

OIM UPDATE

July 2014

In one week last month, I twice had the privilege of freely sharing some of the specific details of my personal salvation testimony to two pairs of listeners. Thankfully, both were genuinely curious about my description of what had transpired as I was being born again in 1978. In recalling the specific circumstances that led to my born again experience, I was reminded of two distinct activities that I believe were used by the Almighty to prepare my heart in order to receive the gospel of truth.

First, there was a community outreach that occurred in my neighborhood by some men from a nearby Methodist church. Two witnesses simply stopped by my house one Saturday afternoon, had a brief conversation about whether I was a Christian, asked me to come to their church for a visit, and left some written materials for me to read. While I never went to that particular church, I was not at all offended by their sincere offer. Instead, I simply read the pamphlets, which boldly presented the claims of Jesus, as the Christ. About that same time, there was an older woman at the place where I worked, who was a devout Christian lady, with a heart for lost souls. She knew I was not saved and told me a few times that she was praying for me, which at the moment, I just brushed off with a respectful thank you. *But the Lord knew better.* His time to bring me to faith was on the horizon, and these faithful souls handed me the Word and prayed me into the Kingdom of God!

I mention these two providential spiritual actions, because I believe the loving Lord used both of these events to bring me to faith in the Messiah of Israel over the next several months. In many regards, I was the beneficiary of some men replanting the Word of God with written materials, and a godly woman's prayers for a lost soul. Ultimately, the Scriptures indicate that it is God who causes the increase or draws the soul into His Kingdom, but He uses individuals to plant and water the seeds of truth sown into the souls of those intended to be a part of God's family. The Apostle Paul stated these truths in this manner:

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Corinthians 3:6-8).

I mention all of this because after considerable introspective reflection on my personal salvation experience, coupled with a recent congregational emphasis on sharing the gospel to the Jew first, I was prompted to write this month's article entitled, **"Witness of the Word."** It describes the power of the Word to save, and our personal responsibility to share it with those when led by the Holy Spirit. Hopefully, you will be encouraged to not only keep the Word of God in your heart and mind—but be ready "in and out of season," to share it with others as Divine appointment opportunities arise, and continue to pray for

those who have had the seed sown into their hearts.

Additionally, we continue to need your support and prayers for the **Theological Defense Trust**, as well as the **Prison Ministry Free Book Fund**. The work of the Kingdom continues unabated!

Finally, we are praying for the trials and tribulation which are besetting the people living in Israel, who are contending with the rocket attacks and unwarranted condemnation from those around the world, who are at odds with what the Holy One is doing to restore His people to the Land of Israel. Through it all, it is our fervent prayer that in all of these difficult circumstances, there will be many in Israel and around the world who will call upon the Lord to be saved, just like I did years ago:

“As for me, I shall call upon God, and the LORD will save me” (Psalm 55:16).

Praying for the peace of Jerusalem, and that prophesied day when all Israel will be saved, and we enter into the Messiah's Kingdom!

Mark Huey

WITNESS OF THE WORD

by Mark Huey

The other day, I was asked by a brother in the Lord, to come and share whatever the Holy Spirit put on my heart with his son and his son's Jewish friend, who grew up in the Orthodox Jewish community of Toronto, Canada, in lieu of our weekly Bible study. This made perfect sense, because for years I have been teaching about various aspects of the Hebraic Roots of the faith and Messianic Judaism with my friend, and the others at our regular study. Consequently, my Christian friend thought it would be beneficial for his seeking son, who I have met several times, and, in particular, this young Jewish man, to hear some insight from someone who has spent the last twenty years at the unique place where Judaism and Christianity interconnect and overlap.

So with a minimal amount of knowledge about these two young men in their late twenties, I prayed and asked the Lord what He would have me communicate to these lost souls seeking direction in their lives. Within a few minutes it became clear to me that if in our conversation I was prompted to share from the Bible, the passage of Scripture to reference would be Deuteronomy 30:1-6. I knew from previous examination and teaching of this text, that these prophetic words attributed to the revered Moses would have the best opportunity to impact the young Jewish man—specifically because it would not bring up any preconceived distaste for “Christian Scripture.” Providentially, the occasion arose as I was sharing about our ministry in the Messianic Jewish community of faith, and I turned to this passage, as the young men opened up and shared a Christian Bible for reference:

“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, **then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.** The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and

the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live" (Deuteronomy 30:1-6).

As we slowly read through this passage verse by verse, I was able to take some liberties and describe much of Israel's history that followed Moses' description of what would eventually take place as the End of the Age approached. Thankfully, my memory for some of the details of the blessings and the curses of Deuteronomy chs. 28-29 were readily referenced. Then as I moved through the millennia and got into a number of the details about salvation history, I noticed that both of these young men were not only reading along, but listening intently to the description of what had transpired down through the centuries. This included an overview of the Assyrian invasion, the Babylonian captivity, the first destruction of the Temple on the Ninth of Av, the return of the Jews to rebuild the temple during the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel, the era of the Messiah Yeshua, His crucifixion and the atonement provided, the second destruction of the Temple on the Ninth of Av, the expulsion from the Land of Israel by the Romans, and the splits that came in Judaism with the advent of Christianity.

At that point, these two young men were completely enraptured with the history lesson. So without any hesitation I just kept going on and on about the more recent post-resurrection history of persecution of the Jewish people by institutional Christianity in the Crusades, the Inquisition, the pogroms, and the Holocaust. While focusing on the last hundred or so years, I was able to weave in some of the events in world history that coincided with what the Almighty was doing to bring the Jewish people back to the Promised Land just as Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 30, and as is repeated by many of the Prophets. This included references to Theodore Herzl and the Zionist Congress in the late 1890s in Europe, the rise of Zionism and migration to Palestine, the resurrection of the Hebrew language by Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and the formation of the British Mandate, the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the reconstitution of the State of Israel in 1947-1948 against all the odds in the post-World War II era.

Since these young men appeared enraptured in the history lesson, I took the opportunity to move away from the words of Moses, and introduced a prophecy from the revered Prophet Isaiah, which deals specifically with the birth of a nation in a day. A quick reference to

Isaiah 66, confirmed that the author was foretelling many of the future events that we have and are currently witnessing:

“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons. Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?” says the LORD. ‘Or shall I who gives delivery shut *the womb*?’ says your God. ‘Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her; be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her, that you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts, that you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom” (Isaiah 66:8-11).

The last portion of my historical review was all about what the Father God has been doing since the State of Israel was recognized in 1948 with the Jewish people, who have not only returned to the Promised Land, but still remain widely scattered to the nations, as Moses’ prophecy indicates. I was able to describe some of the spiritual movements that are recognizable among the Jewish and non-Jewish children of God since the Six Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and the additional wars and conflicts with the Palestinians even occurring at this very time. This included testifying about the many Jews who have become followers of Yeshua the Messiah, *and* the multitude of non-Jews who have been drawn into the Hebraic and Jewish Roots of their faith by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Amazingly, when our visit was coming to a close, I looked at the clock on my cell phone and all of a sudden realized that I had shared for three-and-a-half-hours without any interruption. I apologized for taking up so much of their time, but thankfully, they were not at all concerned about the time that was spent hearing about all of these references to the Bible, world history, and current events. In fact, they seemed genuinely appreciative of getting this overview by someone who was not necessarily preaching, but just sharing from the heart, with the reference to the Scriptures, some insight and explanation about what has happened down through the millennia, and how it relates to what is transpiring today.

As I drove away from the meeting I was gently reminded of another passage found in the prophecy of Isaiah, which has always been a comforting number of verses to recollect, when we do not know exactly why we shared with non-Believers the Word of God that is so precious to us:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My

ways,' declares the LORD. 'For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding *in the matter for which I sent it*' (Isaiah 55:8-11).

I knew by faith, that the Lord God Almighty had directed me to share those exact prophecies from Deuteronomy and Isaiah to these young men—and that according to His Word—whatever was said that was of Him, will not return empty but will accomplish everything that it was sent to accomplish. So I began praying for Jonathon and Michael, and that the Word they received would draw them into a further examination of the Holy Writ.

A few days later I was in a conversation with my Bible study friend, and the subject of our lengthy visit with his son and the young Jewish man came up. He smiled broadly and exclaimed how great it was to see and hear so much “seed” spread on their hearts. Of course, his reference was to the parable of the spiritual seeds cast by the “sower” of the Word, found in Matthew 13 and this passage from Luke 8:

“When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: ‘The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. Other *seed* fell on rocky *soil*, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. Other *seed* fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. Other *seed* fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.’ As He said these things, He would call out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’ His disciples *began* questioning Him as to what this parable meant. And He said, ‘To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is* in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND [Isaiah 6:9-10]. Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. Those on the rocky *soil are* those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no

firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity. **But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance**” (Luke 8:4-15).

Here, we are reminded that even the Twelve Disciples did not necessarily understand what Yeshua was declaring, when He gave this parable about the seeds cast on various types of soil. But after being asked, the explanation was fairly simple to comprehend. So when my friend reminded me of this parable, I remarked that we needed to pray that the seed cast a few days earlier upon the hearts of these young men, was indeed cast upon “good soil,” so that the seed would germinate and bear good fruit! He agreed and we so prayed.

Then a few days later when we were having our weekly Bible study gathering at my friend’s office, our meeting stretched a little long. Coincidentally, my friend’s son and the young Jewish man were back in the office to go with my friend to look at a real estate business opportunity. Before leaving the office, I ventured into the room where the two young men were sitting, and took a moment to greet them. I was thankful that both of them seemed genuinely pleased to see me. As I engaged them both in a brief conversation, another word from Scripture came to mind, which reminded me that whatever I shared the previous week **did not offend** either one. By the grace of God, I had been a good witness for the Messiah, as the Holy Spirit in me had manifested Himself as a sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place:

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Messiah, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. **For we are a fragrance of Messiah to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.** And who is adequate for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Messiah in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 2:14-17).

According to this graphic description written by Paul, when these young men reencountered me a week later, I was **not** an aroma of death to death, but rather a sweet aroma of life to life. The Holy Spirit resident in my heart was not an offense, but rather wooing them

through the witness of the Word. Immediately upon perceiving the positive reception, I felt that these two would one day come to a knowledge of Yeshua, and I committed myself to redoubling my prayers for them. My motivation the previous week was to simply share some appropriate Scriptures, with the hope that the Word of God would fall on good soil and bear some fruit. *But the timing on when if any fruit will be born, is something I cannot control.* However, there is one thing my friend and I can do: that is pray for Jonathon and Michael and their souls. For it is known from another Scripture found in the Apostolic Writings about the power of the Word of God to travel deep into the inner recesses of the heart, in order to stir the soul unto repentance that leads to belief:

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

It is critical that the children of God take the time to read, study, meditate upon, and memorize different parts of the Word of God—so that when the opportunity arises, they can be ambassadors for the Messiah of Israel (2 Corinthians 5:20) in order to share the Word in due season (2 Timothy 4:2). After all, the Apostle Paul eloquently summarizes the witness of the Word to both Jewish people and those of the nations, in the following passage to the Romans, because of God’s desire that all people come to the knowledge of Him and be saved (1 Timothy 2:4):

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED’ [Joel 2:23]. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!’ [Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15]. However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’ [Isaiah 53:1] So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah. But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; ‘THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD’ [Psalm 19:4]. But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, ‘I WILL

MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU' [Deuteronomy 32:21]. And Isaiah is very bold and says, 'I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME' [Isaiah 65:1]. But as for Israel He says, 'ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE' [Isaiah 65:2]" (Romans 10:12-21).

This passage reminds all followers of the Messiah Yeshua, that from God's perspective, He is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), but requires the same call from the heart to be saved, regardless of heritage. However, note that His plan is to send His Word into the world through and to all types of people in order to reach the people He has called into His family. No one knows exactly who those people are, but we do know that they will come from every tongue, tribe, and nation upon the earth (Revelation 5:9; 14:6). So with this in mind, whether its someone in your family, a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker, an acquaintance, a lost soul you encounter, or the son of a friend and his friend (as the two who inspired this article), the responsibility for followers of the Messiah is to faithfully witness for Him, by sharing His Word (sowing the seed). Of course, it is critical to pray that the witness of the Word would have its way in the heart of those who have heard it proclaimed. If given a follow up opportunity to continue to share (watering the seed), then pray some more and ask the Father to give you the words, and His Word, to continue the dialogue. But let all remember as it is summarized by the Apostle Paul regarding the work of sharing the Kingdom, some plant (cast seed), some water, but it is God who causes the growth:

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So **then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.** Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:6-9).

When all is said and done, may we each be faithful witnesses of the Word, until the Messianic restoration of all things...

TNN ONLINE EDITOR'S UPDATE

July 2014

Dear Friends:

For the third week of June, I got to once again take a week off, as is our annual tradition, and



spend a week with my extended family at Gulf Shores, AL. *This is a time when I literally do nothing*, and thankfully Gulf Shores 2014 was the first time in a long time, when I was able to not feel so overburdened and overwhelmed with current and future writing projects. I was able to look forward to the completion of current assignments, and the beginning of some new assignments, with a genuine sense of some “relief.”

This is not to say that I did not do any spiritual or theological reflection on my vacation. This was the first year, in a good long while, that I seriously began to consider a few of the (significant) things that makes a ministry like Outreach Israel and TNN Online different, among others in the broad Messianic world. What are some of the things that guide our ideology and views, always keeping us busy, and always looking for the next challenge? The admonition of 1 Peter 3:15 is surely important: “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you” (RSV).

One of the things which I can put a label on today, is that our ministry definitely adheres to a philosophy of **constant renewal**. Unlike some others, who would have stopped writing articles, books, and other analyses a long time ago—we are very much aware of how one project seems to naturally lead to another project, or at least will cause us to open up a file on a particular topic or issue. I remember all the way back in 2008 when I was conducting the study on Ephesians for the Wednesday Night podcast, and how it was not difficult to figure out, especially given Ephesians’ relationship to and references made to Colossians, what the next study would be in 2009.

Constant renewal does not permit a teacher like myself to ever get “comfortable” or sit around, resting on his laurels. *More has to be done*. It is not difficult to detect much of the spiritual and theological tension present within the broad Messianic movement right now, and the decisive need for **resolution** on an entire array of issues. Unfortunately, much of the Messianic movement, in all of its diverse sectors and sub-movements, **does not allow for an ethos or culture of academic freedom**. Hence, even mentioning the presence of certain topics or issues, when a Bible passage is being analyzed, can get one censored or slapped down with a pejorative label. While many of the current leaders and teachers may continue to permit various forms of censorship, or limited discussion, to be the order of business—as I have said it

before: the generation of young people in their 20s and 30s, of which I am a part, **will not permit this to go on indefinitely**. Such an order of business will inevitably be taken to task.

I was able to glean something highly important, from a book I read over my vacation, on Yeshua's statement, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). How does one reconcile the seeming disparity with His previous word, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9, NRSV)? The perspective we all need to be considering is how:

"What is the difference? Peacekeeping seeks to *avoid* conflict. Peacemaking seeks to *resolve* conflict. Peacekeeping serves to separate warring parties from one another. Peacemaking means laboring to transform warring parties into full allies. Perhaps most people learn the difference from their experience of family life" (Hugh Ross, *Navigating Genesis* [Covina, CA: Reasons to Believe, 2014], 218).

Providing or facilitating the environment that can create a lasting peace within the Messianic movement—and enable us to mature to be all the things that the Lord wants us to be—is going to require that some difficult statements be made, some self-critical evaluations be conducted, various concessions and admissions of previous error or limitation, *and* some people may even get proverbial "bloody noses." **People will need to be very open to considering third, innovative solutions to the issues that we face.**

Too much time and energy have been wasted on white papers and position statements espousing *dogma*, when not enough time and energy have been utilized to formulate *doctrine*. I cannot tell you how many times I have been told by some people that the quantity of work I am doing has to be the product of some sort of "Greek mindset"—when this sound byte is actually just being employed as a hollow excuse to justify laziness! We are almost half-way through the second decade of the Twenty-First Century, and I know how conscious I am aware of some growing pains on the horizon.

This Summer will see more progress made on the two writing projects I am coordinating: the commentary *Romans for the Practical Messianic* and the *Messianic Kosher Helper*. They are both en route to being completed sometime in the Fall, for both paperback and eBook release. And as usual, no one will be more happy to see than completed *than !!*

Until next month...

J.K. McKee