** (32) **For Elohim has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.'**

At this point we need to decide if the Jews in Israel today, are the Jews of Scriptural times. We also need to resolve why some insist that the Jews living in Israel at this time are Edomites (former Moslems), meaning from the children of Esau. In order not to re-invent the wheel, I quote portions from a paper by Steven M. Collins, a like-minded believer from Oregon in the USA, who explained this, in a paper entitled: *'The Khazars and the Modern Jews'* in this way: *'Let us consider an aspect of Jewish history which is sometimes controversial. This is the history of the Khazar kingdom, whose later monarchs adopted Judaism.'*

Some maintain that the Khazars were non-Israelites who, en masse, accepted Judaism and became the forebears of the Ashkenazi Jews of Europe. This viewpoint tends to disenfranchise Ashkenazi Jews as "legitimate" Jews from the tribe of Judah, and it is historically inaccurate. This viewpoint assumes: (A) all Khazars were gentile; (B) all Khazars accepted Judaism and no member of the house of Judah were already living among the Khazars.

All three assumptions are incorrect.

It is well-documented that numerous Jews lived in the Parthian Empire and many of them accompanied the migrating Parthians toward Europe through the Caucasus Mountains and into territory north of the Black Sea. Other Jewish migrations to the region of Khazaria occurred in the centuries prior to the fall of Parthia, as we shall soon document. This region (the Transcaucasus and north of the Black Sea), through which hordes of Israelites and Jews passed on their way to Europe, was the homeland of the Khazars. How could the Khazars all be gentiles when their homeland had been the main expressway for the tribes of Israel as they left Parthia and Scythia? The Khazar region also included the former kingdom of Iberia, which had a Hebrew name since its founding soon after the fall of the Israelite capital of Samaria. Iberia had also been ruled by kings with the root-word "Phares" in their names, confirming their descent from King David of Israel. Surely, there were still Israelites left in this region when the Khazars came to power there in later centuries.

There is considerable evidence that the Khazars were a mixture of races and ethnic groups. The Encyclopedia Britannica records that some “Khazars” were first noticed in Armenia in 198 A.D. This was 28 years before Parthia fell. When Parthia collapsed, millions of Semitic people from Parthia poured through the region later to be called “Khazaria” like a tidal wave on their way to Europe. During the centuries of the great migrations of Parthian and Scythian refugees through the Transcaucasion region, the descendants of the ten tribes were dominant in the region which later became Khazaria. The Khazar rulers did not adopt Judaism until 740 A.D. or even later. Let us consider how many waves of Jewish refugees entered Khazaria before the event occurred.

Large numbers of Jewish refugees had settled in what became Khazaria long before the Khazars were even a recognizable people. It is recorded in ‘The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia’ that: “Vakhushti’s History of Georgia informs us that permission was granted to a Jewish legation which had appealed to the prince of Mtskheth, after the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE), to settle on the outskirts of Mtskheth.” Jews from the tribe of Judah began settling in the Transcaucasus from the time Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians! The same source records many more waves of Jewish migration to this region:

“Another influx of Jewish refugees into various Trans-Caucasian regions took place after the destruction of the second temple at Jerusalem (70 CE). The height of the influx during the first centuries of Christianity is confirmed by the chronicler Faustus of Byzantium (4th cent CE), who reports that the Persians, under King Sapor II (360 CE), invaded Armenia, and took with them to South Persia more than 75,000 Jewish captives, the progeny of those who had previously come to the Trancaucasus from Palestine.”

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia also states that the conversion of the Khazar “Kahan” and his court may not have occurred until between 786 and 809 A.D. It further records how few people actually converted to Judaism as a result of their monarch’s conversion. It states regarding the Khazar King’s conversion:

“...he and about 4,000 Khazars were circumcised; it was only by degrees that the Jewish teachings gained a foothold among the population... the Jews were greatly outnumbered by pagan masses, by Moslem and Christian inhabitants of the cities.” The Khazars were not a majority Jewish state. They had leaders of the Jewish faith, but only a sizable minority of the Jews among their numbers. A total of only 4,000 new conversions to Judaism in a large nation was actually a small number of the converts. The requirement of circumcision was likely a disincentive for most Khazar men to convert to Judaism. Most Khazars remained in pagan or Christian religions. In later centuries of the Khazar kingdom, many adopted Islam. The Encyclopedia Britannica records that one of the major Khazar cities, Itil, had 30 mosques around 934 A.D.’. Enough said!

Since 1948 authentic Jewish Zionist started returning to the land of Israel to establish the modern nation of Israel. Eventually we the remnant of the lost ten tribes will also return to the land as we’ve read from Jeremiah 3: 18. Judah was destined from the start to maintain the Law for the other tribes, as is witnessed in Psalm 60: 7 and 108: 8. This agrees with Romans 3: 1 – 4 and Hosea 11: 12 quoted before. The Levites among the Jews are responsible to determine the Feast Days of Elohim, as is witnessed in Malachi 2: 1 - 8 as follows: **“And now, this commandment is for you, O Priests. (2) If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My Name,” says YHVH of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart. (3) Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it. (4) Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi,” says YHVH of hosts. (5) “My covenant with him was one of life and peace,**

and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me, and stood in awe of My name. (6) True instruction was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. (7) For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of YHVH of hosts. (8) But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says YHVH of hosts.’ YHVH is not pleased with Feast Days not ordained by Levi, but as we read from Nahum 1: 15 He is delighted with the Feast Days kept by Judah, as follows: ***‘Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; pay your vows. For never again will the wicked one pass through you; he is cut off completely.’*** From the wording of verse 15, and the duality principle that runs throughout the Scriptures, it is safe to assume that this is also a prophecy about the Millennium rule of Yahshua.

Yahshua kept the Feast Days on the same days that the Jews of His day kept it, except for the Passover, which He kept in the night part of the 14th Aviv, before His death the next day. When studying the four gospels, it becomes abundantly clear that Yahshua kept all the other Feast Days including Chanukah (see John 10: 22), according to the Hebrew calendar. Yahshua only made one correction to the Hebrew calendar, and since He is the example of how to follow the way of Elohim, we should do likewise. We accordingly keep the Passover the night before the Jews do, since we keep it as a memorial of Yahshua’s death, as instructed in 1 Corinthians 11: 23 – 26.

Finally we need to consider the significance of the moon. We read from Psalm 89: 34 – 37 that the moon is very important to YHVH, in this way: ***“My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. (35) Once I have sworn by My holiness (Sanctuary); I will not lie to David. (36) His descendants shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. (37) It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful.”*** Yes, the moon is Elohim’s witness, that David’s descendant, Yahshua will rule the united nation of Israel from Jerusalem during the coming kingdom of Elohim and into eternity. The Feast of Trumpets begins at the new moon on the seventh month and is a Set-apart convocation. It is the day that our Jewish brothers call the Head of the Year or Rosh Hashanah. The civil New Year is counted from Yom Teruah and the ten days of awe concluding at Yom Kippur, also starts from it. We read about Yom Teruah in Psalm 81: 3, transliterated in Hebrew, as follows: *‘Tiqu va’chodesh shofar ba’kesh le’yom chagenu’*, meaning ***‘Blow the shofar at the moon’s renewal; at the time of concealment of our festive day.’*** Yom Teruah is the only Feast Day of Elohim that falls on a new or concealed moon, since we do not know exactly when Yahshua will return.

The moon is renewed immediately after the shadow of the earth, between the sun and the moon, covers the moon and commences its move towards renewal. The renewed moon cannot be seen by the ‘naked’ eye and only becomes visible as a crescent moon 1½ to 2 days after concealment. The new moon is in concealment for ±2 days, and is only ‘watched’ to determine the date for Trumpets. If Atonement will be on a Friday or a Sunday, Trumpets is moved one day on, ensuring that Atonement is never on the day before or after a weekly Sabbath. Concealment takes up to 2 days, which ensures that even in the event of such a postponement, Trumpets will still occur during the concealment of the moon. Those people watching for the crescent moon, by which they declare a ‘new month’ is usually a day and a half to two days later than the Hebrew calendar. We read in 1 Samuel 20: 5, ***‘So David said to Jonathan, “Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I ought to sit***

down to eat with the king. But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field until the third evening.”

The question is: Why did David want to hide himself in the field until the 3rd evening. The reason is that King Saul kept the New Moon for two days, by having a special meal on both the evenings during which the moon was not visible. This is confirmed in verses 27 of 1 Samuel 20, as follows: ***‘And it came about the next day, the second day of the new moon, that David’s place was empty; so Saul said to Jonathan his son, “Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?”’*** Both the First Day of Unleavened Bread and the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles occur on the fifteenth day of either the first or the seventh months of the year. The moon is usually full on both of these two days. But, if we determine the new month by watching for the first sliver of the crescent moon to become visible, it will always be at least a day or two after the full moon. Yes the next ‘month’ will be about 30 days later, to the next crescent moon, but these two Feast Days will essentially always be a day or two too late.

We know from the Scriptures that Yahshua will return on the Feast of Trumpets or Yom Teruah one day, as we read from 1 Thessalonians 4: 13 – 17, like this: ***“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Yahshua died and rose again, even so Elohim will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yahshua. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Master, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Master, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Master Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of Elohim; and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds (not heaven) to meet the Master in the air, and thus we shall be with the Master. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*** This will be the first resurrection spoken about in verse 6 of Revelation 20, as follows: ***‘Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of Elohim, and of Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years.’***

I have been asked by a few, how one would watch for the real New Moon, which any meteorologist will tell you is a complete dark moon, as may be seen on calendars showing the four phases of the moon. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we told that people watched for the new moon. The new moon is watched in the same way as people watch for the crescent moon – when the opposite crescent of the outgoing moon is watched, we know that immediately after it disappears, it is the new (or dark) moon. According to the Hebrew calendar the very next day will be the New Month, unless a postponement is necessary. This very same calendar is used by the current state of Israel, consisting of millions of citizens: they do not only organize an assembly or congregation of a few hundred members by every crescent moon, (where the equinoxes are not even considered) as some do. We’ve seen that our Jewish brothers will be in their synagogues keeping Rosh Hashanah, when Yahshua the only true Messiah returns on the Feast of Trumpets one day. The question is: Are those who keep to the Crescent Moon calendar, going to be there? Think about it!

This book is published on behalf of the Nazarene Israelite Two House Congregation of Port Elizabeth an Internet ministry based in Port Elizabeth South Africa. Postal Address: P O Box 15935, Emerald Hill. 6011. Port Elizabeth. South Africa.

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