



Intimacy & THE END TIMES

Performing a wedding ceremony is one of the holiest moments I get to experience. Heaven touches earth when I stand under the wedding canopy with a man and a woman who are deeply in love and giving themselves to each other unconditionally for a lifetime.

Time stands still. The man and woman are surrounded by family and friends who sincerely love them. In those moments of cutting covenant God Himself draws near, as if to say:

“In the beginning, I created you for this closeness, this sweetness, this depth of longing for each other—which I am now granting you. I, Myself, am participating in your joy and fulfillment. This blesses Me!”

This theme permeates the Seven Benedictions sung at every Jewish wedding:

“Grant perfect joy to these loving companions, as you did your creations in the Garden of Eden. Blessed are You, LORD, who grants the joy of groom and bride.”

It is the season for weddings, and this year many Messianic couples are taking their vows. I’ve been privileged to perform a number of their ceremonies. When people congratulate me afterward, saying *“Thank you! That was so special.”* I usually respond with *“It’s hard to mess up such a good script.”* And I mean it. Our magnificent Inventor fashioned us with such strong desire for the opposite sex that an almost magnetic force energizes us to find our mate. There is no doubt that He is the original “wedding planner.” But the ceremony and family/community celebration are *just the opener.*

Weddings are about intimacy. A man and a woman pledge their lives to each other—body, soul, and spirit—through every circumstance, “forever and ever.” They are henceforth blessed (even commanded) to express their new-found intimacy in sexual love. The depth of intimacy for which marriage is designed is used repeatedly in the Scriptures to awaken us to God’s delectable intention for us with Him. Of all the images employed by the Author to help us “get” what He has in mind—this one should both shock and attract us. He devoted an entire book of sensual poetry, the Song of Songs, as if to luxuriate in the satisfaction of a man and woman becoming one. He describes Himself as Israel’s “husband” (Isaiah 54:5).



Apocalyptic Preparation

We hear much teaching and many feature films now about the Apocalypse. It would seem that the end times really are drawing near. So, in the words of the Apostle Peter, **“How should we then live?”** I believe that the prime answer lies in this *mysterious marital concept: INTIMACY.*

That’s what makes the wedding canopy such a holy place. God has woven into the fabric of every heart this essential desire. It is the longing to overcome our separateness, *to merge with a greater reality—to enter something unlimited.* The enormity of the physical universe sends a signal that we are tiny and very finite. *Being joined intimately with the Inventor of the universe flips that equation around, propels us into value and dissolves our aloneness, with the constant nearness of Another.*

Miriam (Mary) and Martha. One of them saw that the essential thing was being with Yeshua. Relational intimacy requires unusual openness – to a degree we are not familiar or comfortable with in everyday life. That’s why marriage involves removing all barriers. This is God’s goal for us in relating to Him, and the reason for Yeshua’s unique sacrifice.

In the final chapters of the Bible, at the culmination of the End Times, we’re given an image of Yeshua being united with His people - with us. We are the bride in the wedding supper of the Lamb. ✨



By **EITAN SHISHKOFF**



“Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old” (Matthew 13:52). *Old treasures* are a reference to the Torah - studying and understanding that faith without accompanying deeds is dead (James 2:26). And deeds - this is when you're doing not just what you understand, but what the Word of God determines is important and required.

The New Covenant priesthood and faith in Yeshua are 2,000 years old, but unfortunately have been distant from the Jewish people among whom they started. *Now* we see something different happening - modern Israelis believing in Yeshua. Many secular Israelis are intrigued. Even among Orthodox Jews we hear fresh debate about the question "Who is this Yeshua?" Up until recently they only cursed Him, but now some rabbis agree, "He is ours, He is Jewish." We see a stirring in the hearts of our people. May we find a balance and receive the wisdom of the Lord in how to bring good news to those who are open to the truth - both to "old timers" and to those who have just arrived in Eretz Israel.



Harvest

The fields are ripe. Even though Israel is a small country, it grows much wheat. The eyes of many people have turned toward Zion. Israel develops technology and scientific discoveries quite successfully. But now people also come to Israel for revelation. Micah's words literally come true, **"In the last days ... many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"** (Micah 4:1-2).

We are also seeing a spiritual harvest in our congregation. In celebration, *Shavei Tzion* arranged a festive Shavuot outing for the whole congregation. There were three big busloads of people, and many came in their cars. We enjoyed fresh air, spent time together and made a *mikvah* (Hebrew for a purifying immersion, or baptism) in the name of Yeshua for those who joined the priesthood of the New Covenant during the last six months. Thirteen people were immersed in the Jordan River. We believe this trend will continue, and that the fruit will become more and more apparent. ✨

Old & New Treasures

Shavuot, Pentecost and the Feast of Weeks are different names for the same Biblical holy day. On Shavuot, fifty days after the Exodus, God gave Israel the Torah - the Law - and transformed the twelve tribes into One People. It was a day that changed history as a people was called to shine the light of God through their lifestyle. A few thousand years later, after Yeshua (Jesus) rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, the Lord God revealed Himself in *another* manner and *poured out His Spirit* on the Jewish followers of the Messiah - also on Shavuot. Thus, in the midst of Israel was born a far superior New Covenant, a kingdom of priests to which myriads of Gentiles joyfully joined themselves.

When the fields are ripe at Shavuot in early summer, Israel's farmers reap wheat to make bread and satisfy hunger. But it is possible to reap a spiritual harvest as well. The Lord Yeshua told His disciples, **"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"** (Matthew 9: 37-38). We live in a day when all three of these events are taking place again: *the giving of the Torah, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual harvest.*

Torah

The Torah is as old as the world, but today it is regaining value for many believers. For centuries many Gentile disciples of the Messiah largely ignored the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) and the *Torah* of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). Recently, as believers around the world are coming to understand the Torah foundation, they are seeing even brighter and more powerful truths in the New Testament. And those who used to say the words "Believe, believe, believe" are now adding, "He who believes in Him, keeps His Word and His commandments." God's Word is being restored.



By LEON MAZIN

NO GREATER JOY

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." (3 John 1:4)

Raising our children as believers can be challenging. We long for them to put their trust in the Lord, yet they do not want to appear different in the eyes of friends and peers. This natural desire is in conflict with being as light and salt in the world. Often our children can feel embarrassed or even ashamed of the Jewish Messiah while living among His people who largely reject Him.

The Apostle Paul did not always embrace Yeshua wholeheartedly. In fact, he started out rabidly antagonistic. Then on the way to Damascus Paul had a revelation. He saw the Lord, and his whole life changed. He stopped persecuting Yeshua's followers and embraced the message of Messiah, proclaiming, **"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Messiah which is salvation for everyone"** (Romans 1:16). Our children are in need of this same revelation.

Local congregations here in Israel need strengthening in order to be effective in the midst of the traditional Jewish world we inhabit. Our children attend schools full of children from families to whom the revelation of Yeshua has not yet come. One day a teacher taught my son's class about the Christian religion and its *founder* "Yeshu." When my son heard the name she used, he raised his hand, received permission to speak and then explained that

this word "Yeshu" (*without the "a" at the end*), is actually a curse that some rabbis centuries ago spoke concerning Yeshua. It is an acronym that stands for "May His name and memory be blotted out." The teacher was surprised. She did not know that this was not His real name but rather a derogatory reference. She immediately began using our Lord's real name.

Brothers and sisters, our children are in a *tight spot*. At home they receive the identity of the Messiah, but at school they want to be like all their friends, not weird and strange. None of us wants to be rejected, especially not children. Israeli children from believing families are a tiny minority in their schools if not alone in the whole school. Furthermore, many of our children have not yet received a deep revelation of Messiah, and there is an enemy who is constantly attacking and trying to prevent our children's from growing in their faith.

For the last four years, one afternoon a week, we have gathered children from believing families all around the Western Galilee into our Congregational facility at Harvest of Asher in Akko. We provide fellowship for these kids from different congregations, arranging transportation, even from distant towns. Each child chooses two activities out of the six we offer. Then at the end we give them with a warm meal and return them to their homes with a full stomach and a satisfied heart.



Guy and Tali with their children

As we continue this activity our present space is limited. We need to expand for the good of the next generation, **"the generation of those who seek Him, who seek [God's] face"** (Psalm 24:6). A partial solution has been opening more classrooms in another congregational facility. This ministry is growing. There is a great need for the children of believing families to have regular, weekly fellowship with the wider body of children from believing communities. Some of the club activities are guitar and singing lessons. The children have then served elderly Holocaust survivors by singing and praising the Lord with music they have learned.

Our long term goal is to establish a Messianic *school* which will provide a strong academic and scriptural foundation for our children. Please pray with us, that this vision which God has placed in our hearts, will come to pass. We are contending for their lives, to see our *children walk in the truth*. ✡



Our musician children blessing Holocaust survivors



By GUY COHEN

Everyone Has a Song

"When you come together everyone has a holy song, or a revelation...for the common good." (1 Corinthians 14:26 BBE translation)

Tents of Mercy Congregation has recently finished a series of teachings on realizing, developing and using the *giftings* God has given us. Each one of us has diverse and different backgrounds. Each one has different gifts. God created us to grow into a place of bearing fruit in our lives, particularly in these areas which God has given us (Isaiah 5, John 15). Therefore it is important that each of us realize - and walk in - our calling.

When we see the growth and expression of unique giftings it brings encouragement to the whole community. We want to be cheerleaders for each other. When victory and fruitfulness blossom forth for one of us, we all move forward: *"If it can happen for them, it can happen to me as well."*

"A gift opens the way..." (Proverbs 18:16 NIV)

God has gifted one of our member couples with musical ability - both the husband and the wife. Together they have a vision to not simply play musical instruments, but to create a musical message, with a heart to reach out and share the good news. The husband composed music for many years in Europe, including theater and

ballet productions. Here in Israel he and his wife have been creating an original musical arrangement orchestrated with video clips and verses to express a redeeming message about human existence.

The musical story follows a boy and girl growing from childhood to old age. The path of their lives sometimes feels like a maze, and successfully arriving at the final destination is only possible through sacrificial atonement. Each stage of life was given its own distinctive piece of music, inspired by Ecclesiastes and Isaiah 53: God's hands hold up the earth; each of us has gone his own way; God comes down in human form to take our sin.

In June this original audiovisual composition premiered before the congregation. As a community we witnessed the work of this creative duo. We stand with them and appreciate what the Lord is doing in and through them. At the conclusion of the concert, they shared the clear sense of God leading and guiding them, even without knowing exactly where God is taking them with this music and this *journey*. ✨



By AVI



Leonid and the Tents of Mercy choir singing during the Shavuot harvest season



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