



Parasha Ekev

August 8, 2020

Torah: Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25
Haftarah: Isaiah 49:14-51:3
K'tuvim Shlichim: Ya'acov 5:7-11

Last week in *Parasha VaEtchanan*, Moses predicted that Israel would sin after they had lived in the Land and would be exiled by ADONAI and scattered among the people of the earth. Moses wasn't speaking about individual sin, but a nation-wide turning away from ADONAI. And, from our viewpoint in the End Times, we know that he was correct. That is what happened. Israel turned away from ADONAI and was scattered among the Nations. Our *parasha* today, *Ekev*, begins today with Moses continuing to confirm ADONAI's promise that a time will come when, after this great falling away, they will be restored. The title of our *parasha* today, *Ekev*, literally means because. 12 *"Then it will happen, as a result (because) of your listening to these ordinances, when you keep and do them, that Adonai your God will keep with you the covenant kindness that He swore to your fathers"* (Deuteronomy 7:12 TLV). Moses gave more details about this when he spoke earlier. He said: 29 *"But from there (where they are scattered) you will seek Adonai your God and you will find Him, when you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these things have come on you, in the latter days you will return to Adonai your God and listen to His voice. 31 For Adonai your God is a merciful God. He will not abandon you or destroy you, or forget the covenant with your fathers that He swore to them"* (Deuteronomy 4:29-31 TLV). Moses' wording seems to indicate that this will be a future national time of crying out to ADONAI and not the crying out of scattered individuals. In our current time, which seems to fit the latter days Moses referred to, we have seen some of the covenant kindness which ADONAI promised. First, He restored Israel as a nation. That happened in 1948. He is also regathering Jews from all over the earth where He scattered them. As I speak today, there are about 6,700,000 Jews in Israel, or almost 6,000,000 more than the 717,000 who were there were in 1948 when it became a nation. Second, ADONAI has restored the control of Jerusalem to the nation of Israel. The "times of the Gentiles" for Jerusalem ended in 1967 with the Six Day War and Jerusalem is now in "the times of the Jews." They exercise political and physical control over the city after more than 2000 years under foreign powers. What is next? I believe that the next great event will be "the salvation of all Israel" and that *Moshe's* words in Deuteronomy 4 are a foreshadowing of it: 30 *...in the latter days you (Israel) will return to Adonai your God and listen to His voice.* (Deuteronomy 4:30b TLV).

In the 4000 years since ADONAI called Abraham there have been many changes. The greatest change, which we call "the Good News," is that ADONAI gave us His Son Yeshua as a sin sacrifice which would allow Gentiles, the peoples of the Nations, to enter His New Covenant along with Israel. The not so good news is that of the 7,800,000,000 people of the earth today, 5,400,000,000 do not know Yeshua. In the world today, there are approximately 2,400,000,000 Christians, which includes us Messianics. More not so good news is that of the 2.4 billion followers of Yeshua, hardly anyone agrees with anyone else on doctrine. Yes, some do agree, but we also realize that human effort has zero chance of bringing Yeshua's

2.4 billion followers into theological agreement. The good news is that we can love each other regardless of our theological view. That's our continuing campaign. Love each other regardless of our different doctrines.

In Deuteronomy, Moses spoke about what we call the End Times when he spoke of Israel being restored spiritually. In Hebrew thought, this time is called the *acharit ha-yamim*, אחרית הימים, or the end of days. I am speaking about this period today because in conversation with one of you *mispacha* recently, the question was asked, what do we believe about the millennium, the one thousand year reign of Yeshua? That's a good question. What do you believe? Each of us must decide what we believe and you will have to decide whether you agree with me or not. You may not and that's OK. I will still love you.

With regard to the millennium, you may have heard that there will be 6000 years of human existence followed by another 1000 years of peace for a total of 7000 years. That general thought is that the Messiah will come at the beginning of the final 1000 years. Can we trust this information as being something that should be in our personal theology? To decide if we can, we must first discover from whence cometh this belief.

The earliest mention of it that I have been able to find comes from rabbinical Judaism in the *Talmud* and then later from the medieval rabbis. A very early mention is from *Sanhedrin a* in the Babylonian *Talmud*: *R. Katina* said, "Six thousand years the world will exist and one [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate (*haruv*), as it is written, 'And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' (Isa. 2:11)... *R. Katina* also taught, "Just as the seventh year is the *Shmita* year, so too does the world have one thousand years out of seven that are fallow (*mushmat*), as it is written, 'And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' (Isa. 2:11); and further it is written, 'A psalm and song for the Shabbat day' (Ps. 92:1) – meaning the day that is altogether Shabbat – and also it is said, 'For one thousand years in Your [God's] eyes are but a day that has passed.' (Ps.90:4) (*Sanhedrin* 97a)." Also in the Babylonian *Talmud*, the *Avoda Zara* folio 9a refers to a teaching of the Academy of *Elijah* that "the world will exist for six thousand years". Then we have *Rashi*, the French *Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki* of the 11th century who comments: "The world is decreed to last for six thousand years, as the days of the week; the seventh day of the week is Shabbat, so too in the seventh millennium, will there be tranquility in the world." About a century later, *Ramban*, the Spanish *Rabbi Moses ben Nachman* wrote that the sixth millennium will see the coming of the Messiah and the seventh millennium will be the Shabbat of the 'World to Come', when the righteous will be resurrected and rejoice. A number of other rabbis wrote essentially the same thing between the 11th and 18th centuries. In the late 1700s, the *Vilna Gaon*, *Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman* wrote about what he called the *ichvot Mashiach*, the footsteps of Messiah. He said that the footsteps of Messiah began the first hour of Friday morning in the Sixth Millennium, which began October 4, 1739 and continues hour by hour until the Seventh Millennium and the Messiah is revealed. We also find discussion of the Millennium in Jewish *Midrash*: From *Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer*: "Six eons for going in and coming out, for war and peace. The seventh eon is entirely Shabbat and rest for life everlasting." And, it is also found in *Kaballah*. The *Zohar* states: "In the 600th year of the sixth thousand, the gates of wisdom on high and the wellsprings of lower wisdom will be opened. This will prepare the world to enter the seventh thousand, just as man prepares himself toward sunset on Friday for the Sabbath." I think that you get the idea. This is just scratching the surface. There are so many more Jewish writings about the Millennium.

What about Christian doctrines about the Millennium? There are a number, but we'll only speak of one today; Dispensationalism. This theology divides ADONAI's creation into dispensations, or ages, which are given different functions. Very briefly, they are: Innocence – Adam prior to the Fall. Conscience – From the Fall to the Great Flood. Human Government – From the Great Flood to the Tower of Babel. Promise – From Abraham to Moses ending with the 40 years of unbelief in the wilderness. Law – From Moses to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ ending with the scattering of Israel in AD 70. Grace – From the cross to the rapture of the church. The rapture is followed by the wrath of God constituting the Great Tribulation. Some use the term *Age of Grace* or *the Church Age* for this dispensation. Millennial Kingdom – A 1000 year reign of Christ on earth centered in Jerusalem, ending with God's judgment on the final rebellion. Dispensationalism is a very complicated doctrine. It is also not monolithic and has several different subgroups of understanding. For our purposes today, we will only focus on the Dispensation of the Millennium.

I encourage you to search for additional information about Dispensationalism for yourself. You have heard it discussed here at *Beit Shalom* for a number of years. There is not time to go into any more detail about it today, but I have attached some information about it in the written notes on our website as Addendum A. My purpose in discussing Dispensationalism is not intended to denigrate those who choose to believe and follow it, but for us to seek truth. Each of us has to stand on what we believe and I encourage you to individually search for yourself the truth. Those who follow Dispensationalism are also seeking the truth. And, we choose to love them and also others who follow doctrines with which we may disagree.

Dispensationalism's view of the years just before the Millennium is based upon what they call the "Seventieth Week of Daniel." 27 "*Then he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed annihilation is poured out on the one who destroys*" (Daniel 9:27 TLV). Their understanding of this verse is that "he" is the Anti-Christ, the coming human being who will rule the world. He will make a covenant for seven years, the seven years of the Tribulation which is divided into two 3 ½ year periods. The second 3 ½ year period begins after the Abomination of Desolation occurs. This abomination stops the daily sacrifice in the Temple and generally increases his cruelty to the people of the world. This seven year period is called the Great Tribulation. All of this depends upon the Temple being rebuilt and sacrifices being offered. This is allowed for the first 3 ½ years, but the daily offering is stopped by the Anti-Christ, the Abomination of Desolation, and thus beginning the worst part of the tribulation. G-d then judges this rebellion, Messiah comes and then the Millennium, one thousand years of peace.

Daniel 9:27, which we just read, is referred to by Dispensationalists as the 70th week of Daniel. They say that the prophecy given to Daniel in the verse before, verse 26, speaks about the death of the Messiah on the cross: 26 *Then after the 62 weeks Mashiach will be cut off and have nothing..* (Daniel 9:26a TLV). Then, they say, the next verse, the 70th week of Daniel, does not immediately follow what happened in about 30 CE, but occurs more than 2000 years in the future from the time of Messiah. Read Addendum A and you will see how they arrived at this.

About 10-12 years ago, I began to seek answers about these things. I could understand some things myself, but found that it was necessary to depend upon what ADONAI has shown other followers of Yeshua for much of the answer. I was able to examine the views of others

and then through prayer decide if it was the understanding which I should have. For refuting Dispensationalism's interpretation of the "Seventieth Week of Daniel," I defer to another Daniel, Daniel Bruce. He is the author of *Daniel Unsealed* a free E-Book which you can download and which a number of you have read (<http://www.prophecysociety.org/>). His interpretation of Daniel 9:26 is that *mashiach* who is cut off is Yeshua, he calls Him Jesus. But, cut off doesn't mean that He was killed. He was covenanted. The Hebrew word *karat* meaning "cut off" can also mean to make a covenant or "cut a covenant." This verse, he says, is a reference to Yeshua's immersion by John the Immerser in the Jordan River. Bruce equates this with the confirmation of the New Covenant with the people of Israel. Then, in verse 27, it is Yeshua and not the AntiChrist who makes a firm covenant with many for one week. It is the last week of His life on earth, seven actual days. And, He is the one who stops the daily offering in the middle of the week. He stopped the offering by offering Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. His death in the middle of the week effectively rendered the Temple offerings, the actual Temple offerings of that day and not a rebuilt Temple offerings, as null and void, without legal force; invalid. I encourage you to compare the Dispensationalist view with Bruce's interpretation and ask the *Ruach HaKodesh* to show you which is correct. Or, I have to say: "mostly correct." None of us has the perfect and absolute truth, but we can hope to be almost correct. There are other theologies which have views of the Millennium, but we will not examine them today. Dispensationalism is probably the major Christian view.

If our quest is "the Millennium," where can we find our answers? One place that we know they are not is in the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. There are quite a few verses in it which we can understand as referring to the coming of Messiah, the coming of Yeshua. And, these verses do have to do with what we understand are end times events, but nowhere in the *Tanakh* can we find words describing a one thousand year reign of the Messiah.

A portion of *Rabbi Katina's* comments from the *Talmud* regarding the Millennium says this: "as it is written, 'And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' (Isa. 2:11)..." The complete verse from Isaiah is: *11 The man of haughty eyes is humbled, the lofty ones brought low, for Adonai alone will be exalted in that day* (Isaiah 2:11). We recognize these words from the song by Ted Pearce, *The Time To Favor Zion*. "In that day" are the key words, and are what *Rabbi Katina* referred to as the Seventh Millennium. But, I cannot find any verse in the *Tanakh* which refers directly to a "thousand years" except one, Psalm 90, verse 4: *4 For a thousand years in Your sight are like a day just passing by, or like a watch in the night* (Psalm 90:4 TLV). And, if you put this verse together with Isaiah 2:11 referring to "that Day," which is what *Rabbi Katina* did, you might infer that "that Day" is a thousand years. But, the truth is that the *Tanakh* does not speak of a one thousand year period of Messiah's reign.

But, what Isaiah referred to as "that Day" is a very important future event. I believe, along with many followers of Yeshua, that it is the day which begins with the return of Yeshua our Messiah as King. Zechariah speaks of it: *9 Adonai will then be King over all the earth. In that day Adonai will be Echad and His Name Echad* (Zechariah 14:9 TLV). You probably recognize these words as a part of our beautiful *Aleinu* prayer. These words, either in or on that day, are found a total of 114 times in the whole of the Bible and Yeshua referred to it five times. Here is one: *22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name'"* (Matthew 7:22 TLV)? "That day" is also referred to in Scripture a number of times by another name, "the Day of the L-rd." You will immediately recognize this one from the *Tanakh*: *4 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of Adonai comes* (Joel 3:4 TLV). *Yochanan*, John, heard Yeshua's voice on that day: *10 "I was*

in the Ruach on the Day of the Lord, and I heard behind me a loud voice like that of a trumpet,” (Revelation 1:10 TLV). John was on the Island of Patmos in the Spirit when the whole vision of Revelation came to him. From these and other Scriptures, we can understand that there is a day coming when Yeshua will return as Messiah and King and rule and reign on the earth. Some say “in that day” and some say “the day of the L-rd.” But, with what we have seen thus far, can we say that it will begin a thousand year period?

There is a chapter in Scripture which repeats the words, “thousand years,” six times and it is in the Book of Revelation. Chapter 20 opens with this: *1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon—the ancient serpent, who is the devil and satan—and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He also threw him into the abyss and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed. After these things, he must be released for a short while* (Revelation 20:1-3 TLV). The words “Thousand years” are found in this chapter six times. We can also find it in Psalm 90 and 2Peter 3:8 where *Kefa* references Psalm 90. Ecclesiastes also mentions a man living one thousand years twice, but the context we are looking for is not there.

The Book of Revelation is a very mysterious book. We seek understanding, but usually wind up baffled. There have been many books written about it proposing many different theories. We know it’s important, but how are we to understand it? I think that we would all agree that it is a book of prophecy. The Book of Daniel was sealed up until the time of the end, but it has now been unsealed for us. Maybe Revelation is also sealed and we are awaiting its unsealing and complete understanding. We don’t know. But, for now we have to just do the best we can.

There are three major approaches to understanding prophecy. Preterism comes from the Latin *praeteritus* which means "gone by." This approach sees prophecy chiefly as having been fulfilled in the past, and especially with regard to the Book of Revelation and that it was fulfilled during the 1st century. I think we can all agree not to agree with Preterism. Then, there is Historicism. This approach sees prophecy as being fulfilled in the past, the present and also in the future. Regarding the Book of Revelation, this view sees parts of it as having been fulfilled during the past two thousand years. The third is Futurism. In it, parallels may be drawn with past historical events, but most eschatological prophecies are chiefly referring to events which have not yet been fulfilled, but will take place at the end of the age. There are other approaches to understanding prophecy, but most follow one of these three ways.

If we are going to categorize, in my opinion, the category into which Revelation would best fit is Historicism. Here is an example. John’s conversation with Yeshua about the seven congregations of Asia are historical. They were actual congregations and the events were taking place then. They are now in our past, but they are also prophetic with regard to present day congregations. There are also future prophetic verses in this book, but most are wrapped in symbolism.

According to Reverend Ellis Skolfield, the three verses which we just read from chapter 20 are also historical but include prophetic symbolism. According to his understanding, *HaSatan* was bound when Yeshua died on the stake. He was bound for a symbolic “thousand years,” and he has already been released to “deceive the nations.” We don’t have time to go over the explanation about it today. You have heard it several times in past years and the explanation is attached as Addendum B at the end of this message if you would like to refresh

your memory. But, *HaSatan* has only been released from the abyss for a relatively few years. And, he is already doing a good job of deceiving the nations. Not only is he causing much trouble in Israel, but also here in the United States. But, his final end is approaching.

Regarding the “thousand years,” Reverend Skolfield points out that the word thousand comes from the Greek *chilioi* (khil'-ee-oy), a word called an indefinite plural. It could mean one thousand, but it could also mean many thousands. That is what makes these verses difficult to understand. *Chilioi* is an indefinite plural and Dispensationalism’s doctrine of the “thousand year’s reign” is based upon an indefinite plural. Even though the translation of the plural word *chilioi* as one thousand is technically correct, if we insist on it meaning exactly 1000 years, then the sense of the passage could be lost. Used symbolically, it could be any number or even thousands of years because it is a plural word. But, there is also a singular, the word *chilias*, which actually means a single thousand. Why didn’t Yeshua say *chilias*, the singular, to *Yochanan* rather than *chilioi*, an indefinite plural? Maybe, because the understanding which He wanted us to have goes beyond understanding it as a period of 1000 years. If we apply these thoughts to *HaSatan*’s being bound for a thousand years in Revelation 20 verse 2, the indefinite plural can mean that he was bound one thousand plus years, almost two thousand, and still be correct. Reverend Skolfield suggests that he was bound in the year 30 CE and possibly released in 1948. Or, as I thought, it might have even been during the 1930’s when Hitler began to persecute the Jews. And, *HaSatan*’s troubling of the nations has now increasingly focused on the nation of Israel and all followers of Yeshua. The prophetic meaning of this book is very much deeper than the English words reveal and a direct reading of the English can possibly lead us astray.

Reverend Skolfield suggests a figurative interpretation of the whole of chapter 20 and suggests that it represents the “entire Christian era,” from Yeshua to today.” You have heard me speak of this man before. He was a Christian pastor, the son of missionaries to the southeast Asia area. He has written several books on Endtimes and is better known in Africa than the United States. He received his theological training at Columbia Bible College in Columbia, South Carolina. He died in 2015 at the age of 87, but has left all of his works free to the public. His website is www.ellisokolfield.com.

According to Skolfield, here is how we might interpret these next verses. *4 Then I saw thrones (in the heavens), and people sat upon them—those to whom authority to judge was given (6 And He raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua— (Ephesians 2:6 TLV). And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Yeshua and because of the word of God (The martyrs reigning and judging with Yeshua). They had not worshiped the beast or his image, nor had they received his mark on their forehead or on their hand (Satan is this beast, and he has struck his mark on the foreheads of his servants throughout time). And they came to life (souls of the martyrs came to life in the heavens with Yeshua) and reigned with the Messiah for a thousand years (In the heavens) (Revelation 20:4 TLV). Comparing the KJV with the TLV, rather than they came to life, we find: 4....And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (chilioi. According to 1Peter 2:5-9 we are a royal priesthood, reigning with Yeshua now. Also Revelation 1:6 and 5:10).*

5 The rest of the dead (the unsaved dead’s spirits were not alive) did not come to life until the thousand years (the Christian era; Yeshua’s birth to His second coming) were completed. This is the first resurrection (The resurrection when the righteous dead and the living rise to meet Yeshua and receive perfected bodies. 1Thessalonians 4:14-18;

1 Corinthians 15:51-55. Up until this point, the righteous dead were spirits with no physical body. The unrighteous dead also must appear before Yeshua) (Revelation 20:5 TLV).

6 How fortunate and holy is the one who has a share in the first resurrection (the righteous dead plus all of us who will go up to meet Yeshua in the air)! Over such the second death (being thrown in the lake of fire) has no authority, but they shall be kohanim of God and the Messiah, and they shall reign with Him for a thousand years (a symbolic period) (Revelation 20:6 TLV).

The next two verses tell that *HaSatan* has been released and describe his activities. *7 When the thousand years (possibly 1930s to 1948) has ended, satan shall be released from his prison, 8 and he shall come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth (which he is doing, big time, right now), Gog and Magog (one and the same with the battle of Armageddon), to gather them for the battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea* (Revelation 20:7-8 TLV).

9 And they came up (in our near future) on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the kedoshim (on the plain of Armageddon; fulfillment in Ezekiel 38 and 39) and the beloved city (Jerusalem)—but fire fell from heaven and consumed them. 10 And the devil (HaSatan) who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are too (they were thrown there in Revelation 19), and they shall be tortured day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:9-10 TLV).

11 Then I saw a great white throne, and the One (Yeshua) seated on it. The earth and heaven fled from His presence, but no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead—the great and the small—standing before the throne. The books were opened, and another book was opened—the Book of Life. And the dead were judged (the fulfillment of Yom Kippur) according to what was written in the books, according to their deeds (Revelation 20:11-12 TLV).

We will stop here. Notice that Reverend Skolfield's scenario in chapter 20 includes the time from Yeshua's birth until now and also includes however many years His return is in the future. Regarding the mentions of a "thousand years," they are all one and the same. *HaSatan* was bound for a symbolic thousand years and the spirits of the martyrs were with Yeshua in the heavens during this same period. According to this understanding, there is no future thousand years. To say that Revelation is not easy to understand is a great understatement.

To give you a greater sense of Reverend Skolfield's approach to understanding Revelation, here are a few more passages explained. *1 Then a measuring rod like a staff was given to me, saying, "Get up and measure the Temple of God and the altar, and count those worshiping in it. 2 But do not measure the court outside the Temple—leave it out, because it has been given to the nations, and they shall trample the holy city for forty-two months* (Revelation 11:1-2 TLV). In Reverend Skolfield's understanding of the symbolism, 42 months is 1,276 prophetic years extending from the time of the Dome of the Rock in 688CE to 1967. The Gentiles, Islam in particular, had authority over the Temple Mount for 1,276 years. This prophecy tells us that Gentiles would dominate Jerusalem for this period of time, but that eventually authority over all of Jerusalem, including the space occupied by the Dome of the Rock, would be given back to Israel. General Moshe Dyan and his troops recaptured the old city of Jerusalem and

the Temple Mount in July of 1967. Yeshua prophesied this as well in Luke 21:24. But history also tells us, that at that time, partial authority was returned to the Jordanian King as the overseer of the Islamic properties on the Mount, while Israel retained overall control of the area. Dispensational theology says that those 42 months are the second 3 ½ year period of the 70th week of Daniel. During this part of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will stop Temple worship for 42 months. Which do you think is more likely?

Then, we have “The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11.” 3 “*And I will grant authority to My two witnesses and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, dressed in sackcloth*” (Revelation 11:3 TLV). The following verses tell us that they can’t be harmed because fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies and they have the power to shut the heavens for rain. The beast from the abyss kills them and they lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days and then rise from the dead. I know that some of you *mishpacha* are looking for literal fire from their mouths. But, I believe that to understand this prophecy, we have to understand that it is very largely symbolic. You don’t have to agree with me, but just consider this possibility. A symbolic understanding of these verses explains that the two witnesses who died are two bodies of believers; the Jewish body of Yeshua’s followers and His followers from the Nations, the Gentiles. The 3 ½ days that they lay in the streets can also be calculated into prophetic years. This time fulfilled the period from the construction of the Dome of the Rock until 1967CE, the year that Israel regained control of Jerusalem. Reverend Skolfield points out that *hemera*, the word which is interpreted by most as “days,” can also mean “years.” To calculate this we multiply 3 ½ years times 365.24 days which equals 1278.34 prophetic years. This prophecy begins with the year 688CE and the Dome of the Rock and extends to 1967CE and Israel’s recapture of Jerusalem. This symbolizes the Islamic suppression of ADONAI’s body of believers during this time and does not refer to two literal prophets who lay dead in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days.

In Revelation 12:1-6 we see “The Woman in the Wilderness.” Verses 1-2 say: 1 *A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She is pregnant—crying out in birth pains, in agony to give birth* (Revelation 12:1-2 TLV). This is a prophetic picture of Israel. The next few verses refer to the birth of Yeshua and His being resurrected into heaven with the Father. Then verse 6 says: 6 *Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God so they might take care of her for 1,260 days* (Revelation 12:6 TLV). One of our former *mishpachot* used to mention this verse frequently. His belief was that it was to be physical and a day would come when the whole body of Messiah would be miraculously transported into the wilderness for safety. But, I have to disagree. This again, is a symbolic understanding of a timeline tied to Israel. According to Reverend Skolfield, the woman, Israel, is a picture of the Jews of the world during this time period. She was taken care of for 1260 days by G-d. These days are 1,260 prophetic years which extend from the Dome of the Rock in 688 to 1948 and the re-establishment of Israel. This is not a prophecy about the Body of Messiah literally being protected in a miraculous wilderness during a time of tribulation, but about God’s miraculous preservation of the Jews of the world during a time that their world was ruled by Islam.

It’s time to wrap up. Can we really decide which verses are literal and which verses are symbolic? If we say that we can, we must also accept the possibility that there will be seven headed monsters walking the earth. What I have just presented to you are in my mind just possibilities of the meanings. Reverend Skolfield isn’t infallible. He was only a man just as I am and we don’t have the full and complete truth. And, we won’t until Yeshua returns.

But still, we must make some determination of what these Scriptures mean. My vote is for mostly symbolic and that we continue to seek their meanings. Maybe ADONAI will reveal them just as we can now understand Daniel.

The AntiChrist which Dispensationalism says is a literal man who is supposed to come and rule the world and eventually stop the offering of sacrifices in the rebuilt Temple is only mentioned four times in all of Scripture. Just four times, and all four are found in the books of 1st and 2nd John. Quoting Reverend Skolfield: "Dispensationalism tells us that this man will: 1. Appear at the end of the age. 2. Rule the world for 3½ years as a good leader and 3½ years as a monstrously evil leader. 3. Have the temple rebuilt. 4. Reinstate temple sacrifices for the first 3½ years. 5. Turn against the Jews for the second 3½ years. 6. Stop temple sacrifices in the middle of the 7 years. 7. Cause all to worship him. 8. Start the battle of Armageddon. 9. Persecute the Great Tribulation saints and anyone else he can get his hands on. 10. Miscellaneous other legends, including that as 666, he is Satan incarnate." The only references to "AntiChrist" are found in 1John 2:18, 1John 2:22, 1John 4:3, and 2John 1:7. *Yochanan* tells us that this "spirit" was already in the world at the time of his letters and specifically it is a spirit which denies both the Father and the Son and denies that Yeshua has come in the flesh. I personally believe that this is this same spirit which occupied the Syrians in the days of the Maccabee's desecration of the Temple, was in the pagan Romans who destroyed the Temple in 70CE, and is also in Islam which now occupies the Temple Mount as the Abomination of Desolation. It's very difficult to see how these 10 theological statements from Dispensationalism about the "AntiChrist" could be constructed from just these four verses written by John. There is one other group of verses which they use to support their doctrine and I have included some information about them as Addendum C.

What is "the Millennium found in Revelation chapter 20?" We have to discuss it here because this is the only place that this term can be found. Is it a literal one thousand year period during which the Messiah will reign on the earth after His return? Or, is it a symbolic thousand year period representing the era of Yeshua's followers on the earth which also coincides with the symbolic thousand year time that *HaSatan* was bound and then released to deceive the nations? These two periods overlap and both extend from the time of Yeshua to the time of His return to the earth as King. No one knows the whole truth. We all see through a glass darkly. According to *Sha'ul* in 1Corinthians 13, we prophesy in part and we know in part. And, that is why we must all seek to rightly divide ADONAI's Word by being Berean. *15 Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth (2Timothy 2:15 TLV). 10 As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. Upon arrival, they made their way to the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, because they received the message with goodwill, searching the Scriptures each day to see whether these things were true (Acts 17:10-11 TLV).* As Yeshua's disciples, we are to be lifelong students of the Word. And, as we seek, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will find. And, I would also emphasize that we should only trust ADONAI's Word, Genesis through Revelation. Non-Biblical sources are interesting, but we are called to the truth and we have no way of determining the truth outside of ADONAI's Word.

As followers of Yeshua we collectively have many different "ologies." During this time on earth, we will never fully agree on the meanings of Scripture. But, when Yeshua returns, we will. Until that blessed time comes, we must seek to love each other in spite of our different doctrines. Yeshua said: 39... "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39b TLV).

And, that definitely includes our fellow believers, our brothers and sisters in Messiah!
Shabbat shalom!

Addendum A- "Dispensationalism" (From 2012 message at MJAA SE Regional Conference in Orlando.)

I am going to begin by speaking about "Dispensational eschatology.". The word eschatology simply means, "the study of the last," and is referring to the final events of history, or the "endtimes." Dispensationalism is a particular theology of eschatology. In speaking about this today, I am not doing it to criticize the sincere beliefs of the many followers of Yeshua who believe in this way. I am speaking about it because of the urgency in my spirit to encourage people to reexamine their personal focus and to re-adjust it as necessary. What is most important in the life of a follower of Yeshua? Are we focused on what we have understood to be the most important, or something else? Some of you may become angry at some of the things that I am going to say. But, please hear me out. Everything that I will say today is being said because the Ruach HaKodesh is speaking this very same message to many, many believers. I don't consider myself special. I am just one of many who are hearing these words from ADONAI's Spirit.

From where did this "Dispensational" theology come? And, is it truth? There is very good evidence for what I am about to tell you. And also be aware that some of those who promote this theory would not agree with me. Again, please understand that I am not trying to be controversial just for the sake of being controversial. The purpose of this message is to challenge members of Yeshua's body to seek to believe and practice only what we've been told in Scripture to do. Many denominations make the claim that their beliefs are "sola scriptura," Latin for "by scripture alone." That is the goal that each of us should have; to base our beliefs and practices on Scripture only. But although many make this statement, their practices often say something different.

I want to begin by considering just a portion of "Dispensationalism," "the 70th Week of Daniel." What is the origin of this theological position which has come to be so commonplace today? Briefly stated, this theology says that Daniel 9:27 did not take place in the same time period as the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-26, the preceding 3 verses. Daniel 9:27 says: *27 He will make a strong covenant with leaders for one week [of years]. For half of the week he will put a stop to the sacrifice and the grain offering. On the wing of detestable things the desolator will come and continue until the already decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator.* It is understood and generally agreed that the major portion of verses 24-26 took place during the several hundred years preceding and also within the First Century. But Dispensationalism says that verse 27 refers to a time more than 2000 years in the future. How did this understanding come about? To learn that we need to go back in history. You might be surprised to learn that there is evidence that this whole "end time scenario" was actually initially invented. Why was it invented? It was invented to counteract rising pressure from the protestant churches of Europe against the Catholic Church. The Protestant Church reformers of the 16th century were beginning to teach that the Catholic Church was possibly the "whore of Babylon" which is depicted in Revelation 17:3-6, a Scripture picturing a woman on a scarlet beast. In the year 1585CE, a Jesuit priest by the name of Francisco Ribera began to write a book, a futuristic view of Scripture, with the premise that Revelation would not be fulfilled until the end of the Christian Era. He invented an end-time Babylon, a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and an end-time Antichrist, all of this, presumably, to take the heat off the Catholic Church and the Pope, which was then being applied by the Reformers.

In order to remove the Pope from consideration as the Antichrist, Ribera began writing his 500 page commentary on the Book of Revelation in 1585 and completed it about 1590. In it he proposed that the first few chapters of Revelation apply to ancient pagan Rome and the rest he assigned to a future period of 3½ literal years, which would occur immediately prior to the second coming of the Messiah. He also proposed that the Antichrist, an individual, would persecute and blaspheme the saints of God, rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, abolish the

Christian religion, deny Jesus Christ, be received by the Jews, pretend to be God, kill the two witnesses of God, and conquer the world. This Futurist view of Revelation interprets the prophecies about Antichrist as a future literal man who deceives the world. In this view of Scripture, there is a "gap" of over 2400 years between the 69th week and 70th week of Daniel 9.

There is more to this story because another Catholic priest, Manuel Lacunza, wrote a book in 1782, about 200 years later, building upon Ribera's story. In his book, Lacunza, a non-Jew, claimed that he was a Jew who believed in Jesus and that his name was Rabbi Juan Ben-Ezra. His book was entitled "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty." In his book, among many other things, he stated that the Church would be taken up to be with the Lord 45 days before Jesus' final return to Earth. During those 45 days, while the Church was in heaven, God would pour out His wrath upon the wicked remaining on Earth. After Lacunza died in 1801, his views were taught in Spain, and published there as a book in 1812. Fourteen years later, in 1826, it was translated into English. Soon thereafter this theology appeared in Scotland.

Another event which occurred in that general time period was a vision by a Miss Margaret McDonald in Scotland. In the year 1830 there was a revival of the "gifts" which began to be manifested among some people living in the lowlands of Scotland. They experienced what they called the outpouring of the Spirit. It was accompanied with speaking in "tongues" and other charismatic phenomena. On one particular evening, the power of the Holy Spirit was said to have rested on Miss Macdonald while she was ill at home. She was very sick and thought she was dying. For several hours she experienced manifestations of prophecy and vision. The message she received during this prophetic vision convinced her that Christ was going to appear in "two stages" at His Second Coming, and not at a single coming as most all people formerly believed. Her vision revealed that Christ would first come in glory "to those who look for Him" and then come again later in a final stage "when every eye would see Him." This vision of Miss Macdonald's represents the initial source of the modern "Rapture doctrine."

At this same general time there was a man named John Darby in London. He was one of the founders of a group of Christians called "The Plymouth Brethren." Darby visited Scotland during the 1820s where he likely heard about the Ribera/Lacunza theology as well as about the vision of Miss McDonald. Her vision that she had was built upon by Darby and it became a foundational part of what was then called his "Secret Rapture Theory." He also used portions of the Ribera/Lacunza material to develop his theology of "Dispensationalism," and is considered to be the author of modern Dispensationalism.

Darby also made many visits to Canada and the United States and he expounded on this theology in the many places where he spoke. C. I. Scofield was a minister in the United States who heard about Darby's theology and became enamored with it. At that time, Scofield was working on a new, annotated Bible, and because he was so taken with Darby's theory, he decided to include the Dispensational scheme of interpretation in his new Bible. The Scofield Reference Bible later became the most widely read Bible in the English language. First published in 1909, how many has it influenced?

So there you have it. The theology of "the Rapture" originated with a sick girl who had either visions or delusions. Please understand that I am not speaking against the actual event which is described in 1Thessalonians 4. In verses 16 and 17 it says: *16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a rousing cry, with a call from one of the ruling angels, and with God's shofar; those who died united with the Messiah will be the first to rise; 17 then we who are left still alive will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord.* I certainly believe that it will happen. But the "Dispensational Rapture Theology" is not just 1Thessalonians 4, but is also wrapped up in the 70th Week of Daniel and includes that week being brought into the future and divided into two three and one-half year sections and a "great tribulation."

Addendum B- "Revelation 20:1-3" (From Reverend Ellis Skolfield).

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon—the ancient serpent, who is the devil and satan—and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He also threw him into the abyss and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed. After these things, he must be released for a short while (Revelation 20:1-3 TLV).

Yeshua was tempted by *HaSatan* in the wilderness after His immersion in the Jordan River. In Luke 4, verses 5 and 6 it says: *5 And leading Him up, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in an instant. 6 And the devil said to Him, "I'll give to You all this authority along with its glory, because it has been handed over to me and I can give it to anyone I wish.* In 2Corinthians 4:4 *HaSatan* is referred to as “the god of this world.” *HaSatan* was correct in stating that he had authority over the kingdoms of the earth and in the wilderness, Yeshua did not contradict him. *HaSatan* did have dominion over the empires of the world at the time of Yeshua’s temptation, a dominion which he had had for centuries. But when Yeshua died on the stake, *HaSatan*’s dominion over the empires ended. When Yeshua came to earth to live as a man, the “suffering servant Messiah,” He had not been given earthly authority over a kingdom. When talking to His disciples and the people of Israel, He said: “my kingdom is not of this earth.” But when Yeshua died on the stake and ascended to the right hand of the Father, all things were given into His hands. Ephesians 1:20-23 tells how ADONAI raised Yeshua from the dead to His seat of power: *20 when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heaven . 21 He is far above any ruler, authority, power, leader, and every name that is named—not only in the olam hazeh but also in the olam haba. 22 God placed all things under Messiah's feet and appointed Him as head over all things for His community— 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.* This is the reality: Yeshua’s Kingdom exists right now. *HaSatan* had it his way until Yeshua went to the stake. And Yeshua had already told his disciples several times about what was going to happen to *HaSatan*. In John 12:31 Yeshua said: *31 Now is the judgment of this world! Now the prince of this world will be driven out! Sha ’ul* also tells us about this in Colossians 2:15: *15 After disarming the principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross .* What does all this mean? It means that Yeshua’s death on the stake defeated *HaSatan* and took away his authority over the earth.

So what happened to *HaSatan*? Yeshua said in John 12:31: *Now the prince of this world will be driven out!* Other versions read “cast out.” Yeshua had *HaSatan* cast into the Abyss. And that’s what Revelation 20 is about. But it happened when Yeshua died on the stake and it is not going to happen 1000 years in the future from now. And *HaSatan* has already been released. As we see the increasing lawlessness and violence throughout the earth we realize that *HaSatan* is very actively trying to regain the kingdoms which were taken from him by Yeshua.

This is how we can understand it. *HaSatan* was bound in the year 30CE when Yeshua died on the stake and he was probably released from his prison sometime prior to Hitler’s rise and the rise of antisemitism. During the time period in which Israel has been back in the Land, we have seen a great falling away of the churches worldwide and a great rise in the influence of Islamic states. In 1967 the “times of the Gentiles” were ended when Jerusalem was once again in Jewish hands for the first time in over 2500 years. Messiah Yeshua prophesied that this would happen. In Luke 21:24 Yeshua said: *24Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.* Jerusalem is no longer trampled, that is, controlled by Gentiles. If the “times of the Gentiles” have been fulfilled and we are no longer in “the times of the Gentiles,” then, in what time are we now? With regard to Jerusalem, we are now in the "times of the Jews." With regard to the world, we are in "the times of the coming of the Messiah" or "the last days." In this time period Israel has come again to world-wide attention as a fulfillment of the many prophecies written about these days. And this time period culminates in the return of our Jewish Messiah. Then after Yeshua returns in power and glory and defeats all His enemies as depicted in Revelation 19, we find a little further in Revelation 20 that *HaSatan* is dealt with once again, and this time with finality. In verse 10 it says: *10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone , where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they shall be tortured day and night forever and ever.*

Addendum C- “2Thessalonians 2: The Man of Lawlessness).

1 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, concerning the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and our gathering together to Him, 2 not to get shaken out of your mind or disturbed—either by a spirit or a word or a letter as if through us—as though the Day of the Lord has come. 3 Let no one deceive you in any way, for the Day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the one destined to be destroyed. 4 He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in the Temple of God, proclaiming himself that he is God. 5 Don't you remember that when I was still with you I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what now holds back, for him to be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already operating; only there is one who holds back just now, until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Yeshua will slay him with the breath of His mouth and wipe him out with the appearance of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is connected to the activity of satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with every kind of wicked deception toward those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a delusional force, to lead them to believe what is false, 12 so that they may be judged—all those who did not believe the truth but delighted in wickedness (2Thessalonians 2:1-12 TLV).

The man of lawlessness in the TLV is called the man of sin in the KJV, but man of lawlessness in most every other version. Can we assume that the man of lawlessness is Dispensationalism's AntiChrist? I don't think so. Adolph Hitler and Mao Zedong come to mind as good candidates but aren't global enough. Mohammed, the false prophet of Allah, and Allah, *HaSatan* himself, get my vote. Allah symbolically sits in the Temple of God in the form of the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar and is also the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by both Daniel and Yeshua. The question is, can the translation of Daniel 9:27 as antichrist, four mentions of antichrist in 1st and 2nd John and the man of lawlessness in 2Thessalonians 2 be enough to develop a doctrine as broad as is found in Dispensationalism? My opinion is no. It has to have the non-scriptural scenario of an end time event brought in by Darby added to it in order to give it enough substance. The problem is, that Darby's theory is based completely upon the writings of two men, Daniel 9:26 is incorrectly translated, the antichrist mentioned by John is a spirit and not a man and the man of lawlessness in 2nd Thessalonians is *HaSatan* in the guise of Allah.