



This month's study with  
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*“But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”*

—Daniel 12:4



## Prophecy II: God's Word on the End of Days

In Maimonides' 13 principles of faith, the 12th-century rabbi and scholar wrote, “I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, nevertheless I anticipate *every day* that he will come.” In many ways, for the Jewish people, the End of Days are *all days*. We believe, and have believed for centuries, that the Messiah might appear on any given day.

According to Jewish tradition, one of the first questions a person is asked after they pass away is, “Did you anticipate redemption?” In other words: Did you long for and look out for the Messiah? Were you on the lookout for the End of Days?

In that spirit, over the centuries many Jews have slept with a small packed bag under their beds so that if the Messiah arrived they would be ready to greet him immediately. Elderly Jews slept with their canes next to their beds so they, too, wouldn't miss this momentous occasion.

If you visit the city of Safed in Israel, you may hear about the old woman who lived next to an alley said to be part of the path the Messiah will take upon his arrival. She had a piece of cake and something to drink ready for him every day, just in case that day was the day.

Clearly, Jews are very much focused on and eager for the arrival of the Messiah. Yet, the *Talmud*, Judaism's Oral Tradition, teaches that if you are in the middle of planting a tree and someone tells you that the Messiah has arrived, you are to first

finish planting the tree and then go out to greet him. Why?

Planting a tree signifies planning — doing what we need to do now so that we can make the world a better place until the Messiah arrives. The idea is that while we must anticipate the End of Days, we must also be firmly planted in the present and continue to live godly lives. In the Christian Bible, the Apostle Peter taught this principle to the early church, “*The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply . . .*” (1 Peter 4:7–8).

With that said, as world events unfold, we must question if perhaps the very days we are living in right now are, indeed, different from other times in history. Is there an end time — a time by which the Messiah *must* arrive and the world as we know it must change? Moreover, if so, is there reason to speculate that we are living through those times now?

Join us in this month's *Limmud* study as we look at prophecies in the Bible that tell us about the End of Days. Together, we will explore both Jewish and Christian teachings on the End of Days, and examine the signs that we might be living through them now. Together, we will explore the times we are witnessing and how we can best prepare as Christians and Jews for the much-awaited Messiah.

*Rabbi Eckstein*



## A New Beginning

*“Your sun will never set again,  
and your moon will wane no more;  
the LORD will be your everlasting light,  
and your days of sorrow will end.”  
– Isaiah 60:20*

**F**or all the attention that the End of Days gets, it would be appropriate for us also to consider what might happen *after* the “end.” Isn’t it true that after every end comes a new beginning?”

The Jewish sages provide us with a wonderful perspective on viewing the events predicted to occur at the end of time to help prepare us for what is to come. They liken the trials and tribulations that will occur during the End of Days to birthing pains. Jesus described the events of the End Times in the Christian Bible in the following way, “*All these are the beginning of birth pains*” (Matthew 24:8), echoing what the prophet Hosea alluded to in Hosea 13:13 when he wrote: “*Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him . . .*”

My daughters tell me a woman is able to withstand the pain of childbirth because she focuses on the beautiful baby that will result from all her suffering. The mother’s knowledge that soon she will hold this baby in her arms gives her the strength to push that baby out so that the pain will end and the joy of new life can begin.

We’ve all heard the concept of Armageddon — an End of Days scenario where there is much death and destruction. It has its roots in Ezekiel chapters 38–39, which speaks of the war of Gog and Magog. God said: “*And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel . . . that My fury will show in My face*” (Ezekiel 38:18, NKJV). The Christian Bible also mentions this last great battle when, according to the Apostle John’s prophecy, in the final days Satan will be released from prison and “*will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle*” (Revelation 20:8).

This war is shrouded in mystery, and Judaism allows for many interpretations of what this war may look like, including the possibility that we may avoid it altogether. Among those interpretations, some say that the war will be physical in nature, similar to the Armageddon scenario mentioned above. To that end, the sages wrote, “When you see nations fighting each other, look toward the Redemption.” Others maintain that it will be a spiritual war fought within every individual. The *Talmud* explained: “when you see a generation overwhelmed by many troubles as by a river, await him [the Messiah].”

In short, we are not sure how the “end” will play out. However, we do know much about what our new beginning will look like. Both Jews and Christians look to a redeemed world where everything is new. The promise of a new heaven and new earth can be found in Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13, and Revelation 21:1. We know that there will be world

peace, as we read in Isaiah 2:4, “*They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.*

*Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*” In the Christian Bible, in the book of Revelation, the Apostle John described this new world as a place where God Himself will dwell and where “*There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away*” (Revelation 21:4)

We know that all people will recognize the one true God, as we read in Isaiah 2:2, “*In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.*” Again, the Apostle John described the new temple in the book of Revelation as a place where “*The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it*” (Revelation 21:24).

No longer will people make material matters their main pursuit, but connecting to God and understanding Him will be their main occupation. As we read in Habakkuk 2:14, “*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*”

Some sages maintain that the messianic era will be unlike anything we can imagine, while others maintain that the world will be exactly as it is now with the exception of world peace and global recognition of God. Of course, even if world peace and a global recognition of the one true God were the only differences, they would be such monumental changes that they would completely alter the destiny of humanity.

The prophet Isaiah painted this beautiful word picture of this time for us:

*The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
and a little child will lead them. — Isaiah 11:6*

May that day come soon!

## think about it...

1. What would the messianic era look like to you based on all we have learned together, and what you may have learned in your own Bible study?
2. What is one aspect of the messianic era that you anticipate the most?
3. How might you live differently if you knew for sure that we are



# Is There an End Time?

*“As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”*

– Daniel 12:13

**T**he *Talmud* tells a story about Rabbi Yehoshuah that occurred nearly 2,000 years ago. The rabbi was communicating with Elijah the prophet. He asked Elijah when the Messiah would come. Elijah suggested that Rabbi Yehoshuah ask the Messiah himself, and gave him directions on where to find him. Rabbi Yehoshuah did indeed find the Messiah and asked his question: “When will you come?” The Messiah replied, “Today!”

However, the Messiah did not come on that particular day, and when Rabbi Yehoshuah next talked with Elijah, he complained that the Messiah lied to him. “He told me that he would come today!” the rabbi explained. “He told you the truth!” claimed Elijah. “He will come today: *Today, if only you would hear his voice . . .*” (Psalm 95:7).

This story speaks to one of Judaism’s strongly held beliefs: that human beings can influence the coming of the Messiah. In Judaism, it is a fundamental belief that our good deeds and obedience will bring the time of the Messiah closer. However, does that mean that we are destined to wait and wait until we get it right? Can this waiting go on forever?

In the Jewish tradition, there most definitely is the concept of a final end. It is first mentioned in Genesis 49:1, when Jacob was on his deathbed. We read: “*Then Jacob called for his sons and said: ‘Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come.’*” Those “*days to come*” are understood to mean the end of this world; in other words, the advent of the messianic era.

Most Jewish commentators believe that Jacob wanted to reveal the date by which the Messiah must come, but God made him forget it so that he would not reveal the secret. Others maintain that Jacob did reveal the time, but that it is encoded in the verses that follow. Either way, this passage is considered an indication that the concept of an End of Days does exist.

The Christian Bible also clearly refers to the End Times. In Matthew 24, Jesus described many of the signs indicating

that the End Times were approaching, with references to wars, earthquakes, famines, false messiahs, and prophets. But he also made it clear that no one – “*not even the angels in heaven*” – knows when that hour or day will come (Matthew 24:36). In fact, in the Christian tradition, there is an entire branch of theology known as eschatology, which is the study of what the Bible says is going to happen in the End Times. Depending on the denomination, there are different approaches to understanding the events of the final days and when they will occur based on interpretation of biblical prophecies.

Judaism also allows for multiple End of Days scenarios. For example, Isaiah Chapter 60 describes the messianic period, and at its conclusion, we read: “*I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly*” (Isaiah 60:22). The first possibility for the messiah’s arrival is “*in its time*,” a predestined time by which the Messiah must come no matter what. The other possibility is “*I will do this swiftly*,” meaning God will bring the Messiah immediately if we are deserving, and therefore, his coming is not bound by a predetermined time.

The sages explain further: If the Messiah comes at the pre-determined date, he will come “*lowly and riding on a donkey*” (Zechariah 9:9). In the Christian faith, this passage is considered an example of prophecy that Jesus fulfilled when he entered Jerusalem on a donkey and was hailed as king. In Judaism, however, this passage is seen as meaning that the messianic era will be ushered in through a slow, painful process that will involve much confusion and suffering. It will appear to many as though God does not exist at all or is “asleep at the wheel,” though we know that God neither sleeps nor slumbers (Psalm 121:4).

Jews believe that if we are deserving of the Messiah at an earlier date, he will arrive as described in Daniel 7:13, “*coming with the clouds of heaven*.” If this is the situation, the Messiah will arrive with joy and mercy, with miracles and wonder.

According to Jewish thought, the Messiah will arrive no matter what. But how we make the transition to the next phase of human history is largely up to us. If we as a people return to God in repentance, we can bring about a joyful and peaceful transition instead of the opposite. In either scenario, Judaism encourages us to be personally ready for His coming as though He might arrive at any moment.

Likewise, in the Christian Bible, Jesus urged his followers to be ready for the End Times by living obediently and caring for others: “*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come*” (Matthew 24:42).

## living in the End Times and that the Messiah would arrive this week?

4. God placed each of us in the world at this time for a reason. What might be the reason that you are living at this time? What contribution can you personally make to our world during these times?
5. Nations spend trillions of dollars on war and on being prepared for war. How might our world be different with peace?





## Signs of the Times

*“For the revelation awaits an appointed time;  
it speaks of the end  
and will not prove false.  
Though it linger, wait for it;  
it will certainly come  
and will not delay.” — Habakkuk 2:3*

There is a growing feeling among both Christians and Jews that we are in what Judaism calls the *ikvata d'meshicah*, “the footsteps of the Messiah.” It is a term borrowed from Psalm 89:51 – “*the taunts with which your enemies, LORD, have mocked, with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one*” – and is a reference to the time period immediately before the coming of the Messiah, when we are so close that we can “hear” his footsteps approaching. It is a time that many believe we are in right now.

In the Jewish tradition, there are numerous signs that identify this time period. Some are based on biblical prophecies, and others have been passed down through the Oral Tradition for generations.

Perhaps there is no greater sign that we are in the End Times than the ingathering of the exiles and the restoration of Israel after nearly 2,000 years. In fact, the *Talmud* states explicitly that when we see the Lost Tribes of Israel coming back to Israel, we can be sure that the end is near.

Consider that in the last few decades, we have found the Tribe of Manasseh in India, and they have come home to Israel. We have found the tribe of Dan in Ethiopia, and they, too, have made Israel their home. We are constantly discovering groups from far off places who believe that they are descendants of the ancient Hebrews. Miraculously, they are resurfacing now and coming back to their roots, back to Israel.

The very fact that Israel exists after two millennia of exile is another indication of the End of Days. In the book of Amos, God promised: “*I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant*

*Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them*” (9:14-15).

The prophet Zephaniah also spoke of the day when the Hebrew language would be revived: “*For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech*” (3:9 ESV). That pure speech is Hebrew. No other ancient language on earth has ever been revived. A hundred years ago, Hebrew was all but dead – forgotten over the centuries of exile. Today it is the spoken language of modern Israel.

In Isaiah 35:1-2, Isaiah prophesied: “*The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.*” As promised, Israel has been transformed from a barren wilderness into a beautiful and fruitful land. The *Talmud* teaches that when the land of Israel is in bloom once again, this also is a sure sign that the redemption is near.

Undoubtedly, the Messiah’s footsteps are getting closer and growing louder. However, no one can say for sure if redemption will come next week, in a year, or in decades. In the Christian Bible, the Apostle Peter reminded the early church, “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief*” (2 Peter 3:10)

Christianity and Judaism both encourage us to anticipate the Messiah’s coming by concentrating on being godly people and doing acts of kindness. In so doing, we will hasten the end so that we may start our new beginning. As Peter instructed in the Christian Bible, “*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming*” (2 Peter 3:11–12).

## apply it...

1. **PARTNER IN PROPHECY.** Help fulfill biblical prophecy by supporting *The Fellowship’s On Wings of Eagles* program to bring Jews home to Israel.
2. **SEE CHALLENGES AS TESTS.** Whatever challenges you may be facing currently, try to see them as tests crafted just for you during the End of Days. Consider how that might affect the way you approach difficulties in your life.
3. **READ THE BIBLE.** Study the prophecies in the Bible concerning the End of Days. Allow these words to motivate and inspire you. We are living in amazing times. Let that excite you and guide your actions.
4. **GET READY.** While some people are preparing for the “end of the world” by stockpiling canned food and weapons, the Jewish and Christian traditions teach that the way to prepare for messianic times is by doing good and living godly lives. Prepare by improving yourself a bit each day.
5. **LIVE WITH URGENCY.** Many people live with a nagging feeling that they should take a certain action, reach out to a particular person, or make a serious life change. If, indeed, the End of Days is near, the time to take action is now! Don’t wait until later to do what you know you should be doing now.