

OIM UPDATE

August 2016

Last month, in the wake of returning to the heat of Dallas from the MJAA national conference in Pennsylvania, I was prompted to write an article about “**A Messianic Vision,**” from the input I received from some of the lectures by seasoned Messianic Jewish leaders and teachers of long standing. In so doing, I had to reflect upon some of the historical facts that have occurred over the millennia, and how they line up with the prophecies forecast in the Holy Scriptures. Admittedly, I was limited in space to share the plethora of tangible realities that have taken place or are currently occurring, which verify that God continues to have a very unique plan for the Jewish people as the End of the Age approaches—something which surely affects *all followers* of Yeshua the Messiah, as we await His inevitable return to rule and reign from Jerusalem.

Upon returning to our normal *Shabbat* routine at our local Messianic congregation, I was reminded of my inherent lack of fully understanding traditional Jewish perspectives, when our services were concluded. This is when a follow up conversation with a Jewish brother, who happened to attend the national conference, revealed some limitations in our congregational attempt to exemplify the “one new man” fellowships of the First Century. With much of this in mind, I have written this month’s lead article, “**A Messianic Orientation,**” to address some of the fine tuning that should be incorporated into Messianic assemblies—if indeed they are going to continue a mission of offering a safe and comfortable haven for Jewish people to learn about the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua. After all, even though the Apostle Paul was called to be an apostle to the nations—which for his purposes involved mainly declaring Israel’s Messiah to Greeks and Romans—he recognized and followed a strategy of taking the good news to his fellow Jews first, at existing synagogues in the Diaspora, and from there also declaring the message to various non-Jewish God-fearers, and then whoever else would be willing to hear. We encounter the following example in the Book of Acts:

“Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. **And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,** explaining and giving evidence that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, ‘This Yeshua whom I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah’” (Acts 17:1-3).

Paul’s letters bear witness to the reality that many of his fellow Jews did not receive the message of the good news, and broadly rejected Yeshua as Israel’s Messiah. Still, this did not deter his goal to reach them. In fact, we see how Paul knew from his knowledge of the Tanakh Scriptures that in due time, an eventual recognition of Yeshua by the corporate Jewish people, will literally be seen as “life from the dead”:

“I say then, did they stumble so as to fall? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the nations, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world, and their failure is riches for the na-

tions, how much more will their fullness be! But I am speaking to you, the nations. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of nations, I magnify my ministry" (Romans 11:13-15, PME).

It is my conclusion that maintaining assemblies which are welcoming to Jewish people—by especially being sensitive to the effects of centuries of anti-Semitism, the vestiges of abuse toward Jews by many (purported) Christians, and most especially the Messianic claims of Yeshua of Nazareth—needs to be a central orientation of Messianic congregations. While God has surely directed many non-Jewish Believers today, to not only repent of past anti-Semitism (ranging from confessing heinous acts of violence to social discrimination), but also enter into Messianic congregations so they might embrace their Hebraic and Jewish Roots in a tangible way—it can never be overlooked or forgotten how the Messianic movement originated as a venue of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity.

As I contemplated this subject, I was blessed by the realization that this has been a major part of the emphasis of the ministry of Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics. After all, as non-Jewish Believers led into the Messianic Jewish movement over twenty years ago, it has remained our desire to help others similarly understand how they need to be conscious of Jewish *halachah* and orthopraxy. Those from Christian backgrounds need to learn to employ alternative religious terminology, and to avoid actions which can deter or potentially damage delicate relationships the Holy Spirit wants to see develop with Jewish people, particularly those who do not know Messiah. The Body of Messiah is widely returning to conditions similar to those witnessed in the First Century—as there are Jewish Believers and non-Jewish Believers, in Diaspora settings, coming together in the unity of Yeshua, and are diligently asking our Heavenly Father about the future before them. All of us do find ourselves on a learning curve, as various "one new man" assemblies emerge, and we recognize different spiritual needs—most especially those of Jewish people, who will come to faith in Yeshua en masse before His return!

We want to continue to graciously thank those of you who have given generously to our OIM Technology Fund! We are continuing to implement the different upgrades we need to our office computer setup, as we need to multi-task, especially with the editing of new video and audio podcasts every day. We continue to need (1) a new Windows 7 desktop computer, (2) a new Windows 7 or 10 notebook, and (3) a MacBook Pro notebook. These required purchases go beyond our monthly budget. This past month, we have also completely redesigned both the Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics websites, to a new Wordpress based format. Our websites are not only more streamlined, but are compatible with mobile devices! Updates are posted every day to www.outreachisrael.net and www.messianicapologetics.net.

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-25).

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

A MESSIANIC ORIENTATION

by Mark Huey

For well over twenty years, after our family became members of a Messianic Jewish congregation—and most certainly for the past fifteen years, being called into Messianic educational ministry—I have at different times queried the Lord as to why He chose us for this particular assignment. After all, our evangelical Christian backgrounds, and both family and life histories, did not necessarily prepare us to enter into this complicated field, at least from our limited, finite perspectives. But, despite not being Jewish, we each had considerable interactions with Jewish people over the years, both at school and in the marketplace, which did provide us with a profound sense of respect and honor for those biologically linked to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Romans 9:4-5). In addition, we knew from our salvation experiences and an understanding of the Holy Scriptures, that those called according to His purposes are predestined to become conformed to the image of God's Son:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become conformed to the image of His Son*, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30).

When the Spirit of God led us from the relative comfort zone of our Christian upbringings, to completely engage with the emerging Messianic Jewish community of faith, we found ourselves on a major learning curve. We almost immediately concluded that the distinctly Jewish approach to our Heavenly Father had more in common with the way Yeshua would have conducted His walk in the First Century. The emphasis to *do what Yeshua did* throughout the period of His ministry, just made sense, *if* we were to be conformed to His image. As the Holy Spirit led us, we joyfully embraced a Messianic orientation in our walk with Him, recognizing we had a great deal to discover. Over time, we began to write about our experiences, particularly in order to inform those from similar backgrounds as ours, being drawn into the Messianic movement, so their acclimation to this move of the Holy Spirit might be accelerated. But before addressing some of the unique factors involving a Messianic orientation, as I began writing this article, I distinctly recalled that Margaret and I did have two extraordinary Spirit-led encounters with the Ruach HaKodesh (before we even knew this Hebrew term) in Israel, when we toured there in 1994 with Zola Levitt's ministry, which has set us on the course for our lives together. So please indulge me, as I am reminded that we need to, as the saying goes, “Watch what you ask for, because you just might get it...”

The first encounter took place at the summit of Mount Tabor, on the roof of the monastery that overlooks the Meggido Valley to the north and west. Here at sunrise on December 15, 1994, on an unscheduled “off tour excursion,” and after climbing over a fence and tiptoeing past praying monks, Margaret and I praised the Lord and dedicated our lives to serving Him in whatever capacity He chose. It was a special time to be in His presence, praying without any of the distractions of others. Incredibly, the anointing that Margaret received that morning evidenced itself a few hours later when she joyfully emerged from the water, after being immersed in the Jordan River. But we did not see the Holy Spirit with our eyes, until we developed the film taken by our camera! The effervescent Light of the Spirit was captured, surrounding her in a photograph, with no similar “light” in the preceding or following photos in the film roll.

The second encounter took place as our tour group had the privilege of visiting the Temple Mount in Jerusalem a few days later, even though it was under Muslim supervision. As we meandered around the plaza, unwilling to step into either of the mosques, we noticed among the large flat square stones, one that was distinctly redder than the rest, located somewhat in the central courtyard. So once again without anyone relatively near to us, Margaret and I decided, “by faith” as it were, that this was perhaps where the Holy of Holies was once located. We positioned ourselves in a hugging fashion—although praying, reading the Bible, and signs of affection were forbidden or frowned upon by the Muslim guards—and offered our bodies to the Lord, as we read and prayed these memorized verses to be living and holy sacrifices unto Him:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (Romans 12:1-3).

At some point in time, we will know for sure if our decisions to voice our willingness to serve the Lord with our lives came as a result of these heartfelt offerings. But if nothing else, I do know that I am extremely thankful that the Holy One has given Margaret an extremely large measure of faith! After all, the journey our family has been on *to persevere through the trials and tribulations* of the emerging Messianic community of faith, continues to require the eyes to see and the ears to hear what we believe the Spirit of God is doing at this hour in world history. Consequently, for a family which appreciates history and the ardent pursuit of the God of Israel and His Son Yeshua from the study of the Holy Scriptures, perhaps a passage found in the Acts of the Apostles, best describes *why* we have dedicated our lives to

what the Prophets of old have said would eventually occur:

“And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. **Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Yeshua, the Messiah appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time**” (Acts 3:17-21).

Here in concise words, after a man lame from birth was healed by faith in the name of Yeshua, the Apostle Peter stated in categorical terms to his fellow Jews present—who knew the words of the Prophets—that despite their widespread ignorance to discern what the Prophets declared, the Messiah must suffer an atoning death. But notwithstanding the Messiah’s ascension into Heaven for a period of time, it was incumbent upon *all* to repent and return to the ways of the Lord. This would need to take place in order to (1) have sins wiped away, and (2) receive “times of refreshing” from the presence of the Lord, prior to the Messiah’s eventual return. Yeshua would sit at the right hand of the Father in Heaven “**until the period of restoration of all things**” comes to pass.

In the interim, we know that untold millions of people have confessed and repented of their sins, and committed themselves to follow Yeshua the Messiah. They have been forgiven by and reconciled with their Heavenly Father, by faith in the blood sacrifice made by Yeshua. In so doing, whether it is personal peace, salvation, and/or rededication and restoration; corporate seasons of revival, awakenings; or rededication in families, communities, regions, or even countries—each falls under the broad category of “**times of refreshing.**” As noted personally above, the individual times when the Holy Spirit touches you are impossible to forget—and when received with a willing heart can confirm His presence in your life, and strengthen your resolve to love the Lord even more. At a bare minimum, if someone is a pursuer of the Holy One, diligently seeking and loving Him, the Lord will reveal Himself. As Yeshua Himself directed,

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8).

Even when doors of understanding about what the Father is doing at this hour test one’s faith, wholehearted dependence on the Holy Spirit for endurance and perseverance during the inevitable trials is a perfect result. Nevertheless, in order to lack in nothing and comprehend what is happening, a person must ask for wisdom, so God can bestow it generously and without reproach:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.** And let endure-

ance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him**" (James 1:2-5).

Consequently, asking for additional measures of faith and wisdom from above, to comprehend how the "restoration of all things" is proceeding, prompted us to conclude that the Holy One is in the delicate process of returning many Twenty-First Believers full circle to the way the First Century Believers conducted their lives. It is almost like watching a movie in reverse, if one simply takes the commendations and admonitions of Yeshua the Messiah through the Apostle John found in Revelation chs. 1-3, to the seven assemblies of Asia Minor. When these descriptions are read, many modern-day congregations might come to mind. However, if one adds the specific Apostolic letters of the Messianic Writings (New Testament), then various problems addressed and the exhortations and solutions given, can be as applicable today as they were nearly two thousand years ago!

With that being said, some of the final words of warning and instruction, from Yeshua to His Disciples, need to be contextualized. Just before His execution, Yeshua made this statement, quoting Zechariah 13:7 about the scattering of His sheep. But after He was resurrected from the dead, He indicated that He would go to the Galilee in anticipation of His Disciples joining Him there:

"Then Yeshua said to them, 'You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, "I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED" [Zechariah 13:7]. **But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee**" (Matthew 26:31-32).

Then, after the resurrected sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the resurrected Yeshua gathered His eleven Disciples back in the Galilee for some final instructions. These are often regarded to be the Great Commission of taking the good news or gospel message to the far reaches of Planet Earth until the End of the Age:

"But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Yeshua had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful. And Yeshua came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**" (Matthew 28:16-20).

For some amount of time in the Galilee and other places, Yeshua continued to speak of the things concerning the Kingdom of God, for the first forty days of the Omer Count, when His Disciples returned to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast of Weeks, or *Shavuot*/Pentecost. It is here that Yeshua gave His final instructions to wait until the promise of the Holy Spirit

was received, and with such empowerment, become witnesses to those in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the Earth:

“The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Yeshua began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up *to heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, ‘Which,’ *He said*, ‘you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; **but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**’ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Yeshua, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:1-11).

As the Disciples watched Yeshua’s departure into Heaven, two figures in white clothing, presumably angels, addressed these Galileans, and confirmed that Yeshua would at some future time return in the same manner He departed. Consequently, after the disciples and 3,000 others were filled with the Holy Spirit on *Shavuot* (Acts 2:41), their commission to take the good news to the immediate vicinity, region, and to the world at large, was now supernaturally enabled, as the Acts of the Apostles records some of the testimonies which followed.

If one takes the reel of time back to these early days following the resurrection and ascension of Yeshua, and the empowering of those born from above with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit—those gathered from around the Mediterranean basin and beyond returned to their respective countries, equipped with power from on high, and literally “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) with the good news of the Messiah. But a little further along the time compendium, the Lord God chose Saul of Tarsus, a unique individual, to be an apostle to the nations. After Saul’s Damascus road experience, the Lord spoke these words to Ananias, detailing the distinct assignments He had for him:

“But the Lord said to him, ‘**Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake**’” (Acts 9:15-16).

How incredible is it for the sovereign God of Creation to choose a highly educated Jewish Pharisee—yet murderer of those following “the “Way”—to take the good news to the Greco-Roman world! As Saul of Tarsus would experience in his ministry travels and duties, he would have to endure a great deal of physical abuse and mental torment for following the Messiah of Israel. But our Creator has always had a plan for His Creation, and His sovereign will continues to direct affairs on Earth from Heaven, despite various mortal protestations about what He alone allows to happen among humanity.

Nevertheless, with Paul (his Roman name) likely having memorized knowledge of the Torah and Tanakh, he readily accepted his assignment to take the good news to wherever the Holy Spirit led him. In doing so, whenever Paul was sent to a new city or region, he principally went to the local synagogue, where he knew those gathered would at the very least have knowledge of the One True God of Israel, as well as access to scrolls of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. This sampling of how Paul approached most learned audiences was commonplace:

“Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. **And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures**, explaining and giving evidence that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, **“This Yeshua whom I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah”** (Acts 17:1-3).

A frequent response, by many of his fellow Jews, was a rejection of Paul and the Messianic claims of Yeshua of Nazareth. In some cases, after Paul left a local Jewish synagogue, and then declared the good news to the local Greeks and Romans, the Jewish religious leaders would stir up the local political leaders against him. Such was the case when Paul declared the good news to those in Thessalonica:

“And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. **But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar**; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Yeshua.’ They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them” (Acts 17:4-9).

It is possible that Paul had some conversations with other Apostles like John or Peter (cf. Galatians 2:9), given his earlier personal rejection of Yeshua, in order to understand what the Messiah had previously relayed to His Disciples about rejection of Him. Yeshua had referenced the prophecies of Isaiah

that speak to the blindness, deafness, and hardening of the heart which prevented certain people from receiving the Light:

“So Yeshua said to them, ‘For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. **While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.**’ These things Yeshua spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not believing in Him. *This was* to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: ‘**LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED [Isaiah 53:1]?**’ For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ‘**HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM**’ [Isaiah 6:10]. These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. **Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God**” (John 12:35-43)

Note the summary statement that even though various religious leaders believed in Yeshua, a strong fear of human disapproval frightened many away from publicly confessing Yeshua. Is this not something that many struggle with even today?

Paul was absolutely determined to complete the assignment given to him, and a summation of his compulsion to take the good news to all, in the opening words of his letter to the Romans, details much of his methodology. Paul boldly went first to his fellow Jews, and then ministered to any other people who responded to the message in faith:

“I have an obligation to both Greeks and barbarians, to both the wise and the foolish. So I am eager to proclaim the Good News also to you who are in Rome. **For I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts—to the Jew first and also to the Greek**” (Romans 1:14-16, TLV).

With these Bible passages to percolate in your heart, where do the faithful find themselves at this point in time, as we each ponder and determine how should be living? Well, if you have been called to evangelize like Paul, take the good news to whomever, wherever, and however you are so led by the Holy Spirit. If you have been called to be a watchman on the wall like Ezekiel, then share the warnings as required to prevent the blood of others from accruing to your account (Ezekiel 33:1-11). But for whatever reasons—some only known to God—our call as a family has been to educate people in today’s broad Messianic movement, with a particular focus on non-Jewish Believers gravitating toward Messianic Jewish congregations, as we once were. However, in recent years, as a part of leadership in a local Messianic Jewish

congregation here in North Dallas, I have had to become far more sensitive to the “one new man” (Ephesians 2:14-22) vision of the assembly founders, to make this synagogue a place of refuge and comfort for the Jewish Believers who are members, but specifically those Jews, who via our evangelistic outreaches, come to services. Let me explain.

As noted earlier, I believe that a significant part of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21) includes the Body of Messiah coming full circle to much of the way the First Century Believers were constituted, and how they worshipped and approached the Holy One of Israel. Those early Diaspora assemblies and fellowships initially included a majority of Jewish Believers, but also included a sizeable number of Greek and Roman Believers—which by the late First Century would have been in the majority. Without getting into all of the historical data about the complicated dynamics of seeing many of the non-Jewish Believers follow the Apostolic decree (Acts 15:19-21, 29), or disregard it, and be integrated as fellow disciples with the Jewish Believers—and how the forces of anti-Semitism within the Roman Empire and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. altered much of what the Apostles likely believed would take place—severe mistakes were made by the early Second Century C.E. resulting in the emerging Christian Church being severed from its Hebraic and Jewish Roots.

To many of today’s Jewish people, the history of what has been commonly referred to as “the Church” has been wrought with strife, envy, anti-Semitic discrimination, torture, and murder at the hands of those claiming to be followers of Christ—be it during the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the pogroms of the Russian Empire, the Holocaust of World War II, and now today via a growing evangelical support for the Palestinians against the Israelis. Needless to say, the abuses of millions of Jewish people down through the centuries by people claiming to be “Christians,” has often distorted the opinions of Jews toward Yeshua of Nazareth. Many Christian people—even if their ancestors were not involved in the pogroms of Eastern Europe, and have been in North America for centuries like our family—have still been subject to the negative influences of social anti-Semitism. The accuser of the brethren, the father of lies, has been very successful at distorting the Word of God, and enticing the fleshly nature of people. The wall of partition, which was torn down by the sacrifice of the Messiah, has instead been widely reinforced by layers of animosity, acrimony, and abuse:

“But For he himself is our *shalom*—he has made us both one and has broken down the *m'chitzah* which divided us by destroying in his own body the enmity...He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make *shalom*, and in order to reconcile to God both in a single body by being executed on a stake as a criminal and thus in himself killing that enmity” (Ephesians 2:14-15a, 15c-16, CJB)

However, despite the relatively successful attempt of the enemy to perpetuate divisions between the Jewish people who are seeking their Messiah

and non-Jewish people who have professed trust in Israel's Messiah—God will inevitably be faithful to His Holy Word. The prophecies which declare of Israel's eventual return and reconciliation with the Holy One, stretch all the way back to the deliverer Moses, who foresaw the ultimate restoration that the world is witnessing today:

“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. The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today” (Deuteronomy 30:1-8).

Per some of my observations in last month's article, “**A Messianic Vision,**” why is it imperative that each of us continue to heed the guiding of the Holy Spirit, and consciously strive to have a **Messianic orientation** in the various restorative “**one new man**” assemblies that have emerged over the past several decades? Consider an illustration I will provide below from my previous days as a salesman. For most assuredly, a number of the congregations first founded by Jewish Believers in Yeshua, may now several decades later, have a non-Jewish majority—people similar to our family, who have been led by the Holy Spirit to return to the ancient paths (Jeremiah 6:16), and are turning to Zion to be instructed by God's Torah as the Prophets anticipate (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3).

I myself have had to mature in an understanding of how I need to be much more sensitive to the Jewish people in our local assembly, particularly the non-Believers who are curious about Messianic things, or who come to visit with family members or friends who are Believers. While at the MJAA conference in Pennsylvania this past July, I had a few conversations with a Jewish brother from our congregation, which were then followed by some frank and open conversations when we all returned to Dallas later—prompting me to remember some of the first things we learned in Messianic Judaism all the way back in 1995. Many years ago, in our family's early time in the Messianic Jewish movement, we were taught that we needed to be very careful with how a number of customary Christian terms—terms such as Jesus, Christ, Christian, church, and cross—should not be readily employed

in the speech of those in Messianic congregations, **but most especially those who speak in front of the assembly.** These were terms which could easily send the wrong message to Jewish people who were intrigued about the Messiah Yeshua—but for whom a phrase such as “converting to Christianity” would communicate things such as the forced conversion of Jewish people in the Middle Ages, perhaps on the threat of death, via ecclesiastical authorities. Jewish people, who are not Believers, tend to be more open to hearing the good news when terms like Yeshua, Messiah, Believer or Messiah follower, congregation or assembly, and execution-stake, are instead employed—by *at least* the congregational speakers, teachers, and announcers during the main *Shabbat* service and activities on Saturday morning. I myself did not realize how sensitive a Jewish person can indeed be, to some of the commonplace terms used in Christian speech today, as non-Jewish Believers in evangelicalism do not tend to have issues with these terms—and even more so, if they are American and Protestant, can arrogantly consider abuses of these terms to be a problem associated with European Catholicism and not them.

In further conversation with my Messianic Jewish friend, he related how his family had brought his wife’s Jewish first cousin to a *Shabbat* service, hoping to introduce him to the Jewish Messiah Yeshua. Lamentably, there was a guest speaker that morning who used a number of Christian terms, which resulted in the cousin stating that he would never come back because of what he perceived to be the offensive nature of the sermon. Immediately upon hearing my Messianic Jewish friend’s concern for his wife’s cousin, I was reminded of an effective sales approach that envisions **tossing popcorn through an oscillating fan.** To understand how this works, imagine the conscious mind of someone you are trying to sell a product to, with a fan located in the frontal lobes of the mind. When you are relating to that person, the fan is simply turning at various speeds listening to your sales pitch—kernels of popcorn—absorbing the information, sorting, and filing the bits of data in various parts of their memory. A good salesperson has the ability in his or her presentation to slow the fan down to such a low speed, that a piece of popcorn—facts—can literally pass through the fan, so that it settles into the far reaches at the back of the mind where the subconscious is located. It is there, not necessarily when or where the prospective buyer is aware (at a moment like taking a shower, mowing the lawn, or driving a car), that the subconscious brings up “the kernel” of information, and begins to contemplate purchasing whatever has been offered for sale. The key to being a successful salesperson, according to this illustration, is keeping the potential purchaser’s oscillating fan moving slow enough to pass those kernels of popcorn through the fan blades, so that at some future time, the prospective buyer reengages with the item related. But if something offensive or controversial is said that activates the fan, or the salesperson is doing something very annoying or distracting, the fan speeds up and the ability to get popcorn through the fan is impeded.

So how does this correlate to presenting the truth of the good news, to a

visiting Jewish person, and why is it critical that we personally and congregationally have a Messianic orientation in our assemblies? Because the empirical evidence indicates that without a doubt, the present restoration of all things is resulting in assemblies where Jewish people are coming to faith in Israel's Messiah, and non-Jewish Believers are living more like Israel's Messiah. As we mature as a Messianic movement—and most especially as more Jewish people are beginning to consider the claims Yeshua of Nazareth—we need to be sensitive to what is being communicated, *beginning with the terms being used*. We should be more aware of how certain words can be identified in Jewish culture with Christian persecution, and how they just might get the proverbial “fans” of seeking and open-minded Jewish people spinning so fiercely, that even if a bucket of popcorn is thrown at the fan, not a kernel of truth will land in the subconscious back of the brain. However, when a person can be led by the Holy Spirit, and employs genuine love, compassion, and empathy without offensive “Christian” terminology—then “the fan” can slow down, and deposit God's truth into the deep recesses of the soul, leading to salvation!

As I am personally learning more about the Messianic orientation that I need to employ in my thoughts and words, I am reminded of how crucial it is for the restoration of all things to have a healthy compliment of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in fellowship together. As I have received a much deeper understanding of how the Jewish experience is different from mine in recent weeks, the blessing and benefit of having each unique perspective, confirms the Proverb that “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). Clearly, the Holy One of Israel knows that His Body needs each of us to speak the truth in love, with the recognition that we each have unique roles to fulfill as we grow up in Messiah:

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **but speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Messiah, **from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love**” (Ephesians 4:14-16).

May a Messianic vision for God's people today, be undergirded with a Messianic Jewish orientation, so that as the Holy Spirit continues to draw more and more Jewish souls into His Body, we can witness what Paul concluded regarding the salvation of his people: “**For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?**” (Romans 11:15).

May He hasten that day, as we eagerly anticipate, “and so all Israel will be saved...” (Romans 11:26)! Finally, as we are all being conformed to the image of the Messiah, we will all receive what we have asked for and hear Yeshua declare, “Well done, good and faithful servants!”

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS UPDATE

August 2016

Dear Friends:

This past month, as a part of our ongoing OIM Technology Fund, I got a new computer. It took me around two long afternoons on a Thursday and Friday to install software and transfer files from my old station to this new station.

During our morning *Shabbat* service following, I sat down during the worship, and got an impression that later in the weekend I needed to look into significantly upgrading the Messianic Apologetics website. While the previous website was easy to navigate, the basic design was over ten years old, and not always compatible with mobile devices. By Sunday evening, a new Messianic Apologetics website was up—and one which is not only compatible with mobile devices, but is tied into social media.

The old website is still accessible (messianicapologetics.net/old). If I counted things up correctly, there are 170 Article listings, 244 FAQ entries, and 66 publications on the Messianic Apologetics site. Rather than re-post all of these in some massive online tsunami, I have instead been steadily posting: one article, one FAQ entry, and one publication listing every weekday. *This is going to take a while.* But doing this, and then linking to these resources via social media, I believe will be very helpful in getting many of you acquainted with our ministry, and exposed to the massive amount of work I have conducted over the past ten to twelve years. And even though this gives me some new and exciting busywork to do: ***I still post*** almost-daily video podcasts, a Wednesday Night Bible Study audio podcast, periodic Audio Archive teachings, and continue to make progress on the book *Salvation on the Line*.

One of the things about the new Messianic Apologetics website, and the employment of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube—is that this forum is something completely under my control. As such, there will be a number of topics and issues addressed, and perspectives considered, that in other forums—be those congregational or larger—such things might not be discussed. In wider arenas, where there can be various issues which can either stir deep emotions, divide people, or reveal some limitations—there is a need to be forbearing when it comes to particular subjects. Even with some deep seated reforming convictions, not always shared by everyone—I have always strived to lead from the Center, bringing people together to come to some fair resolution and consensus—we are also in the year 2016. I feel a greater freedom *to now discuss in my own forum*, a number of issues which people in the broad Messianic movement certainly do ask about.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee

