



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

REACH TEACH ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE



JULY 2009

**GOD'S "Mah Tovu"
REQUIREMENTS**



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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

There is only one assembly of chosen ones/elect, the people of Israel, of which all Believers in Messiah are a part. God does not have two groups of elect: Israel and "the Church."

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be followed and studied by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the saints after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

Outreach Israel News is the monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries, a non-profit organization with an emphasis on reaching, teaching, and encouraging the Messianic community. Subscription to **Outreach Israel News** is without cost and supported only by donation.

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OIM UPDATE

July 2009

With the hot Summer upon us, the required work of God's Kingdom continues. Our energies at the present time are steadfastly devoted to the ongoing TNN Press printing project, as we are busy getting our main books into softcover format. Currently, both *Introduction to Things Messianic* and the *Messianic Fall Holiday Helper* are at the printers, and are due back sometime at the end of August. *Introduction to Things Messianic* is an excellent follow-up study to *Hebraic Roots*, providing many more details for the Messianic newcomer. The *Messianic Fall Holiday Helper* has been expanded to include teachings from our Virtual Sukkot series, and also includes a significantly large liturgy section, with templates for a morning *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur* service. We thank you greatly for your continued support in making these—and many more volumes—available to a Messianic community that is yearning for sound Bible teaching!

With sound instruction in mind, this month the annual trek through the Torah and Haftarah readings prompted me to write the lead article, “**God's Mah Tovu Requirements.**” We recently considered the *Chukat-Balak* Torah portion (Numbers 19:1-25:9), with a complimentary reading in Micah 5:6-6:8, and this allowed me to really ask the question “What is good?” as posed by the prophet-for-hire Balaam, then expanded upon by the legitimate Prophet Micah. I sincerely hope that this overview will encourage you to pursue the weightier things of God's Torah—justice, mercy, and faithfulness—as you discover what He requires His people to do in order to live properly and upright (Micah 6:8)

Rather than virtues such as love and holiness often dominating our discussions, for a variety of reasons the broad Messianic movement often has some contentious issues to work through in the Summertime. *This year is certainly no exception.* Last Summer, our ministry directly confronted a deviant teaching endorsing polygamy, which seriously degraded women and encouraged chauvinism. Four years ago, a particular teacher came out and said that the Epistle to the Hebrews should be seriously questioned as reliable Scripture, and many people literally ripped it out of their Bibles. Add to this the expanding allure of Jewish mysticism over the years, and it seems that the attacks on sound Bible teaching never seem to cease.

Outreach Israel Ministries has steadfastly declared the alarm when false teachings arise in our faith community. Just take a look at the extensive database of Frequently Asked Questions on the TNN Online website (tnnonline.net/faq), and you will discover a large repository of information on different subjects addressed. We are very mindful that most people who compose the Messianic movement, are hungering and thirsting for God's truth. *This is good!* Yet, we know from personal experience that people, can be overloaded with information—especially when it is being taught by those who speak with conviction. *Discernment may not always be present.* This edition of OIM News speaks to a rather poignant issue, discussed in my recent McHuey Blog post, “**Following Oth-**

ers—or—No Fear?"

It is our prayer and hope that you will hear what the Spirit is saying, and learn to hear the Lord's voice more clearly. We all need to be molded into mature men and women useful for His service, and not sidelined because of this issue or that debate.

Until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

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COMING SOON: ALTERNATIVE SURVIVAL GUIDE

Are you in need of clarity about the end-times?
How do you maintain a sound heart and mind for what is up ahead?
Do you need to know more about the specific teachers you have been listening to?

GOD'S “Mah Tov” REQUIREMENTS

by Mark Huey

“God is good!” Perhaps you have heard this statement, with the acknowledging refrain “All the time!” echoing back a truism that is undeniable. This clever salutation recognizes some elementary facts about our Heavenly Father, but have you ever taken the time to seriously consider *the goodness* of a loving, infinite God, and all that it entails? Such a study would be interminable—reaching heights, depths, and lengths beyond comprehension (Ephesians 3:18-19). But what about the goodness, or simply the good, that God requires of finite mortals? Is this something more attainable, as willing human vessels are being conformed into the image of the Messiah Yeshua?

“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 8:29-30).

These questions and many more came to mind, while simply contemplating the elementary concept of God's goodness, prompted by the recent study of the *Balak* Torah (Numbers 22:1-25:9) and Haftarah (Micah 5:6-6:8) portions. One of the links between these two passages is the Hebrew clause *mah-tovu* (מַה־טוֹבִי), seen in statements uttered by the prophet-for-hire Balaam, viewing the camp of Israel. Secondly, the Prophet Micah asks *mah-tov* (מַה־טוֹב), regarding God's requirements for humanity.

“How fair [*mah-tovu*] are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel!” (Numbers 24:5).

“He has told you, O man, what is good [*mah-tov*]; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

The two perspectives regarding what is good, were originally different from two vastly different vantage points. Balaam was originally hired by Balak, the king of Moab, to curse the Ancient Israelites as they bivouacked on the plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan River. Yet as is noted in the oracles recorded, Balaam is not permitted to curse those whom the Lord God has blessed. Instead, from surrounding heights Balaam oversees the orderliness and organization of the tribes, arrayed around the Tabernacle, and marvels at their beauty or goodness. The essence of contentment in the camp must have been palpable, or the words would have not come forth from his lips.

As Balaam parries the rebukes of Balak, it is readily apparent that this exclamation is from the heart of the Almighty God, as Balaam asserts that he only

speaks what He allows:

“Balaam said to Balak, ‘Did I not tell your messengers whom you had sent to me, saying, “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything contrary to the command of the LORD, either good or bad, of my own accord. What the LORD speaks, that I will speak?”’” (Numbers 24:12-13).

What is something that can affirm that Balaam’s blessing, “How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!” (Numbers 24:5, NIV), **truly came from the heart of God?** Balaam was originally contracted to curse Israel, but was supernaturally prevented from doing so. It is easy to see in the Scriptures the great irony this has for King Balak. But, consider how even today the *Mah Tovu* is a traditional prayer that is used in the Jewish liturgy of the morning *Shabbat* service. These words, of a pagan non-Israelite—speaking of the goodness of Israel’s ancient tents and dwellings—reminds pious Jews every week of the harmony that should be present in their lives on the Sabbath.

The traditional liturgy, whether one is Orthodox or Conservative, intends to instill a connection between God’s goodness and orderliness, and reverence that people are to show Him in the assembly place. The opening prayer when one enters into the sanctuary begins with exclaiming Numbers 24:5, and is then supplemented from various Psalm quotations:

How fair are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel!
(Numbers 24:5).

But I, through Your abundant love, enter Your house; I bow down
in awe at Your holy temple (Psalm 5:8).

O LORD, I love Your temple abode, the dwelling-place of Your
glory (Psalm 26:8).

As for me, may my prayer come to You, O LORD, at a favorable
moment; O God, in Your abundant faithfulness, answer me
with Your sure deliverance (Psalm 69:14).¹

I really get inspired when exclaiming these verses before the Lord! Alas, though, in all of my fifteen years of being involved in Messianic congregations and fellowships—I have not regularly attended a single one that began their worship service with the *Mah Tovu*.

As you review the verses of the *Mah Tovu* prayer, perhaps you will discern that there is a thematic connection to be made between Israel being fair or goodly, and what the Prophet Micah declares is required by God of His people (Micah 6:8). Micah simply says that people are to do three things: (1) perform justice, (2) love kindness, and (3) walk humbly before the Lord. Is it possible that within the Jewish liturgical tradition, the Sages simply took Micah’s description of *mah-tov*, “what is good,” and found some important verses from Psalms that would get people to continually remember that God requires much more than

¹ All quotations for the *Mah Tovu* here are taken from the NJPS.

Cf. J.H. Hertz, ed., *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, revised (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1960), pp 4-5; Jules Harlow, ed., *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2007), 61.

simply tents in straight lines? And by extension in more modern synagogues, more than just reverent respect when the rabbi speaks?

Certainly, when you consider the *Mah Tov* verses from Psalms—or better yet, when you search intently into the counsel of Scripture about what doing justice, exhibiting lovingkindness, and walking humbly entails—there is much to inculcate into the mind and soul. This is to be a conformation process, where via the sanctification provided by the Holy Spirit, you can be transformed into the image of the Messiah Yeshua. The Apostle Paul taught, “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” (Romans 12:2).

In order to prove, analyze, or examine what the perfect will of God is, His children must have their minds renewed by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit. The Spirit should be working in concert with a consistent, almost repetitious study of the Holy Writ. Let us take a few moments, and consider how the *Mah Tov* prayer forces us to take seriously some important attributes of a mature Believer.

Psalm 5:8

The second verse of the *Mah Tov* is the pivotal, seventh verse from Psalm 5. Do remember that many of these Psalms were, or are memorized, by people attending synagogues. This one verse could ostensibly remind one of the whole Psalm. Claiming the attributes of lovingkindness and doing justice as the admonition, David pleas for justice from the Holy One of Israel. He reiterates his faithfulness in praying daily, reminding God that He does not pleasure in wickedness, nor allows evil to dwell with Him. God does not let the boastful stand before Him, and He hates all who do iniquity. He utterly ruins those who speak falsehood, and abhors people of bloodshed and deceit:

“For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David. Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch. For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit. **But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, at Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.** O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes; make Your way straight before me. There is nothing reliable in what they say; their inward part is destruction *itself*. Their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. Hold them guilty, O God; by their own devices let them fall! In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out, for they are rebellious against You. But let all who take refuge in You be glad, let them ever sing for joy; and may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in You. For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor as with a shield” (Psalm 5:1-12).

After noting the Lord’s abundant lovingkindness and the humility to bow in

His presence, David continues to ask that he be led in the Lord's righteousness, and not his own. David reminds the Lord of the devices of the wicked, and asks Him to judge them and hold them guilty. Doing justice appears to be of paramount importance to David, as the shelter and shield of God are requested.

Psalm 26:8

Next, in another short Psalm, David again solicits the examining and testing of his mind and heart, because performing justice and lovingkindness are constantly on his soul. David hates evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked (cf. Psalm 1). In this case, as David expresses his love of the habitation of the Lord and the place where His glory dwells, he references the Tabernacle and the place where the Ark of the Covenant stands before Him. His final statement to bless the Lord in the congregations, compliments the theme of the *Mah Tovu*:

"A Psalm of David. Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Examine me, O LORD, and try me; test my mind and my heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. I do not sit with deceitful men, nor will I go with pretenders. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. I shall wash my hands in innocence, and I will go about Your altar, O LORD, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and declare all Your wonders. O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells. Do not take my soul away along with sinners, nor my life with men of bloodshed, in whose hands is a wicked scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. My foot stands on a level place; in the congregations I shall bless the LORD" (Psalm 26:1-12).

Another short Psalm about the concept of walking humbly before the Lord is proclaimed. Declaring God's greatness and majesty over Creation, while bowing down and kneeling before Him as our Maker, is a true indication of humbling oneself. If this is done in the assembly, or in the privacy of one's home, it is to be a sign of how one recognizes the preeminence of the Lord and the desire to walk humbly with Him. Interestingly, this Psalm also references some of the consequences of hardened hearts and complaining against the Lord, that resulted in an entire generation being prevented from entering into the rest of the Promised Land. This is yet another reason to walk humbly with the Lord:

"O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, 'When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not

know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest” (Psalm 95:1-11; cf. Hebrews 3:7-11; 4:5-7).

Psalm 69:14

Finally in a much longer Psalm, the last verse of the *Mah Tovv* speaks of the desire for the salvation only provided by the lovingkindness of the Maker. Confession and repentance, coupled with a zeal for serving in the House of the Lord, highlight the early verses of Psalm 69.

“For the choir director; according to Shoshannim. *A Psalm* of David. Save me, O God, for the waters have threatened my life. I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God. Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies; what I did not steal, I then have to restore. O God, it is You who knows my folly, and my wrongs are not hidden from You. May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; may those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel, because for Your sake I have borne reproach; dishonor has covered my face. I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. When I wept in my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. Those who sit in the gate talk about me, and I *am* the song of the drunkards. **But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, answer me with Your saving truth**” (Psalm 69:1-13).

It is important to note how Psalm 69 is often considered a Suffering Messiah Psalm, as it mentions some of the abuse that was endured by Yeshua during His ministry (cf. John 2:17). I personally consider it to be quite ironic that the Jewish Sages would include a verse from Psalm 69 in the *Mah Tovv*, since down through the ages, it could be an ongoing reminder of the Messianic Savior. I think it is safe for us to conclude that the Lord had His hand in this choice for the final verse of the *Mah Tovv*. The Lord's persistent love for His dear Jewish people, who have often rejected the atoning work of the Messiah Yeshua, continues even through this frequent reminder from Psalm 69:

“Deliver me from the mire and do not let me sink; may I be delivered from my foes and from the deep waters. May the flood of water not overflow me nor the deep swallow me up, nor the pit shut its mouth on me. Answer me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; according to the greatness of Your compassion turn to me, and do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in distress; answer me quickly. Oh draw near to my soul *and* redeem it; ransom me because of my enemies! You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor; all my adversaries are before You. Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. May their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace,

may it become a trap. May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, and make their loins shake continually. Pour out Your indignation on them, and may Your burning anger overtake them. May their camp be desolate; may none dwell in their tents. For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have smitten, and they tell of the pain of those whom You have wounded. Add iniquity to their iniquity, and may they not come into Your righteousness. May they be blotted out of the book of life and may they not be recorded with the righteous. But I am afflicted and in pain; may Your salvation, O God, set me *securely* on high. I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving. And it will please the LORD better than an ox *or* a young bull with horns and hoofs. The humble have seen *it and* are glad; you who seek God, let your heart revive. For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise His *who are* prisoners. Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them. For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it. The descendants of His servants will inherit it, and those who love His name will dwell in it" (Psalm 69:14-36).

Meditating on the Mah Tovv

As you have read, the *Mah Tovv* is an awesome prayer, which when chanted and meditated upon each *Shabbat*, should consciously imbue within you the need to demonstrate justice, lovekindness, and to walk humbly with the Lord. Of course, these characteristics epitomize the very nature of the Father as demonstrated during the ministry of Yeshua. He not only humbly fulfilled the Torah requirements of "justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23), but because of His lovingkindness toward people, willingly offered Himself as the unblemished sacrifice for the iniquity of fallen humanity. **Can you imagine a greater good?**

As Believers trusting in the accomplished work of the Messiah, nothing compares to His shed blood cleansing us from the guilt of sin (Hebrews 9:14)! But the requirement for all of us to do justice, lovekindness, and walk humbly with the Lord is *by no means over* simply because the Messiah has come! While being conformed into Yeshua's image through prayer, study of the Word, trials, tribulations, and faithful works, Paul encouraged the Philippians to exemplify aspects of these godly traits, quoting from a prior hymn used by the early Messianic community:

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:1-8, TNIV).

Considering the *Mah Tov*, and the references from Balaam, the Psalms, and the connections to Micah, we should certainly all be aware that what it teaches us is seen throughout the Prophets.

The Prophet Jeremiah indicates that understanding and knowing the Lord, along with exercising lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, not only delights the Lord, but characterizes wise people:

“Thus says the LORD, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, **that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,**’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

The Prophet Hosea exhorted people to return to the Lord, by observing lovingkindness and justice, while waiting patiently:

“Therefore, return to your God, **observe lovingkindness and justice**, and wait for your God continually” (Hosea 12:6).

The Prophet Zechariah commanded people to practice true justice, while extending lovingkindness and compassion not only to their close brethren, but also to the widows, orphans, strangers, and poor in their midst:

“Thus has the LORD of hosts said, **‘Dispense true justice and practice lovingkindness and compassion** each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another” (Zechariah 7:9-10).

In many regards, as one surveys the counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation, the emphasis on performing justice, lovingkindness, and walking humbly with the Lord, comes through the words of the text in a multitude of ways. We cannot forget how Yeshua admonished the Pharisaical leaders for focusing on their offerings, rather than learning the weightier aspects of the Torah (Matthew 23:23). While their *halachah* was to be followed, their life attitudes were not (Matthew 23:2-3).

Understanding and knowing God requires people to comprehend what His justice entails in order to adhere to it. Additionally, one must appreciate God’s lovingkindness—by extending such love, mercy, and compassion to others. This is all accomplished by exercising an attitude of humility, recognizing that without the sacrifice of the Messiah, intimate access to the Father in Heaven would be very difficult, if not impossible. After all, unrighteousness or defilement cannot co-exist with the purity of absolute holiness. This is why we as Believers must be eternally grateful, for how the author of Hebrews explains and confirms how an entrance into the holy place of God in Heaven has been fully opened through the shed blood of the Messiah Yeshua:

“For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ‘THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,’ *He then says*, ‘AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.’ Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy

place by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:14-25; cf. Jeremiah 31:33).

The loving God of Creation has ordained holy justice, as a means to instill the righteousness that He requires in order to have communion with His chosen people. For those faithfully seeking communion with Him, the requirement to enter into the holy place *only* comes from confidence in the atoning work brought by the Messiah’s blood. The full assurance of faith in the atonement sprinkles our hearts clean from an evil conscience, as our bodies are washed by the pure water of the Word. We need the Word to explain God’s “*mah tovu*” requirements. We need to understand that God not only wants us to emulate Him by performing justice, lovingkindness, mercy, compassion, and walking humbly with Him—but also that we recognize that faith to do these things essentially wraps it all together. After all, He is faithful to fulfill His Word!

If the words detailing God’s “*mah tovu*” requirements—things we have received from Genesis to Revelation—are not heeded, then woe to us. In fact, if **the greatest good ever achieved since Creation**—the death, burial, and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua—is not true, then as the Apostle Paul puts it, our faith is in vain:

“Now if Messiah is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Messiah has been raised; and if Messiah has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Messiah, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Messiah has been raised; and if Messiah has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:12-17).

Just scratching the surface on the subject of God’s “*mah tovu*” requirements, has taken us to a variety of Scriptures that begin to explain what He considers to be good. But if you go back and review the last verse of the *Mah Tovv* liturgy, you will note that the final phrase pleads with God for His salvation: “in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, answer me with Your saving truth [*b’emet yishekha*, בְּאַמְתֵּי יִשְׁשֶׁקָךָ]” (Psalm 69:13). For faithful Believers in Messiah Yeshua—the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6)—our comfort is in knowing Him. But on the other hand, when given an opportunity to chant this prayer, perhaps it would be good to remember to intercede that those hearing this prayer—especially our Jewish brethren who do not know Him—*will come to know Him* who is life eternal. Perhaps this would be something else that our Heavenly Father would truly consider “how good”!

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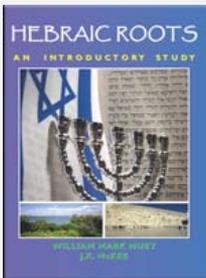


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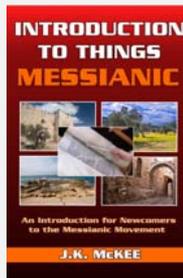
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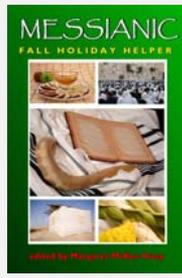
***Introduction to Things Messianic* and the *Messianic Fall Holiday Helper* are at the printers this month!**



AVAILABLE



AUGUST



SEPTEMBER



LATE FALL

Following Others—or—No Fear?

by Mark Huey

Imagine being a religious person who (1) believes fervently in the existence of God, (2) has a nominal working comprehension of the Holy Scriptures, and (3) sincerely wants to be informed about current events and how they relate to Biblical prophecies. Do you know anyone like this? In varying degrees, this includes many of today's evangelical Christians, and even those who make up a considerable bulk of the Messianic movement.



While not all of today's Christians and Messianics may agree on every facet of doctrine, **almost all are inclined to listen to people who claim to speak for God.** The insatiable thirst for truth about God creates an urge where *it is thought* that someone with more (perceived) knowledge of God, perhaps better acquainted with the Scriptures, can give them insight into what God requires. These seekers can often innocently believe what various leaders tell them, without thinking critically. Too many, when hearing a particular teaching or sermon—especially on the end-times—do not turn to the Scriptures themselves and confirm that what they have been told is accurate (Acts 17:11).

When you couple inquisitive religious inclinations, with a basic human desire that prefers to take a path of least resistance—while instinctively avoiding harmful and/or life threatening circumstances in order to survive—a surreptitious ensnarement is established. For millennia, nefarious people who have been given open, armed access to these searching souls, have been exploiting this confluence of spiritual and natural human proclivities.

Thankfully, the Creator God understood these tendencies of His creatures to follow after those who abuse the naïve and undiscerning, with clever verbal manipulations, and at times even physical signs and wonders. The Lord told the Ancient Israelites in the desert sojourn, and by extension us today, **that He would actually allow various people to test His followers**, in order to determine who they would follow and serve. The immutable, jealous, omniscient God—then and now—really desires to know if those who call upon Him truly love Him with their whole being (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

False prophets or dreamers—possible even able to produce physical signs or wonders—**or just speak in a way as to have people follow them**, will often seduce children of God into walking by fear rather than walking by faith. The Biblical admonition to purge their evil from among the faith community is very candid. While today we might not put these false prophets and dreamers to death—as we believe Yeshua has atoned for their sin—we should neither be consulting nor listening to them. We should especially not be sending them our money to acquire their latest teachings!

What often boggles the mind, is how, when one considers the direct instruction given from the Lord, there is inherent affinity for gullible people to again return to false prophets' teachings! God, however, says "The prophet has spoken

presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:22). This requires us to move on and find legitimate leaders who have a proven track record of reliability with the Scriptures. But as we can often find, either people just have short memories—or, false prophets are able to manipulate them quite well. They are frequently able to allure foolish people back to their deluding trough, like a dog returning to its vomit (Proverbs 26:11; 2 Peter 2:22).

For years, our ministry has been warning the Messianic community we serve, about fear-generating techniques of false prophets who are proliferating in greater numbers. Let’s face it: **fear-mongering sells** because the willing audiences enable these people, and totally ignore the precise warnings of the Scriptures.

Since the mid-1990s, our family has witnessed a huge array of end-time date theories, different yet similar calendar calculations, diverse prognostications on the identity of the antimessiah/antichrist, and some unique interpretations of prophetic Scriptures. When various predictions do not come to pass, we then often witness recalculations of recalculations. We have encountered a whole cadre of individuals who are quite bold enough to declare themselves as prophets of God, some of whom have said that they have been chosen to lead people back to the Promised Land in a greater Exodus.

It is *always prudent* to be aware of the environment and times in which we live. Each of us needs to prepare our families and congregations for unexpected events like tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, or even terrorist attacks. **But we are to never be motivated by fear.** Fear paralyzes the soul, and leads to people making unwise, “adrenaline aided” decisions—that are primarily motivated by physical survival, and do not take into account rational spirituality. When it comes to the Second Coming, Yeshua informed His Disciples that the exact time of His return was known only by the Father (Matthew 24:36).

Knowing human nature, if someone is constantly anticipating the beginning of the Great Tribulation—in a mere handful of years or even just a matter of months—unwarranted fear will literally consume him. Decisions will be made with the expectation that horrific events are soon going to “come down,” and preparations for protection and survival will become the primary focus of attention.

In the past two decades we have personally witnessed some negative things spike in the Messianic community over the end-times—with a devastating impact left upon individuals, families, fellowships, and congregations. People start selling their assets and relocating to areas where a false prophet is located, so they can be near to the person who is purportedly “hearing from God.” Marriages fall apart as one of the spouses does not believe in blindly taking in the diatribe of the false teacher. Children get uprooted and lose a great deal of their education, because the logic is that with the Great Tribulation rapidly approaching, learning survival skills is what is really necessary. A bunker mentality starts to grip a group, as paranoia about outsiders knowing about stored provisions becomes a concern. Eventually, the family or groups spend their time primarily discussing strategies for survival and enduring to the end. The work of God’s Kingdom, spreading the gospel and encouraging discipleship, becomes secondary or tertiary. Outreach, evangelism, sober Bible study, and ministering to the community—are

terminated.

With the advent of greater Internet usage, and easy access to a wide variety of teachings in the past decade, the problems associated with following false prophets has exacerbated. Only enhancing the problem is a growing multitude of *repeating clones* of some of the older false prophets. Combine all of this with the following:

- spiritual delusions of theories about the end of the Mayan calendar in 2012
- Nostradamus' predictions
- comets heading toward Earth
- the return of the final Muslim *mahdi*
- political upheaval in the United States as government bureaucracy grows
- continued tensions in the Middle East, especially between Israel and Iran

Christian prophecy teachers still selling their wares and speaking about an imminent rapture at each Feast of Trumpets

Seeing this concoction of phenomenon that are conducive to perpetuate hysteria, **what is a mature Believer to do?**

First, take a deep breath and relax. Things are not as bad as you may have been led to believe. Yeshua told His Disciples, "do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

Secondly, **do not listen to or fear those who use paranoia of the end-times to promote themselves.** Many have used the legitimate prophetic message of Scripture to bring great ruin and devastation to the lives of families and individuals, while making a tidy profit in the process. *Think critically* about who you listen to about the End of the Age.

All of us know that since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, more Jewish people coming to faith in the Messiah since the First Century, and the significant expansion of the Messianic movement—we have been getting much closer to the return of Yeshua. As a ministry, we encourage people to be on the lookout, and not be caught unaware. But in so doing, let us be like the wise virgins with their oil, or the faithful stewards with their talents, and continue to be about the Father's work for His Kingdom (Matthew 25). **If we hope to make it to the end, we must learn to be productive in God's service,** and not be guided by fear and paranoia.

My friends, I encourage you to love and follow the Lord, fearing and obeying Him, listening to His voice, serving Him with your whole heart, and clinging to Him with your entire being.

I also encourage you to not follow after people who act as though they serve Him, but have spoken presumptuously and have discredited themselves. Their manipulative words are to no longer be feared.

For more information, check out the *Alternative Survival Guide* coming soon!

KOSHER YOUR PLATE

edited by Margaret McKee Huey

It is my intention to bring our Messianic cooks timely recipes of interest in each issue of the OIM News. In this issue, I have included a wonderful kosher Vegetable Lasagna recipe from my sister, Susan Schwartz, as well as an old Southern favorite of mine - Fried Green Tomatoes!

Susan's Vegetable Lasagna

For one large pan (about 9x13 or even a bit bigger)

3 layers of lasagna noodles (regular, do not precook)

2 bottles of marinara sauce

15 oz ricotta

$\frac{3}{4}$ 12 oz bag of shredded mozzarella

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup parmesan

2 eggs

(mix the cheeses and eggs together, carefree spreading)

1 10-oz bag baby spinach

about $\frac{1}{2}$ large can of large black olives, sliced

One cup of sauce on bottom of pan/layer of pasta, cheese, sauce, half of spinach/layer of pasta, cheese, sauce, half of spinach, olives/layer of pasta and sauce/top with parmesan.

Bake covered 35-45minutes at 350, uncovered 10-15, let cool 10-minutes.

Matzah Fried Green Tomatoes

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup matzah meal

1 teaspoon kosher salt

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground red pepper

2 large lightly beaten eggs

4 large green tomatoes, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch slices

Vegetable Oil

Combine the meal, salt, sugar and pepper. Dip the tomatoes into the eggs, dripping off the excess, then dredge in the matzah meal, pressing into the surfaces. Place on a baking sheet. Pour oil $\frac{1}{2}$ inch into a large heavy frying pan and heat until 360 degrees. Fry the tomatoes in batches for 3-4 minutes on each side until golden. Drain on paper towels and sprinkle with additional salt if desired. Serve hot!

Please submit your recipes to Margaret Huey at the OIM office for inclusion in this column and our upcoming cookbook "Kosher Your Plate."

A new addition to TNN Press' confronting issues series:

Addressing the Frequently Avoided Issues Messianics Encounter in the Torah



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time of the Exodus, but multiplied millennia to the Creation of the cosmos itself. The questions and the controversies that the first five books of the Bible present to us, not just as students of God's Word, but specifically as Messianic Believers—are quite significant. **Many people do not know what to do when the social norms of the ancient period are different than those of today**, and are often at a loss when reading the Torah. Not infrequently, such issues are just avoided or outright ignored in Messianic Torah study.

As the Messianic movement prepares to enter into a new chapter in both its spiritual and theological development, there is much in the Torah that needs to be explored by us. Today's Messianic community need not find itself (unnecessarily) lagging behind in a variety of important areas, as having a better handle on them will help us in both our Biblical Studies and in understanding the mission that the Lord has laid out for us—to be a kingdom of priests and a light that can make a difference in the world (Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 42:6)!

Focusing on God's instructions in the Torah is an undeniable part of not only the Messianic lifestyle, but also the Messianic experience. Ever since the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon, the public reading of the Torah to instruct God's people on what was acceptable and unacceptable behavior has been a regular practice, something that is also witnessed in the Apostolic Scriptures, and continues in the traditions of today's Jewish Synagogue. The repetition of hearing Moses' Teaching is important for men and women of faith, particularly in understanding the fuller meaning of "For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44). The statutes and commandments of the Torah are to make God's people different from the rest of the world, possessing qualities and wisdom that attract outsiders to Him (Deuteronomy 4:6).

When the Torah is examined and carefully scrutinized, and not just surveyed for people, places, and events—it becomes quite clear that Torah observance is *much more* than just *Shabbat*, the festivals, and kosher. A great number of ethical and moral issues/ commandments become significantly conscious to the Torah reader. Likewise, a person has to encounter a world going not only back some 3,300 years to the

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