

Hineni!

Winter 1999
newsletter of Emmanuel Messianic Congregation

From the Rabbi...

Why Purim is an Underrated Holiday and What You Can Do About It

When evening falls on March 1, 1999, Purim begins. What's Purim, you ask? Good question, one that's to be expected, since this Jewish holiday is one of the least observed biblical celebrations.

Passover is a holiday with which we're all familiar. Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur—the High Holy Days—get a lot of our attention. And Chanukah, with its gift-giving and candle-lighting, is a day (actually eight days) we enjoy and observe. But Purim doesn't demand a lot of our interest. Why?

To begin with, the events leading to Purim, the celebration of a defensive military victory, took place in Persia, not Israel. The Jews were in the *galut* (the diaspora), having been brought there after the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.E. They were attacked by the prime minister of Persia—Haman—because Esther's cousin, Mordecai, would not bow down to this pagan leader. That was the last straw for self-aggrandizing Haman, who had wanted to get rid of the Jews, anyway. He saw them as a threat to his upward mobility and power. Since the whole story took place outside of Israel, it never became a major holiday, especially in the western world.

Second, there is no reference to God in the entire Scroll of Esther. This was so surprising to the rabbis who canonized the Scripture (those whose books were to be called Scripture), that

there was conflict as to whether or not to include Esther in the Bible at all. How could a document that doesn't mention God be placed in his Holy Book?

Furthermore, the hero of the story is a woman, something some of the less "liberated" rabbis had a hard time with. Esther was the star and strength of the Purim story.

A third reason that Purim is not a well-known Jewish celebration is that it is not crowned with a biblical Sabbath. Unlike the holidays summarized in Leviticus 23, on which a Sabbath was commanded, Purim is not given the same holiness. Although people rested on the days after Purim, this rest was not a commandment of God. That's why I call it a holiday, not a holiday.

But Purim is an important celebration that needs more recognition. It teaches that even though Jews may be out of the Land of God, in a behind-the-scenes kind of way, is present and does protect his people. The many "coincidences" described in the book encourage us in that even though we may not see God face-to-face, we can count on his presence—anywhere and any time.

Another reason to celebrate Purim is the fact that it teaches what happens to anti-Semites, Jew-haters. They always lose! Even Adolf Eichmann, one of the most wicked Nazis, discovered this truth. After he was caught, convicted, and condemned to die, he liked his

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Get Your Tickets EARLY for upcoming Spring Events!

Our special spring events are always so popular you may want to purchase tickets well in advance...before the seating fills up.

PURIM '99

For those of you who have become fans of the genre known as the *Purim Spiel*, you will be interested in what Emmanuel has come up with this year. Our previous productions, *It Happened in Shushan* and last year's extravaganza *Middle East Side Story* have created a demand for something spectacular—and here it is:



Dates: Saturday, February 27
Sunday, February 28
7:30 PM
Location: Kahler Hall
Harpers Farm Village Center, Columbia, MD
Suggested donation:
In advance \$5
At the door \$7

Call for information and reservations: Heidi Ortmeier 410-521-9779

PASSOVER '99

We have arranged to hire the brand new Ten Oaks Ballroom in the River Hill village of Columbia for our annual community Passover seder. Save the evening of April 1, 1999 for a time of worship, fellowship and feasting as we observe the Pesach celebration together with our extended Emmanuel family. Details will follow. —Heidi Ortmeier: 410-521-9779.

Today in Jewish History

- January 23, 1492 First printing of the Pentateuch.
- January 26, 1945 Auschwitz is liberated by the Russian Army.
- February 2, 1915 Abba Eban, Israeli statesman, born.
- February 6, 1481 First auto-da-fé the Spanish Inquisition held.
- February 14, 1949 The Knesset opened its first session.
- February 17, 1949 Chaim Weizmann elected first president of Israel.
- February 24, 1912 Hadassah founded by Henrietta Szold.
- March 26, 1979 Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel signed.
- March 31, 1492 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella sign the order expelling Jews from Spain.

DEAR JOSEPH

The children in Emmanuel's Shabbat school wrote encouraging letters to Joseph in prison.

Dear Joseph, You know you shouldn't be glum. It was good you did not do. I want to let you know that I'm praying for you. Trust in God for He is putting you through a trial right now. If you put your trust in Him, things will go right. I hope you will be faithful to God in prison and follow His commandments; the best that you can. If I were you, I probably would have thought that God had forgotten about me. So don't think that.
Trust in God, Holy

Dear Joseph, Hi, it's me! I heard that you are in prison for something I know you did not do. I want to let you know that I'm praying for you. Trust in God for He is putting you through a trial right now. If you put your trust in Him, things will go right. I hope you will be faithful to God in prison and follow His commandments; the best that you can. If I were you, I probably would have thought that God had forgotten about me. So don't think that.
Trust in God, Holy

Dear Joseph, I have heard that you were thrown in jail for no reason. I am also a Jew and wish some encouragement to you. God will keep and protect you. I know that for a fact because we are His Chosen People. I also know that you are the head of the entire prison administration and the reason why is because God has everything under control!
Sincerely,
Veronica

Dear Joseph, Keep up the good work! I'm surprised to write an encouraging letter. You're doing a good job! (I don't know why, but I won't ask). Keep praying to the Lord to help you every day! The Lord will guide and help you. Hope you're encouraged.
Becky

Dear Joseph, How's life? I've been hearing about you in my hometown. I hear you need a little advice. Everyone has been telling me you are in prison. Try and get out. Escape and when you do, find a boat or something and cross the ocean to wherever you want.
Your Jewish Friend, David
P.S. Don't get caught!

Chavunos Are Here! Chavunos Are Here!

Howard Gold

The *chavunos* are already in full swing at Emmanuel—but it's not too late to get involved! A *chavurah* (fellowship group) meets in a member's home and is designed to help people maintain close relationships outside of regular Shabbat services and other official events. Each *chavurah* provides a particular focus or subject for study and discussion (such as Torah, how God communicates with his people, evangelism), and a rich, fertile ground for spiritual growth. The *chavunos* (plural of *chavurah*) feature friendly discussions in comfortable surroundings and include music, prayer, and food! The members of the *chavurah* determine how the group is run, so your input is essential!

Chavunos are meeting in several counties in the area, so there's one near you. They meet on varied days and times, so there's always one to fit your schedule. For all the exciting details, call Howard Gold at 410-290-8092 or contact one of the *chavurah* leaders listed below. Get involved with the dynamic *chavurah* movement at Emmanuel today!

Area *chavurah* contacts are as follows:

- Howard County: Howard and Marianne Gold 410-290-8092
- Baltimore County A: Neal and Kim Surasky 410-585-1033
- Baltimore County B: David and Jennifer Negley 410-788-8030
- Anne Arundel County: Ray and Donna Fisher 410-360-0182
- Montgomery County: Gary and Linda Bittner 310-589-3024

How God Communicates With His People

by Neal Surasky

How often have you heard a phrase like "God told me..." or "The Lord showed me..." or even "God told me to tell you..."? You can fill in the blanks yourself. As believers, we do our best to walk in the path of the Lord. We are constantly seeking His will in our lives. We pray, asking for guidance, and help, and advice, among other things. And he, being a faithful and loving God, answers our prayers. He "speaks" to us every day. But how? And WHY?

Proper communication skills are taught to our children in school. They are taught how to effectively interact with each other, with parents, teachers, and other adults, etc. It is a great shame that we are not taught how to effectively communicate with God. This becomes an area in our adult lives which very few people come to excel at.

Because communication is a two-way process, it is absolutely imperative that we hold up our end of any conversation with God. Our part does not only include prayer and verbal praise. It also includes a quiet but active listening that has become very difficult in our society. These forms of communication require learning, and of course, practice.

To help with the learning aspect, this article will look at the various ways God has spoken to his people in the past, and which methods he continues to use today. Through this examination we will learn how to better hear the voice of God in such a "noisy" world. Using verses from scripture, we will develop our communication skills to better our relationship with ADONAI. Don't miss the next article of "How God Communicates With His People."

Next: "From Adam to Yeshua—How God Speaks in the Scriptures"

Readings & Special Days for the Current Quarter * Denotes Special Emmanuel Activities

January 1999

Tevet-Shevat 5759

January 2: 14 Tevet
Vayechi (End of Genesis)
Gen. 47:28-59:26
1 Ki. 21: 1-12
1 Pet. 1:3-9

January 9: 21 Tevet

Shemot
Exod. 1:1-6:1
Isa. 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23 (Ashkenazi)
Jer. 1:1-2:3 (Sephardi)
Acts 7:17-29

January 16: 28 Tevet

Va'yera
Exod. 6:2-9:35
Ezek. 28:25-29:21
Rom. 9:14-24

January 18: 1 Shevat

Rosh Chodesh (New Moon)

January 19: 2 Shevat

* FAMILY NIGHT at Emmanuel
7:00 PM

January 23: 6 Shevat

Bo
Exod. 10:1-13:16
Jer. 46:13-28
1 Cor. 11:20-34

January 30: 13 Shevat

Shabbat Shira
Beshalach
Exod. 13:17-17:16
Jud. 4:4-5:31
John 6:22-40

February 1999

Shevat-Adar 5759

February 6: 20 Shevat

Yitro
Exod. 18:1-20:23
Isa. 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6
Matt. 5:17-32

February 13: 27 Shevat

Shabbat Shekalim
Mishpatim
Exod. 21:1-24:18; Exod. 30:11-16
2 Ki. 11:17-12:17
Matt. 5:38-42

February 16: 30 Shevat

* FAMILY NIGHT at Emmanuel
7:00 PM

February 17: 1 Adar

Rosh Chodesh (New Moon)

February 20: 4 Adar

Terumah
Exod. 25:1-27:19
1 Ki. 5:26-6:13
Matt. 5:33-37

February 27: 11 Adar

Shabbat Zakhor
Tetzaveh
Exod. 27:20-30:10; Deut. 25:17-19
1 Sam. 15:1-34
Heb. 13:10-17

February 28

* "Megillah on the Roof" 7:30 PM

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* "Megillah on the Roof" 7:30 PM

Shabbat

by Linette Alexander-Parent

Bring the joy of your wondrous celebration, our hearts away through the passing of the six others, not at all like you! Cease and delight one and all pious ones, rulers, servants and strangers for it is here. Spread out the best, separate from the norm! Adorn thine heart, home, and family, light thine heart's candle, and gather the family! Man, submit unto thy creator; woman, submit unto the creator of man, as well as thy husbandman! Single man and woman, submit to the creator as well as thine husbandman, submitting to his ways and standards! Children, fall in place for worship and become as the Messiah, obedient to thine Father!

March 1999

Adar-Nisan 5759

March 1: 13 Adar

Fast of Esther
Exod. 32:11-14; 34:1-10
Isa. 55:6-56:8
Matt. 6:16-18; Luke 2:36-37
Erev Purim (Eve of the Feast of Lots)

March 1: 13 Adar

Purim (Feast of Lots)
Exod. 17:8-16
The Megillah (Scroll) of Esther

March 6: 18 Adar

Shabbat Parah
Ki Tisa
Exod. 30:11-34:35; Num. 19:1-22
Ezek. 36: 16-38
1 Cor. 8:4-13

March 13: 25 Adar

Shabbat HaChodesh
Vayakhel/Pekudei (End of Exodus)
Exod. 35:1-38:20; Exod. 38:21-40:38;
Exod. 12:1-20
Ezek. 45:16-46:18
2 Cor. 9:6-6:11; 2 Cor. 3:7-18

March 16: 28 Adar

* FAMILY NIGHT at Emmanuel

March 18: 1 Nisan

Rosh Chodesh (New Moon)

March 20: 3 Nisan

Vayikra
Lev. 1:1-5:26
Isa. 43:21-44:23
Heb. 10:1-18

March 27: 10 Nisan

Shabbat HaGadol
Tzav
Lev. 8:1-8:36
Mal. 3:4-24
Heb. 8:1-6

March 31: 14 Nisan

Erev Chag HaMatzot
(Eve of Unleavened Bread)
Pesach (Passover) lambs were killed on this day in biblical times.
First Seder

Special Note:

April 1: 15 Nisan
Chag HaMatzot (Unleavened Bread)
Traditional First day of Passover
* EMT: Emmanuel Community Seder

"Miracle Healing"

by Gary and Linda Bittner

This month we were so impressed with a short article from the December 1998 issue of *Prevention* magazine entitled "Miracle Healer."

In one feature of this fascinating article, *Prevention* interviews Rabbi Simkha Weintraub, Director of the National Center for Jewish Healing in New York City. "Jews today," he reports, "are just beginning to recover the old prayers, meditations, and rituals that didn't originally come to light as part of the bare-bones Judaism that survived major disruptions such as the Holocaust."

Rabbi Weintraub speaks highly of the role of spiritual communities—such as *Chavunos*!—that can offer comfort and support to the sick and distressed. Also suggested as a focal point is the recitation of the book of Psalms during a season of illness in a congregation.

Since we, too, have those who are sick and distressed among us, we would like to invite you and your family to join us in reading a chapter a day from the book of Psalms as well as in praying together for the sick. This is one way we can show our love to those of us who are facing special physical and emotional challenges. ☺

From the Rabbi

...continued from the front page

life to the story of Purim, where the wicked Haman, after trying to destroy the Jewish people, like Eichmann, was hanged. People need to know that God protects his people, whether Jews or "grafted-in" Gentiles (a.k.a. Christians).

A third reason that we at Emmanuel put so much effort into celebrating Purim is a verse found at the end of the Scroll of Esther. It reads, "The Jews resolved and took upon themselves, their descendants and all who might join them that without fail they would observe...at the appointed time, every year" (Esther 9:27). Since we have many non-Jews who have joined themselves to Israel through the "grafting-in" that comes through Yeshua, the Messiah, this celebration befits our congregation's concept of how Jew and Gentile have become one in the Messiah.

As has become our tradition, we will be having a *Purim shpiel*, a *Purim musical*, on two nights: Saturday, February 27th and Sunday, February 28th. It's called *Megillah on the Roof*. It was written by my wife, Yaffa (Steffi), who has written many songs, dramatic sketches, and *Purim plays*. In the starring role is my daughter Shira (Esther is her middle name), who not only sings beautifully, but acts terrifically, too.

I urge you to come to the play (see the side bar of front page for details). To get the most out of it (and understand all the jokes), you should read the *Megillah* (Scroll) of Esther before coming. Then *Purim* will be a more meaningful experience to you.

Chag Sameach
(Happy Holiday).

Rabbi Baruch (Barry) Rubin

Mark Your calendars: the 3rd Tuesday of every month is FAMILY NIGHT!

We have already had two family nights: one called "Preparing for Y2K" in November and the other a Chanukkah Party in December. Future topics will include the issues "Creation and Evolution: A Jewish Perspective," "Science and the Bible," and "The Genesis Diet." Family night begins at 7:00 PM and there will be a children's program for kids younger than 13. Call for details: 410-531-2093.



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Emmanuel...God is with us!