

### CHAG SAMEACH!! REJOICE!!

Sukkot has arrived and we have reason to celebrate!! In fact, this chag (holiday) is the only one of seven special feasts (in Leviticus chapter 23) where G-d actually **commands** the Jewish people to rejoice.

We rejoice because this feast points us forward to a special time when the Messiah will be ruling and reigning from Jerusalem!

### SUKKOT LOOKS FORWARD TO THE MESSIANIC TIMES

It is a time which many of the Hebrew prophets spoke about. One of them is Habbakuk, who wrote that the earth will be ... *filled with the knowledge of the glory of the L-RD, as the waters cover the sea.* Hab. 2:14. What a flooding of G-d's presence that will be!

### ARE YOU ALSO LONGING FOR THAT TIME?



Anthropologists have a name for this longing. They call it *nostalgia for paradise*, which they say is common to all men and to all religions. It is an inner knowledge of a paradise that has been lost. It's the soul's innate quest to be united with its Creator. The Tanakh speaks about a time when all men will know G-d in their hearts, a time when G-d will dwell with man. A paradise, so to speak. It is a time when nature will be reconciled, when animals will eat together rather than eat each other. It is the time when the child will play with the serpent, and no one will get hurt.

### THE SUCCAH SPARKS AN EVEN GREATER NOSTALGIA

Before Sukkot arrives, Jewish people are busy preparing their booths, their sukkahs, where many will dine and sleep, in obedience to the commandment given in Leviticus 23:42 which says, *You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths.* The Israelites were to reflect on their bondage in Egypt, the freedom into which G-d took them and the protection He provided for them while in their desert sojourn. Because these were temporary booths, it emphasized the frailties and transitory nature of life, thereby giving rise to an even greater desire for that security which paradise can offer.

The ancient rabbis understood the sukkah to be a protection ministered through the Shekinah Glory over the Israelites during their journey in the desert. They saw the cloud which followed the Israelites as that divine defense or sukkah.

Later in the Zohar, they spoke of the sukkah as the shelter of faith, a reminder of the love and security we have in G-d. Though the sukkah is somewhat flimsy and transient, G-d is our pavilion of protection.

That longing for peace, for the Messianic times causes us to question how the evil in this world will ever end. It also makes us wonder when and how the evil in our own hearts can ever be eradicated. This query comes at a good time because the season of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur have brought us to face G-d and question our ability to stand before Him. After all our pleadings and repentance, we now ask, do we merit His forgiveness and receive that special peace we are so longing for.

### AN ANCIENT RABBINICAL SOLUTION

There is an interesting teaching, a legend that comes from the Zohar which is a collection of rabbinical thoughts published in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In one section it speaks about the last night of the Feast of Sukkot when the final edicts are issued from G-d, edicts which were to decide who would die in the coming year.

Notice how in this legend, the dead are brought before G-d. We have quoted a small portion of a much longer text. It reads:

*When the angels bring up the shadow (that is the name of the person), they deliver it to that faithful servant whose name is **Metatron**, and he takes it and brings it unto its due and rightful place. From that hour on, a place is prepared for the neshamah (the soul) of that man, and a place*

*for his ruah (spirit) in the Garden of Eden, Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2, Page I42b*

This is the edict for the righteous, but in that same quote, for the unrighteous, it says, *their nefesh will wander, having no rest either by day or by night. This is the greatest and direst punishment possible. "That nefesh shall be cut off from my presence; I am the L-rd"* (quoting Leviticus 22:3).

### WHO IS METATRON?

Who is **Metatron** who gets this prestigious privilege to judge, condemn, and release souls into their final abode? If we are concerned about the place *where* our soul will eternally exist, we would want to know who has that final authority to decide.

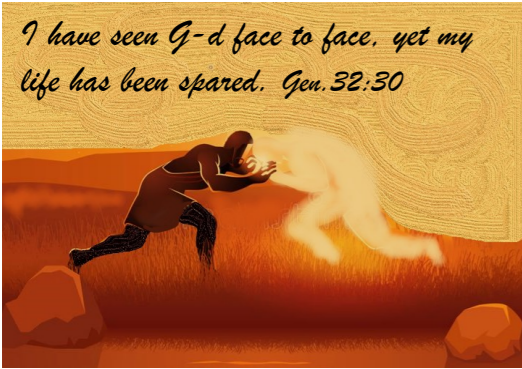
After all, in Ezekiel 18:4 G-d says *Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine.*

Is Metatron a god or some divine entity to have this authority over the soul? Many understand him to be a created fictional personality found in ancient rabbinic literature which was used to fill a gap.

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They used Metatron to explain the enigma of many of G-d's visible manifestations. A startling example is found in Genesis 32 when Jacob, wrestling with a man, claimed that he saw G-d face to face. How could Jacob see G-d and live? How could we call a man "G-d" unless it is the manifestation of G-d Himself in the form of a man?

The Talmud gives Metatron supernatural powers and the Encyclopedia Judaica writes, "perhaps there are two powers," as though pointing to Metatron himself as a second deity.

If Jewish thought and theology brings us to consider the possibility that God in nature can be described as a plurality and that He can manifest Himself in the form of a man, then we propose that Yeshua of Nazareth, is the One who fulfills this biblical mandate as the Redeemer of our souls.

If we are concerned about the eternal status of our soul, then we must read what G-d Himself says. The prophet Isaiah speaks boldly and succinctly about the Servant of G-d and His role in our lives.

Here we will see the solution that the prophet provides so that we can finally do away with the evil in our hearts that would otherwise never get eradicated. This text comes directly from the Hebrew Scriptures.

### WHO DO YOU THINK THIS SERVANT IS?

*Isaiah 53:3-5*

*3 He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by G-d, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

Who is this servant who takes our sins when only G-d has possession and authority over our soul? We are also reminded that only G-d cleanses us, as He promises in Isaiah 1:18 which says: ***"Though your sins be as scarlet, they will be whiter than snow"***. Yeshua is not an imaginative being like Metatron. He is real. Unlike Metatron, Yeshua's life and actions fulfilled the very prophecies found in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the Messiah. And it is Yeshua who offered this promise of eternal life

on the last day of Sukkot to those who had a listening ear.

The Talmud relates the beautiful ceremonies that the Jewish people observed on Sukkot. These rites included candle lighting and an elaborate water pouring ceremony which pointed people to a hope of a better world.

And on that 7<sup>th</sup> day of Sukkot, Yeshua took the opportunity to speak into the heart of man, identifying himself as that light that leads to true sight and as that water which cleanses and restores the soul. He can fulfill that hope of true rejoicing in our hearts. When we consider how we might be able to stand before a righteous Judge, this Servant Yeshua fulfills the task. As it says in Isaiah 53:11

מַעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ, יִרְאֶה יִשְׁבַּע--בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עֲבָדִי, לְרִבִּים; וְעֹנֶתֶם, הוּא יִפְבֹּל.

This verse says that G-d's righteous One (His Servant) makes others righteous. How then can we stand righteous? By believing the quote from Isaiah 53:3-5 (see above) and understanding that He alone takes our sins. When He does that, His righteousness is applied to us. He is therefore our kapparah and our sukkah, our very protection at this season and in every season of our lives.

**For more information  
Beth Ariel Congregation  
Tel: 514-685-5902  
[info@bethariel.ca](mailto:info@bethariel.ca)**

## Under the Canopy of G-d's Protection



***Psalm 31:20***

*You shall hide them in the secret place (sukkah) of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*