

# 6,000 Year Teaching

## How close do you believe we are to the Biblical year 6,000?

Throughout the broad Messianic community, composing Messianic Judaism, the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, the Two-House sub-movement, and various Hebrew/Hebraic Roots associations—is a wide and firm adherence to the 6,000-year doctrine. This teaching advocates that there are 6,000 years allocated to human history, with six 1,000-year periods corresponding to the six “days” or *yamim* (יָמִים) of Creation, with a seventh 1,000-year period representing the Sabbath and the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah. With such a seventh 1,000-year period representing the Millennial reign of Yeshua, then the Messiah’s return should occur sometime around “the Biblical year 6,000.”

The 6,000-year doctrine is almost seldom questioned by today’s Messianic people, given how any reevaluation would necessarily involve considering some different perspectives of Genesis chs. 1-4. Since 2008, Outreach Israel Ministries has actually been one of the few voices which have been somewhat critical of the 6,000-year doctrine, not just in terms of its presumed Biblical support, but also how it has been used as an unnecessary deterrent for discussing various Creation issues in Genesis chs. 1-11.

During our family’s time in the Messianic movement since 1995, a full two decades, there have been a great number of predictions released relating to the so-called “Biblical year 6,000,” which have been intended to calculate the return of Yeshua the Messiah. **All of the predictions which have been offered**, as of today in 2015, **have seriously failed to one degree or another.**

Eventually, when you have witnessed dozens of theories released on the “Biblical year 6,000” and human attempts to calculate the year of the Messiah’s return, which have all proven to be faulty, it is only reasonable to wonder whether the various Biblical passages that are offered in support of this theory, really do support it. We have come to the conclusion that the Bible itself is completely mute about a year 6,000, and instead focuses God’s people on various spiritual and/or sociological phenomena as being the clues to consider regarding the Second Coming. The 6,000-year doctrine, while very popular throughout today’s Messianic movement, is something that is a bit too “packaged,” and does not stand up well to scrutiny.

There is little denying that anyone who examines Jewish history, will see that the 6,000-year doctrine was a view of many ancient Sages and Rabbis:

“And Scripture says, ‘For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when they are past’ (Psa. 90:4). [A day stands for a thousand years.] *A Tannaite authority of the house of Elijah [said], ‘For six thousand years the world will exist. For two thousand it will be desolate, two thousand years [will be the time of] Torah, and two thousand years will be the days of the Messiah. But on account of our numerous sins what has been lost [of those years, in which the Messiah should have come but has not come] has been lost’* (b.*Sanhedrin* 97a-97b).<sup>1</sup>

We would never reject a teaching like the 6,000-year doctrine via the logic that it is “Rabbinic”; we would reject a teaching like the 6,000-year doctrine because it does not hold up to Scripture, anthropology, and science.

One of the major places for Tanach substantiation for the 6,000-year doctrine comes from **Psalm 90:4**, which states, “For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or *as a watch in the night.*” Many find support here for the premise that a 1,000-year period can represent a “day” on a “cosmic week” of human history. Others, however, particularly looking at some of the wider statements appearing in Psalm 90, would conclude that God’s timelessness contrasted to human transitoriness is instead what is to be considered:

“Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man back into dust and say, ‘Return, O children of men.’ For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or *as a watch in the night.* You have swept them away like a flood,

<sup>1</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary.*

they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away” (Psalm 90:2-6, NASU).

Interestingly enough, human transitoriness in view of an Eternal God, is precisely the perspective taken by Glenn D. Blank in the reflective commentary available in the *TLV Psalms*:

“Few people like to think about death. Many of us are content to avoid it. We extol the virtues of God’s healing power. We hope our faith in God will hold it off a while. But the truth is (3), ‘You turn mankind back to dust’—just as our first father Adam was made of dust, so we return. But the poet, representing all humanity, is determined to dialog with his Maker about it—‘from generation to generation’ (1) with ‘from everlasting to everlasting’ (2). Creatures of time dare to exchange words with the Eternal One. Then comes a line famous for the paradoxical way God looks at time (4): ‘For a thousand years in Your sight are like a day just passing by.’ He might as well have said a moment snapping His fingers. Then again, at least a day gives the Eternal One the luxury of taking it in. Meanwhile, on earth and in time, human life is compared to grass that sprouts up in the morning and withers in the evening (5-6)—in a land on the edge of the desert, wild flowers perish quickly.”<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion rightly drawn from the statements of the Psalmist, is hardly something about Biblical chronology—but instead about God’s supremacy and timelessness in view of mortal limitations and inferiorities. A thousand Earthly years do not seem that long at all to the Almighty, Eternal One.

The Apostle Peter does reference the sentiment of Psalm 90:4 when he asserts, “But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day” (2 Peter 3:8, NASU). Is Peter referencing a kind of specific date calendar, on which the Lord has set events for human history—or is Peter also speaking of God’s timelessness? Certainly while Peter has the judgment of God in mind (2 Peter 3:10-14), too many overlook these critical words:

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9, NASU).

The *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, a resource which would be widely friendly to the 6,000-year doctrine, does not actually reference this in its commentary on 2 Peter 3:8. Instead, it is stated,

“God is present everywhere, and is not limited by time and space. He is not bound by the normal flow of time, as humans experience it. A thousand years is but a brief span to One who inhabits eternity; conversely, a day with the One who knows all things at all times might seem like a thousand years to finite mankind.”<sup>3</sup>

Our Heavenly Father is very patient when it comes to judging the human race. While He is absolutely faithful, “not slow in keeping his promise” (2 Peter 3:8, NIV), He still desires all to come to repentance. It is perfectly valid for one to ask whether or not Peter would allow, or even subject God, to a 6,000-year time calendar for humanity—when his own view was that God is going to be patient, for as many as possible to be allowed an opportunity to be saved.

**Hosea 6:2** is also commonly offered as support for the 6,000-year doctrine, as the Prophet says, “He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him” (NASU). Using the one day=1,000 years presupposition, many assume that this refers to the past 2,000 years of history since the First Coming of Yeshua, and that the world stands on the brink of the “third day,” i.e., the Millennium. But we do have to ask ourselves whether or not this view is consistent to the larger scope of Hosea’s prophecies, which specifically concern the redemption and salvation of Israel:

“Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth” (Hosea 6:1-3, NASU).

The answer of “He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him” is given regarding how Ephraim and Judah (Hosea 6:4) are to be restored before the Lord. Hosea is clear to say, “like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously against Me” (Hosea 6:7, NASU), indicating that Israel stands before God as a representative of all humanity. The issue in Hosea 6 is actually not the Second Coming and some long term future end-time scenario, it is rather how Israel can be restored to

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Seif, Glenn Blank, and Paul Wilbur, *TLV Psalms With Commentary: Hope and Healing in the Hebrew Scriptures* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2012), 240.

<sup>3</sup> Tim LaHaye, ed., *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, KJV (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2000), 1343.

faithful covenant status before God no different than how Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, whose descendants (all humanity) also must be restored.

The answer to Israel's deliverance is found in two days, and a third day. Various evangelical Christian commentators, far from associating Hosea 6:2 with some kind of end of the world timetable, have instead referenced an association of Hosea 6:2 with a need to be identified with *the Messiah* in His death, burial, and resurrection:

- Derek Kidner: "Nothing short of resurrection is fit to describe such need and such salvation; and while the mention of *the third day* would sound to Hosea's hearers as the mere equivalent of 'very soon', the prophet may have spoken more significantly than he knew [cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12]; for it is only in Christ's resurrection that His people are effectively raised up, as both Paul and Peter teach us [1 Corinthians 15:17; Ephesians 2:5ff; 1 Peter 1:3]. And when Paul finds, apparently, not only the resurrection but even 'the third day' to be 'in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:4), it is at least possible—though one should put it no higher—that this passage as well as 'the sign of Jonah' was in his mind."<sup>4</sup>
- Peter C. Craigie: "The brief hope of the 'third day' had no reality in Hosea's time; nor, from a strictly human perspective, would it have much hope for our time. For we, like Hosea's audience, have a deeply stubborn streak, compounded by a willful blindness to the nature of our position. Yet in the early Church, a ray of messianic light was seen in these words of the ancient prophet; Paul writes to the Church in Corinth 'that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:4), alluding no doubt to Hosea's words. It is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ which imparts new meaning to the ancient message, transforming its tone of despair to one of hope for all human beings."<sup>5</sup>
- David Alan Hubbard: "Such language anticipates the clearer accounts of national resurrection after death in exile or through persecution found in Ezekiel chapter 37 and Daniel 12:1-2. Hosea 6:2 may have been part of what Paul alluded to in his resurrection argument (1 Cor. 15:4)..."<sup>6</sup>
- Duane A. Garrett: "It is impossible for the Christian to read this text and not wonder if it foreshadows Christ's resurrection on the third day...The New Testament does not explicitly cite this verse, but 1 Cor 15:4 asserts that Christ arose on the third day 'according to the Scriptures,' and no other text speaks of the third day in the fashion that Hos 6:2 does."<sup>7</sup>

When seeing the Hosea 6:2 admonition, "He will heal us after two days; on the third day He will raise us up and we will live before Him" (ATS), many have made an understandable connection to 1 Corinthians 15:4: "and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The prophecy of Hosea 6:2, requiring a redeemed Israel to be identified with the Messiah in His death, burial, and resurrection, would be akin to the Apostle Paul's words, "do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Messiah Yeshua have been baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3, NASU). The answer for the salvation of Israel is to be found in the Messiah's resurrection and atonement for not only Israel proper's sin, but sin going all the way back to Adam!<sup>8</sup>

The common passages used in support of the 6,000-year doctrine (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8; Hosea 6:2) can be demonstrated to have alternative meanings which do not at all require Yeshua the Messiah to return on, or even around, an apparent "Biblical year 6,000." But, there are other things that need to be considered regarding a 6,000-year chronology for human history.

Many point to the genealogical charts of Genesis chs. 5 and 11, adding up the lifespan numbers of the people listed, and believe that human history extends for approximately 6,000 years. But the Biblical text itself does not add up any of the numbers, and the actual numbers for the ages of these people differs substantially among the witnesses of the Hebrew Masoretic Text, Greek Septuagint, and Samaritan Pentateuch. Furthermore, if Genesis chs.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Kidner, *The Message of Hosea* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981), 66.

<sup>5</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Daily Study Bible Series: Twelve Prophets, Volume 1—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), pp 46-47.

<sup>6</sup> David Alan Hubbard, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Hosea* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 125.

<sup>7</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *New American Commentary: Hosea, Joel*, Vol 19a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 158.

<sup>8</sup> For a further review, consult the article "The Last Seder and Yeshua's Passover Chronology" by J.K. McKee, appearing in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*.

5 and 11 are two telescoped genealogies as is consistent with Ancient Near Eastern forms of reckoning, how many actual people are missing from these lists? If parts of these lists go from great-great-great grandfather to great-great-great grandson, via an *A begat the line resulting in B* formula, human history will then be considerably longer than 6,000 years. Many conservative, Old Testament scholars, like K.A. Kitchen<sup>9</sup> and Walter C. Kaiser,<sup>10</sup> do believe that the Genesis chs. 5 and 11 genealogies are telescoped. This would make human civilization to be tens of thousands of years old, to be sure. A fair number of today's Messianic people, but also leaders and teachers, are, unfortunately, unaware of these sorts of factors.<sup>11</sup>

What also makes the validity or non-validity of the 6,000-year doctrine a very difficult subject to consider in today's Messianic community, are discussions which have remained largely silent and untouched on the origins of the universe and humankind.<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of today's Messianic people are Young Earth Creationists, who believe that the universe was created in six 24-hour days, approximately 6,000 years ago. From time to time, though, one will hear reports of a few Messianic Jewish teachers ascribing to Theistic Evolution, believing that the human race came about via a God-directed, Darwinian natural selection. This also would probably mean that the Genesis 1-11 accounts of Eden and the Flood are redacted from some Mesopotamian mythology, with Adam and Eve not being two actual people.

An abandonment of the 6,000-year doctrine and a 6,000-year chronology for the human race, hardly means that one has to be a Theistic Evolutionist. A third view that has emerged over the past three to four decades, among a wide number of evangelical Christians, has been Old Earth Creationism. This view strongly repudiates the Darwinian theory of evolution for human origins, but does affirm a Big Bang cosmology for the universe. Old Earth Creationism holds to what might be considered an "essentially literal" approach to Genesis chs. 1-2, in that Adam and Eve are believed to be created by Divine fiat **and not by any evolutionary processes**, but it does treat the six *yamim* (יָמִים)<sup>13</sup> of Creation as being long periods of time, each in the hundreds of millions or several billions of years. Old Earth Creationists affirm that the greater universe is approximately 13.2-4 billion years old, and that Planet Earth is around 4.5 billion years old. Adam and Eve are affirmed to have been real people, in a real Garden of Eden in the Middle East, having lived some time around 40,000-60,000 years ago, or even 100,000 years ago.<sup>14</sup> While we have been cautious about the issue of Creationism in our teachings and writings, Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics do affirm the tenants of Old Earth Creationism.

Almost all of the people in today's Messianic movement, including ourselves, are pre-millennialists, believing that Yeshua the Messiah will return before His Millennial reign on Earth. No one argues against the reign of Yeshua on Earth during this time as a thousand years (Revelation 20:2ff). While some may dislike how an abandonment of the 6,000-year doctrine means a disruption of the seeming cinergy and symbolism between a six day week followed by the seventh-day Sabbath, and an apparent 6,000 years of human history followed by a thousand-year Millennial Sabbath—the association of the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat* with the Messianic Kingdom hardly gets dispensed. On the contrary, given the Torah's enforcement from Zion as the Law of Planet Earth (Isaiah 2:2-4;

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<sup>9</sup> "[O]ne cannot use these genealogies to fix the date of the Flood or of earliest Man" (K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* [Madison, WI: InterVarsity, 1966], 39).

<sup>10</sup> "[D]o not add up the years of these patriarchs in Genesis 5 and 11 and expect to come up with the Bible's date for the birth of the human race. The reason for this warning is clear: the Bible never adds up these numbers...[I]n Genesis 5 and 11 the writer does not employ his numbers for this purpose; neither should we" (Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Branch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996], 103).

<sup>11</sup> For a further discussion, consult the FAQ, "Genesis 5, 11 Genealogies."

<sup>12</sup> A general overview of topics is accessible in J.P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, eds., *Three Views of Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); David G. Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruypress, 2001); J. Daryl Charles, ed., *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013); Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, gen. ed., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Charles Halton, ed., *Three Views on Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew term *yom* (יּוֹם) primarily means "day of twenty-four hours" (*HALOT*, 1:399), but there are most certainly instances when *yom* means "a period of time" such as a "year" (*HALOT*, 1:400), or simply "division of time" (*BDB*, 398) that may or may not be specified.

<sup>14</sup> Old Earth Creationism is widely represented and defended in Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis*, second expanded edition (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004); *Navigating Genesis: A Scientist's Journey through Genesis 1-11* (Covina, CA: Reasons to Believe, 2014); David Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006).

Old Earth Creationism is widely refuted in Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of "Progressive Creationism" (Billions of Years) As Popularized by Astronomer Hugh Ross* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004); Tim Chaffey & Jason Lisle, *Old-Earth Creationism on Trial: The Verdict is In* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).

Micah 4:1-3), Yeshua's reign from Jerusalem will be the first time in history when the Sabbath will actually be able to be properly observed, without any worldly impediments. Far from Jewish people in the Diaspora, or even in Israel today, having to worry about their jobs or their safety—the Sabbath is going to be a worldwide observance (Isaiah 66:23), with the King of Israel leading the way. **The Messianic Age, as a time of worldwide Sabbath adherence, is something which has not been too emphasized in our discussions of the end-times.**

For the present, as we do await for the return of Yeshua, we do not need to find ourselves slacking off in His Kingdom's work *now* looking for an elusive "Biblical year 6,000" which has already come and gone. Let us, rather, be earnestly considering our mission and calling as His people, and how we are to change the lives of men and women who need to enter into His Kingdom—by experiencing His salvation!

Too many Messianic people have used the so-called "Year 6,000" coming as an excuse not to plan or prepare for the future, and this has not helped the long term growth or viability of our faith community. As a movement, we are behind where we need to be spiritually and theologically. Due to the scores of failed end-time predictions associated with a 6,000-year chronology and end-time date setting—with more to surely be made in the future—there will be an increasing number of Messianic people who abandon the 6,000-year doctrine. Their attention will instead be focused on how their "lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12, RSV), will see the Messiah's Second Coming take place.