

# WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE GOSPEL IN ITS HEBREW ROOTS CONTEXT?

## A SURPRISING AND ENLIGHTENING ANSWER

BY YA'ACOV NATAN (LAWRENCE) BEN ALAS  
HOSHANA RABBAH MESSIANIC COMMUNITY, PORTLAND, OR

(503) 570-3376 · hoshanarabbah@earthlink.net · <http://home.earthlink.net/~hoshanarabbah>

### WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS OF (GOSPEL) OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

The word *gospel* is one of the most common words in all Christendom. But what does it mean? The word itself is easily enough defined, but what about the concept behind the word? That may take us into a whole other dimension of understanding.

First, let's define the word. The word *gospel* or synonyms are used 132 times in the Apostolic Writings (NT). *Gospel* (Strong's #2097 and 2098) literally means *good news* or *glad tidings*. These two Greek words (*euaggellion* and *euaggelizo*) are translated into English in the Authorized Version (KJV) via the following words: as a noun, *gospel* and as a verb, *preach*, *bring good tidings*, *show glad tidings*, *declare*, and *declare glad tidings*.

The word itself is quickly defined, but what is the *good news*? Let us begin to answer this by seeing how the authors of the Messianic Scriptures use this term. Here are some common ways this word is used: *gospel of the kingdom* or *of God* (used five times) (e.g., Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk. 1:14); *gospel of Yeshua the Messiah* or *Yeshua* (used 15 times) (e.g. Mk. 1:1; Rom. 1:16; 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thes. 3:2); *gospel of the grace of Elohim (God)* (Ac. 20:24); *gospel of Elohim* (used five times) (e.g. Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thes. 2:2,8,9); and *gospel of peace* (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15). The vast majority of times the term *gospel* is used in the Apostolic Writings the word stands alone without adjective modifiers as simply *the gospel*.

But again, what is the *good news*? One cannot read the Messianic Scriptures without seeing that Yeshua the Messiah is at the center of the good news. The message of "Jesus" has been at the center of the Christian message for two thousand years. This will hardly come as a new revelation to the reader. The famous passage of John 3:16 sums up this blessed message perhaps better than any other: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We know that at the center of the Apostle's message was the good news of the Messiah (Acts 5:42; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 2 Cor. 2:12) and his death, burial and resurrection; the redemption, reconciliation and salvation of sinful man through his shed blood at the cross of Golgatha. But is there more to this *good news* message?

The Apostle Paul, a Jewish rabbinical scholar without peer in the first century, discusses the deeper implications of the meaning of the term *gospel* in Romans 10:14-15:

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

This is a quote from Isa. 52:7. So what is this *good news* or *gospel*? Let us make a quick overview of the context of 52:7 by starting in Isa. 52:2,

52:2, "O captive daughter of Zion"

52:3, "Ye have sold yourselves [to your harlot lovers] for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money."

- 52:5, “my people is taken away for nought?”
- 52:7, “ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”
- 52:8, “when YHWH shall bring again Zion.” i.e. redeem Israel from captivity where they were taken because they sold themselves into adulterous relationships with their foreign lovers.
- 52:9, “he hath redeemed Jerusalem.”
- 52:13ff Enter Yeshua the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, who will redeem his people.
- 53:4-6, He bore upon himself the sin (death) penalty for adulterous Israel and Judah and then he “prolonged his days” (v. 10) by being resurrected so that he could remarry Israel, as we shall see later.
- 53:6, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and YHWH hath laid on him [Yeshua the Messiah] the iniquity [i.e., Israel’s sinning against YHWH through violation of the Torah covenant or marriage agreement with YHWH that she made at Mt. Sinai] of us all.”
- 54:1 “for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith YHWH.” Israel was desolate because of her captivity, but in captivity she became as the stars of heaven, as the dust of the ground, as the sand of the see, a multitude of fish.
- 54:3 “thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles...” Israel shall be as a net who brings with her the riches of the sea (Gentile people of the nations).
- 54:4 “for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.”
- 54:5 “ For thy Maker is thine husband; YHWH of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Set-apart One of Israel; The Elohim of the whole earth shall he be called.
- 54:6, “For YHWH hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy Elohim.”
- 54:7, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee [out of captivity back to Zion].”
- 54:8, “ In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the YHWH thy Redeemer.”
- 54:10, “but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith YHWH that hath mercy on thee.” This is a reference to the renewed marriage covenant YHWH would make with Israel in the future — literally, a renewal of their wedding vows (Jer. 31:31-33).
- 54:11-12, This is a reference to New Jerusalem of which ALL ISRAEL will be apart and which contains only 12 gates named for the twelve tribes of Israel. There will be no Gentile gate (Rev. 21:12).
- 54:17, No weapon formed against Israel shall prevent their redemption, restoration and attainment of righteousness through YHWH.
- 55:1, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,” Israel, returning out of the wilderness of her captivity, will be thirsty. Indeed she will drink water from the wells of her salvation in Yeshua, her Redeemer and Bridegroom (Isa. 12:3; see 11:10-12:6 for a prophecy about how a root from Jesse [Yeshua] will stand for an ensign of the people and the Gentiles will seek after it and the remnant of YHWH’s people that have been scattered in Assyria, Egypt, etc, the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah, will return from the four corners of the earth and will reunite into a united kingdom under King David once again [Ezek. 37:15-28]).
- 55: 3 “Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to YHWH, speak, saying, YHWH hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.” By all appearances it would seem that the dispersed of Israel were cut off with no inheritance or progeny or had

become a dry tree like a eunuch, but in reality the opposite was true. Indeed, they would be found to be a stick or tree that was alive and well and had actually become a vast multitude that would be added to the tree of Judah (Ezek. 37:19) or grafted back into the olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11:13-24).

56:1, ff Sabbath-keeping is at the center of Israel's redemption

56:6, Here are the sons of the stranger that join themselves to YHWH to serve him and to love his name, who keep his Sabbath from polluting it, and take hold of his Torah-covenant.

56:8, YHWH will gather the outcasts of Israel...

56:10-12, Israel's (Christian's) watchmen (prophets) and shepherds (pastors) are blind, ignorant, dumb, barkless and greedy dogs.

58:1, "Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a shofar [the sound of the shofar is bringing many outcast Israelites back to their Hebraic heritage] and show my people their transgression [violation of their Torah-covenant/marriage agreement Israel made with YHWH at Mt. Sinai] and the house of Jacob their sins."

58:13, The Sabbath is a focal point again. After all, it was the sign of the Mosaic/Sinaitic Covenant Israel made with YHWH (Ex. 31:13).

61:1, "The Spirit of YHWH Elohim is upon me; because YHWH hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

61:2, "To proclaim the acceptable year of YHWH, [FIRST COMING OF MESSIAH] and the day of vengeance of our Elohim; to comfort all that mourn [SECOND COMING OF MESSIAH the Redeemer of the outcasts and dispersed of Israel]."

61: 3, "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of YHWH, that he might be glorified."

61:5, "Strangers...sons of the alien..." are a reference to the dispersed ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

61:9, "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people..."

61:10, "I will greatly rejoice in YHWH, my soul shall be joyful in my Elohim; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

61:11, "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so YHWH Elohim will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."

### **What then is the good news or gospel?**

It is the good news of the unquenchable love that YHWH-Yeshua has for his people Israel who have been dispersed and exiled among the Gentiles; who have been cut off from their Maker, their Husband; who have become aliens from the covenants of promise and from the commonwealth of Israel, without Elohim and without hope, but who have been brought near and redeemed by the blood of Messiah Yeshua, the Suffering Servant, who paid the price for the sin of their spiritual adultery, for breaking their marriage agreements with YHWH; they are no longer to be strangers and aliens, but like the prodigal son, will come back into their Father's household (Eph. 2:11-19); they were wild olive branches that were broken off of the olive tree of Israel because of unbelief (Rom. 11:13-24), but upon drinking from the Cup of Redemption, the third cup of the Jewish Passover Seder, which corresponds to the Cup of Acceptance which a Jewish maiden drinks at her betrothal ceremony to show her Israelite suitor that she accepts his marriage proposal signifying the beginning of their betrothal. This corresponds to Yeshua, on the night of his Passover with his disciples, drinking of the fruit of the vine, passing it around and having them drink

from the same cup which was their accepting, as representatives of the spiritual bride of Israel, his marriage proposal to Israel. And this corresponds to a new Believer in Yeshua confessing with their mouth Yeshua as Master and believing in their heart that Elohim has raised him from the dead. At this point one believes unto righteousness and accepts the redemption of Messiah Yeshua and is saved (Rom. 10:9-10) which corresponds to being grafted into the olive tree (or tree of life, which is a picture of Yeshua who is the Tree of Life of which he said, "I am the vine and you are the branches...Jn. 15:1-6) (Rom. 11:13-24).

## BACKGROUND OF ISRAEL'S MARRIAGE TO YHWH

### The whole house of Israel was married to Elohim:

-Ezekiel 16:6-8, "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt [talit] over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant [ketubah] with thee, saith the YHWH Elohim, and thou becamest mine."

### YHWH Divorced the House of Israel.

-Isaiah 50:1, "Thus saith YHWH, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement [a get], whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away."

YHWH is not asking whether there is a get or not, but rather asking to be shown the get that he had previously written. How do we know this is the correct interpretation? If he had not put her away (divorced her) why would he have to make a renewed covenant (or renew his marriage vows) with her (Jer. 31:31-33)?

-Jeremiah 3:8, "And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also."

-Hosea 1:9, "Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God."

-Hosea 2:2, "Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;"

### Israel Marries Her Foreign Lovers

While there is no place in Scripture that specifically states that the House of Israel married any of her foreign lovers (the House of Judah, on the other hand, did marry "the daughter of a strange god," [Malachi 2:11]), the Torah specifically states that when two unmarried people have consensual intimate relations they are considered married in YHWH's eyes, for the sex act consummates the marriage (Deut. 22:28-29 and Exod. 22:16). If, on the other hand, a married woman lays with a man, this is adultery and is punishable by death (Deut. 22:22-24). As we have seen, YHWH gave the House of Israel a Bill of Divorce, freeing her to remarry.

Jewish rabbinical authorities recognize this fact. Baal HaTurim, the notable medieval Jewish Torah commentator, states in his commentary on Exodus 19:4, "Just as a woman may be acquired [as a wife] through any one of three ways (i) through money; (ii) through a legal document or (iii) through marital relations" (bracketed phrases are in the original). He then goes on to show how YHWH acquired Israel through money (i.e., the spoils of Egypt and the sea; through a document (i.e., the Torah as a written marriage document or *ketubah*); and through marital relations (as it is stated, "I will spread my skirt or wing over you...and I will enter a covenant with you [Ezek. 16:8]) (*Baal HaTurim Chumash, Davis Edition, Shemot, p. 731, Artscroll Series, Artscroll Series, Rabbi Avi Gold – editor, Mesorah Publication, Ltd., Brooklyn, NY: 1999*). This is further proof that consensual sexual relations

between a man and a woman not only consummate, but also legally establish the marriage. Thusly, the House of Ephraim/Israel and the House of Judah were legally married to their foreign lovers, spiritually speaking.

### The Divorced Wife Grieves For Her Divorced Husband

- Hosea 2:7-8, “And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.”

### A Marriage Agreement (Betrothal - Erusin) Is Anticipated

- Hosea 2:16-19, “And it shall be at that day, saith YHWH, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.”
- Isaiah 62:3-5, “Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of YHWH, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for YHWH delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy Elohim rejoice over thee.”
- Jeremiah 31:31-34, “Behold, the days come, saith YHWH, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith YHWH: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith YHWH, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know YHWH: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith YHWH: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

### A Problem: Divorce and Remarriage?

The Torah-law forbids that a man remarry his divorced and remarried wife (Deut. 24:4). YHWH divorced the House of Israel. Legally, YHWH cannot remarry her according to his own Torah-law. The solution: YHWH has to die. Enter Messiah Yeshua, the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13ff) who would die for his people and redeem them from captivity. This is the message of Rom. 7:1-14,

- 1 “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know *the* [supplied],) how that **the/this** [ #3588, a demonstrative pronoun: *this, that, the, etc.*; namely, a reference to a specific Torah-law pertaining to divorce and remarriage] law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?”
- 2 “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by *the* [supplied] law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the/this law of her husband.”
- 3 “So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from **that** [here the translators used the demonstrative pronoun] law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”
- 4 “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to **the/this law** by the body of Messiah; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

- 5 “For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by **the /this law**, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”
- 6 “But now we are delivered from **the /this law**, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”
- 7 “What shall we say then? Is **the/this law** sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by **the [supplied] law**: for I had not known lust, except **the/this law** had said, Thou shalt not covet.”
- 8 “But sin, taking occasion by **the/this commandment**, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without/apart **the [supplied] law** sin was dead.”
- 9 “For I was alive without/apart **the [supplied] law** once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”
- 10 “And **the/this commandment**, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”
- 11 “For sin, taking occasion by **the/this commandment**, deceived me, and by it slew me.”
- 12 “Wherefore **the [supplied] law** is holy, and **the /this commandment** holy, and just, and good.”
- 13 “Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by **the/this commandment** might become exceeding sinful.”

### This Is a Difficult Concept: A Quick Summary

Because of Israel’s unfaithfulness YHWH divorced her (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8) and rejected her (Hos. 1:9; 2:2). In her pursuit of her spiritual, heathen lovers she was not satisfied, but longed for YHWH, her former (spiritual) husband (Hos. 2:7-8). But because YHWH had already divorced her due to her violation of her marital/covenantal agreement (ketubah) which she made with him at Mt. Sinai when she said, “I do” to him three times (Ex. 19:8; 24:3, 7) he could not remarry her without violating his own Torah-law (Deut. 24:4) since she had become another man’s wife. YHWH’s intentions were clear: he would remarry her (Hos. 2:16-19; Isa. 62:3-5; Jer. 31:31-34). But how could he do so since (a) she was worthy of death for her adultery under Torah-law and (b) he could not remarry his divorced and remarried wife?

Enter the Rabbi Sha’ul (Paul), who as a Jewish legal expert, could, from the pages of Scripture, unravel this perplexing legal dilemma and give us a Scripturally and legally sound answer. Romans 7:1-6 is a discussion of this very issue. If a woman’s husband dies she is free to remarry. She is no longer legally bound to her husband since the Torah-laws pertaining to marriage have no jurisdiction over a dead man.

Some Christian biblical expositors claim this passage teaches that “New” Covenant Believers through Yeshua are now dead to the Torah-law of Moses meaning that one is now only obligated to keep the moral aspect of the law (no idolatry, no murder, no adultery, etc.), but that one is freed from the more ritualistic, ceremonial, and lifestyle aspects of the Torah (Shabbat, Feast Days, kosher laws, etc.) except tithing, curiously so (sarcastically speaking).

But is Paul teaching this in this portion of his letter to the Roman Believers? No he is not. Those who teach this are overlooking a major detail in the Greek grammar of Rom. 7:1-6). In every place where the phrase “the law” (in the *KJV*) occurs in these six verses (where the definite article *the* is found in the Greek) the word *the* is *Strong’s* #3588. According to *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* this word “corresponds to our definite article *the* which is properly a demonstrative pronoun” and can therefore mean *this, that, which, who*, as well as *the*. Indeed, the *KJV* translates this Greek word as *the* in our passage under consideration in all places except in verse three where this word is translated (in the *KJV*) as the demonstrative pronoun *that* as in “that law”. The question is this: Is Paul referring to the sum total the Torah-law, or to one specific law within the Torah that pertains to marriage? In verse two we find the phrase, “the [or *this*] law of her husband”. Here Paul is talking about a specific law pertaining to marriage found in the Torah, and not to all 613 laws contained in the Torah. Based on this and the translators use of the demonstrative pronoun *that* in verse three (as opposed to the definite article *the*), the internal evidence of this passage would point to the phrase *this/that law* being preferred over the phrase *the law*. This being the case, to

which specific law out of the 613 found in the Torah would Paul be referring? In verse two we read, "...if the husband dies she is loosed from [this/that] law of her husband." It is the law that states that if a woman has sex with another man beside her husband (and she is not legally divorced) she is an adulteress (Ex. 20:14).

The Torah also forbids a woman from remarrying her first husband who had divorced her due to her adulterous relationship with and subsequent marriage to another man (Deut. 24:4). But how could she remarry her first husband (if her second husband was still alive) without violating the Torah-law prohibiting this? Impossible in the natural, but with YHWH all things are possible. What if her first husband were to die in her place (and pay the legal death penalty under the Torah for her adultery) and then resurrect as a new or different man? Is this possible? Evidently, Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) thought so. In Rom. 10 he expresses his heart's desire for the salvation of Israel and states that this occurs through one's calling upon the name of Messiah Yeshua who did just that: he died on the cross and paid the sin penalty and resurrected as a new man.

The preaching of this message, which Sha'ul calls the Gospel or Good News, is the message of YHWH-Yeshua remarrying his divorced bride, for in Rom. 10:14-15 Sha'ul quotes Isaiah 52:7 which in its greater context (Isa. 52:2 - 62:12) is talking about the (final) redemption (a rabbinical concept involving the return and restoration of the exiled House of Israel and the establishment of the Messianic Age [or Millennium] of Israel back to YHWH (i.e., the pre-incarnate Yeshua [Acts 7:38 and 1 Cor. 10:4]) through the death, burial and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua (see Isaiah 53).

Messiah Yeshua is presently betrothed to his Bride (the Body of Messianic, Torah-keeping Saints who make up Israel (see Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 19:7-9) whom he has redeemed and sanctified by his blood from her state of spiritual harlotry. This Bride awaits his return from his Father's house where he will claim her as his own and take her as his full-fledged wife. She awaits the wedding feast that will last for 1000 years.

Israel, made of Israelites and non-Israelites (genetically), but all one new man in Messiah Yeshua (Eph. 2:11-19) and all who are spiritual descendants, by faith, of Abraham (Rom. 4:16; 9:8,11; Gal. 3:14) will rule with Yeshua, as his spiritual wife as kings and priests in his Millennial kingdom (Rev. 1:6; 5:10;20:6).

**This is the true Good News (Gospel) of the kingdom of Elohim!**