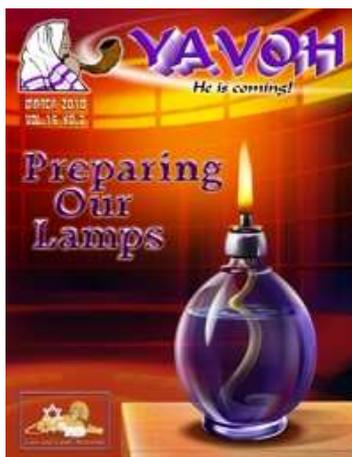


## Preparing Our Lamps



In last month's *YAVOH*, February 2010, we examined the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks. Instead of rendering the word "shavuim" as the number "sevens" as many do, we considered the possibility of it being a reference to the Feast of Weeks, thus "weeks." "Shavuim" is the masculine gender for the word we use for the holy day "Shavuot." We also looked at the entire prophecy as counting backward from the Messianic kingdom and laying out a sequence of events leading up to the kingdom. To quickly review, the entire prophecy illustrates the last seventy years leading up to the kingdom by counting the annual observance of Shavuot as years.

Daniel's prophecy specified that the Messiah would be "cut off" and Jerusalem destroyed, which are confirmed first century historical events. The actual 70 years began with a decree to restore Jerusalem "with plaza and moat," followed by 62 years, followed by seven years. Then, during the last seven years preceding the kingdom, the Abomination of Desolation occurs at the halfway point, bringing on the 3½ year Great Tribulation. The Lord then returns in the days immediately after the Tribulation to establish His kingdom.

The diagram presented [here](#) shows first the 70 years with the first 62 then seven years. The 70th year is the first year in the kingdom. The second time line highlights the last seven years showing the separation from the 62 years as a result of the agreement, war, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The first 3½ years deals with the return of the House of Israel to the land prior to the Abomination of Desolation. The last time line shows the 3½ year Great Tribulation lasting 1290 days.

What makes this interpretation so timely is that Israel completes 62 years as a state this May 2010. Shavuot this year could be the first Shavuot of the last seven. This means that the Great Tribulation could begin in February or March of 2013. The Messiah could be returning in the fall of 2016 to observe the first Shavuot of the kingdom in 2017.

The implications of this study are stunning. If we see the agreement to divide the land of Israel and Jerusalem this May, it will be the agreement prophesied

millennia ago by Daniel. If we see a regional war this spring or summer, it will be the war prophesied by Ezekiel and Joel. The end result would be God pouring out His Holy Spirit to prepare for the final seven years and the coming of the kingdom. We will be watching closely for this confirmation.

Let's catch our breath for a moment. If we are at the end of the ages and the final seven years are upon us, how should we prepare for the final years? What should we do?

When Yeshua told His disciples (and us) what would be the sign of the end of the ages and the sign of His coming, He specifically referenced Daniel's prophecy, but He didn't just speak about prophetic events. He knew that this would be a traumatic time for the world and for us and gave words of encouragement and offered some parables to prepare our hearts. In particular, He told a parable about ten virgins with lamps who were preparing for a wedding. Let's review this parable because its timeliness is directly applicable to these days.

*Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the prudent answered, saying, "No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered and said, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*

### **Matthew 25:1-13**

The parable is about preparing for the second coming of the Messiah (the Bridegroom). We know that the Messianic kingdom is the wedding of the Lamb and the marriage of the Messiah's bride. All of the virgins were scheduled to be part of the wedding with the Bridegroom, but only five made it to the wedding. Five were prepared while five failed to prepare in time.

Beyond the simple message of preparation we also hear about the lamps and oil for the lamps. Let's examine that imagery a bit further.

According to the ancient Hebrew wedding tradition, the bride and her attendants each carried a lamp to the wedding, and Yeshua's reference to these lamps in the parable confirms the tradition existed in His day.

If you have been a part of wedding preparation, you know that the wedding is the highest priority for the bride's family. The attendants are chosen by the bride primarily to have her best friends present on her biggest day. Being a bridesmaid is a high honor. Not only does this command their time but also their attire and attendance. Can you imagine for a moment that a bridesmaid is late for her friend's wedding? The offense would be so great that there would be no acceptable excuse for missing the wedding and the ceremony.

What does the lamp represent in this parable? According to the ancient tradition the lamp represents the Torah (the Word of God). This is consistent with Scripture.

*Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.*

**Psalms 119:105**

*For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light;*

**Proverbs 6:23a**

Yeshua may have chosen to give us this parable based on this Scripture from Proverbs:

*The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked goes out.*

**Proverbs 13:9**

All believers have the Word of God—in effect, they all have their lamps. We all look to the Scriptures as our guide for everyday life and for the proper understanding of the end-time events and the coming of the Lord. We have all been given the prophecies yet we sometimes lack the understanding of the Scriptures. This is where the oil for the lamp comes in.

The oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Just as the oil was the fuel for the lamp in the temple, so too the anointing of the Holy Spirit gives us

insight and understanding of the Scriptures and leads us into all truth, guiding us to see and hear the things of the Lord.

*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

**Romans 8:14**

*For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,...*

**I Corinthians 2:10,12**

The parable says that the wise virgins acquired the extra oil as part of their preparation, whereas the unwise didn't seek out extra oil. Remember, they all had lamps and some oil. When the midnight hour came, the unwise watched as the lamps immediately began to go out.

You are probably tempted to ask now: How do we get more oil for our lamps? Where is this extra flask of oil to be acquired? Before we answer that question let's complete the parable.

The midnight hour of the parable can be likened to the events in the middle of the last seven years when the Abomination of Desolation occurs and the world is thrown into the Great Tribulation. In those days, there is no time left to prepare. Those destined to live through the Great Tribulation and those who seek the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory must have the oil for their lamps from the beginning.

Having the oil (the Spirit) is a reference to having the understanding of the Great Tribulation. Yeshua warned that the events of the Great Tribulation were likened to the preparations for Noah's flood. Those who understood the warning were in the ark, but those who did not understand were outside. The oil that we acquire must include a much better understanding of the Great Tribulation and how to escape.

I have heard brethren say that they did not need to understand the prophecies of the Great Tribulation since they were not going to be there. They expect to be *raptured* up and away prior to the Tribulation. If that is so, then why didn't the Messiah say that? Maybe the five without oil thought that the bridegroom would come in the daytime and they would not need the extra oil for their lamps. It

concerns me when I see brethren not perceiving the key events that trigger the Great Tribulation nor the plan for how to escape, survive, and endure to the end. Most brethren have little to no understanding of the events leading to the Messiah's return. Fictional end-time prophecy books have misled them.

The parable also says that all of the virgins fell asleep because the bridegroom was delayed. I guess it makes sense that if it was midnight when he arrived, then sleep would overtake the waiting virgins. Putting it in today's context, this seems to speak to the anticipation that we have faced in this generation waiting for the Lord only to see it delayed longer. To a certain extent you could say that believers today are dull of hearing while waiting for the return of the Messiah.

Here is a question that could be asked today to measure the understanding of the end-time saints. What are we waiting to see when the abomination that makes desolate occurs? Yeshua referred to this specific prophecy given by Daniel. How many believers today have enough oil in their lamps to recognize those specific events, specifically shutting down the daily sacrifice on the altar and setting up of the image of the anti messiah? How many brethren anticipating the return of the Messiah know and understand these prophesied events?

The parable speaks of a great tragedy for the unwise virgins. They attempt to acquire the necessary oil (insight and understanding) only to be late in joining the wedding and the door has been closed.

*And later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered and said, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you."*

**Matthew 25:11-12**

The answer given by the bridegroom is very similar to a lesson taught by Yeshua earlier in His ministry.

*Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness [Torah-less]."*

**Matthew 7:21-23**

This suggests that part of the proper understanding of the end-time events is based in the Torah. The commandments are the light. Keeping the commandments is the difference between just having a lamp and having a lamp that produces light. Probably the best example of this is understanding God's escape plan for the believer in the Great Tribulation. It is modeled after the ancient exodus from Egypt. Since the name *Egypt* is "mitzrayim" in Hebrew, meaning "trials and tribulations," it follows that we will escape Egypt when we escape this world. Then we will be on a journey to the Promised Land (the Messianic kingdom). The lessons of the wilderness (the book of Numbers) are a guide to us at the end of the ages. This all goes back to the most profound of prophecies found in the Bible that in essence what happens to the fathers will happen to the descendants. Only by knowing the Torah, believing its words, and keeping its commandments will a person properly understand end-time events.

Let's return to comparing Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy with the present 2010. If the confirming events occur this spring (the agreement and the regional war) then we should be anticipating the outpouring of God's Spirit as He promised through the prophets Joel and Ezekiel. That would be incredible to experience; and quite honestly, we need that kind of strength and support from the Lord for the days ahead. Perhaps this is when we acquire the extra oil for our lamps. I have often said that we should prepare before the event, not at the event. Preparation is a process, not the event itself; therefore, God pouring out His Spirit 3½ years before the actual "midnight cry" of the Abomination of Desolation makes much more sense. Yet, how many of our brethren are going to understand that this is the time to secure the extra oil?

Yeshua taught another parable about the end times immediately after the parable of the ten virgins. It is like the first; however, it addresses the return of the Lord. It discusses what happens when the Master returns and what He has to say about our preparation for His return.

*For it [the coming of the kingdom] is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of*

*those slaves came and settled accounts with them. And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, "Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master." The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, "Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours." But his master answered and said to him, "You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

### **Matthew 25:14-30**

This parable speaks to all of us about receiving something of value that still belongs to the Lord. The question is what do we do with it. The first two slaves doubled their talents producing profit for the kingdom. The third, however, sought no profit for the kingdom.

The language of the third slave also hints at a disrespectful attitude toward the master. That slave knew his master's expectations, yet despite this failed to attain any benefit for him. Why ever did he take the one talent to begin with?

Most intriguing to me is when the master takes the remaining one talent and gives it to the one who had ten. Why did he get the single talent? Why didn't the master give it to the one who had four to make his total five?

I have asked the Lord about this and have discovered an interesting principle about the kingdom. It is one thing to become a champion of the faith, to stand upright and set a good example. We know we honor the Lord by this. A single strong testimony can break a stronghold and open up opportunities. But I have discovered when it concerns pure profit for the kingdom, the saint who can motivate and lead others saints accomplishes far more. This is why the Messiah speaks of greater reward for those who motivate others in the kingdom.

*Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

### **Matthew 5:19**

I believe the servant entrusted with five talents encouraged others to help him produce the additional five. Consequently, it makes sense for the master to award him an additional talent because he knows what to do with it and how to get others to help him.

The parable concludes in the same manner as the parable of the ten virgins—the negative results are devastating. At first this seems inconsistent with the merciful God we know and hope in, and it is, but one of the things we have been taught but don't quite understand is that the guilty will not go unpunished. We tend to ignore that there is a day of reckoning coming. Just as God judged the world previously by water, He will judge the world again—by fire.

The prophet Zephaniah only writes about God's final judgment. His chilling words are eerily similar to those that conclude the parable of the ten virgins and the talents. Consider them for a moment.

*"I will completely remove all things from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. "I will remove man and beast; I will remove the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, and the ruins along with the wicked; and I will cut off man from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. "So I will stretch out My hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests. And those who bow down on the housetops to the host*

*of heaven, and those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom, and those who have turned back from following the LORD, and those who have not sought the LORD or inquired of Him.”*

### **Zephaniah 1:2-6**

No one survives the Day of the Lord. Men don't survive; animals don't survive. How are we going to make it? Who can stand in the day of the wrath of the Lamb? These are the questions asked and answered in the book of Revelation. The answer given is the 144,000 and the tribulation saints are gathered with all of the resurrected saints to join the Messiah in Jerusalem. God's judgment will be upon those who called Him "Lord" insincerely during their lifetime. Interestingly, Zephaniah proclaims a particular judgment upon those who were lukewarm toward the Lord.

*“And it will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, ‘The LORD will not do good or evil!’”*

### **Zephaniah 1:12**

Perhaps we should ask ourselves, how do we react and respond to the knowledge of the Messiah's kingdom being established in seven years? How do we feel about the Great Tribulation starting in the winter of 2013? Do we go numb and say, "Whatever," or do we leap for joy, anticipating the coming kingdom and the end of this wretched world?

Perhaps we should ask ourselves whom we really believe in. I know all of us will testify of the Lord, but the real question is whom do we trust in *addition* to the Lord. Do you remember Zephaniah's criticism?

*And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven, and those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom, and those who have turned back from following the LORD, and those who have not sought the LORD or inquired of Him.*

### **Zephaniah 1:5-6**

Milcom was the idol god of the Ammonites. Amman is the capital of Jordan. The Ammonites were nearby neighbors of Israel. Who is our nearby neighbor that has a god that we trust in along with the Lord? Before you answer quickly and say you are not like them, you should take a private look at yourself and ask the Lord if you are making the same ancient mistake. Do you believe your fortune cookie? Do you check your horoscope? Are you still keeping Christmas and looking under the tree for blessings and telling your kids/grandkids about Santa Claus? Are you still hiding Easter Eggs? These are not idle things; these are idol things. There's no difference in God's eyes between these things and Milcom.

It would be prudent for us to prepare our hearts for the days ahead. We are quickly moving from God being longsuffering and offering His mercy to finding out how profound His justice and judgment are. We are fast approaching the days when God is going to deal with us all *face to face*.

*“As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. And I shall bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I shall enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord God. “And I shall make you pass under the rod, and I shall bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I shall bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord.*

### **Ezekiel 20:33-38**

Whether you realized it or not, Ezekiel's prophecy is about the last generation. It is about the ten virgins at the end of days. It is about those who received talents from their master and what they did with them. It is about those who will face the bridegroom and master. It is very clear that God's objective is not just about saving us but also establishing His kingdom with us.

I grew up in the American Midwest, born in Abilene, Kansas, the home of the original cowboys. We have an expression that sums up the Messiah's soon return in the days we live:

"There's a new sheriff coming to town." (It is time to clean up our act because He is going to lay down the Law (Torah)).

My friends, watch this springtime for an agreement to divide the land of Israel. Watch for the war that fulfills Ezekiel 38 and 39. Be prepared to receive God's outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is when we get the extra oil we need for our lamps. Be one of the wise ones ready for the wedding feast. Don't ignore these events. Let all that we do be profitable for the kingdom.

*And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.*

## **II Peter 1:19**

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