

COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE

-

**HANDEL'S *MESSIAH* AND THE
SEVEN SHABBATOT OF CONSOLATION**

BY JOSHUA & JULIANNA SPURLOCK

INTRO

The seven Shabbatot (Sabbaths) of Consolation fall between Tisha B'Av - the saddest day of the year - and Rosh HaShanah (Jewish New Year), which begins the High Holy Days, which, in turn, culminate in the joyous celebration of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles). How do we get from the saddest day of the year, commemorating some of the worst tragedies in Jewish history - let's call that "the worst of times" - to the festival known as The Time of Our Rejoicing - let's call that "the best of times"?

We'll pause a minute while you go read "A Tale of Two Cities."

Ok, let's go back to the beginning: what is Tisha B'Av? Literally meaning the "Ninth of Av", it is the ninth day of the month of Av. It's the last day in the Three Weeks of Mourning, a time period in the summer bookended by two traditional fasts (the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av). These three weeks are historically an inauspicious time for the Jewish people. The Final Solution was put into effect during the Three Weeks. The Iran Nuclear Deal was signed. Even as recently as 2017, there was a shooting on the Temple Mount that caused rioting and violence for days on end. The Three Weeks culminate in the saddest day of the year, the ninth of Av. On this day, the Israelites rejected the promised land, which led to forty years wandering in the wilderness. Both temples were destroyed. World War I began. Jews were expelled from multiple countries.

The Jewish people have many traditions during the Three Weeks, such as not listening to music, not cutting their hair, not shopping for or wearing new clothes, not swimming, not drinking alcohol or eating meat – all of these are symbols of mourning. By the time we arrive at Tisha B'Av, we have entered into a deep sadness. We fast once again, we sit on the floor, we read Lamentations. We mourn.

So back to our question - how do you journey from sadness to joy? How can we pull ourselves out of deep mourning in time to celebrate the High Holy Days? We can do it through the seven Shabbatot of Consolation. To help you make that journey, this study looks at each of the seven traditional readings from the Haftarah (Biblical prophets) during the seven Shabbatot of Consolation.

What does that have to do with Handel's Messiah, you may ask? Good question!

Let's read the first sentence from the traditional consolation readings and the opening to Handel's Messiah:

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God."

Isaiah 40:1, NKJV

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

- Charles Jennens, Handel's Messiah

Look familiar? If you guessed, "Isn't that the same verse?", you're right! But aside from the obviously similar source material, Handel's Messiah and the consolation readings have another thing in common - Messiah. Handel's expansive oratorio covers the

prophecies, birth, death, resurrection and second coming of our Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). While the seven haftarah passages of consolation don't address Messiah by name, they include some of the important prophecies about Messiah...and the ultimate consolation for Israel is Messiah.

As we look at the readings and the libretto (lyrics) of Handel's Messiah together, here's what we hope you'll get from this study:

- You'll spend time learning about our Messiah
- You'll see the integral role Messiah plays as the ultimate consolation of Israel
- You'll enjoy the beautifully constructed libretto by Charles Jennens, which was set to music by George Handel

Let's begin!

LESSON 1

Ok, before you actually begin, here are a few things you need to do:

1. Buy a copy of Handel's Messiah. You can also search for it on YouTube, but look for the full or complete version (it should run at least two hours - such as "G. F. Handel: Messiah HWV 56 (best performance).") We recommend using it as background music for the study, but it's a good listen any time of day.
2. Read the libretto located in the back of this study. It should take less than half an hour. (Amazing it takes over 2 hours to sing!)
3. Go back to the beginning of the libretto and try to follow Charles Jennens' train of thought from one passage to the next. It might be helpful to use a highlighter or colored pencil to draw the connections as you read.

NOW. Let's begin for real.

Read the first haftarah of consolation, Isaiah 40:1-26, in your favorite version of the Bible.

Read stanzas 1-12 of the Messiah libretto. Do you see a common theme between these words and Isaiah 40? Perhaps a character who shows up a few times?

Read John 1:1-34 and Mark 1:1-8. Who is the Voice Crying Out in the Wilderness and what is his message?

Read Matthew 11:13-14 and Mark 9:2-13. Who does Yeshua say John is? What is his role in the coming of Messiah?

The following prayer is recited during Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) each year. Many of the themes come straight from Scripture. Traditionally, the Voice is understood to be Elijah, heralding the coming of Messiah and the events surrounding it.

*Open the gates of heaven, and Your goodly treasure trove may You open for us.
Save us, do not let accusations be drawn out, and save us, G-d of our salvation.*

The voice of the herald heralds and proclaims:

*The strength of Your salvations comes, a voice - my Beloved, behold He comes -
heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*He comes among myriad bands, to stand upon the Mount of Olives
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*To the blast of the shofar, He draws near, beneath Him the mountain
shall be split
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*He knocks, He peers and He shines, and half the mountain moves from
the east
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*He has verified the words of His utterance, He has come, and all His holy
ones with Him
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*To all who walk the earth, a heavenly voice is heard on the earth
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*The seed borne from the womb, born like a child from its mother's innards
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*She delivered and gave birth: 'Who is this? Who has heard the likes of
this?
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*The pure One has done all these; and who has seen the likes of these?
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*Salvation and its moment were ordained. Can the earth deliver issue in a
single day?
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*He Who is mighty above and below, can a nation be born in a trice
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

*When the resplendent One redeems His nation, at evening time there will
be light
- heralds and proclaims.*

A voice -

Saviors shall ascend upon Mount Zion, for Zion has delivered and given birth
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
It is heard within all your boundaries, 'Expand the area of your tents!'*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
Set up your dwellings until Damasek, receive your sons and your daughters*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
Be joyous, O rose of Sharon, for those sleeping in Hebron have arisen*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
Turn to Me and you shall be saved - this very day, if you will but heed My voice*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
A man has sprouted, Tzemach (Branch) is his name, He is David himself*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
Arise, you who are covered with dust; awake and sing, you who lie in the dust*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
When He rules the city great with people, His king shall be a tower of salvations*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
The name of the wicked He will cause to be lost, but He will show kindness to His anointed, to David*
- heralds and proclaims.

*A voice –
Grant salvations to the eternal people, to David and to his descendants, forever*
- heralds and proclaims.

The voice of the herald heralds and proclaims.

From Hoshanos for Hoshana Rabbah, Artscroll Sukkos Machzor

Read the following passages:

Zechariah 14:1, 4-5

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

Malachi 4:1-6

Will we hear the Voice again? When?

LESSON 2

Read Isaiah 49:14-51:3 and read stanzas 18-31 of the *Messiah* libretto.

Messiah's suffering is alluded to in Isaiah 50 – how does that compare to the passages of Messiah's suffering quoted by the libretto?

Read Matthew 26:65-68 and 27:27-31 – do you see any parallels to the libretto passages and/or Isaiah 50?

What does Messiah's suffering accomplish and for whom?

There is some disagreement between Judaism and Christianity as to how the death of the righteous can provide atonement for others. However, this is a common teaching in Judaism. In Leviticus Rabbah, it says:

“R. Abba b. Abina enquired: For what reason was the section recording the death of Miriam placed in close proximity to that dealing with the ashes of the Red Heifer? Simply this, to teach that as the ashes of the Heifer effect atonement, so the death of the righteous effects atonement. [...] And whence that the death of the righteous effects atonement? From the fact that it is written, “And they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son” (2 Sam 21:14), and it is also written, “After that G-d was entreated for the land.””

Leviticus Rabbah 22:12

In Judaism, it is understood that passages that are juxtaposed to one another in the context of the Bible are linked and can comment on one another. Therefore, the above Jewish midrash (commentary) offers two connections between the death of the righteous and atonement. Miriam's death is compared to the nearby discussion of the ashes of the

red heifer to equate the atoning effect of the ashes with the effect of the righteous woman's death (Number 19 and 20:1).

But do we see an actual example of the death of the righteous resulting in atonement? Yes, the commentary states, and points to the death of the divinely-anointed King Saul and righteous Jonathan. After they die and are buried, atonement for the land is evidenced by G-d heeding prayer for the land.

In the libretto you read Isaiah 53:3-6. Now read Isaiah 53:7-9 – do you see any connections to the passage from Leviticus Rabbah above?

In Leviticus Rabbah, you read about the death of the righteous – referring to King Saul and his son Jonathan – but did you notice that verse also mentioned their burial? The famous Jewish commentary Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, in chapter 17, illuminates that point. According to a legend about the Biblical account, a famine in the land at the time had King David perplexed. First, he presumed it was due to idolatry, but the people investigated and no idolatry was being practiced. Then he thought it might be due to immorality, but again none was found. Finally, he asked the people to confirm if there was any bloodshed among them, and again none.

At last, King David asked G-d, who in the legend told him that it was King Saul who had played a role in making the people righteous, and yet he was then buried outside the land of Israel. So the famine was because of the dishonor of his grave. King David then led the people to bring Saul to a proper burial place in Israel.

Once Saul and Jonathan were properly buried, Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer says, "When the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that all Israel had displayed loving-kindness (to him), He was forthwith full of compassion, and He sent rain upon the land, as it is said, 'And after that G-d was entreated for the land.'"

The point of the story is the importance of burial. One of the unusual but poignant details about Messiah Yeshua's death is the burial given Him by the presumably wealthy Joseph of Arimathea – which was prophesied in the Isaiah 53 passage that you read. The great Pharisee Nicodemus also participates in giving Yeshua an honorable burial. Do you think this was more important than just a kind gesture?

While Yeshua's death and resurrection is atoning for all people who trust in Him, there is a particular group that is His mission's focus. Earlier, you read from Isaiah 49:14-51:3. Most of that passage is talking about the restoration of what (or whom)?

What does Messiah have to do with that? Read the below passages:

Zechariah 9:9-12

Matthew 1:20-23

Romans 11:1, 25-32

Matthew 10:5-7, 15:24

Messiah Yeshua's death and resurrection accomplished precious salvation for G-d's people and those who would join them. But has He fulfilled all the above passages? When do you think that will happen?

LESSON 3

Read Isaiah 54:11-55:5, and stanzas 18-21 of the *Messiah* libretto.

In Isaiah 55, it says:

*“Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.”*

Isaiah 55:2

What is Isaiah talking about? What is good? What satisfies?

What is good and perfect and holy and true? And Who is good and perfect and holy and true? (If you're unsure, read John 1.)

Read the following passages:

Psalm 19

Proverbs 3:13-18

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm 81:8-16

Matthew 11:25-30

Yeshua's encouragement to live righteously and find satisfaction in the ways of G-d doesn't end with His first coming to earth.

Read Revelation 22:12-17. (Do you recognize a phrase from Isaiah 55?)

Yeshua notes that He is the offspring of David. In Isaiah 55:3-4, G-d promises a Davidic leader for the people. But what will that leader achieve? Is the utopia He promises just spiritual?

Read Revelation 21:9-27 and compare it to Isaiah 54:11-17.

What parallels do you see in Revelation that appeared in Isaiah's prophecy? Do you think they are talking about the same thing? Why or why not? Is this "heavenly" or "earthly"? Is it "tangible" or "spiritual"? Or both?

Judaism, even without the additional prophecy in Revelation, sees much of the same meaning in this Isaiah passage. The Artscroll Chumash includes the following commentary note on Isaiah 54:11-55:5:

“In a lyrical prophecy of Messianic times, Isaiah speaks of a world where the currency will be righteousness, where the defense will be faith in G-d, and where sustenance will be bought with obedience to the word of G-d. The leader of Israel will be the offspring of David, and the nations of the world will flock to him and his nation—because all will recognize that G-d has glorified Israel.”

From commentary on Isaiah 54, Artscroll Chumash

Do you see the connection between the first half of the Isaiah passage and Revelation 21 - that discusses a divinely ruled holy city - and the second half and Revelation 22 - that references obedience and finding satisfaction in the words of G-d and His Messiah?

Look at it this way: who will enjoy the richness of the New Jerusalem? Will it be those who live as they see fit, or those who live for something – or Someone – else?

LESSON 4

Read Isaiah 51:12-52:12.

The Artscroll Jewish commentary for this passage says this:

“The prophet alternates between vivid descriptions of suffering and lyrical evocations of joy and fulfillment. For this is a microcosm of Israel’s history: no matter how dire the situation, hope is always at hand. Indeed, it is a principle of Israel’s faith that Messiah can come at any moment, and if so, while pondering the causes of exile and pain, we must always remember that G-d declares to us constantly, “It is I, I am He Who comforts you.””

From commentary on Isaiah 51, Artscroll Chumash

As seen in the commentary above, Messiah’s coming brings us from despair to great joy. While this passage in Isaiah refers to redemption in a general sense, that is but a snapshot of the ultimate redemption that will be seen in the reign of Messiah on earth.

Let’s look more closely at this passage from Isaiah 52:

*“How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who proclaims peace,
Who brings glad tidings of good things,
Who proclaims salvation,
Who says to Zion,
“Your G-d reigns!”
Your watchmen shall lift up their voices,
With their voices they shall sing together;
For they shall see eye to eye
When the LORD brings back Zion.
Break forth into joy, sing together,
You waste places of Jerusalem!
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
The LORD has made bare His holy arm
In the eyes of all the nations;
And all the ends of the earth shall see
The salvation of our God.”*

Isaiah 52:7-10

The literal “seeing” of the redemption is an important theme in Scripture. And for those of us with our eyes open, there’s a lot of redemption to be seen these days! In 1948, the State of Israel was reborn and in 1967 – almost 2,000 years after the Romans destroyed the Jewish Jerusalem – the city was retaken by Israel, including the holy Temple Mount.

However, that last point highlights the difference between a prophetic “appetizer” and the “main course”: The Temple Mount is back in Jewish hands, but they don’t have the

political freedom to rebuild the Temple. The exile is physically over, but spiritually and practically we are still awaiting the true redemption. So let's look at the full Scriptural plan and what we will someday "see".

Read the following passages and note the emphasis on seeing:

1 John 3:2-3

Zechariah 12:7-10

Isaiah 40:3-5

Isaiah 62:1-5

Matthew 24:27-31

One of the most important things in Jewish prophecies of Messiah is that He will physically bring back His people from exile to the land of Israel. In the Matthew passage above, Yeshua says He will do that, and the Jewish sage RAMBAM agrees that this act is a critical proof of the Messiah's identity:

"If he is further successful in rebuilding the Temple on its original site and gathering the dispersed of Israel, then his identity as Messiah is a certainty."

Aish.com

Can you see in these passages that the coming redemption is a physical event that can be seen with our eyes? Not only that, but it will also be something we hear with our ears.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day
That the Lord will thresh,
From the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt;
And you will be gathered one by one,
O you children of Israel.*

*So it shall be in that day:
The great trumpet will be blown;
They will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria,
And they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt,
And shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."*

Isaiah 27:12-13

A great ingathering and a trumpet?? Where have we heard that before??

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words."

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Resurrection from the dead is an integral part of the final redemption – it is the ultimate return from exile. Part Three of the *Messiah* libretto focuses on this especially. Read the third part and try to see this resurrection for what it truly is: bringing all of G-d's people together into His physical land, under His physical reign – the glorious Messianic reign.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For

this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." [...] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:51-54, 57

LESSON 5

Read Isaiah 54:1-10.

Notice the repeated references to marriage in this text? The Jewish sages teach in the Talmud that the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai was a marriage ceremony between G-d and Israel. The relationship between G-d and His people is that of a husband and wife, and this is where that was made official.

“And similarly, it says in another verse: “Go forth, daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon, upon the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of the gladness of his heart” (Song of Songs 3:11). This verse is explained as an allusion to special days: “On the day of his wedding”; this is the giving of the Torah through the second set of tablets on Yom Kippur. The name King Solomon in this context, which also means king of peace, is interpreted as a reference to G-d. “And on the day of the gladness of his heart”; this is the building of the Temple, may it be rebuilt speedily in our days.”

Talmud Ta’anit 26b

The Jewish wedding ceremony has, at its core, the ketubah (marriage contract). It’s a covenant document in which the groom promises to provide for his wife in all respects. The document is hers to keep. The Kabbalah (Jewish mystical writings) compares the Torah to a ketubah, a covenant between G-d and His people – the Groom and His bride. Sounds a lot like the “covenant of peace” in Isaiah 54 that G-d promises will never go away.

In fact, the entire Exodus / Sinai experience can be compared to a betrothal and wedding, as taught by the Jewish rabbis. They see the promises made by G-d to Israel in Egypt as a betrothal promise. There, G-d uses the traditional marriage verb “take” (as in, “he took her as a wife”) in saying,

“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your G-d, and you shall know that I am the L-rd your G-d, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”

Exodus 6:7

Mount Sinai – the place where the covenant is made – and the cloud that covered it are compared to the chuppah (marriage canopy) used in traditional Jewish weddings today.

In short, G-d courted Israel in Egypt and married her at Sinai.

This theme of marriage is repeatedly used in the writings of the prophets in the Bible. It’s not all positive – Israel is compared to an adulterous wife – but G-d is faithful, and not only keeps His marriage vows to her, but woos her back into a harmonious marriage.

Read the following passages:

Jeremiah 2:1-2

Hosea 2:14-23

Jeremiah 31:31-34

And staying with that covenant theme, read Matthew 26:17-19, 26-28.

Think of the “new” covenant like a renewal of marriage vows. Yeshua references this renewal of the covenant during the Passover Seder with His disciples. How appropriate, to renew your vows on the anniversary of your “wedding”!

As Yeshua notes, His role as Messiah is integral to this renewal. The *Messiah* libretto makes a similar connection.

Read the libretto, stanzas 1-12.

Did you notice the reference to the Gentiles? The inclusion of Gentiles is part of Messiah’s restoration of Israel. The devout Simeon drew a similar conclusion when he met Yeshua.

Read Luke 2:25-32.

In Isaiah 54, our haftarah passage, G-d promises to restore His perfect relationship with Israel, and that includes Israel's role in bringing in the nations.

*“Enlarge the place of your tent,
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;
do not hold back; lengthen your cords
and strengthen your stakes.
For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,
and your offspring will possess the nations
and will people the desolate cities.”*

Isaiah 54:2-3

Why do we need to enlarge the tent? Because the Gentiles will be there, too!

*“He also said,

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.
May God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant.””*

Genesis 9:26-27

Read Acts 15:13-18.

That sounds like a big tent! Not to worry – like a husband providing a home for his wife, Messiah has prepared a place for us.

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

John 14:1-3

LESSON 6

Read Isaiah 60:1-22 and then read stanzas 9-18 of the libretto.

“Arise! Shine! Your light has arrived and the glory of the L-rd has shined upon you.”

Isaiah 60:1

Light! Who or what is the light? Read the following passages:

John 8:12

John 9:4-5

Matthew 5:14-16

But wait. Is it Messiah Who is the Light, or is it us? Or is it both? Or is it Messiah in us? Read these passages:

Psalms 27:1

Psalms 37:5-6

1 John 1:5-7

This idea of light and walking with G-d is not new. Aish.com notes that the Zohar (Jewish mystical work) says that originally Adam and Eve were covered in light. When they sinned with the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they lost that covering of light. G-d, in his mercy, clothed them with skin (Genesis 3). Rabbi Meir, commenting on this, notes that the word for light in Hebrew is just one letter different from the word for skin – and they actually sound the same (“ohr”).

In other words, Adam before his sin was connected to G-d so closely he literally shone brilliantly. Commentary from Rabenu Bachayeh links this to Moses reaching a similar peak in his connection with G-d at Mount Sinai, where he shines as well. Moses meets with G-d at Mount Sinai, and the skin – there’s that word “ohr” again – of his face glows with light (Exodus 34:29-35). Light and closeness to G-d are related, as seen in these accounts from Genesis and Exodus.

When Messiah is in us (when we act as He would), we are closer to G-d and we are shining His Light. Like a lantern, G-d uses us to broaden the reach of these Divine Rays. This was always His plan – to use His people to reach the world.

Read Deuteronomy 4:5-8.

Right here at the beginning of the Bible, G-d lays out His vision: His people keeping His commandments, drawing the nations to Him. The message at the end of the Bible is the same: joining Israel to serve G-d.

Read Revelation 21:22-22:5.

“Then the sons of strangers shall build your city walls, and their kings shall minister to you; though I struck you in My indignation, in My favor have I been compassionate to you. And your gates shall be open continuously, day and night, they shall not be closed to bring to you the wealth of nations, and their kings under escort. For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve you shall be lost, and the nations utterly destroyed. [...] You shall no longer have need of the sun for light of day, nor for brightness the moon to illuminate for you; rather, HaShem shall be unto you an eternal light and your G-d for your glory. Never again shall your sun set, nor shall your moon be withdrawn; for HaShem shall be unto you an eternal light, and ended shall be the days of your mourning. And your people, they are all righteous; forever shall they inherit the land; a brand of my planting, My handiwork, for Me to glory in.”

Isaiah 60:10-12, 19-21

So here's the plan: G-d's light in us draws the nations to join us, like moths to a flame, in His kingdom, where He is our light forever. It's global utopia, through Messiah, through obedience to G-d's commandments (Torah). It's something you definitely want to be a part of – let your light so shine!

LESSON 7

Read Isaiah 61:10-63:9.

A wedding is coming! And it's not just the wedding of the century – it's the wedding of all of time! The culmination of G-d's plan will be to unite His people with Him through Messiah Yeshua in a marriage-like event. And as in marriage, after the celebration we will live with Him forever.

“I will rejoice with the Lord; my soul shall exult with my God, for He has attired me with garments of salvation, with a robe of righteousness He has enwrapped me; like a bridegroom, who, priestlike, dons garments of glory, and like a bride, who adorns herself with her jewelry... As a young man lives with a virgin, so shall your children live in you, and the rejoicing of a bridegroom over a bride shall your God rejoice over you.”

Isaiah 61:10, 62:5

The marriage analogy is directly connected to Messiah. He is the bridegroom!

“To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of Him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.”

John 3:27-30

This marriage language is also replete in Yeshua's words about the end of time.

Read the following passages:

Luke 12:35-40

Matthew 25:1-13

Matthew 22:1-14

Do you notice the consistent transition from a joyous wedding feast to great judgment? This pattern was evident in the Isaiah haftarah passage, where we see a celebration of G-d reuniting with His people, and then the imagery of the winepress of the judgment of G-d on the wicked. This is then echoed in these parables, and also in the book of Revelation.

Read Revelation 19 (yes, the whole chapter).

There are two suppers in this chapter. Check your invitation – are you invited to the right one?

The link between the joy of marriage and judgment might seem odd, but this is the revelation of who G-d truly is. Rabbi Jeremy Gimpel, in his commentary on the Book of Joshua, says that Israel reached the heights of prophecy at the parting of the Red Sea, because they saw G-d's perfect judgment on the Egyptians.

Rabbi Gimpel says that according to Jewish tradition, the Egyptians' punishment was "measure for measure" – if an Egyptian had broken the arm of an Israelite slave, his arm was broken in the sea and so on. Seeing the punishment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous is to perfectly see the justice of G-d and the harmony of His mercy and holiness.

In other words, they saw G-d for all of who He really is (not dimly in a mirror, but clearly, face-to-face, as it were) and therefore could sing a joyous song of prophecy declaring His greatness.

That theme of the just and conquering G-d ruling over earth and leading to joyous bliss and song was captured beautifully by Charles Jennens in Handel's *Messiah*.

Read stanzas 40-44 in the libretto.

The Song of Glory, prayed by Jews on Shabbat, portrays the divine paradox of G-d's justice and His love.

*“They symbolized You in many varied visions; yet You are a Unity containing all the allegories.
They envisioned in You agedness and virility, and the hair of Your head as hoary and jet black.
Aged on judgment day and virile on the day of battle, like a man of war whose powers are many. [...]
...He is near to me when I call to Him.
He is white and crimson; His garment will be bloody red, when He tramples as in a press on His coming from Edom.”*

From Song of Glory, Artscroll Siddur

*“Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.
Lovingkindness and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

Psalm 85:9-10

Messiah the Bridegroom is coming! But Messiah the Judge is coming, too. They are one and the same – are you ready to meet Him?

.....

So, now that we have walked through seven Shabbatot of Consolation...here we finally are at Rosh HaShanah. Are we not consoled??

It began with a voice, calling for repentance and heralding the first coming of King Messiah. But it's not enough to just experience personal salvation; G-d's plan is to restore His people Israel, to use us to shine His light to bring the nations to serve Him also, and ultimately celebrate the greatest wedding feast of all time with Him.

What is the ultimate consolation? How can we enter the celebration of Rosh HaShanah (Yom HaTeruah) with joy after the sadness of Tisha B'Av? Messiah – we have Messiah. But it's the totality of Messiah: His mission, His purpose, His role, His salvation, His judgment, His kingship.

HALLELUJAH!

HANDEL'S MESSIAH LIBRETTO

BY CHARLES JENNENS

PART ONE

1. SINFONIA (OVERTURE)

2. ACCOMPAGNATO

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness; prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

(Isaiah 40:1-3)

3. AIR

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry moutain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

(Isaiah 40:4)

4. CHORUS

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

(Isaiah 40:5)

5. ACCOMPAGNATO

Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts: Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

And I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come.

(Haggai 2:6-7)

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

(Malachi 3:1)

6. AIR

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire.

(Malachi 3:2)

7. CHORUS

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

(Malachi 3:3)

8. RECITATIVE

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us.

(Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)

9. AIR AND CHORUS

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God!

(Isaiah 40:9)

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

(Isaiah 60:1)

10. ACCOMPAGNATO

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

(Isaiah 60:2-3)

11. AIR

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

(Isaiah 9:2)

12. CHORUS

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 9:6)

13. PIFA (“PASTORAL SYMPHONY”)

14. RECITATIVE / ACCOMPAGNATO

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

(Luke 2:8)

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

(Luke 2:9)

15. RECITATIVE

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

(Luke 2:10-11)

16. ACCOMPAGNATO

And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

(Luke 2:13)

17. CHORUS

"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men."

(Luke 2:14)

18. AIR

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.

(Zechariah 9:9-10)

19. RECITATIVE

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

(Isaiah 35:5-6)

20. AIR (OR DUET)

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; and He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

(Isaiah 40:11)

Come unto Him, all ye that labour, come unto Him that are heavy laden, and He will give you rest.

Take his yoke upon you, and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

(Matthew 11:28-29)

21. CHORUS

His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

(Matthew 11:30)

PART TWO

22. CHORUS

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

(John 1:29)

23. AIR

He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

(Isaiah 53:3)

He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting.

(Isaiah 53:6)

24. CHORUS

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows!

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

(Isaiah 53:4-5)

25. CHORUS

And with His stripes we are healed.

(Isaiah 53:5)

26. CHORUS

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53:6)

27. ACCOMPAGNATO

All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying:

(Psalm 22: 7)

28. CHORUS

"He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him."

(Psalm 22: 8)

29. ACCOMPAGNATO

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart: He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort him.

(Psalm 69:20)

30. ARIOSO

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

(Lamentations 1:12)

31. ACCOMPAGNATO

He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken.

(Isaiah 53:8)

32. AIR

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

(Psalm 16:10)

33. CHORUS

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

(Psalm 24:7-10)

34. RECITATIVE

Unto which of the angels said He at any time: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?"

(Hebrews 1:5)

35. CHORUS

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

(Hebrews 1:6)

36. AIR

Thou art gone up on high; Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea, even from Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

(Psalm 68:18)

37. CHORUS

The Lord gave the word; great was the company of the preachers.

(Psalm 68:11)

38. AIR

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

(Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15)

39. CHORUS

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.

(Romans 10:18; Psalm 19:4)

40. AIR

Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed.

(Psalm 2:1-2)

41. CHORUS

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.

(Psalm 2:3)

42. RECITATIVE

He that dwelleth in Heav'n shall laugh them to scorn; The Lord shall have them in derision.

(Psalm 2:4)

43. AIR

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

(Psalm 2:9)

44. CHORUS

Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

(Revelation 19:6)

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

(Revelation 11:15)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

(Revelation 19:16)

Hallelujah!

PART THREE

45. AIR

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

(Job 19:25-26)

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

(I Corinthians 15:20)

46. CHORUS

Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

(I Corinthians 15:21-22)

47. ACCOMPAGNATO

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

(I Corinthians 15:51-52)

48. AIR

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

(I Corinthians 15:52-53)

49. RECITATIVE

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

(I Corinthians 15:54)

50. DUET

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

(I Corinthians 15:55-56)

51. CHORUS

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(I Corinthians 15:57)

52. AIR

If God be for us, who can be against us?

(Romans 8:31)

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us.

(Romans 8:33-34)

53. CHORUS

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Amen.

(Revelation 5:12-14)

Bibliography:

Messiah Libretto:

<http://opera.stanford.edu/iu/libretti/messiah.htm>

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 17:

https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.17.13?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en

Aish.com:

<http://www.aish.com/jl/li/m/48944241.html>

Chabad.org:

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/477336/jewish/The-Ketubah-Marriage-Contract.htm

https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/1496872/jewish/Counting-Toward-the-Wedding-Canopy.htm