



## The Birth of Yeshua During Sukkot

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### An Excerpt From the Book:

*Rosh HaShanah and the Messianic Kingdom to Come*

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An easy to document, but not well known fact, is the date of the birth of Yeshua. This is done by establishing several things:

- The date that Gabriel the angel tells Zechariah, the soon to be father of Yochanan, about his son's birth. (The birth date of Yochanan (John) is established by going forward nine months, the term of pregnancy).
- The approximate date of Miriam's (Mary's) conception.
- The date of Herod's death.

The date that Gabriel the angel told Zechariah that he and his wife were going to have Yochanan is established from the following. Luke 1.5 states that Zechariah is a priest of the course of Abijah. King David, according to I Chronicles twenty-four, had divided the priestly families into twenty-four groups. Each group was called a course, and named after the head of that particular family. Each course served for one week in the first half of the year, and for another week the second half of the year. This was in addition to the weeks of Hag haMatzah, Shavuot, and Sukkot, when all the courses were required to be present (Deuteronomy 16.16). Therefore, the first course served the first week of the year (Aviv); the second course, the second week; then all the courses, the third, because it was Hag haMatzah, and so on. I Chronicles 24.10 lists the course of Abijah as the eighth course. This course would serve the tenth week of the first half of the year, having allowed two weeks for Hag haMatzah and Shavuot. It is at this time that Zechariah receives the prophecy of Yochanan's birth.

*And it came to pass, that, while he executed the priest's office before G-d in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the Temple of the L-rd. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the L-rd standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not Zechariah: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Yochanan.*

*Luke 1.8-13*

Due to the laws of separation (Leviticus 12.5;15.19,25), two additional weeks have to be counted. Allowing for this and going forward a normal pregnancy, the time of Yochanan's birth (if this is the first half of the year) would be approximately Pesach, when it is expected that Elijah will appear.

Six months following Elizabeth's conception, the angel Gabriel is sent to Miriam (Mary), the cousin of Elizabeth.

*And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from G-d unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Miriam (Mary). And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the L-rd is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Miriam (Mary): for thou hast found favour with G-d. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Yeshua. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the L-rd G-d shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.*

*Luke 1.26-33*

Starting at Chanukkah, which begins on Kislev 25 and continues for eight days, and counting through the nine months of Miriam's pregnancy brings one to the approximate time of Sukkot.

The question arises, "How can it be known that Zechariah was given the prophecy about Yochanan in the first half of the year rather than the last? The key is found in the life and death of King Herod. Herod, a man hated by the Jewish people, figures prominently into the birth of Yeshua. In Mattatياهو (Matthew) two he is visited by "wise men from the East."

*Now when Yeshua was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.*

*Mattatياهو (Matthew) 2.1-2*

From the information in this passage, it can be understood that the "wise men" are Jewish. While the verse does not tell how many wise men there are, it does give reference to where they were from. In the Bible, the "land of the East" is always the land of Babylon (see Genesis 29.1; Judges 6.3). During the first century C.E., the largest Jewish population was in Babylon. These people were the descendants of the captivity of Nebuchadnezzar. Even though Ezra, Nehemiah, and others had returned, most of the people had remained behind. The fact that the wise men are looking for the Jewish messiah, who was only expected by the Jewish people, should be noted. A prophecy relating to the Messiah that only the Jewish people were aware of is found in the book of Numbers.

*I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.*

*Numbers 24.17*

Because of the prophecy, a star was related to the coming of the Messiah. An example of this is seen when, about one hundred years after the time of Yeshua, Rabbi Akiva mistakenly proclaimed a military leader to be the Messiah. He was titled "Bar Kochba," which means "Son of the Star."

The rabbis or the sages were known as the "chakamim," which means "the wise men." The sage Daniel was referred to by this same title. A related word, "mag" is also used for "wise

men.” The Greek “magi” is taken from the Babylonian word “mag,” which has a number of meanings. It is true that the word does mean “astrologer;” however, this is not its only usage. The same word is used for scientist, counselor, or scholar. It is an obvious conclusion, then, that the Jewish sages or wise men from Babylon, knowing the prophecy of Numbers 24.17, relating it correctly to the Messiah, and having seen His star, traveled to Jerusalem to do homage.

Herod was possibly one of the coldest and most bloodthirsty men who ever lived. He killed his sons, his favorite wife, and thousands of innocent people. His fear of losing his throne drove him to insanity. Augustus Caesar, having noted that Herod observed Jewish Law and therefore would not eat pork, once made the statement that it was better to be a pig in the house of Herod than to be one of his sons. It is no surprise that Herod sought the child’s life, nor that all of Jerusalem would be troubled as Herod received this news.

*When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

*Mattatياهو (Matthew) 2.3*

Traditional teaching is that the “wise men” appeared about a year to eighteen months after the birth of Yeshua. This has been based upon Herod’s killing of the male children under two years, according to the date that the wise men had given him for the appearance of the star.

*Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.*

*Mattatياهو (Matthew) 2.7-8,16*

It was the custom in ancient Israel to count the years of one’s age from the date of conception; therefore, Herod actually killed the children one year old and under according to the way that age is calculated today. In fact, the wise men arrive in Jerusalem either just prior to or at the time of Yeshua’s birth.

It is important to note that up to this time, no one in Jerusalem, including the Temple priest, had heard that Yeshua had been born. Knowing the nature of Herod, and his practice of having spies throughout the countryside, it is impossible that he would not have heard of his birth. Luke’s account of the birth relates the experience of the shepherds of Bethlehem, who after seeing the newborn Yeshua, broadcast what they have seen and heard to the entire region.

*And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*

*Luke 2.17*

Realizing that Bethlehem is within five miles of Jerusalem makes it very improbable that Herod or the Temple priest would be ignorant of His birth. Further proof is seen in that forty days after the birth of Yeshua, Miriam (Mary) carries Yeshua to the Temple for her purification and His dedication. It is here that two well known individuals within the Temple compound and make known prophesy concerning the child.

*And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the L-rd; (As it is written in the law of the L-rd, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the L-rd;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the L-rd, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit) was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Ruach haKodesh, that he should not see death, before he had seen the L-rd's Messiah. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Yeshua, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed G-d, and said, L-rd, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Miriam his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served G-d with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the L-rd, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

*Luke 2.22-38*

Having realized that it is impossible for the wise men to arrive after these events, it can be assumed that they must have spoken to Herod about the time of His birth. Traveling on to Bethlehem, they found the child and His parents in a house, (Mattatityahu 2.11); whereas, in the Luke account the shepherds found Him in a stable (Luke 2.7,16). There is no discrepancy between these two accounts, for likely the new mother and child were moved from the stable following the birth. The fact that He was born in a stable is a clue to the time of His birth, for in Hebrew a stable is called a "sukkah" (Genesis 33.17). "Sukkot," the name of the festival, is the plural form of this word. It is even significant that they had to seek cover in the "sukkah" due to "no room in the inn" (Luke 2.7). It was only during the three pilgrim festivals (Pesach, Hag haMatzah, and Shavuot) that Bethlehem would overflow with people. The thousands of pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for the festivals would spill over to the surrounding towns. In ancient times, reporting for a census would be done over a several month period due to the difficulties of travel, as well as the economics of an agricultural society. It is highly improbable that so many people would be in Bethlehem for Caesar's census all at one time.

As stated above, Joseph and Miriam (Mary) bring the child into Jerusalem forty days after Yeshua's birth. This indicates that Herod died within this same forty days. The chronology of these forty days is imperative in correctly finding His birth date. The probable scenario is this: Joseph and Miriam (Mary) come to Jerusalem for the festival of Sukkot (September or October), planning to stay in the nearby Bethlehem in order to register for the census. Unable to find a room at the inn, they are given shelter in a stable, which just happens to be a Sukkah. During the night the wise men arrive in Jerusalem and speak to Herod. Meanwhile, Miriam gives birth. The heavenly host appear to the shepherds, proclaiming that the Messiah has been born. They go to pay Him homage in the stable, while the wise men are making their way to Bethlehem. The shepherds leave to "noise it abroad," and Miriam is moved to a house. The wise men arrive and during the night are warned by G-d concerning Herod. Joseph and Miriam take the child and flee to Egypt and remain there until they are told by G-d that Herod is dead. On returning to Judea,

they dedicate Yeshua according to the Law, receiving the prophecies of Anna and Simeon. After this, they turn aside into Galilee, where they will live.

It is apparent that as long as Herod was alive, they could not appear at the Temple. Therefore, if the approximate date of Herod's death could be determined, it would establish the season of Yeshua's birth. The Jewish historian, Josephus, who lived during the first century C.E., documents in detail Herod's death.

Josephus relates that Herod became very ill immediately following an act of impiety against the priesthood, at which time an eclipse of the moon occurred. This eclipse, the only one mentioned by Josephus, happened March 13 in the year of the Julian period 4710, and the fourth year before the Common Era. Herod's illness lasted several months and is documented in great detail as being painful and distressful. Many times cures were sought and brought about temporary relief; however, nothing prevented imminent death. According to Josephus' calculations, Herod's death occurred about September, in the fourth year before the Common Era. Therefore, with the knowledge that Herod died in autumn, the same time of year as Sukkot, and that his death was within forty days of the birth of Yeshua, it is established that Yeshua was born at this time of year.