



# A Place of Refuge

by Tim Kelley

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“Here Now, but Not Yet” is a simple statement that Jewish sages used to illustrate the reality of many prophecies found in the scripture. It’s a statement of the realization that God gives us little fulfillments of prophecy before giving us the real thing. We have examples of this in the spring festivals of Passover and at Shavuot where a lamb was killed to provide redemption for God’s people, and later Yeshua’s blood was spilled for the same purpose. According to tradition, YHVH betrothed Israel to Himself on Shavuot, and 1500 years later that was renewed in Acts 2.

What about the fall festivals? Has God given us a “here now, but not yet” example to give us a hint of what is yet to come? Does the Bible give us a precursor in scripture to help us understand what the fulfillment of those festivals will look like? In the case of Yom Kippur and Sukkot, I submit that it does; but not necessarily so for Yom Teruah. I don’t see a historical event that could be labeled as ‘a *picture of Yom Teruah*’.

So how do we find the meaning of Yom Teruah? We have to gather it piece by piece from various scriptures. For instance, we can go to Numbers 10 to find the meaning of the sounds of the shofar. We can look at the conquest of Jericho to see how the ‘shout’ of the people caused the walls to fall down. But probably the most significant tool we can use is the Jewish wedding. All of the festivals tend to follow the pattern of the Jewish wedding.

When you read the Bible, starting at the beginning, you’ll notice that one of the first things that man does is join himself to a woman in what we call *marriage*. The marriage theme is carried throughout the Bible with the marriage of Isaac to Rebecca, Jacob to Rachael, Boaz to Ruth, and many other examples. Scripture shows that YHVH betrothed Himself to Israel at Mt. Sinai, and we see that Messiah Yeshua chose to start His earthly ministry at a wedding. The Bible even ends with the *marriage supper of the lamb*<sup>1</sup>. It appears that marriage could be considered the central theme of the Bible because the Bible is a book about the marriage of God’s people to Himself.

Marriage is a process. For most of us there was a courtship, a betrothal, the wedding day with its ceremony and feast, and then the honeymoon. But the day we looked forward to the most was when we took our bride to our new home that first night and we began to live together. This event might best be portrayed in the case of Isaac and Rebecca where the scripture says –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Genesis 24:67** Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebecca and she became his wife, and he loved her . . .

That first night in the tent is what I believe Yom Teruah is about.

Bible prophecy seems to parallel Jewish eschatology, which in turn is closely tied to the pattern of the Hebrew wedding. Briefly, the Hebrew wedding pattern includes courtship, betrothal, a period of waiting while the groom prepares the chuppah<sup>2</sup>, the catching away of the bride where the groom comes to her home and takes her to the chuppah, the appearing of the bride and groom after their seven days in the chuppah, and finally the wedding supper. I believe that for the past 2000 years we have been waiting for our Groom to come take us away, and Yom Teruah pictures the day (or more specifically - the night) that He does so. If I am correct and if indeed it is true that Messiah Yeshua will come on Yom Teruah and

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. 19:7

<sup>2</sup> The wedding chamber

## A Place of Refuge!

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take us as His bride, what then will happen for the next seven days? According to the wedding pattern, we would be with Him for those days, enjoying our time with Him in the Chuppah.

Yom Teruah has a number of names, one of which is “The Day of the Awakening Blast”. From the scripture we see that God ordained that trumpets should be blown for various occasions, one of which was to warn the people of impending war<sup>3</sup>. In Jewish understanding, Yom Teruah is followed by a period called the Chevlei Mashiach ( *חבל משיח* ) – the *Birthpains of the Messiah*. It’s also referred to as *The Time of Jacob’s Trouble* and *The Tribulation*. This is a seven year period when God brings great calamity on the world. The Jewish people teach that Israel will go through this period, but will come out of it a better people.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Jeremiah 30:4-7** Now these *are* the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah.  
<sup>5</sup> "For thus says the LORD: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, Of fear, and not of peace. <sup>6</sup> 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? <sup>7</sup> 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.

The time of Jacob’s trouble is not a good time! Scripture seems to indicate that a lot of bad things are going to happen during this seven-year period.

During my early childhood and teen years, I dreaded the arrival of Jesus because I understood that before He arrived, His people – His BRIDE – would have to endure at least part of the tribulation. On the other hand, most Christians thought that they would spend this time in Heaven, since - in their mind - the Tribulation was intended only for the Jews. But as I’ve learned more about the Biblical pattern of salvation, which again – is closely tied to Jewish eschatology and the Hebrew wedding, I’ve come to see that what I was taught as a child is not correct, and that God would – as would any good husband – take great pains to protect His bride from harm.

So, for the remaining time, I want to discuss our place during this frightening time, the Birthpains of the Messiah and discuss what many have called – the Rapture.

### The Rapture

The word “rapture” is no where found in the Bible. The English word is derived from the Latin word *rapere* which means *to carry off* or *catch away*. The concept of a rapture is derived from Paul’s statement in 1 Thessalonians 4 where we see the term “caught up” -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

This is the key passage used by Christianity to support their view of a ‘rapture’. In order to understand what Paul is saying, it is important to understand the context in which Paul is writing. Let’s begin by seeing what Paul had already revealed about his audience – the believers in Thessalonica.

- They were strong in the faith even after much affliction (1:3-6; 2:13 )
- They had become good examples of the walk to believers from both the region of Macedonia (100 miles north) and Achaia (300 miles south) (1:7; 4:9-10)
- They had proclaimed the good news of the kingdom throughout that area (1:8-10)
- They had become imitators of the Jewish believers in Judea (2:14)

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<sup>3</sup> Numbers 10:9

## A Place of Refuge!

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Based on what we see, the Thessalonians were deeply involved in doing the work of God. As such they understood the scriptures as well as Jewish tradition, but apparently, they still had questions in regards to those who had died in the faith – those who had walked the walk and had done the work, but had died before the Messiah returned. What would be their fate? Paul answered by showing that they needed to better understand what they had learned. He said:

**NKJ 1 Thessalonians 4:13** But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

In this passage, the word “ignorant” is from the Greek word “agnoeo” (Strong’s #50). It is the negative of the word “noeo” (Strong’s #3539) which means “to perceive or understand”. In other words, even though they had knowledge of God, the Torah, the prophets, and the Messiah, they were unable to ‘connect the dots’ in order to understand what would happen with the believers who were deceased. And because they could not figure it out, they were in the same boat as the pagans – they had no hope.

Paul continued by pointing out that since they believed Yeshua was resurrected from the dead, God’s people would likewise be resurrected.

**ESV 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. <sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a (the) word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

This passage is somewhat confusing, and though it is not the purpose of this article, Paul is not saying that those who had died will come with Yeshua from Heaven. He is simply making it clear that when the resurrection takes place, the deceased believers will be resurrected first, then they and the living believers, would be taken with Him to wherever He goes. This is made clear in not only the rest of Paul’s letter, but in many other passages in the Bible as well.

With that background, let us again look at the key passage –

**NKJ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Considering Paul’s previous statement that the deceased believers would be resurrected first, and that they, as well as the living believers would be brought with the Messiah to another place, what Paul is adding here is that there will be signs that will precede that event, specifically the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the ‘trumpet of God’.

The shout and trumpet indicate that this event happens at Yom Teruah, the Feast of Trumpets. But there is another little detail that is often overlooked, and that is the meaning of the Greek word for ‘caught up’ and the Jewish understanding of that thought. But before we get to that, let’s see what the scripture has to say about what God wants to do with His people during the ‘birthpains of the Messiah’ and ask “Is it wrong to want to miss this terrible time?” We’ll start with a passage from Isaiah -

**NKJ Isaiah 26:17-21** As a woman with child is in pain and cries out in her pangs when she draws near the time of her delivery, so have we been in Your sight, O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain; We have, as it were, brought forth wind; We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen. <sup>19</sup> Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. <sup>20</sup> Come, my people, enter your chambers and shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the

## A Place of Refuge!

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indignation is past. <sup>21</sup> For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity . . .

This passage is clearly talking about the end times, the times of the birth pains. Notice that the purpose of this calamity is to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their twisted behavior. On the other hand, “His people” – those who follow the ways of God, are warned to enter into their chedar - their inner rooms – and shut the doors behind them. They are to hide until God’s anger has passed.

### Hiding Away

Hiding during times of trouble is spoken of in many places in scripture. Because he was a man with many enemies, David speaks of ‘hiding’ quite often. In his many times of trouble, he would call on God for deliverance. Psalm 27 is a record of one of those times and is traditionally read during the fall festival season. Notice that David’s confidence was that he would be hidden in the time of trouble

**NKJ Psalm 27:4-5** One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. <sup>5</sup> For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle, He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.

David was not just looking for a cave to hid in or the basement of a building. He believed he would be hidden in God’s pavilion, maybe a secret part of the tabernacle. In this passage, the Hebrew word from which we get *pavilion* is *soke* ( סֹכֶה – Strong’s 5520). This is the root word from which we get *sukkah*, the word that is usually translated *booth* as in *Feast of Booths*. We know that a *sukkah* is a temporary dwelling that God’s people are instructed to stay in during the fall festival. Thus this statement of David’s carries an end-time connotation. What’s more, the *sukkah* in which David believed he’d be hidden was located within God’s tabernacle (*ohel* – tent).

In a later passage David seems to indicate that this hiding place is within God’s presence.

**ESV Psalm 31:19-20** Oh, how abundant is your goodness which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! <sup>20</sup> In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.

In this passage, the Hebrew word for *shelter* is *sukkah* – again, a booth or temporary dwelling. For those who fear Yah, He has prepared a *sukkah* within His presence. This seems to narrow down the location of the hiding place of His people.

So we see evidence that it is God’s intention to hide his people during times of calamity, and that it might even be where God lived.

Yeshua also spoke of hiding during times of calamity. In His end-time prophecy of the Great Tribulation in the last days, the Messiah warned his disciples to look for certain signs, and when they saw them, flee for safety.

**ESV Matthew 24:15-18** "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place ( let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, <sup>18</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.

Notice that Yeshua did not tell his followers to remain in Jerusalem and endure the tribulation with their Jewish brothers. Instead he warned them to flee to the mountains. Apparently He did not consider it honorable to endure this time event when they an the opportunity to avoid it.

## A Place of Refuge!

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So it appears that during the end time tribulation, YHVH has a place for His people to hide, and He expects them to take advantage of it.

So how does the Hebrew wedding tie in? Does it give us more clues to what YHVH has in store for His people during the time of trouble that will befall the earth? Yes it does.

### The Chuppah – a Key to Understanding

In the Hebrew wedding pattern, after the couple is betrothed, the husband-to-be leaves his bride and returns to his father's house. He has a job to do. For the next several months he goes about building a temporary place to bring his bride. This place is called the *chuppah*, and it's usually a part of his father's house or it is located on his property. The groom spends his time furnishing and stocking it with food and all kinds of delicacies for his bride. During this time, he is under the strict guidance of his father who directs the construction of the chuppah and councils his son concerning what his bride would probably enjoy most.

Messiah Yeshua made reference to this custom when shortly before His crucifixion He said to his disciples –

**NKJ John 14:2-3** "In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

According to Jewish sources, this is the statement a young man would make to his bride as he departs to build the chuppah, letting her know he fully intends to come back for her.

When the father feels that his son has finished all the preparations, he sends him back to fetch his bride. But he does not just simply show up and knock on her door. Instead, He is preceded by an entourage of friends and actually 'steals' her away. This may seem harsh, especially in our day when child abduction for the purpose of child prostitution is so prevalent, but in Yeshua's day it was a part of the romance of marriage. Jewish author Zola Levitte says this in his book "A Christian Love Story"<sup>4</sup> –

"Finally, the chamber would be ready and the bridegroom would assemble his young friends to accompany him on the exiting trip to claim his bride. The big moment had arrived and the bridegroom was more than ready, we can be sure. He and his young men would set out in the night, making every attempt to completely surprise the bride. And that's the romantic part – all the Jewish brides were "stolen". The Jews had a special understanding of a woman's heart. What a thrill for her, to be "abducted" and carried off into the night, not by a stranger, but by the one who loved her so much that he had paid a high price for her."

Once he fetches his bride, the groom takes her to the chuppah where he and she will spend the next seven days.

### Catching Away

Let's now go back to 1 Thessalonians 4 and look up the meaning of the Greek word that is translated "caught up". The Greek word is 'harpazo' (Strong's #726) and it means "to seize, to carry off by force". It is used 13 times in the New Testament, and in most places, it implies a violent action. The word is also used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word 'gazel' (גַּזַּל – 1498) which means "robbery" as in this verse from the Psalms –

**NKJ Psalm 62:10** Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; If riches increase, do not set *your heart on them*.

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<sup>4</sup> Zola Levitt, A Christian Love Story, (Dallas, TX: Great Impressions Printing, 1978)

## A Place of Refuge!

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When Paul is speaking of being 'caught up' on the Day of Trumpets with a shout and the blast of a shofar, he is actually referring the Messiah coming to 'steal away' His bride and take her to the chuppah, and since the Thessalonian believers understood and mimicked the beliefs of their Jewish counterparts in Judea, they would be aware of the custom and fully understood what Paul was saying.

Therefore, since the Messiah will come on Yom Teruah to fetch His bride, and since Yom Teruah immediately precedes the Birthpains, it appears that the Messiah and His bride will spend the Tribulation period in the Chuppah.

The prophet Joel supports this view in his end time prophecy.

Chapter 2 of the book of Joel is a prophecy that spans much of the end time, from Yom Teruah through the Messianic Kingdom. It includes a prophecy specific to Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) that indicates what happens as the Messiah prepares to return to earth and begins the restoration of the Kingdom of God. Here's how it starts –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Joel 2:15-16** Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; <sup>16</sup> Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room (Heb. 'chuppah').

On this day, the bridegroom leaves His chamber; and look who leaves with Him . . . the bride! And notice where she's coming from – the Chuppah! ( **חֻפּוּת** - Strong's 2646). When the Messiah returns to earth, He's going to bring His Bride with Him - she's going to be at His side. Why? Because He's coming to establish His kingdom, and his Bride is a symbol of that kingdom just as in a family where a man's wife is symbolic of him being complete and in control.

So, this brings us back to the what Paul said.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Paul saw in the scripture the end time events and how they would play out. Paul was Jewish, and fully involved in the Jewish culture - of which the Hebrew wedding was a large part. By combining the prophecies with the words of our Jewish Messiah, he was able to clearly see how God would take care of his people, the remnant who fear Him, walk in His ways, and have the testimony fully established in their minds. After all, it's written in scripture.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Proverbs 14:26** In the fear of the LORD *there is* strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge.

Shalom Alecheim