



**SIGNS
AND SECRETS
OF THE
MESSIAH**

**A FRESH LOOK AT THE
MIRACLES OF JESUS**



RABBI JASON SOBEL

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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Signs and Secrets of the Messiah

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To my wife, Miriam—your passion for the supernatural and pursuit of His Presence has been a continual source of inspiration. Thank you for being such a wonderful wife and woman of faith.

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INTRODUCTION

I don't know about you, but I'm always excited to be involved in miracles. Miracles show us that Jesus (His Hebrew name is *Yeshua*) is alive and working powerfully in this skeptical world. I've witnessed authentic miracles in my own life and in others' lives. Nothing will ignite one's life like a miracle.

Some years ago, I received a phone call from a homeless friend in New York City. Jeff told me he had been sleeping on the cold streets of Chinatown during a New York winter night. As a result, he developed a horrific case of frostbite in both legs. He had been admitted to the hospital at New York University with the threat of never walking again and possible amputation. He was petrified, so my friend John and I rushed to the hospital to be with him.

I had recently read the *Besorah*—the accounts of the good news (the Gospels) found in the New Testament. I had read the book of Acts, and deep inside my heart, I knew that the Lord created me for the “greater [works] than these” (John 14:12) that Jesus promised. Greater works are our inheritance. To do greater works is our birthright. The followers of Yeshua prayed for people, and their prayers made people whole two thousand years ago. Why not here? Why not now? Why not us? If not you, who will walk in the authority Jesus entrusted to us?

We walked into Jeff's hospital room, where he was lying in bed, downcast and troubled. A blanket of icy depression chilled the atmosphere. His legs and feet were swollen and blistery and were a gruesome blackish green in color. Not only that but he was in severe pain.

As I gazed down at him lying there, a wave of compassion washed over me that was coming from a Source bigger than me, yet from inside me. I knew Jesus had promised in Matthew 25:40 that what we do for the "least of these," we are doing for God Himself. In that moment, it felt as if Jesus was watching me, nudging me on. I smiled and looked into Jeff's eyes. "Jeff," I said, "I really believe that God can heal you! Do you mind if we pray for you?"

Of course, he agreed.

I laid hands on him, essentially saying what Peter said in Acts 3:6: "Silver and gold have I none. But what I have in the name of Yeshua, rise, take up your bed, and walk!"

Nothing appeared to change at that moment, so we visited for a while and then left. A few days later, I received a phone call from Jeff. He excitedly told me that the hospital was sending him home and that he would be walking out of the hospital. There was nothing wrong with his legs! I'm sure the doctors were astounded. It typically takes six months or longer to recover from severe frostbite, if you recover at all. It was an absolute miracle—there's no other way to describe it.

If we are Christians, walking in the supernatural should be natural for us. Since it is within God's power, it should be part of His people's healthy, day-to-day spiritual life. Here's the question: How many of you need a miracle in your own life, or in the life of someone you care about? Well, you can have them! God has been doing miracles from the beginning of time. He did them throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, and He will continue. He has never stopped. It's part of His character.

Greater Miracles

The Old Testament prophet Micah told us, “As in the days of your coming out from the land of Egypt I will show him wonders” (7:15). What’s significant in this verse is the idea that the miracles performed by the Messiah at the messianic redemption would be much greater and more numerous than the miracles performed by Moses. There were miracles in the past; there would be miracles in the future.

The purpose of this book is to help us see God’s miracles from the book of John in a fresh new way that increases our faith in them for our own lives. You’ll note that there are seven miracles in John’s gospel, but I’ve chosen nine miracles or mysteries to cover because I didn’t want to narrow Jesus’ journey to only seven miracles. Some stories I share from John are miraculous mysteries and secrets that give us many thought-provoking applications.

Signs, Miracles, and Secrets

The Bible says it’s the “glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to search it out” (Prov. 25:2). As children of the King, we are called to immerse ourselves in the wonder and mystery of God’s Word. The Bible is like a multifaceted diamond—its many sides contribute to its brilliance. There are many ways to read Bible text that are complementary and never contradictory. It’s not worthless but worthwhile to look at every word from many angles.

The Bible is also like the ocean—shallow enough for any child and deep enough that you can’t explore all of it. There are infinite layers to God’s Word. That’s what makes the Bible different from any other book written

by a human author. There's always some new mystery or secret to be uncovered. That's why the Bible needs to be read repeatedly. It's not boring and should create a sense of wonder that renews your mind and transforms you.

Deeper spiritual truths are often not obvious on the surface, but they can be found, and it's the glory of the King to seek them out and meditate on them. Jesus gave us an example in the road-to-Emmaus experience (Luke 24). The more we look at languages, make connections between Old and New Testaments, and consider the numeric connections, the more secrets and mysteries (deeper meaning in the Scriptures) are revealed.

When discussing hidden secrets or mysteries, we're not attempting to make new doctrines based on these. We're merely wanting to go deeper in our study to determine what God is saying and what it means to us.

Throughout these pages, we will explore the depths of Yeshua's miracles and secrets. We will study them and discover how they changed lives back then and how His miracles and secrets are changing lives today.

Before you begin untangling this book, there are a few things you need to know that will help you on your journey.¹

Hebrew and Greek by the Numbers: The Code of Creation

Most of the world's languages separate numbers from letters, but not Hebrew and Greek. Both languages use letters—their respective alphabets—for numbers. Each letter in the Hebrew and Greek alphabets has a numeric value.² Because of this, numbers can spell words, and words add up to numeric values. So both words and numbers are significant as we study the mysteries and secrets in the Bible. Let me share some common questions people have about biblical letters and numbers.

Why is it important to study the numbers? The Bible often uses numbers in patterns, and there is significance to many of these patterns. For example, the first word of Genesis 1:1 is *beresheet*, “in the beginning.” The first letter of *beresheet* is *bet*, which has a numeric value of 2. Why is it significant that the first letter in the Bible has a numeric value of 2? Because God created the world in twos. He created heaven and earth. He created light and dark. He created day and night. He created the sun and the moon. He created the sea and the dry ground. He created man and woman. The letter *bet* also represents blessing. Only when two opposites come together is God’s blessing fully released.

How can I study the Bible using numbers? Here’s an example of studying the significance of numbers in the Bible. The Lord told Moses to consecrate the Tabernacle for eight days. On each of the previous seven days, Moses erected the Tabernacle and took it down. But on the eighth day, the glory of God filled the Tabernacle after Moses and Aaron blessed the people (Lev. 9).

Why did the Lord choose the eighth day?

- 8 = the number of vestments worn by the high priest (Ex. 28)
- 8 = sprinklings of blood on *Yom Kippur* for atonement (Lev. 16:14–15)
- 8 = spices used in the Tabernacle, including the anointing oil and incense (Ex. 30:23–24, 34)
- 8 = instruments used by Levites, seven plus the voice of the choir³
- 8 = poles for carrying the holy vessels: the ark, the table, the golden altar, and the copper or brass altar (Ex. 25, 27, 39)

This repeated use of the number 8 created a consistency and pointed to the person and work of the Messiah. For example, Yeshua died and rose

from the dead on a Sunday, which is both the first day and the eighth day. The Messiah died on Friday, which is the sixth day. Like the Father, He rested on the seventh day after finishing the work of redemption. Then He rose on the eighth day. Can you see how studying words and numbers can help you connect the Testaments and go deeper in your Bible study?

Connections such as these make the study of the Bible's original words and their associated numbers fascinating and life-changing.

The Rabbis and Jewish Tradition

The Bible was written in a Jewish context. Jesus Himself was a Jew and a popular teacher of the Torah who was called “Rabbi” by the disciples and the crowds (Matt. 26:49; Mark 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; John 1:49; 20:16). Yet many Christians are unfamiliar with the Jewish interpretative tradition that forms part of the background for the New Testament. A better appreciation of this can lead to a richer understanding of both the Old and New Testaments.

The primary text of Judaism is the Old Testament (*Tanakh*), or the Hebrew Bible. The *Tanakh* has the same number of books as the Christian Bible's Old Testament, only they are arranged a bit differently. Much of the Hebrew Bible was handed down orally from generation to generation.

Jewish thought and Bible commentary are not a single or continuous tradition but rather a mixture of works from centuries of study. For several of the sources, the dating is even a mix of times. The writers reflected specific theological thoughts and historical positions. Also, many of the works were oral teachings that were later written.

What makes these works important is they represent Jewish thinking about the Bible and help us see things from different perspectives. These

diverse perspectives are critical as you learn to connect the Old Testament with the New Testament. As Lois Tverberg pointed out, the insights of sages and rabbis from long ago help us understand that “Jesus was taking part in a tradition known for generations before his time. This makes all the difference in the world in terms of painting the Jewish reality around him.”⁷⁴

In this book I reference several sources from many centuries of Jewish thought. These sources help us examine and understand the Jewish meaning of many passages and their connection to the Messiah and New Testament. Just as Christian pastors and teachers use multiple sources to explain Scripture, we are bringing together essential sources to study the Messiah.

Around AD 200, Jewish scholars compiled the *Mishnah*—written text describing and explaining the Jewish law code that was mostly oral before that time.

Later, the Talmud, a collection of teachings and commentaries on Jewish law, was created. The Talmud contains the *Mishnah* and other texts, plus biblical interpretations from thousands of rabbis. They finalized the first Talmud around the third century AD. The rabbis completed a second edition in the fifth century AD.

Midrash is a Jewish method of interpreting Scripture as well as a compilation of such interpretations, which were composed between AD 400 and 1200. The Hebrew term *Midrash* comes from the biblical verb *darash*, which means “to seek out” or “to inquire.” The rabbis were sensitive to the details in Scripture and therefore found meaning in every nuance of the text. For example, *Midrash* finds profound meaning and unique insights in words, letters, unusual spellings, phrases, missing letters, and so on. The rabbis, like good detectives, often questioned the text in pursuit of greater wisdom and truth. Midrashic insights never replace the literal meaning of the text but are intended to stand alongside it as an additional

layer that clarifies a question, solves an issue in the text, or makes a practical application to the reader's life.

Judaism embraces many other texts and commentaries written by rabbis over the centuries. This book uses these to help connect the Old Testament to the New Testament. Since many manuscripts were compilations, we don't know who the scholars were. For that reason, this book includes references to "the rabbis" or "Jewish tradition" without specific citations or notes. Also, if there is a citation, it may be unfamiliar to the reader. For example, Babylonian Talmud 51 may be an accurate citation, but with so many translations, it's difficult to pinpoint the exact volume. Extensive research has gone into this book, and these rabbinical resources are invaluable for us to understand the connection and the secrets and mysteries of our Messiah Yeshua.

The Tree of Life Version of the Bible

Most of the Scripture references in this book are from the Tree of Life Version of the Bible. The Tree of Life Version speaks with a decidedly Jewish-friendly voice—a voice like the Bible authors themselves—to recover the authentic context of the Scriptures and biblical faith. It was produced by messianic Jewish and Christian scholars who sought to highlight the rich Hebrew roots of the Christian faith. Since this translation restores the Jewish order and numbering of the books of the Old Testament, you may find that certain verse citations are one number off.

As we take this journey together, I pray God will lead you to new insights and breakthroughs and that He will reveal Himself to you with a sense of His presence and shalom.

THE SIGNS AND SECRETS OF TRANSFORMATION

All weddings are special occasions, but Jewish weddings are something to behold. There are some thirteen rituals during the traditional ceremony, ending with the celebratory dance called the *hora* as guests dance in a circle. At the same time, the bride and groom are seated on chairs and lifted into the air, waving handkerchiefs at the guests. As you can imagine, the blend of wine, food, Hebrew songs, and joy illuminates the atmosphere. I love officiating Jewish weddings because of all the festivities and emotions, but mainly because there's nothing like watching two single individuals become one in that holy moment. Barney Kasdan, rabbi at Kehilat Ariel Messianic Synagogue in San Diego, California, put it this way:

Of all the customs appointed by God, there is probably none more joyous than that of the Jewish wedding. It is one *simcha* (joyous

occasion) that you do not want to miss! Of course, it is joyful enough to just witness the covenant vows between a man and woman who love each other. When you add family and friends, food, music and dance, it is difficult to find a more exuberant celebration.¹

Messiah's first miracle occurred during a wedding, and it points to the abundance and blessing that come from our relationship with the Messiah Yeshua. His changing the water into wine was not merely a random act of kindness, as it may seem at first glance. God is sovereign over every seemingly insignificant detail, and the fact that this miracle involved wine and occurred at a Jewish wedding is highly significant.

A Miracle in the Month of Miracles

The Jewish calendar is primarily broken into twelve months, just like the standard or Gregorian calendar we all use. The month of *Nisan* is the first month on the Jewish calendar according to the Torah, the five books of Moses (Ex. 12:2). *Nisan* coincides with the months March and April on a standard calendar. The Torah calls this month *chodesh ha-aviv*, or the month of spring. The Hebrew root for the word *Nisan* comes from the Hebrew word for miracles, *nissim*.

Interestingly, the word *Nisan* begins with the Hebrew letter *nun* and ends with the letter *nun*. As one rabbi observed, “Two *nuns* denote *nisei nissim*: many, many miracles. In the era of *Mashiach* [Messiah], everyone will witness great wonders and miracles.”²

John chapter 2 supports that Yeshua did His first miracle of changing the water into wine in the month of *Nisan*. Then following that miracle, the Bible says, “After this *Yeshua* went down to Capernaum with His

mother, brothers, and disciples, and they stayed there a few days. The Jewish feast of Passover was near, so *Yeshua* went up to Jerusalem” (John 2:12–13). *Yeshua* went up to Jerusalem. Think about that for a moment. He attended the wedding and performed the miracle first. He did His first miracle at the beginning of the month of miracles, *Nisan*.

Why a Wedding?

John 2:1–3 tells us, “On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in the Galilee. *Yeshua’s* mother was there, and *Yeshua* and His disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, *Yeshua’s* mother said to Him, ‘They don’t have any wine!’”

At first *Yeshua* was reluctant to be involved. But He chose to help a couple save face, and also launch His ministry there with His first public miracle. To understand why He chose a wedding, we need to dig a bit deeper into God’s unique relationship with His people.

God’s Marriage to His People

We must begin by asking, Why was the first miracle done at a wedding? Throughout Scripture, God’s relationship with His people is often symbolized spiritually and prophetically, as God being married to His people. God is the groom. Israel is the bride. Ezekiel 16:8 says, “‘Again I passed by and saw you, and behold, you were truly at the time of love. I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you,’ says ADONAI. ‘So you became Mine.’”

Doesn’t this remind you of the covenant vows of marriage?

In medieval France and in North Africa, it was common for the groom to place his *tallit* [prayer shawl] over the bride's head to symbolize that he would shelter and protect her. The origin of this custom is found in Ruth's (3:9) words to Boaz, "Spread your robe over your handmaid, for you are a redeeming kinsman"; and, in fact, during the biblical era, such an act constituted a formal betrothal.³

Later, German Jews based this practice on a verse from Ezekiel (16:8): "Your time for love had arrived. So I spread my robe over you."⁴

Isaiah 62:4–5 keeps the same theme. The prophet wrote:

No longer will you be termed "Forsaken," no longer your land termed "Desolate." Instead you will be called, "My Delight is in Her" and your land, "Married." For ADONAI delights in you, and your land will be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you. As a bridegroom rejoices over a bride, so your God will rejoice over you.

Isaiah was prophesying about marriage to the land but also included God's marriage to His people, writing that He will rejoice over His people as a groom rejoices over his bride on his wedding day. What a beautiful image! I never can forget my own wedding, watching my stunning bride, Miriam, walking toward me. Our eyes were locked, and with each step she took closer to me, my heart rate increased. This is how Yeshua feels toward His bride—us.

God married Israel, but Israel committed spiritual adultery and became estranged from Him. That adultery, the pain of betrayal, broke His heart. Yet, with unfathomable love and faithfulness, the Lord God is constantly calling His bride back to Him (Isa. 54:5–8).

The marriage imagery of God to His people in the Old Testament is

evident in Yeshua's first miracle at a wedding. This miracle was a prophetic sign of the coming messianic wedding that we will celebrate with Yeshua, our Bridegroom, in the Kingdom. Yeshua, Israel's Bridegroom. It's symbolic of God saying, *I'm going to reward you and bring you to Me as My wife.*

This time, however, the bride is not just Israel. She may be first and foremost Israel, but not only Israel. The bride of Messiah will include Israel and the nations—one bride who joined themselves to the God of Israel, through Yeshua. Jew and Gentile become one in Messiah, just as Adam and Eve were created to be one.

Jesus the Bridegroom

The miracle at the wedding was officially the start of Yeshua's public ministry. God was beginning to fulfill the messianic promises, setting His redemption plan into motion. It makes sense that this miracle of abundance occurred at a wedding because Yeshua is the Bridegroom, and He was coming for His bride. The Gospel of John underscores this point:

John [the Baptist] answered, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah,' but rather, 'I am sent before Him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the best man rejoices when he stands and hears the bridegroom's voice. So now my joy is complete!" (3:27–29)

Why was John's joy complete? Because he was a humble man who knew what God had called him to do. John also knew it was Yeshua's voice that carried the message that is calling you and me into an intimate relationship with Him. Why is this important? Because it's the voice of Yeshua the Bridegroom that leads us to experience abundance and blessings.

Provision of Abundance and Blessing

Exodus 21:10 says, “If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights” (NIV). This verse points to the threefold biblical obligations of a husband to his wife—sustenance, clothing, and intimate relationship. These are the things God wants to provide for you when you’re married to Him. Ultimately, we will see how He fulfills these things in the messianic Kingdom through Yeshua in better and more intimate ways.

Hosea 2:19–20 says, “I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD” (NIV).

God wants to be your betrothed. Yeshua performed His first miracle at a wedding feast as a sneak preview of the ultimate wedding celebration, the messianic wedding supper of the Lamb, spoken of by the prophets and in the book of Revelation. Revelation 19:7–8 says, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people)” (NIV). The wedding in Cana of Galilee points spiritually and prophetically to the type of relationship He wants to have with us.

The Secret of the Third Day

The story of this miracle opens with the words, “*On the third day*, there was a wedding at Cana in the Galilee.” The third day of the week is significant in Jewish wedding traditions. In fact, there are three parts to the Jewish wedding: the *shiddukhin* (arrangements made before the legal

etrothal), *erusin* (the betrothal, also known as the period of *kiddushin*—a period of sanctification or being “set apart”), and *nissuin* (marriage).

Many Jewish people are married on the third day. If you are in Israel on the third day of the week, you’re going to see many weddings taking place. The reason it’s traditional is that the third day is the only day in the Creation account that God blessed twice. Doubly blessed, the third day of the week is Tuesday, and it’s considered an auspicious day for weddings because “God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:10, 12).

These weddings are often held outside in the evening, under the stars. The idea is to symbolize abundance and fruitfulness of your descendants, as God promised that Abraham’s descendants would be like the stars of the sky (Gen. 22:17). The Lord brought Abram out into the crisp desert night where the stars were shimmering like billions of diamonds against the blanket of a perfectly dark sky. Oh, what a sight that must have been—no city lights to dim the view! “Look up now, at the sky, and count the stars—if you are able to count them.’ Then He said to him, ‘So shall your seed be’” (Gen. 15:5). Those descendants would eventually be from the seed of Yeshua, which includes you and me!

How does this miracle of abundance come? It comes from a relationship with the Messiah, the Bridegroom. He wants you to be doubly blessed. He wants to give you the double portion. He did his first miracle on the third day, which is a day that’s doubly good.

The third day is not only connected to double blessing and abundance. It’s also connected to revelation at Mount Sinai, where there were three days of preparation to meet God (Ex. 19:15–17).

On the third day, when God revealed Himself as the Bridegroom at Mount Sinai, He came down and gave the Children of Israel the Ten Commandments and ultimately the Torah. This event was a wedding. God married His people on Mount Sinai on the third day.

There's a canopy called a *huppah* at a traditional Jewish wedding. The covering of the canopy is held up by four poles, like a four-post canopy bed. These covers might be quilted and decorated with Jewish symbols like Stars of David or other Judaica art such as a burning bush or olive tree. Often, it is a large prayer shawl, a family *tallit*, or even a family-heirloom tablecloth. The couple stands under the *huppah*, which symbolizes that they're standing under God. He is their covering and the foundation of their family. When God appeared at Mount Sinai, thick clouds hovered over the mountain. The somewhat sagging middle of the *huppah* reminds us of the clouds over Sinai. The image of the bride and groom standing under the *huppah* is also a picture of Israel standing under cloud cover at Mount Sinai.

Moses was a matchmaker. He led the people to Mount Sinai as the bride is led to the groom in the wedding ceremony. A Jewish wedding features a *ketubah*, the wedding contract with the stipulations for the covenant relationship. The Ten Commandments were the *ketubah* for Israel and God.

Also, at the Jewish wedding, the bride circles the groom either three or seven times while he stands under the *huppah*. For the bride, that circling represents that the groom has become the center of her life and world. The deeper symbolism of the bride going around the groom is that God needs to be the one around whom our lives revolve. This is what the Lord was asking of Israel at Sinai and still desires and expects from each of us.

The Commandment Connection

We can't overlook the connection of the Ten Commandments to a wedding and subsequent marriage. After the three days of preparation

on Mount Sinai, God gave the Ten Commandments written by His finger on two tablets of stone. The first tablet contained the commandments between God and man (we are to love the Lord our God). The second one held the commandments between man and man (we are to love our neighbor). Every commandment on the first tablet has a corresponding commandment on the second tablet. Numerically, there's a connection between one and six, and two and seven, three and eight, and so forth. Consider commandments two and seven. The second commandment is "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3). It pertains to our relationship with God—we shall have no other gods. The seventh commandment is on the second tablet, "Do not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). These two commandments connect because both relationships are built on trust and mutual commitment. If a person remains faithful to God, they will likely remain faithful to their spouse. If a person commits spiritual adultery, they are more susceptible to marital infidelity.

Suppose a person does not maintain fidelity to their spouse. In that case, they begin going down a slippery road of idolatry—they have an idol in their life. Idolatry is the equivalent of spiritual adultery. Unfaithfulness violates the covenant relationship—the marriage relationship we have with our spouse is built on, modeled after, and founded on the covenant relationship God establishes with us. After all, He is the husband, and we are the bride. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). Divorce results in broken relationships that shatter people's lives. However, God can bring healing.

God unconditionally loves Israel even in their adultery! He's forever calling them back. It's the same love Yeshua embodies as He calls His bride, the church, back to Him. This kind of love is connected to the number 3, which in Jewish numerical thought means redemption, restoration, and resurrection (Hos. 6:2).

This leads us back to Yeshua's wedding miracle. Changing the water to wine on the third day points to Yeshua's resurrection on the third day after His crucifixion. It's on the third day that Yeshua restores us. Subsequently, the first miracle in the book of John connects to the last miracle in the book of John, which is the resurrection. And Yeshua's resurrection ultimately brings us to that greater intimacy with Him.

Why Is Changing the Water into Wine Jesus' First Miracle?

The changing of water to wine connects to an earlier supernatural sign in the book of Exodus:

This is what ADONAI says: "By this you will know that I am ADONAI. Behold, I will strike the waters that are in the river with the staff that is in my hand, and they will be turned to blood. The fish that are in the river will die, the river will become foul, and the Egyptians will hate to drink water from the Nile." (Ex. 7:17-18)

Yeshua's first miracle of turning the water into wine showed that He was greater than Moses. This comparison is one of the major themes of the book of John. It shows that Yeshua is the promised messianic Prophet, the second Redeemer, like Moses.

Two things made Moses unique. First, he knew God "face to face" (Deut. 34:10-12) and met Him personally. The Gospel of John begins with "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was face-to-face with God" (author's paraphrase). No one has seen God at any time (John 1:18), but the One who is in the bosom of the Father has made Him known.

John went on to write, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled [dwelled] among us. We looked upon His glory, the glory of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The apostle John was showing that Yeshua has an even greater relationship with the Father than Moses did.

Second, Moses was unique in the signs and wonders he performed. Yes, Moses turned water into blood, but Yeshua turned water into wine because He came so that we could have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

Wine: The Sign and Symbol of the Messianic Kingdom

Let’s look at what else wine symbolizes in the Old Testament. The rabbis tell us that the following passage from Genesis is speaking about the Messiah:

The scepter will not pass from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs will come. To him will be the obedience of the peoples. Binding his foal to the vine, his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine, and in the blood of grapes his robe. His eyes are darker than wine, and teeth that are whiter than milk. (49:10–12)

This verse gives us a vivid picture of Him washing His garments in wine, a symbol of abundance (Amos 9:11).

Jewish holidays and life events are celebrated with wine. This was certainly the case in my home growing up. It was common to have what is called a *kiddush*, a blessing or toast recited over wine before meals on *Shabbat*, holidays, and special occasions such as weddings. In Jewish thought, wine symbolizes joy and abundance. Yeshua’s first miracle

provided joy and points to the blessing of plenty. This is where He wants us to live—because Yeshua brought kingdom blessing to earth. He died on the cross, giving us restoration, hope, and abundance.

Wine and the Garden of Eden

Traditionally, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has been thought of as the apple tree. The idea came from the Song of Solomon. But many rabbis associate the tree with grapes and wine. No other fruit causes as many problems and heartaches as grapes, which are used to make wine. People can drink too much wine and become intoxicated. Rabbis believe that after Noah left the ark, he planted a vineyard to correct the sin of Adam and Eve for eating the forbidden fruit. But Noah failed and gave in to his physical urges and got drunk. It is like a second fall of man, from a biblical and rabbinical understanding of the text.⁵

Wine and God's Design

Another reason wine is so symbolic of the Kingdom and the Messiah and is featured at Jewish weddings, *Shabbat* (Sabbath), and holidays is because wine is an allusion to God's original design and plan for humanity. God designed us to become wiser and better with time, like good wine. As the wine matures, its texture, quality, taste, richness, and depth only improve. Each time we drink it, we can reflect on the Garden of Eden and God's original intention for humanity. Wine also points to the promise that is coming—a day when the Kingdom will be a reality and death will be no more. We will live forever and, like wine, only mature and become finer with time. Wine represents unlimited potential for blessing, growth, and life. According to the prophet Micah, the symbol of the Kingdom's

prosperity and peace is each man sitting under his vine and under his fig tree, “with no one causing terror, for the mouth of *ADONAI-Tzva’ot* [Lord of Hosts] has spoken” (Mic. 4:4). We also find this truth stated in the writings of Zechariah (3:10). Again, we see how wine that comes from the vine points to the messianic Kingdom and to abundance and prosperity.

Wine is a perfect symbol of eternal life because almost every other food decays and worsens over time. Bread gets stale, fruit rots, and, unless it’s aged correctly, meat decays. But wine gets better, pointing to the divine design. God wants you to live out of abundance. He’s called you to abundant life (John 10:10).

Living the Abundant Life

Living the John 10:10 life is an extraordinary adventure with the Lord. Deuteronomy 30:19 reminds us that we can choose “between life and death, between blessings and curses . . . Oh, that you would choose life!” (NLT). Yeshua made what some call a “holy interruption.” He came. We need to live each day with an attitude of blessing, abundance, and joy. Are you willing to receive the life Yeshua came to give you? You can have it. Abundant life is yours to receive. Just as the wedding guests received the best wine, you can receive the best, most abundant life. How? Keep reading, and let’s find out.

Abundant Faith and Trust

Let’s continue with the story of this miracle in John 2:

On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in the Galilee. *Yeshua’s* mother was there, and *Yeshua* and His disciples were also invited to the

wedding. When the wine ran out, *Yeshua's* mother said to Him, "They don't have any wine!" *Yeshua* said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with you and Me? My hour hasn't come yet." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." (vv. 1-5)

Mary (Miriam, in Hebrew) approached *Yeshua* in faith. She came to Him expecting that He would act on her behalf. *Yeshua* said, essentially, "Mom, what does this have to do with Me? My hour hasn't arrived." He was telling her it wasn't time for Him to reveal His divine messianic identity and mission. But His mom wouldn't take no for an answer. He was a good Jewish boy, and Jewish boys and their moms have special connections. *Yeshua* may have remembered the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and mother."

Notice that the miracle didn't happen until the wine ran out. Can you imagine how humiliated and embarrassed the bride's parents must have been? They were responsible for providing for the wedding guests, and they had fallen woefully short. This was a serious miscalculation. The pots were empty, putting a significant kink in the celebration. "How could we let this happen?" they must have been saying. We can tell how concerned Mary was when she saw what was happening. "They don't have any wine!" she exclaimed to *Yeshua*. The implication was, "Do something!" The wedding planners were in crisis mode. Many times in our lives, we come to a point where there's nothing left. We're emotionally, physically, and monetarily dried up. Often, it's because we've messed up, or someone else has, and it's affecting us. There's been a significant miscalculation in life. When we hit bottom and things dry up, we tend to panic. *I messed up. How could this happen? What am I going to do now? How am I going to make it?* But we need not fear, because God is in control. In fact, He often waits for everything in our lives to run out. I know

that sounds harsh, but God allows our own resources to run out so we will run to Him, and He can move us from fear to faith.

There have been many times when our ministry, Fusion Global, has been down financially and we didn't know how we would stay afloat. We are dependent on gifts from people to support what we do. I remember times when I was tempted to freak out, yet God's grace empowered us to stay steady and trust Him for provision. And He's always provided, sometimes in miraculous ways. One time, God called us to be part of a large stadium event in Detroit. We didn't have the money to go, but God said to our spirits, *Go anyway*. We spent \$5,000 to get there. It was a complete leap of faith. While we were there, we met a new friend who was led by the Lord to support us. Without knowing what we spent, she gave us a \$5,000 check. Her generosity was a sign of God's faithfulness. God says, *I'll provide; just trust Me, and don't live from the place of fear.*

When everything is running out and life is going crazy, the question is, Are you going to choose to see God in it and believe Him for the good? Or are you going to choose to be like Chicken Little and run around like the sky is falling? Faith is about sight, and God wants you to see differently. Helen Keller said, "The worst thing in the world is not to be born blind, but to be born with sight, and yet have no vision."⁶

There is a subtle difference between faith and trust. Faith believes God exists and oversees all Creation, guiding us with His providential hand. Alternatively, trust is acting on our faith. It's stepping out with the confidence that God's got our backs and will provide when we need Him to. It's moving forward knowing He will make a way where there seems to be no way. Trust is faith in action. Mary had both faith and trust when she asked her Son to help at the wedding. If you want to live from a place of abundance, you'll need both. Author and pastor William Barclay wrote, "In every life come periods of darkness when we do not

see the way. In every life come things which are such that we do not see why they came or any meaning in them. Happy are those who in such a case still trust even when they cannot understand.”⁷

Abundant Obedience

In God’s terms, living in abundance is living in obedience. Mary told the servants, “Do whatever He tells you” (John 2:5). In our culture, obedience has become negative and unsatisfying, while cynicism and unbelief are seen as cool. Unfortunately, the current culture has it wrong. To disobey God dismisses the blessing. It goes back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve disbelieved, and it led to their disobedience. They ate from the tree, and they were dismissed from the Garden and all its blessings. Belief and trust lead to abundance. It’s simple: do what God says in His Word. Don’t delay. If you wait or procrastinate on what God tells you to do, you’re being disobedient, plain and simple. Author Jessica LaGrone wrote, “In India, children are taught, ‘Slow obedience is no obedience.’”⁸

Abundant *Chutzpah*

Chutzpah is a Yiddish word that means “nerve”⁹ or “holy audacity.” I can just picture a stout Jewish woman in 1940s Germany with her hands planted firmly on her hips saying, “Rubbish!” when replying to orders from Nazi soldiers. Corrie ten Boom showed *chutzpah* when she hid Jews in her home during the Holocaust. But it’s more than holy backbone. Mary, when saying, “Do whatever He tells you,” taught us that we cannot accomplish anything great without faith and *chutzpah*.

There’s a good aspect and a bad aspect to *chutzpah*. The bad is stubbornly refusing to let go of your own plan; yet, if you’re going to do

anything extraordinary for God, you must have shameless boldness and obedience. You need *chutzpah*. It is the antithesis to and the antidote for fear. An audacious spiritual nerve in the best sense, *chutzpah* is about having the faith to stand firm when necessary and to move forward and take risks for God when led. Mary wasn't going to take no for an answer when she talked to Jesus at the wedding in Cana. She was willing to risk everything because of her faith. Faith is spelled R-I-S-K. Having faith will embolden us to take risks.

Yeshua is one of the greatest examples of holy *chutzpah*. At the end of John 2, we read about how He went into the Temple and overturned the tables of the money changers. That took *chutzpah*. If we're going to do extraordinary things for God, we can't be passive. We can't be timid, fearful, or intimidated. Moses told the people to choose which way they wanted to live (Deut. 30:19). I choose to nurture this characteristic because I know that I can never fully serve God or walk in my destiny apart from holy *chutzpah*.

Habakkuk 2:4 reminds us, "the righteous one will live by his faith" (NASB). God is looking for people who in the difficult times are willing to stand with an abundance of *chutzpah* that is rooted in faith and trust, and who won't take no for an answer. What about you? Do you need a shot of *chutzpah*?

The Secret of the Six Stone Pots

When reading about this miracle in John's gospel, we need to be alert to its symbolism, which provides deeper messianic secrets to explore. These symbols offer a broader understanding of what God wants us to know, directly impacting our faith and life as believers in Messiah. The stone

pots at the Cana wedding are a profound example of this, especially that there were six of them. In Jewish thought,

- Six is the number of creation. God worked for six days, then rested on the seventh.
- Six is the number of man. God created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, on the sixth day of creation.
- Man fell on the sixth day; he ate from the tree on the sixth day.

Yeshua's first miracle involved six stone pots because He came as both the Second Adam¹⁰ and the Savior. Since the Fall happened on the sixth day, the Messiah died on the sixth day, which on the Hebrew calendar is Friday. What makes Good Friday so good is that the Messiah came to restore what we lost in Eden. Not only did the Messiah die on the sixth day, He was also on the cross for six hours and was even pierced in six places:

- His head was pierced with a crown of thorns (John 19:2).
- His side was pierced (John 19:32–35).
- His two hands were pierced (fulfilling Psalm 22:16).
- His two feet were pierced (fulfilling Psalm 22:16).

The Sign of Restoring the Connection

The significance of the number 6 goes even further. The letter *vav* [ו] is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It's written in the shape of a man and is the most used letter in the Torah. Nearly every verse in the Torah begins with a *vav* since it connects one verse to another. In Genesis 1:1, the sixth Hebrew word begins with a *vav*—connecting heaven and

(*vav*) earth. When we sinned, we broke the connection between heaven and earth. Yeshua came to restore the connection between heaven and earth. He died on the cross to restore that connection, so abundance and blessing can flow into our lives in greater measure once again.

There's yet another connection with the number 6 we should consider. This connection is not a restoration but a look forward. The rabbis teach us it is "the wine that has been preserved in its grapes since the six days of creation."¹¹ There's good wine in the grapes that come from the Garden of Eden and from the six days of Creation. The six stone pots point to the wine that has been preserved since those six days of Creation. Yeshua was giving the guests at the wedding at Cana a taste of the marriage supper of the Lamb, when the good wine would be served. It was a sneak preview of the abundant life to come.

New Old Wine

Another integral part of this miracle is that Yeshua created a curious combination: new old wine. The wine was brand-new but tasted old. This shows that God can take something that is new and supernaturally mature it. He did it to wine, and He can do it to you, giving depth and ability beyond your years of knowledge, experience, and skill. It's supernatural maturation. But the combination of new and old is also symbolic of the Kingdom. It's symbolic of Jew and Gentile coming together. Yeshua said, "Every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13:52 NKJV).

Hidden treasures are both old and new. If you rummage through your storage room or closet, you'll likely find that you have new and old items you treasure. What we often miss is the blessing when we bring

both together. Maybe an old Bible with a new commentary. Or, more importantly, the truths of the Old Testament brought together with the truth of the New Testament. Spiritual truth is the greatest treasure because it transforms us and our relationship with the Lord. Seeing these connections between the Old and the New renews and strengthens our faith and gives us a sense of wonder and deeper love for God's Word. The miracle of the new old wine points to the incredible things that happen when new and old are joined.

Expect the Unexpected

This miracle of water into wine illustrates that God wants to show up in counterintuitive ways. We need to expect the unexpected. He transformed the water into wine partly because water is ordinary and wine is extraordinary. Turning the water into wine reflects the promise that God takes the ordinary and turns it into something extraordinary. He's a God who wants to bless us. He wants us to live in abundance. It's an extraordinary transformation that we can personally experience. That's why 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that if any are in the Messiah, they are a new creation. The old has gone, and the new is here. The old is passing away, and the new, the extraordinary life of abundance, is coming.

God doesn't want you to live out of the lack. He wants you to live out of the overflow. Make no mistake: His blessings are abundant and extravagant. "They filled them [the pots] to the brim" (John 2:7 NIV). God wants you to live life to the brim. He wants you to overflow with blessing and abundance. But it takes faith, trust, obedience, and *chutzpah*. Think about this for a moment. Those stone pots were heavy! Each one held around twenty gallons. The servants had to lug them outside to the

water source and fill them up, which took time. I can picture the servants mumbling to each other, “This is nuts. What are we doing? The guests don’t want water. They want wine. They are expecting wine.” Yet they did it. Think of the obedience that took, simply at Yeshua’s word, as Mary told them. “Do whatever He tells you.” She expected a miracle. When you walk in obedience, no matter how unreasonable it may seem at times, you live in the overflow and can expect miracles. Expect that the best is yet to come. This is one of the secrets to living the abundant life.

THE SIGNS AND SECRETS OF PURIFICATION

I love Passover. It's foundational to every part of Jewish life. What's interesting is that the remembrance of the miracle of the exodus from Egypt is the foundation of all Jewish holidays, and who doesn't love a good holiday celebrating miracles?

We've established that *Nisan* is the Hebrew month of miracles. It is also the month of the Passover, in which God delivered the Children of Israel out of Egypt. During the Passover season, it's rewarding to look at some of the miracles and mysteries of the Messiah. These are not all obvious miracles, but they have signs and mysteries connected to them that prompt the supernatural in our own lives.

The Process of Transformation

The miracle of turning water into wine was the first sign of Yeshua (John 2:1–12). It was a miracle of blessing, abundance, and transformation.

God transformed something ordinary into something extraordinary, just as He does with us when He touches our lives and transforms us into new creations. We are turned from water into wine. The old passes away, and the new comes. However, this transformation is not a one-and-done thing but rather a lifetime process of becoming. Personally, I am being transformed daily from something ordinary into something extraordinary. The old is passing away, and the new is coming into my life. I'm excited as I witness the things God is doing in me. And I'm convinced He wants to do it in your life too.

A key aspect of transformation is purification. There is a purging of the old to usher in the new you. Purification, as a part of transformation, leads to freedom.

God redeemed the Children of Israel out of Egypt at Passover, and the miracle of water into wine took place around Passover. Passover is about redemption, but redemption is not complete without transformation and purification. God brought Israel out of Egypt, but He had to take Egypt out of Israel. This purging is what leads to true freedom. Therefore, we see Yeshua in John 2 purging the Temple in Jerusalem.

Overturning the Tables

Near Passover Jesus went to Jerusalem. John 2:14–16 tells us:

In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money

changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!" (NLT)

As we stated earlier, Yeshua showed some *chutzpah* here. We must ask, Why did He drive out the money changers, right after He performed the miracle of the water into wine, as His second public act? What is the spiritual meaning and significance? The key to understanding all this is remembering that the context is Passover, a holiday known as *Zman Cheiruteinu* in Hebrew. *Zman* means "time," and *Cheiruteinu* means "freedom"; it is the "time of our freedom." God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and say, "Let My people go, so *they may serve Me*" (Ex. 7:16, 26; 9:1, 13; 10:3, emphasis mine). God's not out to get you but to free you. Freedom, however, leads to serving Him. If you are in bondage, you will never serve the Lord and fulfill your divine purpose. Ask yourself: In what way am I choosing to live in slavery (former sins, addiction, unforgiveness, etc.)? And why?

We are called to worship and serve God, but it must be done in purity. We need to be purified. That's part of the process—redemption is supplied, but then it must be applied through the sanctification, purification, and the purging of the old nature of the old man. During some of my most difficult seasons, when my calling seemed to be delayed and it looked like it would never happen, God worked on many levels. One was purging Jason of Jason. We can fall into the trap of pride, or remain fearful, but God works in and through us. Remember, delays are not denials. They usually mean God is working on something in us or preparing the way for our destiny.

Removing the Leaven

Another way to say this is that we are removing the leaven from our lives. Often Scripture uses leaven, or the rising agent in bread, as a symbol of sin. It's critical to our understanding of the Passover, especially the tradition in which all leaven is removed from Jewish homes. It's also a key to grasping why Yeshua overturned the money changers' tables when He was in Jerusalem celebrating Passover. The Scriptures declare, "For seven days you are to eat *matzot* [unleavened bread], but on the first day you must remove *hametz* [leaven or foods containing leaven] from your houses, for whoever eats *hametz* from the first day until the seventh day, that soul will be cut off from Israel" (Ex. 12:15). The first day of this holiday with unleavened bread is Passover, but the rest of the seven-day period is called *Chag HaMatzot*, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There was no leaven found in the Children of Israel's houses, which is true even today.

For several days or weeks before the Passover, the Orthodox Jewish family begins to clean the house from top to bottom. Every crevice and corner is vacuumed and cleaned to make sure the *hametz* is removed. They open every book and ensure there are no bread crumbs in it. They move every pillow on the couch, search their car, and check their cupboards. There is an intricate process, known as *kashering* or "koshering," to make the home kosher and fit for Passover. Some people use separate dishes and flatware that have never had leaven on them, and I've even taken a blowtorch to metal pans! They must clean the counters thoroughly, maybe with boiling water or an iron, or some people cover their counters with aluminum foil. This is an elaborate operation that is the primary preparation for Passover.¹

It also means removing all products that contain leavening agents.

The evening before Passover begins, the parents hide about ten pieces of leaven in the home. The children take a wooden spoon (miniature dustpan), a feather (tiny broom), a napkin, and either a candle (from an ancient Jewish custom) or a flashlight, and they search for the leaven in the home.² The next day it is traditional to burn all the leaven in the morning. We also speak the phrase “All the *hametz*, all the leaven, and leavened bread in my possession, which I have not seen and do not remove, as well as any that I am not aware of, is null and ownerless as the dust of the earth.”

The biblical holidays are not meant to be rote, mindless rituals. Rather, the Jewish people embrace these annual rhythms as opportunities to not only worship God but to do so as a family. These “appointed times” (Lev. 23:1–4) are also memorable ones!

One of my favorite traditions involves the search for ten pieces of leavened bread that I mentioned earlier. These pieces of leaven are hidden around the home for the kids to find. As they search from room to room, we usually help them by telling them they are “hot” or “cold.”

During one memorable experience, my kids were searching for an unusually long time. No leavened bread could be found. After they complained, I decided to check a few spots where we hid the bread. I knew I was good at hiding things but not *that* good. Having pored over the entire house, I finally discovered that we weren’t the only ones searching for the hidden unleavened bread. Another party had discovered it before us (and enjoyed it immensely): our golden retriever, Sammy!

While that was a funny experience, these traditions exist to remind us of something quite important. We need to remember that the preparation for Passover connects directly with what Yeshua did with the money changers in the Temple. Understanding the tradition of removing the leaven from the home and the process that accompanies it is important

because it helps us understand that Yeshua overturned the tables of the money changers as a faithful Son to cleanse His Father's house, the Temple, in preparation for the Passover.

What are the reasons for the elaborate spring cleaning and the removal of the leaven? First, it reminds us that the Israelites left Egypt in great haste, and they ate unleavened bread (Ex. 12:33–34). We eat it to remind us of the speedy redemption. It is known as the bread of redemption or the bread of affliction because it reminds us of slavery in Egypt. It's broken, which reminds us of the cruelty and harsh labor we endured in Egypt.

Second, leaven is also symbolic of sin in the Bible and Jewish tradition. “‘Watch out,’ *Yeshua* said to them, ‘and beware of the *hametz* [leaven] of the Pharisees and Sadducees’” (Matt. 16:6). Rabbi Alexandri, a famous rabbi, would end his prayers with the following supplication: “Master of the Universe, You know full well that it is our desire to act according to Your will, but what prevents us? The yeast in the dough.”³ In Jewish mystical traditions, man's evil inclination, his sin nature, is called the leaven in the dough. Just as yeast is put in the dough and makes it ferment and become *hametz*, or leavened, the evil inclination in man is what entices and puffs us up to sin. In Jewish thought, *hametz* symbolizes the evil inclination.

The blessed and holy One said,

All those years a foreign nation, Egypt, enslaved you, and forces of Egypt controlled you. Now, though, you are free, for I have lifted you from the bondage. When the Torah states, Remove the leaven from your home, you should not eat anything that is leaven, and leaven shall not be seen in your possession—it hints that Pesach [the Paschal Lamb] matzah stand for freedom from the forces of evil [the world, the flesh, Satan] which hametz symbolize.⁴

That is why Passover is the festival of redemption and freedom, when we carefully seek to rid ourselves of the *hametz* and evil inclination. Specifically, *hametz* is associated with three sins: jealousy, the thirst for physical pleasures, and the hunger for honor. We want to be the *matzah*, not the *hametz*. To purge the leaven of idols and false religious beliefs—the lies we believe about God, others, and ourselves. The word *pharaoh* means “mouth of evil.”⁵ We were enslaved in Egypt by evil speech, and part of freedom is coming out of agreement with these lies, false beliefs, and idols that we’ve made substitutes for God. God wants to rid us of all these things. He wants to purify us and purge these things from us, not wanting us to live with the leaven.

Burning the Leaven

There are two aspects of Passover. The first is called Passover, commemorating how the Lord spared the Children of Israel from the death of the firstborn, and the other is the companion seven-day feast, the Feast of Matzah, in which we are removing the leaven, being transformed as we remove all those unhealthy things from our lives. We are coming out from under the power of the pharaoh of the world, the flesh, and the devil. *Egypt* for us stands for a place of gross materialism in perverted form, symbolized by the leaven. When we break down the Hebrew word for Passover, *Pesach*, into two words, *pes* means “annulment,” and *chet* is “sin.” It is the removal of sin. We see this removal in the burning of the leaven, which represents the removal of sin not just from the Temple but from our lives.

On the morning before Passover, the family—or just the children—searches the house for leaven that has been hidden. When it is all

discovered, it's stored in a safe place. A special fire is made to burn the leaven, accompanied by a special blessing.⁶

When we consider this miracle of purification Yeshua performed in John 2, we must remember that He did it again. He cleared the Temple twice. Yeshua bookends His ministry with acts of removing the spiritual leaven from His Father's house in preparation for the Passover. Yeshua's first recorded public act is in John 2 when He purified the Temple. In Matthew 21 He did the same thing, after riding into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday. He purified His Father's house before the last Passover He celebrated on the earth—the Seder (Passover meal) with His disciples—overturning the tables of the money changers a second time. Yeshua comes to bring the fire that burns leaven from our lives.

Yeshua said the rejection of Him would lead to the destruction of God's house, and it would be destroyed by fire. It is the fire that brings judgment. It is the fire of purification. The fire that burns the leaven. Those who refuse Yeshua will receive judgment for the sin in their lives. And even for believers, to the degree that the leaven is not removed in our lives, at the time of the ultimate fulfillment of Passover, the coming of the Messiah, the leaven that is left will be burned. Leaven in your life must be burned. This is not a fire unto salvation but rather tests the quality of how believers have lived their lives. Paul spoke about our works being burned up like stubble, and his comment has nothing to do with our salvation. Our reward is determined by the quality of our works.

The apostle and rabbi Paul wrote:

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work—what sort it is. If anyone's work built on

the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss—he himself will be saved, but as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:12–15)

Our personal Egypts are not merely punishment for disobedience. Exile is part of the process of redemption that leads to new creation and transformation.

King Josiah and the Passover Revival

We find this concept of removing idolatry and false religious beliefs in 2 Kings 22–24. Some sages point to the story of King Josiah as reason to associate the removal of leaven with the destruction of idols and false religious beliefs (2 Kings 23:21–25).

Josiah was one of the most memorable revival kings of Israel. The Scriptures say that no king like him has arisen since. Josiah did more than bring back the God-ordained Passover holiday. He brought revival to Jerusalem at Passover by removing the idols and false beliefs. We all have things in our lives that keep us enslaved in Egypt that must be purged and released. When they are, it brings personal revival and freedom.

I once had a dream that the Holy Spirit took me to my closet and told me to remove all the clothes, and every time I reached for something, I didn't want to get rid of it. Every piece had special memories associated with it—what I wore for my wedding or what I wore when my son was born. I didn't want to let go. The Lord said, *Jason, I want to give you a new wardrobe. I want to give you an upgrade. But if you want to wear these old clothes, you can't also wear the new ones.* I realized the old clothes represented my old hurts, old ways of seeing, old ways of being,

unhealthy relationships, and the unhealthy things from the past that I hung on to. Those clothes weren't going to look good on me—they didn't fit me anymore, and they were out of style. I needed to eliminate the old to make room for the new. I realized there must be displacement before replacement and purging before the promise of the new can come. God said I needed to clean my closet, which is like cleaning the house of the leaven—searching for and removing the leaven of idols, addictions, impurities, unhealthy relationships, and sin from our lives. Removing leaven at Passover reminds us of the need to fight against the influence and control of the world, the flesh, and the devil in our lives and those secret sins and addictions we all have.

The punishment for not removing the leaven during Passover is being cut off, which makes sense because sin separates us and cuts us off from God and His blessings. Scripture teaches us that the soul that sins dies and that our sins have created a barrier between us and the Lord (Isa. 59:1–2). Sin creates barriers and blocks the blessing. All of us have some leaven in our lives, and we need to be more concerned about removing that leaven than pointing out the leaven in others.

The Sign of Preparing His Father's House

As I mentioned earlier, Yeshua performed the cleansing of the Temple during Passover in John 2, which is the time of freedom, redemption, and purification. This act points to His identity and authority as the Son of God. Every good Jewish child's responsibility is to help his parents, especially his father, prepare the house for Passover. As a kid, preparing for Passover was a big deal around our household. We degreased the oven, sanitized sinks in the kitchen and bathrooms, and cleaned out the fridge

and pantries. Nothing remained that had leaven or flour, even cookies and cake! I had to pitch in. While it was work, there was also an air of excitement and significance. Of course, I was still a kid who had his mind on playing and running with my friends. Not so with Yeshua. Even at a young age, He understood what He came into the world to do and that the Temple in Jerusalem was His Father's house.

As a young boy, Yeshua's parents went up to Jerusalem every year for Passover. When He was twelve years old, they went according to the festival custom. When they began the journey home, they didn't realize Yeshua was not with them; He had remained in Jerusalem "sitting in the center of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46).

They found Yeshua in the Temple because it was His Father in heaven's house. The Temple was the place where God set His presence. This moment showed that Yeshua is the Messiah and the One "greater than Moses" promised by the Torah and the prophets. We've discussed how Jesus was greater than Moses in His miracles and His access to God. And now, Jesus made the connection again in the Temple. Moses dedicated and erected the Tabernacle, the first Temple, in the month of *Nisan*, the month of the Passover. The Temple in Jerusalem was dedicated in the month of *Nisan*. Moses' unique relationship with God was demonstrated by the fact that he could enter the Holy of Holies anytime he wanted, unlike Aaron and other high priests, who could enter only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Yeshua's cleansing of the Temple at the start of His ministry demonstrated and testified to His unique relationship as God's Son because He was helping His Father prepare the house for Passover. His first miracle of water into wine demonstrated His unique power, but the cleansing of the Temple was the first sign that bore witness to His unique and intimate

relationship with the Father. He did it publicly to bring attention to His true identity and authority.

The Secret Meaning of “Destroy This Temple in Three Days”

Not only did Jesus cleanse the Temple, but directly afterward, He identified with the Temple as His very body. After Jesus overturned the tables and shooed out the moneylenders, Judean leaders were incensed. They came demanding an explanation.

The Judean leaders responded, “What sign do You show us, since You are doing these things?”

“Destroy this Temple,” *Yeshua* answered them, “and in three days I will raise it up.” The Judean leaders then said to Him, “Forty-six years this Temple was being built, and You will raise it up in three days?” But He was talking about the temple of His body. So after He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He was talking about this. Then they believed the Scripture and the word that *Yeshua* had spoken. (John 2:18–22)

It’s interesting to note that the Judean leaders who knew Scriptures were incensed and yet the disciples—who included uneducated fishermen—“Remembered.” The key here is that they remembered the words *Yeshua* spoke to them. That’s an important lesson for us. We can’t study the Bible enough. We must live on its foundation. But more than study, it’s important that we bring the Bible into our hearts, so we believe and act on our faith in God’s Word.

Yeshua and the Number 2

There's something even deeper here. This was Yeshua's *second* public act. Because Hebrew is alphanumeric, we regard this as especially significant. The number 2 in Hebrew is written with the Hebrew letter *bet* (ב), and the Hebrew letter *bet* means "house" or "house of the father." The Temple in Jerusalem is called *beit hamikdash*, which is "the holy house."

The letter *bet*, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, also points to the Son, because the word for son—*ben*—begins with the letter *bet*. The first letter of Genesis 1:1 ("beginning") is *bet* in Hebrew. The last letter of Revelation in Hebrew is *nun*, so the first letter and last letter spell *son*, *BeN*. The Bible is all about the *ben*, Yeshua, the *Son*. The word *ben* also has numerical significance in Hebrew. *Ben* (son) has the numeric value of 2. Father is the number 1; 2 is the letter *bet*, the letter associated with the house where the fullness of God's glorious presence resides because of the incarnation. Yeshua is the second person of the Godhead, the number 2, and He is the *ben*, the Son, and He's also the house.

We can see this all coming together in several places in Scripture. Jewish tradition says the world stands on three pillars: (1) the Torah, the Word of God; (2) sacrifices and worship; and (3) deeds of kindness.⁷ The second sign, performed in the house of God, or the *bet*, is connected to the number 2, which represents sacrifice (the second pillar). That is also connected to the Son, who is the second person of the Godhead who offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. The Son is the true *bet*. Jesus Himself is the Temple. John the Revelator saw this in his vision:

I also saw the holy city—the New Jerusalem—coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . I

saw no temple in her, for its Temple is *Adonai Elohei-Tzva'ot* and the Lamb. (Rev. 21:2, 22)

The New Jerusalem doesn't have a Temple house. It has Yeshua. He is the true Temple because the presence of God dwells in Him, not in a physical building. His body was God's house. That's the deeper meaning of Yeshua's cleansing of the temple. He said, "Destroy this Temple . . . and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). His body is the new temple in the New Jerusalem.

According to Jewish tradition, God's glory did not dwell in the second Temple, which was the one in which Yeshua worshiped, but according to the New Testament, it dwelled in Yeshua Himself. He was the carrier of God's presence. He was the locus of the *shekinah*, God's manifest glory. John 2:11 tells us Yeshua "revealed His glory" in the first miracle of transforming the water into wine. There are layers of connection here: by killing Him, the leaders destroyed the true *bet*, the house of God, the second person, and the Temple connected to the sacrifice, which, according to Jewish tradition, is the second pillar the world stands on.

Defeating the Leaven and Evil Inclination

Numbers in the Bible show how precise our God is. Every detail of the universe, down to the microscopic level, is ordered beyond comprehension. So is the Word of God. God is all-knowing and all-powerful, and every one of us has a unique and individual number. It's called DNA. That's how personal God is. The Bible is a living book with a DNA code too.

Let's review what I mentioned earlier. Each Hebrew letter has a corresponding number. Hebrew and Greek, unlike many other languages,

don't have a separate number table, so they use letters to represent numbers. To determine a word's numeric value, we simply add the numeric value of the letters. For example, the word we just studied, BeN, has a numeric value of *bet* (2) plus *nun* (50), or 52.

We will uncover quite a bit of numerical meaning in the miracles of Jesus. I realize that all these numbers can be mind-boggling, but stick with me here, and let's discover just how remarkably these symbols tie together.

Hametz, which again is the Hebrew word for leaven, has the numerical value of 138 in the Hebrew alphabet. This is significant because this is also the number of the word *tzemach*, which means "branch." "Branch" is one of Messiah's primary names. It is a messianic title in the books of Jeremiah and Zechariah. Jeremiah 33:15 says, "In those days and at that time, I will cause a Branch of Righteousness to spring up for David, and He will execute justice and righteousness in the land." What was happening in the Temple was unjust and unrighteous, and so the Branch (138) had to remove the leaven (138).

Isaiah 9:6 gives us one of the key messianic prophecies: "For to us a child is born, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon His shoulder. His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God My Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace."

The numerical value of the words "to us a son" is 138, which relates to the letter *bet*, the letter of the Son. The Son (138) who is given to us is the "Branch" (138), who was sent to remove the leaven (138). Interestingly, the Hebrew phrase translated "My servant will prosper" (Isa. 52:13), about the death of the Messiah, also has a numerical value of 138. Even more incredible is that 138 is the mathematical value of the term that translates to "Son of God" (*ben Elohim*). This alludes to the fact that the Son spoken of in Isaiah 9:5 is also the Branch. He is the divine Son of

God (138), who will cause the will of the Lord to prosper (138). And the Lord's prosperity comes from removing the leaven (138) from our lives. It's a precise message worked into the very DNA of the Bible, and one we can all benefit from.

Celebrating the Mini-Passover

We all have leaven in our lives. Sometimes that leaven is hidden deep within us, but like the children searching from room to room for leaven, we need to search every corner of our hearts and lives to remove it. This shouldn't be limited to the season of Passover. Remember what the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:6–8:

Don't you know that a little *hametz* leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old *hametz*, so you may be a new batch, just as you are unleavened—for Messiah, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast not with old *hametz*, the *hametz* of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread—the *matzah* of sincerity and truth.

Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper, it is a mini-Passover. Drinking the cup and eating the bread is a most sacred moment when we slow down and reflect on how His body was broken and His blood poured out on the cross for us. It proclaims His death, resurrection, and return! We respond by searching our hearts for any leaven so that we don't partake in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27–31). The regular partaking of this shows that we are to take an accounting of the soul and search our hearts on a regular basis to remove the leaven.

The Unification of God's People

We've explored several reasons why it was important that Jesus purified the Temple as His second public act. Yet another important reason it had to be cleansed is that the Temple played a unifying role in uniting God's people. The Jewish people prayed toward Jerusalem, just as Daniel did while in exile (Dan. 6:11). All Jews contributed to its support with the half shekel and were supposed to go up to Jerusalem three times a year to worship for the three pilgrimage holidays—*Pesach* (Passover), *Shavuot* (Weeks or Pentecost), and *Sukkot* (The Feast of Tabernacles, Tents, or Booths). However, the Temple was not just a house of worship for Israel. It was meant to be a house of worship for all nations: "My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations" (Isa. 56:7).

Jesus had to clear the Temple to make this possible. There were three courts in the temple: the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, and the Court of Israel. A barricade in the Court of the Women stated no foreigner would enter the forecourt and the balustrade around the sanctuary. Anyone who was caught would have himself to blame for his subsequent death.

Gentiles could go to only one place in the Temple. Because so many pilgrims came during Passover, money changers and vendors who sold sacrifices set up in the Court of the Gentiles for that one week of the year, according to the *Mishnah*, an earlier part of the Jewish writings⁸ and in agreement with the opinion of Jewish leader (10 BC to AD 70) Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel.⁹ The one place in the Temple where nations (Gentiles) could go worship and pray was turned into a noisy marketplace that was not conducive to worship.

There is a deep, prophetic, messianic aspect to Yeshua's action because, in Zechariah 14:20–21, the prophet spoke of the eschatological renewal of

worship, or the way worship will be at the end of days. He said there will no longer be a trader or a merchant in the House of God. Yeshua showed Himself to be the messianic One whom God promised in Zechariah. He was the unique Son of God, the Messiah, the One who was going to fulfill the prophecy. Yeshua's driving out the money changers was a sneak preview of what He will accomplish in the messianic Kingdom.

God desired for Gentiles and Jews to worship together. He wants there to be unity in worship. It's the fusion of Gentile and Jew, of old and new, into one new man. Equality does not equal sameness. Jews don't have to become Gentiles. Gentiles don't have to become Jews. We don't have to worship in the same way, but equality means that there is equal value. As I've written about in other books, I have Gentile friends who were instrumental in my salvation. They helped open my eyes to the truth that Yeshua was the Messiah and opened my eyes to who I really was.

Our worship and our service to God are equally valuable, and there is equal spiritual access to God in worship and prayer. That's why Yeshua rent the veil in two (Matt. 27:51) rather than in four or another number. Now the Holy of Holies, separated by this thick veil or curtain, was open to both Jews and Gentiles. There's a new way for Jews and a new way for Gentiles.

The miracle of Jesus' purification in John 2 showed Gentile mistreatment. The priests didn't show respect for the importance of the worship and prayer of the nations. But it's ultimately through Yeshua, the true Temple, that Israel and the nations are unified. Just as the Temple unified Israel, Yeshua is the Temple that unifies us. The nations connect to Israel and God's promises through the resurrected Yeshua. He is now the center. Just as all Jews pray toward Jerusalem, we pray to Yeshua, not to the Temple. We are unified in Him. God freed Israel so that they would

worship Him. It makes sense that this miracle occurred in the context of the temple, the worship, and the Passover. The Temple was to be a place of consecration, not commerce.

Your Personal Egypt

Leaven and Egypt are connected in the way we celebrate Passover every year. Passover is not merely a remembrance but a present reoccurrence in our lives. Egypt is not just a physical location; it is a spiritual state. All of us have our own personal Egypts, and the journey of coming out of Egypt is a lifelong process. The Hebrew word for Egypt is *Mizraim*, and it means “confinement,” “limitation,” or “restriction.” Egypt was a place of impurity and enslavement for the Children of Israel. It prevented the souls of God’s people from understanding and actualizing their true identity and destiny. Egypt is understood as the root of all of Israel’s exiles. From the time of the Abrahamic promise and the birth of Isaac, Israel lived as sojourners, as foreigners, in exile until God brought them out of Egypt and gave them the land that He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Israel, the Promised Land, represents transformation, the New Jerusalem, and the place of promise for our lives. We associate Egypt with leaven, sin, and evil inclinations. The Promised Land is a place where we can break through the confinement and limitations so we can physically and spiritually overcome the evil inclinations in our lives. It symbolizes the place where we can personally and corporately reach our true identities and potential. It is not merely a physical place, but it is a spiritual reality, and it is a Person. Hope is a Person. Love is a Person. Peace is a Person. It is Yeshua. Entering the Promised Land is entering into Yeshua.

That's why Paul wrote that we are "called to *Yeshua* the Messiah" (Rom. 1:6). We enter into Him like Israel entered the Promised Land to find purification and salvation.

When we live in our personal Egypts, we live in a state of exile. Exile is about distance and disconnection on a spiritual, relational, physical, and psychological level. We're not enslaved by people, but we are enslaved by sin. This is the deeper meaning of the phrase God used to tell His people how to celebrate Passover: "You are to tell your son on that day saying, 'It is because of what *ADONAI* did for me when I came out of Egypt'" (Ex. 13:8). In every generation, we are to tell our children, "I came out of Egypt." Though I didn't come out of the country of Egypt, I can celebrate the inner, eternal spiritual meaning of coming out of Egypt as a lifetime process. That's why Passover is *Zman Cheiruteinu*, or "the time of our freedom." We are being freed from exile.

A Kernel in the Soil

You are a kernel or a seed, and exile is the soil in which the seed breaks open from confinement and grows into a new tree. Have you ever considered the miracle of a seed? Within every kernel is the promise or DNA, the germ of life—of what it will become. When we hold a pack of seeds in our hands, we have a future forest of giant red oaks or a garden of magnificent fruits or vegetables. Yet it must first be buried and die for it to grow and become what it was created to be. Essentially, the seed's original form ceases and transforms into something new. It's born again. How does this happen other than the miraculous power of an all-powerful God? "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much fruit" (John 12:24). This death of the seed

is a little like exile in Egypt. It is necessary. We need exile in the place of struggle and restrictions, because exile is like the dirt in which that seed must die. We must die to the past, to self, and to the leaven of sin. It is in that death that the seed splits open. Redemption is when the seed grows and begins to break through the soil of exile.

But redemption must be preceded by exile. God uses it for the good to transform us. Exile is the preparation. Abraham went into exile in Egypt. Moses went into exile in Egypt. Israel went into exile in Egypt, and even Messiah Yeshua had to go to Egypt as a child and came out of Egypt—the root of all exiles—so He could fulfill His destiny as the Redeemer and the One who was “greater than Moses.” So just as Moses instituted Passover and had the people remove the leaven from their homes, so Yeshua removed the leaven from the Temple and celebrated the Passover. This is good news. Yeshua’s two cleansings of God’s house were prophetic, symbolic acts that He would remove the leaven from our lives because He is the unique Son of God. But we must actively desire and partner with Him for this to become a reality.

Because Yeshua is greater than Moses, who brings about a greater redemption symbolized by turning the water into wine, and who removes the leaven in our lives, we are no longer slaves. We are no longer bound to the mistakes of our pasts, our idols, our addictions, or our afflictions. There is a new creation transformation available to us. Now, *that* is good news.

The cleansing of the Temple is about the miracle of purification and freedom in your life. The secret is Yeshua as the unique Son of God, the “greater than Moses,” being about His Father’s business to cleanse His Father’s House. Passover symbolizes Yeshua wanting to cleanse your life. He is saying, “Listen, I am the greater Temple. There’s leaven in the Temple in Jerusalem, but there’s no leaven in Me. And that’s why when

you destroy this Temple, and it's raised again, it is once and for all, for the fullness of redemption, healing, transformation, wholeness." It's time to come out and experience the fullness of freedom and purity in Him. A washing away of the past. A new you. And that's a beautiful thing.