

A MATTER OF SYNCHRONIZATION

A Devotional Meditation on Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)

Leviticus 22:26-23:44; Zechariah 14:1-12; Isaiah 66:1-24;

Habakkuk 2:2-3; 2 Peter 3:3-13

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My fascination with airplanes began in childhood. My father was a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army Air Corps who freely shared his stories, and of course supplied me with toys, models, and field trips to museums and to the airport to watch planes. My fascination accelerated when I learned to read and discovered a world of books about airplanes written especially for boys. In one of them, I learned about the problem of equipping early aircraft with weapons. It was not simply a matter of mounting machine guns on the front of the aircraft, but of devising a means by which they could fire without



Israeli Air Force Avia S-199 (Czech manufactured postwar version of Messerschmidt Bf-109) of the 101st squadron in June 1948 ([IAF photo via Wikimedia Commons](#)).

damaging the propeller. The Dutch engineer Anthony Fokker solved the problem in 1915 with a device that synchronized the firing of the guns with the rotation of the engine. With that innovation, the aircraft Fokker designed for the German Empire had a decisive advantage over their Allied opponents in World War I.

By World War II, synchronized firing mechanisms were standard on the aircraft of all nations. Ironically, it was synchronization that nearly spelled disaster for the Israeli Air Force in the early days of Israel's War of Independence in 1948. That was but one of many miraculous ironies in that conflict of God's Covenant People returning to the Promised Land. At the start of the war, Israel was able to buy surplus fighter planes from Czechoslovakia. Not just any planes; these were the Czech version of the German Messerschmidt Bf-109, one of the most successful aircraft of World War II. However, the end of the war spelled the end of the supply of engines for the Bf-109. Instead, the Czechs used engines designed for German Heinkel bombers, as well as the propellers for those engines instead of the smaller propellers for the Bf-109. The hybrid aircraft proved difficult to control, prone to mechanical failure, and, due to synchronization problems, frequently in danger of shooting off their own propellers. Many planes and pilots were lost as the deficiencies of the aircraft became known. Even so, the Czech-built fighters were a Godsend to the nascent Israeli Air Force. In time, pilot experience, combined with revised tactics and technical innovations, turned the unwieldy Czech fighters into formidable

weapons that helped save Israel. Even so, Israeli pilots breathed a sigh of relief when, a few months later, they were equipped with British-made Spitfires.*

Extraordinary stories like this of human ingenuity and innovation inspire us. We wonder, though, how much more could have been done had the Israelis possessed genuine Messerschmidt fighters at the outset. How many lives could have been saved? Could the war have been shortened, and thus much destruction to both sides avoided? Synchronization, it turns out, is not only a matter of having the right mechanism to fire machine gun bullets through an aircraft propeller; it's also a matter of having the right equipment and the right people assembled at the right time and place.

Our God tells us about this throughout His word. Here's one example from Habakkuk:

Then *ADONAI* answered me and said: "Write down the vision, make it plain on the tablets, so that the reader may run with it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time. It hastens to the end and will not fail. If it should be slow in coming, wait for it, for it will surely come—it will not delay."

Habakkuk 2:2-3 TLV

Here's another, from Peter:

First of all, understand that in the last days, scoffers will come scoffing, following after their own desires and saying, "Where is this promise of His coming? Ever since the fathers died, everything goes on just as it has from the beginning of creation." For in holding to this idea, it escapes their notice that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God. Through these, the world of that time was destroyed by being flooded with water. But by the same word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire—kept until the Day of Judgment and the destruction of ungodly people. But don't forget this one thing, loved ones, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you—not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements will melt and disintegrate, and the earth and everything done on it shall be exposed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Live your lives in holiness and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. In that day the heavens will be dissolved by fire, and the elements will melt in the intense heat. But in keeping with His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:3-13 TLV

We should be encouraged by these words of scripture. Why, then, do they feel like a frustrating mystery? Either we are not meant to understand, or somehow we are out of synch with God's way of expressing Himself, and perhaps with the way He counts time.

* For a short video documentary of the Avia S-199, the Czech adaptation of the Messerschmidt Bf-109, see "The German WW2 Fighter That Saved Israel - The Avia S.199 | Aircraft History #3," Rex's Hangar, November 5, 2021, https://youtu.be/cs6K3ErDPCU?si=W0hvbBN_EH_mBEdW.

It's probably a bit of both, but I surmise it's more of the latter. Humanity has been out of synch with our Creator ever since our first ancestors decided they would determine times and seasons and everything else according to their own preferences. Ever since, the Creator has been working to restore His order, which means reestablishing His times and seasons. If we have any question about what they are, we should remember that He is the God Who declares the end from the beginning. He tells us about the times and seasons all humanity will be observing eventually. Here's an example from Isaiah:

“And it will come to pass, that from one New Moon to another, and from one *Shabbat* [Sabbath] to another, all flesh will come to bow down before Me,” says *ADONAI*.

Isaiah 66:23 TLV

Here's another from Zechariah:

Then all the survivors from all the nations that attacked Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, *ADONAI-Tzva'ot* [LORD of Hosts], and to celebrate *Sukkot* [Feast of Tabernacles]. Furthermore, if any of the nations on earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*, they will have no rain. If the Egyptians do not go up and celebrate, they will have no rain. Instead, there will be the plague that *ADONAI* will inflict on the nations that do not go up to celebrate *Sukkot*. This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate *Sukkot*.

Zechariah 14:16-19 TLV

The Sabbath, New Moon, and Sukkot are appointed times of our God. Up to now, the only part of His Covenant People who have consistently observed these times are the Jewish people. That's why we've developed the habit of calling them “Jewish feasts,” as if the Jews, rather than God, established them. Yet the Jews have the oracles of God, and this is part of that. Christians around the world are beginning to understand this, which is why many now are trying to learn about and even observe these special times. This learning process doesn't tell us the day or the hour when our Lord will appear, but it does help us understand the seasons, and equips us to celebrate His appointed times in this age just as we will be doing with Him in His Kingdom. God's people who set out on this journey soon learn what those Israeli fighter pilots learned long ago: that synchronization problems disappear when you're properly equipped.