

THE NETWORKER



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NEWS

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Purpose of RFI

RESTORATION: The renewed interest throughout the body of Christ to rediscover and restore its biblical heritage and especially its first century roots and foundations in Christ, the apostles, and the earliest believers for faith, fellowship and practice, has prompted RFI to establish a trans-denominational association of ministers, ministries and churches to assist in bringing people together for meaningful fellowship, dialogue and cooperation. We respect, value and appreciate the efforts of all churches and wish to network with them for Christ-honoring purposes.

FELLOWSHIP: In essence RFI provides an umbrella, or forum, for ministries and congregations to be networked together for mutual promotion, support and celebration. This allows for creativity, latitude and autonomy within ministries and congregations. We believe this to be the first century New Testament model.

INTERNATIONAL: It is our purpose to build and maintain an international network of ministers, ministries and congregations that have a common interest in working together to advance the gospel of Christ and His restoration work within the church in our generation.

Vision / Mission

VISION: Our Vision Statement is three-dimensional. We seek to assist the body of Christ in —

- Restoring the individual through Christ and to growth in Christ.
- Restoring and building godly homes and marriages through the biblical model.
- Restoring, practicing and celebrating the New Testament order of the Judeo-Christian faith of Christ, the apostles and the earliest believers, through praise, worship and service.

MISSION: Our Mission is —

- To proclaim the Gospel and Lordship of Jesus Christ to all mankind.
- To provide New Testament ministry and discipleship for all believers.
- To assist in networking the body of Christ together for authentic biblical fellowship and mutual cooperation.

Business Information:

Restoration Fellowship International and its offices are officially incorporated in the State of Tennessee. RFI is also a non-profit organization with a 501 (c) (3) IRS designation.

COUNTING THE DAYS: WHY PENTECOST?

DR. JOHN A. LOOPER



Dr. John A. Looper
Executive Director

At the first Passover, the LORD God simply commanded that Israel would count from the Day of Firstfruits, which occurred on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath during the Passover/Unleavened Bread Week — three festivals — one day, plus seven days. When the reality of this command was filled full by Messiah Jesus, we count from Resurrection Sunday (Day of Firstfruits) seven weeks to Pentecost Sunday — which is seven sabbaths plus one day, the fiftieth. It is from the Greek text that we extrapolate our English word Pentecost.

The Hebrew people called this Shavuot (meaning weeks) or the counting of seven weeks plus one day — from the waving of the firstfruits of the Barley Harvest at Passover until the waving of the two loaves of the firstfruits of the Wheat Harvest ("the

Omer") on the Day of Pentecost. Passover and Pentecost are inextricably linked. Passover is not complete until Pentecost. This is why the "Omer," or "Firstfruits" of the summer Wheat Harvest, must be offered to the Lord as two wave loaves baked with leaven on Pentecost Sunday. The epistles of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews are the Apostle Paul's opus or master thesis of contrasting two covenants — the Torah, or Ketu-

bodies to miraculously conceive and bring forth the son of promise — Isaac. the LORD also announced to Abraham that the inheritance of his offspring, who would become his great nation, would not enter and receive the Promised Land for four hundred years. In preparation for this, they must go first to live in Mitsrayim — the land of Egypt (Genesis 15:13).

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vah at Mount Sinai — officiated by Moses between YHWH and Israel — and the New Covenant given by Messiah Yeshua through his death burial and resurrection. In Jesus the Messiah, the historical template of Israel's deliverance from Egypt took on its more perfect and complete meaning.

When the LORD appeared as an angel on the plains of Mamre to Abraham and Sarah, and announced the awakening of their dead menopausal

In the Post-Diluvian World of Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their wives, every person who lives today is a descendant of one of Noah's three Sons — Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Noah's second-born son, Ham, gave birth to a son named Mitsrayim, who was the founder of what became known as Egypt. In the Hebrew text of the First Testament, the name Mitsrayim appears 627 times in 570 verses, Egypt's official Hebrew name. There was an interesting concept held by the ancient Egyptians when they called the mighty Nile River the "Birth Canal" of Egypt. If you look at a map of Northern Africa, it be-

comes immediately clear that the Blue Nile that flows down from Ethiopia and the White Nile that flows down from the Upper Sudan unite in Southern Sudan to form the mighty Nile that flows down through Egypt, emptying into the Mediterranean Sea.

Wow! Just consider this for a moment in terms of a mother. The upper Blue Nile and upper White Nile form the picture of the fallopian tubes of a woman. As the Nile flows down toward the Mediterranean, its very rich Delta symbolizes the rich blood in the endometrium to which a conceived ovum attaches itself in order to multiply and thrive. During the first eight days, its cells divide and multiply. On the eighth day, the cells become an embryo (Passover Week). Fifty days later, the embryo becomes a fetus (Pentecost).

When Abraham and Sarah's descendants were only 70 people, under the leadership of Jacob and Joseph, Pharaoh gave them the richest soil in Egypt in which to multiply and thrive — the Land of Goshen — near the Delta of the Nile, their endometrium. There in Goshen, over a period of 400 years, 70 people multiplied into as many as two to three million people, which was the promise to Abraham (Genesis 15). Just as every child cannot be born without the contractions and travail of the mother, so slavery, in addition to the challenges of the 10 plagues, became the birth pains for both Israel and the Egyptians. The firstborn son, Isaac, had now become the firstborn of a nation. Sarah gave birth to the son of promise, but Mitsrayim/Egypt gave birth to a fully developed fetus—the Nation of Israel.

Beginning in Exodus 12, the first liturgical month was given by YHWH to Israel, the Passover, in which he delivered them from Mitsrayim. On the fourteenth day of this month (Nisan) was the Passover. The blood of lambs was applied to the houses of Is-

rael, so the death angel would "Pesach" — jump over them. On this night, they were eating only unleavened bread, the bread of affliction with their coats on, their walking staves in their hands, and sandals shod upon their feet. There was no time for yeast and the rising of the dough. On the third day, the Day of Firstfruits, they walked through the Red Sea on dry ground when the Ruach Ha Kodesh congealed the waters and they "were all baptized unto Moses in the sea and in the cloud" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

From the symbolic death and burial of Israel in the Red Sea following the Passover, and their resurrection from slavery as a free people on the third day — the Day of Firstfruits — the LORD then commanded them to count days and weeks (Shavuot). They were to count off seven weeks of sabbaths, plus one day, the fiftieth, which was Pentecost at Mount Sinai. On the day of Pentecost, they were no longer to eat the unleavened barley cakes of affliction; they were now to bake wheat cakes with leaven and to wave them and eat them before the Lord. Passover, which had to do with slavery, affliction, the death of lambs, blood, and the miracle of a painful birth out of Mitsrayim, was to bring the Lord's firstborn son to his marriage and into the family of heaven and earth.

The fire and smoke on Mount Horeb resulted in the writing of the Decalogue by the very finger of YHWH Elohim, and collectively, his 613 mitzvot or commands, through which to form a Godly and orderly nation. There were 248 positive commands and 365 negative commands. The Torah, meaning the instructions of the Lord to Israel, was also a marriage contract — called a Ketuvah — which became the wedding day of YHWH and Israel in the wilderness, on the Day of Pentecost (Exodus 6:1-8; Exodus 19:7-8).

Passover was not complete until Pentecost. Shavout is the reconciliation of two harvests — the firstfruits of Barley at Passover and the firstfruits of Wheat at Pentecost. Barley were those who were under the First Covenant — the Jewish people. The New Testament Pentecost was the firstfruits of a new and better covenant—the inclusion and reaping of all the nations of the earth — the Goyim/Gentiles/Ethnos. In this context, the two become the "one new man" in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2). This is the reason that Paul stated in Galatians 4:4-5 *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Contrary to most Pentecostals and Charismatics, of which I am one, Pentecost is not about having continuous revivals so we can exercise talking in tongues, to shout and dance, and to get a continuous spiritual battery recharge. These things have their time and place of edification, of course. However, in the context of Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19-20, it is about receiving *dunamis* power and anointing to reap the harvest of human souls and to build up the Kingdom of Messiah on the earth.

The New Testament Pentecost is about a marriage contract, when Jesus married himself to his disciples, and horizontally caused us to be married to each other as the body of Messiah, his Church, his covenant nation in the earth. Just as Jews were naturally born to be a part of Israel, in the New Covenant economy, we are spiritually born into Messiah Jesus as his bride, his people. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb in the Book of Revelation is not about getting married, but rather the consummation of the marriage when we put on immortality to like our eternal husband, Yeshua Ha Meshiach!

Restoration Fellowship International Leaders New on the Board of Directors



Rev. Deanna Stephens

New on the Board of Advisors



Dr. Rose Lee Tan



Pastor Corby Shuey

Board Member Emeritus

After many years of distinguished service to our association, Rev. Paul Craig has retired from the RFI Board of Directors, and will now be Board Member Emeritus. With grateful hearts, we honor you Pastor Paul.



Rev. Paul Craig



THE FEAST OF WEEKS

JUSTIN D. ELWELL TH.D.

“When the day of Pentecost (Shavuot/Weeks) had come, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1).

In our western culture we are familiar with “countdowns.” Countdowns often create a sense of urgency, they can boost motivation and focus, but they sometimes mark a deadline. For

the Feast of Weeks, most commonly Pentecost, rather than a countdown of days, we count “up” the days. The counting “up” the days, rather than a countdown of days recognizes the uplifting experience that we are having in the Lord

between Passover, First-fruits, and Pentecost/Shavuot as we move from slavery to freedom. By counting the Omer (Lev. 23:15-21) we are recognizing the link between Passover and Pentecost, between deliverance and the giving of the

Law and the Spirit. It is a Pentecost when the season of Passover comes to a conclusion.

The focus of Pentecost is explained in this manner: count until the 50th day “and then present a new grain offering to the Lord” (Lev. 23:16). The Feast of Weeks (Shavuot/Pentecost) is the festival fifty days

loaves of bread before the Lord and the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. Each day for forty-nine days a sheaf of the barley harvest was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. On the fiftieth day, Pentecost, a sheaf of wheat was brought to the Temple in recognition of the new season of harvest. This new season of harvest, represented before

the Lord as two leavened loaves, symbolizes the harvest of Jew and Gentile together as one in Messiah Yeshua/Jesus.

At Passover we remember our deliverance by the Blood of the Lamb (Yeshua/

The focus of Pentecost is explained in this manner: count until the 50th day “and then present a new grain offering to the Lord” (Lev. 23:16). The Feast of Weeks (Shavuot/Pentecost) is the festival fifty days after the Sabbath following Passover. There is a thematic shift that occurs as these two festivals unfold. At Passover we are to eat unleavened bread, and we were to bring the firstfruits of the barley harvest. While at Shavuot (Pentecost), we were to bring two leavened loaves of bread before the Lord and the firstfruits of the wheat harvest.

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Jesus); while at Shavuot we remember the gifts of the Torah and the Holy Spirit. Shavuot as a feast of ingathering is traditionally recognized as the remembrance of the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai; and in messianic faith, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. The

Lord frees us from bondage to Pharaoh at Passover, and lays before us a marriage contract that is sealed and empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. While Shavuot was initially celebrated as a harvest and thanksgiving festival, it would take on a more nationalistic meaning with the remembrance of the giving of the Torah, which established Israel as a nation with its own laws and unique practices.

The days of counting the Omer (ספירת העומר) from Passover to Pentecost, the rabbis say, fosters thanksgiving within the covenant faith community. Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days, so that we may get a heart of wisdom."

In Acts 2:1 we see the first sheaf brought together in the Messiah, the Firstfruit from the grave, the apostles themselves. Today the sheaves He is pressing together is His Body, as we share in the sufferings and identity of Messiah Yeshua/Jesus, and in that pressing He causes us to stand together.

In John 14:15-19 Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the παράκλητος/paraklétos, the One who comes alongside of, counsels, comforts, gives aid, reminds of, and us directs to Jesus. Yet, He is also τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, "the Spirit of the Truth." The heart of the comfort and truth attributed to the ministry of the Holy Spirit is found in John 14:18, "I will not abandon you as orphans. I will come to you." It is as if He is saying, "I will not leave you without a Father, a leader, a teacher, guide or guardian. You will not need to figure this out on your own." This is the promise of the παράκλητος/paraklétos, Who comes along side of us to give comfort, wrapping His arms around us, speaking softly to us, assuring that His presence is heavens seal of approval (Eph. 1:13-14).

While Yeshua was on earth, He was the physical παράκλητος/paraklétos, but when He ascended to heaven, to prepare a place of us, He sent another Helper (Jn. 14:16), the Lord, the Holy Spirit. Following the way of truth, and He who is truth, can be a lonely path, but we are assured that

we are not left as orphans (Heb. 13:5), we are not alone.

In Revelation 1:8 and 22:13 Jesus identifies Himself as the Alpha and Omega, or the Alef and the Tav. Still, He calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of the truth" in John 14:17. The Spirit of the truth guides us in the way of His truth, into a full revelation of Jesus, Who is the Truth (Jn. 14:6; 16:13). Notice, that Yeshua refers to Himself as the "Alef and the Tav," the first and last letter of the Hebrew alef bet. Together these two letters form the word "et" (אֶת), which marks the definite direct object of a sentence and is not translated into English. The alef and the tav are equated with the beginning and the end.

Let us consider the word "truth" Hebraically:

1. Truth in Hebrew is אֱמֶת (emet) and it is essentially understood to be true, truthful or being the case. It is from the root אָמַן, amen, meaning "firm, sturdy, supported," which is also the root of נֶאֱמַר meaning faithfulness. So, the ancient Hebrews understood, the Lord to be true and faithful, the Rock, because of His strength, sturdiness, and unchanging nature. When we have faith, we understand it to be firm. We are not standing over a bottomless pit on nothingness, or upon something flimsy, but rather on the firm foundation of Christ Himself.

2. Truth being the very firmness/substance of God to the ancient Hebrews was not relative to situation or time, but rather universal and absolute in all places, just as God is universal and absolute.

3. Truth spelled, אֱמֶת was understood to be all encompassing, as it is spelled with the first, middle and final letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

4. Truth is understood to be the "seal of God" as at the end of the creation narrative the Torah

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3. Truth spelled, אֱמֶת was understood to be all encompassing, as it is spelled with the first, middle and final letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

4. Truth is understood to be the "seal of God" as at the end of the creation narrative the Torah says, "בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לְעֵשׂוֹת, God in creating had made." If you take the final letters of these three Hebrew words, they spell אֱמֶת, truth. He sealed creation in His truth.

Truth manifest as a person, the Person of Christ. Therefore, Pilates question of "what is truth?" is Hebraically incorrect on its surface, as truth is not a "what" but a "Who." To learn truth, it cannot be studied at a distance, as if it is far from you. It must be up-close and personal. Truth became personal in the person of Yeshua/Jesus, Who is fullness of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14). He is the truth, Who came from truth, to the earth, to bear witness of it. He is the firmness, the stability, the unchangeable One (Heb. 13:8) Who could not be contained in the tomb, because if you attempt to bury the truth, He will rise.

Again, the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of the truth" in John 14:17 guides us, comforts us, leads us in the way of His truth, into the revelation of Jesus, Who is the truth (Jn. 14:6; 16:13). When we consider these letters, the אֱמֶת we note that truth is written with the letter מֶמ. This letter can be open or closed, מ or ם, as a regular or final form. The rabbis explain that the open and closed letter represent the revealed Torah as given to Moses, and the hidden Torah revealed by Messiah. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to "testify about Me" (Jn. 15:26), to reveal Jesus to us, and He does so during these days between the beginning and the end, again, He never leaves us as orphans.

At Pentecost, we recognize the One New Man, the Body of Messiah, who are "sheaved" together, that we are also knit together by the Holy Spirit Who is sent to us, to sanctify us for the return of Messiah. We have the Word of His promise, and the Power of His promise. We have been caught up, by the spirit of adoption into the Lord's

family, and in His plan of redemption (Ro. 8:15, 23). How then shall we live?

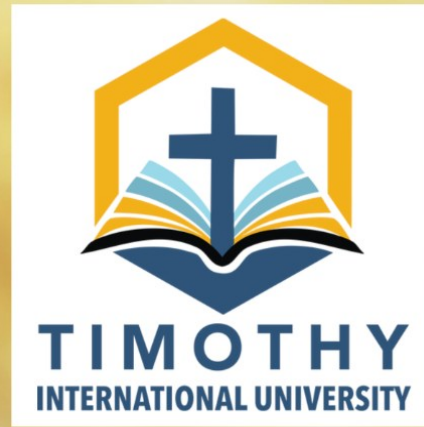
Deuteronomy 26 addresses the subject of Firstfruits, providing a detailed proclamation that those bearing Firstfruits were to recite before the Lord, which ended with, “nor have I forgotten” (Deut. 26:13). Forgotten what? To “blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens” (Deut. 25:19). Amalek is a spirit (still active in this world) that seeks to embitter and destroy the hope of the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. This is a call, by the offering of the Firstfruits to the Lord, to a life of generosity, care, and self-sacrifice, the fullness being found in the messianic faith (2 Cor. 9:6-9). Evidence of the spirit of Amalek at work is visible in many third-world countries, and in the impoverished communities and neighborhoods in the Western World, but also in the depravity of humanity. What shall we do? James answers, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (Jas. 1:27).

As the Holy Spirit ministers Christ to us, we will find that He has us ministering Christ to those around us in Word and deed, to be their helper and comforter, so they know they are not alone. And, as is typified by the presentation of the loaves of Shavuot, on that glorious day we will all be raised up together before the Lord Who redeemed us, as one.

Dr. Justin D. Elwell serves as the messianic rabbi of Messiah Congregation in Washington Mills, New



York, and is the bishop-elect of RFI.



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THE STRUGGLING OF JACOB AND THE CURRENT PROPHETIC SCENARIO

Rev. Gian Luca Morotti

C. S. Lewis once wrote that 'Hardship often prepares an ordinary person for an extraordinary destiny' and if I were to think of a biblical character, the story of Jacob would undoubtedly fit.

In the Genesis account God promised Jacob to bring him back to his land after dealing with him according to his promises.

Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you. (Genesis 28:15)

Little did Jacob know of what would happen in the way of his pilgrimage that would grant him to become the person God intended him to be. Similarly, the God of Israel has been calling the House of Jacob to the promised land since then, yet in the final stage of their pilgrimage, a corporate and glorious transformation awaits them in the land of promise.

Whatever it is, the wandering Jacob resembles much of the story of the people and nation he stands as a representative. After receiving a mighty revelation from God at a place he named Bet-El (*House of God*) where he received promises about a land and of numerous offspring that would prove to be the blessing of the entire earth, ***"May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples, and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham"*** (Genesis 28:3 NKJV), he sets forth on a long journey that turned his life upside down, taking him from being a conniver and pretender, striving with God so as to become a man through whom God could reign, thus becoming Israel (the word Israel literally means *God will rule or prevail*).

In the case of the children of

Israel, their collective pilgrimage it is about a story of a travelling community that finds itself in an epic journey that culminates in the formation of a sovereign nation. In the end, right when many thought that the Jewish people had lost hope of a national restoration, Israel inherited the land and became the recipient of God's promises, just for that very purpose, simply because their exile didn't break the covenant or signal divorce.

After about two decades of pilgrimage, we find Jacob in the crucible of his transformation into Israel. ***"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day"*** (Gen. 32:24 NKJV). When we consider his wrestling at Peniel (*face of God*), the original Hebrew hints that Jacob's struggle was in the rolling on the ground, which involved getting some dirt and dust until the struggling was over. My brethren, do you get the picture here? Until Jacob wrestled with God he couldn't get his transformation, so we're

witnessing a similar transition from Jacob to Israel going on right now in the Jewish people, for it is in the 'wrestling' that their eyes will be opened to be prepared to have a revelation of Yeshua the Messiah. This disclosure, whether it starts on a personal level and ends on a collective one, will begin in the midst of a future time of trouble:

"For thus says the LORD: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, Of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it'" (Jeremiah 30:5-7).

So, to the Jewish community, it is all about a journey that started from the Exodus out of Egypt, and from the return from Babylon, then, of an ongoing adventure story comprising defeats and triumphs, but of divine miracles of preservation as well. The climactic moment of struggle will find Israel resembling Jacob in his/their moment of weakness. Now, while the House of Jacob at large has not come to a revelation of Yeshua as the promised Messiah, we are to believe that this is going to be a future eschatological moment, boosted by a series of prophetic events that have their starting point in a scenario, which I believe to be not far too distant, that of a future demise of Damascus (Syria) according to Isaiah 17 (viz "The Oracle of Damascus"), which says that *"In that day it shall come to pass that the glory of Jacob will wane and the fatness of his flesh grow lean."*

Several commentators see the upcoming war between Israel and the forces of Damascus, which shall result in Syria's

complete demise with the city of Damascus being uninhabitable (**"Damascus will cease from being a city"** – Isaiah 17:1) as the final phase of the Arab-Israeli war since 1948 in which Israel will be greatly diminished in her capacity to wage war and to defend herself—in that **the glory of Jacob will wane** (Isaiah 17:4). This might be due to a conflict that will be so intense to the detriment of Israel that this will be the moment that could be climactic in the struggle of the House of Jacob in anticipation to meet their Messiah. In other words, the prophet Isaiah predicted that in that future day, Israel's glory will fade because of the loss of her splendour due to the conflict with her enemies resulting in Damascus' demise. The Amplified Bible puts it this way: *"And in that day the former glory of Jacob [Israel—his might, his population, his prosperity] shall be enfeebled"*.

Now, in both Isaiah 17 and Zechariah 9 we find an amazing and accurate assessment in deciphering who these enemies of Israel are. The *"cities of Aroer"* (the land east of the Jordan River); the *"Fortress of Ephraim"* (lit., Ramallah, the Palestinian Authority in Samaria); Damascus (Syria); *"Tyre and Sidon"* (Lebanon); Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, Philistines (south of Israel and literally ancient Philistia, now Gaza).

The same scenario of Isaiah 17 regarding the demise of Damascus is depicted in the book of Zechariah Chapter 9 which highlights Messiah's intervention and Israel's struggle to be ultimately saved by God Almighty.

Speaking about **the finale redemption of Israel** the Lord says, *"I am the LORD, in its time I will hurry it"* (Isaiah 60:22). This is quite a staggering statement because it is in

reference to God's attribute of omnipotence in the redemption of His people. On this matter David Rubin has justly written:

"The sages of Israel have taught us that the promised redemption will come in one of two ways. It will either come speedily and in a glorious way or it will come eventually in its time, but with terrible suffering".

When it comes to transformation, it could not have been better said than this. At the same time is with us, for God is never interested in winning the wrestling match so much as he is interested in the transformation of our heart in the wrestling. The angel had the power to touch Jacob's thigh with one finger and fix it for good, but he did not. This tells us of the spiritual dynamics in place. As far as the individual Jew is concerned, God is not satisfied until the final phase of the process is accomplished: **the salvation of the soul**. This explains why the intensity of the struggle gets tough at times, because the transformation process awaits any Jew who is preserved and alive at that time in the land of promise.

So, **"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day"** (Gen. 32:24 NKJV). Here, in the apex of the night Jacob spent in rolling on the ground, his name is changed to Israel, whose very word comes from the Hebrew verb *lisrot* (לִשְׂרֹת), which means *to struggle, contend, fight* and *El* (אל which means *God*). In other words, "God reigns or prevails." In the biblical Hebrew there is more depth to the meaning of this word, that is, *to exercise influence, to prevail*. But there is even more depth to its meaning. The root word for Jacob עִקֵּב comes from עָקַב (akov), *dishonest, crooked* as in this verse: *"The crooked shall be made straight"* (Isaiah 40:4). The name *Israel*, on the other

hand, can be read as Yashar-El. *Yashar* in Hebrew means *straight, honest, law-abiding* and *El*, means *God*. So, **Israel** can be read as:) יֵשָׁרָאֵל Yashar-El) **Yashar** (*straight, honest, keeping the rules*) and **El** (*God*).

Now we fully grasp the meaning of Jacob's change of nature in that Israel is the one whom God finally could reign and prevail, an honest and straight man in contrast to one who is crooked and uneven. Please note that in the context of the Oracle of Damascus, as per Zechariah 9, the ensuing Chapter 10 of Zechariah the prophet speaks about the restoration of Judah and Israel gathered back in the land at the end of days where it is very clearly delineated as the diaspora (world-wide) and then the regathering in the last days, with these words:

"I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside; for I am the LORD their God, and I will hear them" (Zechariah 10:6).

We need to understand that the Deliverer/Redeemer will come out of Zion to deliver and to save Israel. *"For the deliver shall come out of Zion, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, 'for this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins'"* (Romans 11:26; Isaiah 59:20-21; 27:9). Messiah is the Deliverer who shall roar out of Zion — *"I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory"* (Isaiah 46:13). We now clearly understand that it is right there in a place of intense struggle that the Deliverer will come out of Zion.

Let me conclude by saying that Jacob's current and future trouble is becoming our trouble too (ref. Jer. 30:5-7).

Let's look at what the prophet Daniel had to say: ***"... when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered"*** (Daniel 12:7. See also Deuteronomy 36:26). *I believe that here Daniel is speaking about a corporate entity at the end of the age that sees us believers in Yeshua, called out from among the Nations, His elect,*

together with the Jewish people. However, there it is, that's where Christ is revealed, at the end of our natural strength and power. That is where the dead are quickened and nowhere else. He alone knows how to take us and them there, as He will also take His elect from among the nations which will manifest His strength that lies at the end of our strength! (Revelation 12:10).

RFI colleague, Gian Luca Morotti, lives in Forlì, Italy. He holds a degree in Security Management and a Bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies in Hebraic Heritage. He currently serves as member of the International Board of Ebenezer Emergency Fund International, a ministry helping Jewish people making Aliyah (returning to the Land of Israel) and as chairman of Ebenezer Operation Exodus Israel.



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MORMONISM, THE MATRIX AND ME

MY JOURNEY FROM KOLOB TO CALVERY



By
Rev. Tracy Tennant



Tracy Tennant's compelling and inspirational account of raising and homeschooling ten children as a devout Mormon mother. Her story provides insight into Mormon lifestyle, practices, and beliefs. Her life as a Latter-day Saint was rich with humor and drama, as well as the mundane aspects of trying to live worthily as a temple-attending woman preparing her family for life in the future Celestial Kingdom. After discovering solid historical evidence disproving Joseph Smith and the teachings of the Mormon Church, Tracy faced heartbreaking rejection from many of her Mormon friends and loved ones. While her account details her journey out of Mormonism into Biblical-based faith, she acknowledges and credits the Mormon people who made a positive impact on her life. Mormonism, The Matrix & Me is a book that is an intense walk through Tracy's life as she enters and exits a world known as Mormonism, while eloquently comparing her story to the blockbuster movie, "The Matrix." Her story will cause many to open their eyes to the world around them.

Tracy has recently been ordained and licensed with Restoration Fellowship International!

For more information visit:
tracytennant.com



INTRODUCING NEW RFI MINISTERS



Tracy Tennant blogs and podcasts on religion, family, food and adult ADHD and women, and is the author of two books (with more in the works). She loves writing and public speaking with a desire to touch people's lives. She is the mother of ten children. Tracy has a BA in Communication, an AGS with emphasis in early childhood education, and a certificate in practical nursing. Tracy and her husband Greg live in Missouri.

More information on Tracy's ministry is available at tracytennant.com.

Rev. Tracy Tennant

JW Rucker was recently ordained with RFI and serves as the Associate Pastor at Harvest Revival Center in Brookville, Ohio. Originally from Knoxville, Tennessee, JW is a huge Tennessee Volunteers fan and loves all sports. He currently lives in Clayton, Ohio with his highschool sweetheart, now wife, Brenna. JW and Brenna also serve as the Youth Pastors at Harvest Revival Center, which they transitioned to in 2024 after leading the Harvest Kids ministry for a couple of years. JW has been serving in some form of ministry since he met Jesus as a teenager and was called to be a disciple and a leader of men. JW has a heart to raise and equip young men and women to know the Lord, to seek Him above all else, to spread the gospel, and to contend for revival. In addition to his pastoral duties, JW is bivocational, working as a District Sales Manager for Sheds Direct. This role complements his ministry by allowing him a flexible schedule and opportunities to minister to individuals all over the midwest as he travels. JW and Brenna's favorite hobbies are to spend time with their family and friends, play pickleball, play volleyball, and go to sporting events.



Pastor JW Rucker

ISRAEL'S TITLE DEED

KARL D. COKE PH.D.



The Believers in the world have thought that World War I, World War II and other horrible wars were the final wars. They were not. Man has never ceased from prosecuting wars over land possession.

The British author, H. G. Wells, coined the phrase, "The war that will end war" to describe World War I. World War I broke out in Europe in September 1914. The spark that ignited World War I was struck in Sarajevo, Bosnia, where Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was shot to death along with his wife, Sophie, by the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip on June 28, 1914.

World War I, also known as the Great War, lasted four years. More than 16 million people, soldiers and civilians alike, were dead. On August 4, 1914, German troops crossed the Belgian border in WWI's first battle.

Concerning Israel's title deed for the land of Israel, the problem with Arab attacks on Israel since 1948 is made clear in two Bible prophecies. Question. Is the

latest, October 7, 2023, Hamas' unprovoked attack on Daliyat Al-Karmel (which killed 250 unarmed, innocent Jews): 1) the final attack prophesied in Psalm 83; or, 2) the beginning of the battle of Gog and Magog mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39?

For the record, in both prophecies, the alignment of nations against Israel is detailed and accurate. Therefore, in either prophecy, Israel and its allies are again under attack. Result: nations are aligning.

The matter is confusing because of the lies being told by the media. For example, the apostate, socialist, Portuguese Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres, said, "... the Hamas attack on southern Israel 'did not happen in a vacuum,' ..." Israel's UN ambassador, Gilad Erdan, called for Guterres' resignation.

To not be influenced by Middle-Eastern propagandists, a brief, accurate understanding of its history must be known. This entire area is the "cradle" of civilization. Obviously, this area was neither mapped nor divided into cities and states.

Genesis 2:8 says, "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed." Definition: "Eden") אֶדֶן gahnh-ey-den) ... *to live sumptuously, ...*" (p. 609, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*) Definition: "man" - אָדָם (ah-dam) ... *red, ... man ... so called from the idea of redness, ...*" (p. 13, *Ibid.*)

The massive size of the Garden of Eden is given in Genesis 2:10-14. It is identified by four rivers. Firstly, is the river Pison (Pishon) in Havilah. The medieval French rabbi, Rashi, identified it with the Nile. Secondly is the river Gihon in Ethiopia (thought to be the Blue Nile in the land of Cush). Thirdly, the river Hiddekel in Assyria. Fourthly, the river Euphrates in Babylon.

The point made in Genesis 2:10-14 is that the Garden of Eden was massive. It may have stretched from Babylon to Ethiopia. The names of the rivers are difficult to locate, but,

what is certain, the Garden of Eden was the entire area we now call the Middle-East.

Conflict over the land began with the sons of Noah. Genesis 6:10 says, "And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth." The land distribution: Shem (Shemites) - Middle to Far East; Ham (Hamites) - Middle East to Africa; and, Japheth (Japhethites) - Middle East to Europe. Please notice that God populated the Earth from the Middle East outwardly. This is important because this explains why the Middle East has always suffered conflict.

Noah's son, Ham, had four sons. According to Genesis 10:6, "And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim (Egypt), and Phut, and Canaan (Israel)." Rivalries began according to Genesis 9:25-27, which says, "25 And he (Noah) said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. 26 And he (Noah) said, "Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. 27 God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." This family problem took place where the lands of Shem, Ham and Japheth touched each other. That "touch point" is modern-day Israel.

Later, during the time of Abraham, God said to him in Genesis 12:7, "And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him."

Then, in Genesis 15:18-21, the LORD made a covenant with Abraham. It says, "18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20 And the Hit-

tites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, 21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

Notice firstly that at the time of Abram, land areas are referred to by the names of the people who lived thereon, roughly the Garden of Eden. Notice secondly, the land promised to Abraham was "filled" with his enemies. The fact is that Abraham's enemies were the predecessors of modern-day Israel's enemies!

We now move the "legal" right for Israel to exist. The preceding and following "Bible" verses give modern day Israelis legal rights to the "holy" land. Why? Abraham and David both purchased land in Israel. According to Genesis 23:13, "And he (Abraham) spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou *wilt give it*, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money (four hundred shekels of silver) for the field; take *it* of me, and I will bury my dead there." II Samuel 24:24 says, "And the king (David) said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver."

Abraham purchased land in Hebron where David was first crowned King (I Chronicles 11:3). David purchased the land where Abraham offered Isaac (Genesis 22). David's land purchase was where the Messiah, died, was buried and resurrected! Moses wrote about Jesus, the Messiah, in Deuteronomy 18:15.

These two purchases of land "inside" the land called Israel today, form a portion of the legitimate claim of Jews to God's Promised Land. This was presented by David Ben-Gurion to Lord Peel in 1936. The British

Palestine Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel began in 1936 to investigate the cause of unrest in Mandatory Palestine caused by a six-month Arab strike. When Ben-Gurion was asked to produce a deed for land at the Peel Commission, he presented the Bible. The Arabs opposed the Peel partition plan and condemned it unanimously. At the 1937 Bludan (Syria) Conference, Arabs rejected the establishment of a Jewish State claiming all of Palestine. The Zionists were bitterly divided over the plan as well.

The Psalm 83 Arab coalition began their plan to "push Israel into the sea" in 1936. Therefore, when on November 29, 1947, the United Nations adopted resolution 181 to make Jewish and Arab partitions in Palestine, and on May 14, 1948, when David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, the Psalm 83 Arabs attacked Israel.

Ben Gurion also referred to God's explanation about Jerusalem in the last days as found in Zechariah 12:2-3 and 9. It says, "2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah *and* against Jerusalem.. 3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that I will* seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

Ben Gurion also knew Isaiah 49:25-26. It says, "25 But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. 26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they

will be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."

Prime Minister David Ben Gurion was right to claim title deed to the land of Israel from the Bible!

What ignorant people teach about the legal ownership of the Land of Israel is so opposed to the Bible that it makes clear what Jorge Augustin Nicolas Ruiz de Santayana y Borrás (12/16/1886 - 9/26/1952), said. "Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it." In 1948, Winston Churchill paraphrased him by saying, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." This explains the unending war over the land of Israel from Noah until today.

However, God's purpose in this war is found in Isaiah 49:26b, "... and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." Never forget Leviticus 25:23a, which says, "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is Mine; ..." Israel is God's Land!

When Hamas (Chah-mahs) attacked Israel October 7, 2023, believers immediately asked, "Is this about Gog and Magog?" As before, non-believers heard the world-wide news' lie, "Israel is at war with the Palestinians." This is the same lie repeated since May 14, 1948. NO! Israel is not at war with the Palestinians. Israel is defending itself from a Chamas attack! IDF stands for: Israel Defense Force. This unprovoked attack is not new.

"Chah-mahs" appears 57 times in the OT beginning with Genesis 6:11. It is translated: damage -1; injustice - 1; false - 1; unrighteous -1; wrong - 3; cruelty - 5; and, violent - 45. Definition: violent -); חָחַח (chah-mahs) ... TO TREAT VIOLENTLY, TO OPPRESS VIOLENTLY, TO INJURE" (p. 287, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*).

To get the truth about Chah-mahs, type in Google Search, Mosab Hassan Yousef interviews. Mosab gives you an "inside" report of the violent

nature of Chah-mahs. Mosab Hassan Yousef, is a son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef, one of the co-founders of Chah-mahs. Sheikh Hassan Yousef was born in Ramallah, Israel.

His son's videos reveal the true nature of the Chah-mahs, Sunni Islamists. It is worth noting that Chah-mahs' benefactor, Iran, has from 7% to 12% Sunnis in their population. Sunni's believe there is no direct descendant of Muhammed to lead Islam. It is further worth noting that USA President, Joe Biden, released \$6,000,000,000.00 to Iran, "money that likely contributed to Tehran's funding of Hamas, the genocidal terrorists group that slaughtered more than 1,400 Israelis and took about 200 hostages October 7, 2023." (www.dailysignal.com) The truth regarding Biden's release, is that it may be closer to \$70 billion. Most of Iran's support for Chah-mahs is siphoned off by its leaders.

The two current "terror-master" leaders of Chah-mahs, Ismail Haniyeh Moussa Abu Marzuk and Khaled Meshal, live as kings in Doha, Qatar. They live far away from the dangerous Gaza Strip. Their estimated combined net worth is \$11 billion. These charlatans have grown rich at the expense of the Palestinians that they use as human shields. So, do not be fooled by the lies of the media. The money intended for aide to the Palestinians is diverted to the bank accounts of the evil Chah-mahs leaders. Remember PLO leader, Yasser Arafat?

The time to be bold, stand with and pray for Israel is now, and, should continue until Messiah returns. Psalm 83:18 gives the reason. Asaph wrote, "That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, *art* the most high over all the earth."

Israel was once again violently attacked by Chamas from the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023. This is just the latest of such

attacks that began May 14, 1948. Asaph gives the reason in Psalm 83:4, "They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."

This current attack is the result of many years of planning by Chamas. Psalm 83:2-5 reveals that this "tumult" comes from their hatred of God. They have "taken crafty counsel" against Israelis and have formed a "confederation." Pray for Israel because they are "up against all odds." Therefore, Psalm 83 illustrates how God has previously delivered them.

What to pray for Israel: Psalm 83:9, "Do Unto Them As ... the Canaanites (read: Judges 4-5), the Canaanite king Jabin (read: Joshua 11:10-13), the Canaanite general Sisera (read: Judges 7:25). Include in your requests: Psalm 83:13-17, "... make them stubble; burn them like wood in a forest; persecute them with fear, fill their faces with shame; and, confound and trouble them forever ..." Although these requests seem harsh, they are "in" God's Word!

Deuteronomy 33:29 says, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

When you pray, remember that the 1937 Bloudan Conference was called by the Arab Higher Committee in response to the Peel Commission which recommended the partition of "Palestine," then under British control, into Arab and Jewish states. The Peel Commission's recommendations were rejected by the participating delegates while the 1936-39 Arab revolt in Palestine was ongoing against the British authorities who supported and increased Jewish immigration in Palestine.

When you pray remember that a pamphlet was distributed at the second, secret, meeting held in Damascus, of Arab activists (called the Conference of Nationalist Youth). They wrote and distributed a pam-

phlet called *"Islam and Jewry."* This was history's first text that propagated sheer Jew-hatred in an Islamic context by mixing selected anti-Jewish episodes of Muhammed's life with the so-called wickedness of Jews in the 20th century. This diabolical pamphlet lies behind Iran's desire to destroy the "cancerous tumor" of Israel.

When you pray Psalm 83, do not forget God's prophecy to Israel from verses 2 through 5, "For lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. 3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: ..."

Then, Psalm 83 lists those trying to destroy Israel. They are: **Edom** - Palestinians & Southern Jordan; **Ishmaelites** - Saudi Arabia; **Moab** - Palestinians & Central Jordan; **Hagarenes** - Egypt; **Gebal** - Hezbollah & Northern Lebanon; **Ammon** - Palestinians & Northern Jordan; **Amelek** - Sinai Ar-

abs; **Philistia** - Chah-mahs Gaza Strip; **Tyre** - Hezbollah & Southern Lebanon; and, **Assyria** - Syria & Iraq.

What caused all of this?

Ezekiel 37:12-14 says, "12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them (Israel), Thus saith the LORD God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, 14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: Then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD."

Isaiah 11:12 says, "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

Zephaniah 2:4-7 says, "4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron

shall be rooted up. 5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6 And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for their flocks. 7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity."

The LORD has spoken! While radical Islamists curse what Jews celebrate, the Jews have God's legal, title deed to His land! What God has said, He will do.

Dr. Karl D. Coke is the Chancellor of the Timothy Program International. Karl travels extensively and teaches internationally. He and his wife Lori live in Charlotte, NC.



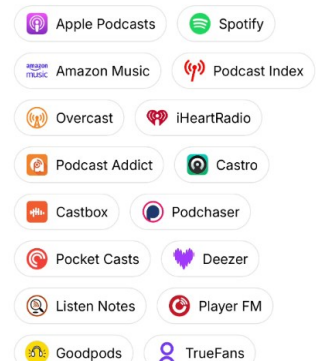

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If you believed Moses, you would believe me,
for he wrote about me.
John 5:46 (ESV)

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EDWIN HAS BEEN MARRIED TO JUANITA SINCE 1978. THEY HAVE SIX CHILDREN ALONG WITH SIX GRANDCHILDREN.



JUSTIN D. ELWELL, TH.D. IS A MESSIANIC JEWISH DISCIPLE OF MESSIAH YESHUA/JESUS, SERVING AS THE CONGREGATIONAL RABBI OF MESSIAH CONGREGATION IN NEW HARTFORD, NEW YORK.

JUSTIN AND HIS WIFE RENEE HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR TWENTY-NINE YEARS AND HAVE TWO ADULT SONS.

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Harvest Revival Center Brookville, Ohio



On April 27, 2025, Dr. John Looper and Dr. Justin Elwell visited Harvest Revival Center in Brookville, Ohio to officially welcome this church family to Restoration Fellowship International. Looper and Elwell ordained and licensed five ministers who service the church, under the direction of Senior Pastor Niel Petersen.



Dr John Looper teaching at the morning service



Giving the Scriptural charge of ministry.



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Pastor Geoff Gipe and Pastor JW Rucker with Dr. Elwell.



Rabbi Elwell led a traditional messianic Passover Seder for the Harvest family and the wider local community.



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Wednesdays: 6:30 PM

A time of prayer, devotion, fellowship
and sharing on the last Monday of each
month at 7:00pm EST.



RFI CONNECTIONS

Ministers and friends of RFI are welcome to participate
and connect with others in our growing, diverse and
broad international network!

VIA ZOOM!

Hosted by Dr. Justin Elwell, for a meeting link email:
[drjelwell @ gmail.com](mailto:drjelwell@gmail.com)



A Testimony of God's Faithfulness at Bethel by the Water

By Pastors Don and Scotti Hickman

Upon relocating to our new residence, we commenced exploring the surrounding area. During one of our excursions, I received a call from the district presbyter acknowledging our arrival. He extended an invitation to Scotti and me to attend his church and join him and his wife for lunch to become acquainted with us. We accepted the invitation and attended a Sunday service. The church members were friendly and genuinely interested in us. We enjoyed our time with the presbyter and his wife, who encouraged us to join their church. However, we wanted to visit another nearby church before deciding which to attend.

We located a church closer to us. Bethel featured a sanctuary with a seating capacity of 400 individuals, an administration building equipped with offices and numerous classrooms, and a gymnasium complete with a kitchen and additional instructional spaces. The service began at 11:00 A.M. Approximately 20-25 individuals attended the congregation. After the ser-

vice, we sought God's guidance.

After prayer and fasting God confirmed, we should attend Bethel. Upon joining Bethel, we identified significant distress within the facility, which was too expansive for the current congregation to sustain. Upon the pastor's request for my professional opinion, I determined that the buildings required approximately \$1,000,000 in repairs to meet current standards, a financial obligation that the congregation could not afford. Scotti and I discussed the available options for the church, and we recommended that the facility be sold. Consequently, the pastor presented the sale proposal to the congregation and received approval.

A local realtor was contacted to initiate the selling process. Scotti, with real estate experience, was important in both the selling process and in locating our current premises. The church property was listed for 1.9 million. Scotti insisted the price was too low. The property

sold for 2.4 million which allowed Bethel to buy our property on Lake Cooley and we are debt free, and she was correct.

In 2023, I received an invitation to join the staff as Senior Associate Pastor. After prayerful consideration and discussion with Scotti, I accepted the position. Our purpose became evident: we were meant to be here even before understanding the reasons behind God leading us from Montana. Unfortunately, the year 2023 and 2024 proved challenging for us. The church did not make significant progress, we did not engage with the community effectively, and Scotti and I were not able to fully utilize our gifts and talents.

In March 2025, we convened a special business meeting where the pastor announced his decision to resign. He informed the congregation that Scotti and I were interested in being considered for the position of lead pastors. The pastor encouraged the congregation to vote for us. On March 23, 2025, the congrega-

tion unanimously elected us as Pastors of Bethel by the Water. Since then, we have initiated several changes to advance the church's mission. We have elected two new deacons and believe that God has called us to appoint a Youth Pastor to introduce innovative ideas and engage with our community. Additionally, we have established our Children's Ministry under the leadership of a dedicated individual.

The recent Mother's Day Tea event was completed successfully, with participation from three different local churches. A rededication of the Church is scheduled for June 8th. A special speaker will join us for our celebration, and we'll provide hot dogs, hamburgers, and all the fixings. Additionally, there will be a Father's Day Gathering for men, with invitations sent to four other local churches (Ukrainian, Spanish, Lutheran, Baptist).

Once a month, a Unity Church event is hosted in rotation among our church, Cambodian Baptist Church, and Lutheran churches, featuring both a service and a shared meal. There is an ongoing

effort to involve more area churches in the Unity Church gatherings. We are reaching out to the missionaries supported by the church, scheduling their visits to share their achievements and needs. Additionally, we support local ministries that assist individuals in transforming their lives through Yeshua.

On Sunday, May 18th, Honor Bound, a motorcycle group, will be attending, with the aim of attracting bikers from the Spartanburg area and North Carolina. An update will follow the event.

Excitement surrounds the upcoming Vacation Bible School (VBS) in July, the first since 2019. This event aims to welcome children from the community to learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit along with their parents. A 4th of July Celebration is also planned as a family event, encouraging the attendance of as many family members as possible. We will have food, games, and most of all fun.

We began a Zoom Prayer on Tuesday nights, and we have Bible Study and youth on Thursday night at the church. We are asking those in our congregation who feel called

to offer a study on Thursday's. We are discovering our church has talents that have never had the opportunity to be expressed. We have committed ourselves to give all we have to bring this church forward and assist as God brings His people in. We are determined to help the congregation grow in faith and learn that covenant equals commitment.

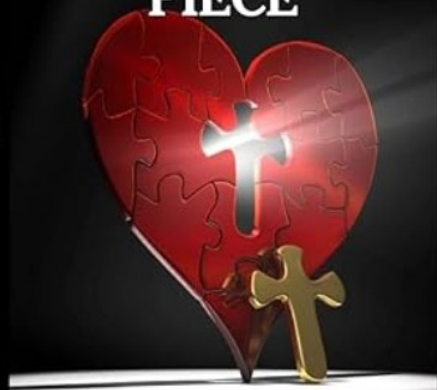
It is very difficult at times to see what and where God is doing in our lives, but if we just take a deep breath and listen He always answers and He answered us.

Shalom and may the Great God of Israel continue to bless us and show us grace and mercy.

RFI colleagues, Don & Scotti Hickman, live in Chesnee, SC. They have recently become lead pastors at *Bethel by the Water*.



HAPPINESS, THE MISSING PIECE



Jeffery D. Hamm, Ph. D.

Happiness, The Missing Piece

The Legitimacy of Pastoral Counseling

Paperback – January 10, 2015

\$11.00 through [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Everyone wants to be happy, but most people never take the time to stop and think about what happiness means or how to achieve it. There is a children's song that goes "With Jesus in the family, happy, happy home." While this is true, it takes some effort on the part of the brothers, sisters, and parents for this to happen.

Dr. Jeffery D. Hamm is the founder of JDG Ministries. He is an international speaker and teacher. Dr. Hamm serves as vice president of Restoration Fellowship International. He serves as senior pastor at Great Harvest Church in Pocahontas, Arkansas, where he resides with his wife Trella.





HEALING the harvest

Going to the Need



Pastors David and Cherie Bartels are the founders of Healing the Harvest. In July 2021, they felt God calling them to buy a school bus and convert it into an RV. By December of that year, they had found the perfect bus, and by October 2022, their new home – The Chariot – was (mostly) ready to go. With hearts full of faith, they sold their home in Pennsylvania, gave away all their furniture, and set out on a journey led by the Holy Spirit.

For more information:

Phone:

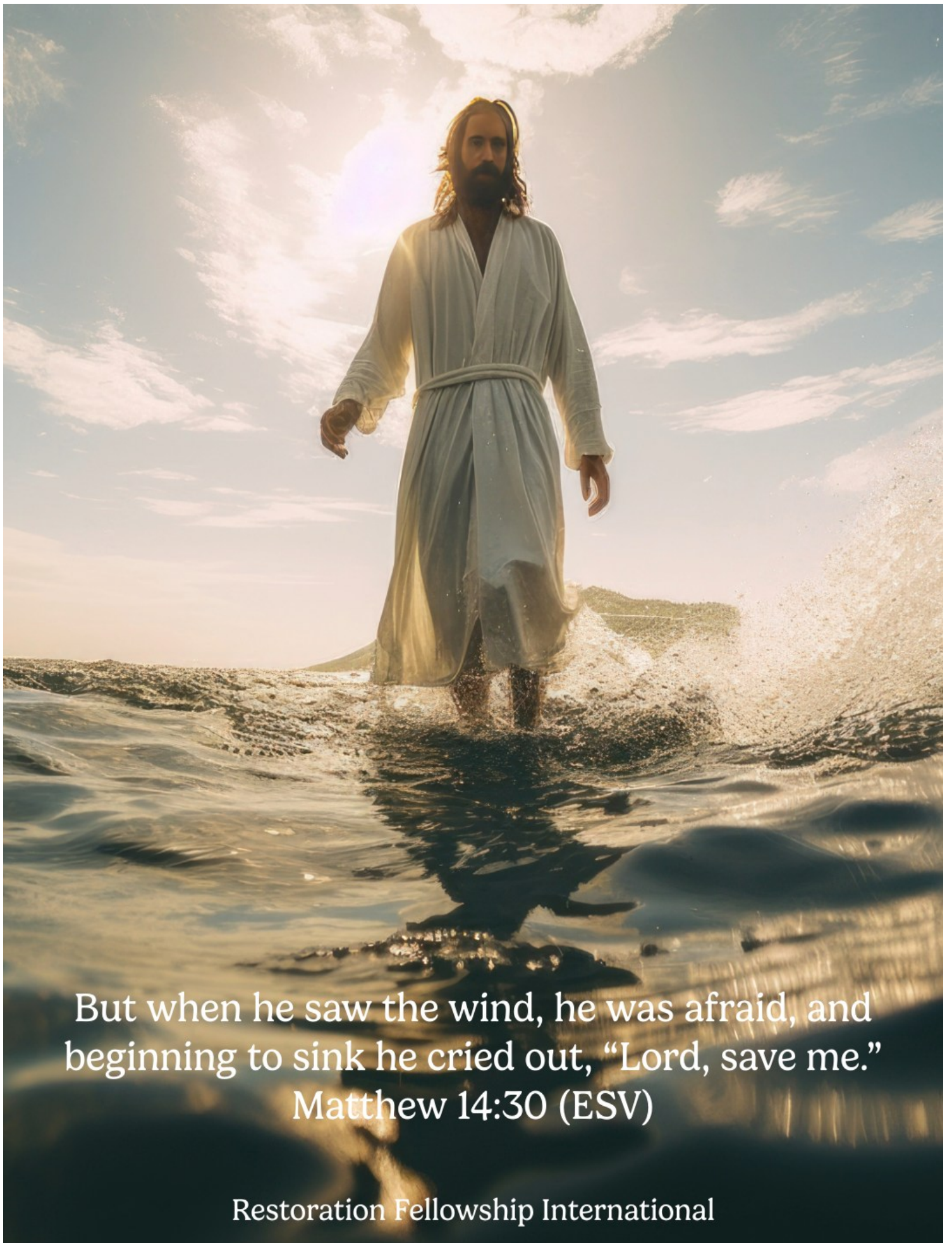
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But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and
beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."
Matthew 14:30 (ESV)

Restoration Fellowship International