

OIM UPDATE

July 2013

Since our return to North Texas in December, we have visited a number of Messianic congregations and have been blessed by getting reacquainted with a number of people we knew from the past, as well as meeting quite a few other Messianic Believers, who are exercising their spiritual gifts in obvious ways. It is a great joy to realize that being “Messianic” here in Dallas is not considered odd—or even “cultish”—by many in the Christian community! In fact, when we mention that we are “Messianic” followers of Jesus, most knowledgeable evangelical Believers here understand exactly what we are. They generally appreciate the fuller explanation that Outreach Israel and TNN Online are helping Jewish and non-Jewish people comprehend the Hebraic Roots of our common faith.

During one of our recent visits to a Messianic Jewish congregation, the congregational leader shared a video about the upcoming lunar eclipses of 2014-2015. This has prompted this month’s lead article, entitled, “**Signs of the Time.**” The memories of what occurred back in the 1990s, which was used to propel our family into the ministry, may just have a profound parallel of sorts to what is about to happen in the next few years. But because technology has advanced substantially in the past two decades, it is imperative that Messianic Believers anticipate a flood of curious people, as many search for answers that can be adequately addressed by those in the Messianic community of faith. Hopefully as the lunar eclipses approach, many will be encouraged to mature in their respective walks of faith, in order to be prepared for the onslaught of the more-than-curious individuals, who will be seeking answers to questions that only the Holy Scriptures can explain.

We want to thank each and everyone who continues to support our **Theological Defense Trust** and the **Prison Ministry Free Book Fund**, as requests expand substantially every month. From our perspective, there must be either a network among the prisoners and/or the Holy Spirit is motivating a growing number of incarcerated souls to seek the truth, as we work to communicate via the Messianic perspective we represent. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness to those who are seeking Him with all their hearts, mind, souls, and strength!

May the Lord continue to bless you and keep you in His will, as you are used to advance His Kingdom, until the Messianic restoration of all things...

Shalom,
Mark Huey

SIGNS OF THE TIME

by Mark Huey

Recently at a Messianic Jewish congregational service that we attended, the congregants were informed about some upcoming lunar eclipses that will coincide with Passover and *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles) in 2014 and 2015. An Internet video of a “Christian questioner,” who interviewed a popular “quasi-Messianic” teacher about these normal astronomical occurrences in light of Israel and Biblical prophecies, was shown. This short clip immediately confirmed, to us, that the Holy Spirit was definitely going to use these timely lunar eclipses for His purposes, not only among the Messianic community of faith, but also the Christian world, in some remarkable ways during the next few years. The announcement expectantly generated some anxious chatter in the Messianic crowd which was gathered. Then, the congregational leader further noted that some have concluded that 2014 is also a Sabbatical year for the Land of Israel, yet offhandedly indicated that it is a hypothetical calculation based on speculation. The congregants seemed to miss his point. Instead, the attendees were moved to elevated *ahs* and *whispers* erupting into sustained applause. *Such is the power of thought-linked suggestions and prognostications.* Even relatively informed “Messianic” hearts and minds can be prompted to jump to conclusions, in anticipation of the return of the Messiah or the onset of the Great Tribulation or war in Israel and the Middle East.

Given the anticipated arrival of these lunar eclipses, I had to note some of our own family’s Messianic experience since the mid-1990s. I was reminded of how a lunar eclipse during Passover 1996, generated an inquisitive reaction and sense of bewilderment from me. At that time, we were just a short year into our Messianic walk. Consequently, any teaching or comments that drew parallels between what we were rapidly learning about the Biblical festivals in association with “end-time” prophecies, generated some alarm that warranted serious Bible study. Hence, when I read in a ministry newsletter about an April 4, 1996 lunar eclipse occurring on Passover—which was hyperbolically being labeled by some Messianic prophecy teachers as a “blood red” moon per Joel 2:31 and Acts 2:20—I literally got on the roof of my house to get a better view of this purported “sign” in the sky. Much to my chagrin, the murky, brownish shadow cast on the moon, was witnessed with nothing visibly or ostensibly profound happening. However, I was piqued to know more.

A few days later, we were again informed by some Messianic prophecy teachers that two more “blood red” moons were going to take place at *Sukkot* 1996 and *Purim* 1997, which are two more Biblically significant dates. To further generate anticipation of significant events of “Biblical” proportions taking place, the appearance of the Hale-Bopp comet, visibly floating in the western sky for hours after dusk, was included in the purported array of “signs” in the sky per Matthew 16:3. Without hesitation, some Messianic prophecy teachers routinely included some words from Yeshua that they said confirmed that the “Great Tribulation” or Jacob’s Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) was imminent: “there will be signs in

sun and moon and stars and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves” (Luke 21:25). To make their arguments even more persuasive, especially because of the interest in Israel among their listeners, there was the absolute conclusion that the Oslo Peace Accords signed on September 13, 1993, just before *Rosh HaShanah* between Israel and the Palestinians, was the “covenant with many” prophesied by Daniel 9:27. Therefore, from our earliest months in the Messianic movement, we were being overwhelmed with Scripture passages/quotes, world events, and lunar eclipses—that were cleverly weaved together by some teachers, who we figured out later were **false teachers**—to come to a foregone conclusion that the Great Tribulation was about to commence. Needless to say, the Lord used this intense period of time dissecting these statements, to force our family into a fervent study of the entire Bible in order to personally understand prophecies found from Genesis to Revelation. In His time, the Lord gently began teaching us His truth and ways, **rather than learning from other people with their false and exploitative interpretations, and perhaps, personal agendas.**

Of course, the Great Tribulation did not begin on March 23, 1997, as prophesied by the misguided teachers. But there is no doubt that during the mid-1990s, these false teachings were used to arouse a considerable number of people around the world regarding the Hebraic and Jewish Roots of their faith—in spite of the false prophets, voices, and their repeaters. Whether it was the hype about the beginning of the Great Tribulation, or the return of the Messiah, or simply an introduction to the Biblical festivals found in Leviticus 23—interest in these topics was providentially a part of the Father’s plan (cf. Romans 8:28) to accelerate the fulfillment of some of the concluding prophecies recorded in the Tanakh (Old Testament):

“Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse” (Malachi 4:4-6).

Now after almost two decades since the Oslo Peace Accords, when these false teachers were mistakenly mischaracterizing what the lunar eclipses were “signs” of—many people from all tongues, tribes, and nations around the globe are studying the Torah of Moses in rapidly increasing numbers. Finally, after centuries of being relegated primarily to the Jewish people studying Judaism, untold thousands of non-Jewish Believers are learning about the statutes and ordinances found in Moses’ Teaching. The spirit of Elijah is restoring the hearts of the fathers to their children, in order to prepare a generation of saints who have a testimony of Yeshua and obey the commandments (Revelation 12:17; 14:12), for the inevitable “great and terrible day of the Lord.” Additionally through this restoration and return to the foundational building blocks of the faith, the hearts of the children are being restored to their natural fathers, as well as learning life lessons from their spiritual ancestors, the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel.

As I sat in the audience, noting the similarities between the lunar eclipses of

the 1990s and those coming in 2014-2015, I pondered our own family experience, and how the Lord partially used these presumed “signs” in the skies to draw us into fervent study of the Scriptures, in order to better understand what we were being told and taught. I also recalled that back in that timeframe the Internet was in its relative infancy, and was just beginning to be used by some of the more technologically savvy population. Instead, one of the primary sources for obtaining information not readily available from traditional media outlets was shortwave radio transmissions. Now almost a relic of the past, shortwave radio is still a useful means to communicate to poorer countries which have not yet completely entered the Digital Age. However, the explosive growth of the Internet has made it nearly omnipresent and readily available worldwide through satellite transmissions, if not accessible through local and regional connections.

At that point, my mind wandered from the past into the near future, and I began thinking about what the Internet has brought forth in merely the last seventeen years, as it has become one of the primary means of communication. Today, as the Information Age has developed and advanced, the prophecy issued by Daniel 12:4, “but as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase,” seems most relevant and applicable to our times. Fast and inexpensive availability of informational knowledge has become a modern-day convenience approaching necessity. Intercontinental travel with people going back and forth, coupled with the astronomical increase in knowledge accelerated by almost instantaneous access by the World Wide Web, is possibly allowing the concealed words of the Scriptures to be better comprehended, as the End of the Age rapidly draws near.

This line of thinking led me to contemplate a few more thoughts, as I look ahead. Inevitably, these coming lunar eclipses will once again be hyperbolically referred to as “signs” in the skies, by *not only* Messianic teachers, but *also* many Christian leaders and influencers—who have already been at least tangentially introduced to “Messianic teachings” through the commemoration of Passover *sedars* and the Feast of Tabernacles gatherings. **After all, sensationalistic teaching about the coming of the Messiah, or the beginning of the Great Tribulation, draws a crowd! “Theotainers” (those who use the subject of God to entertain and arouse their audience) are always looking for fear-generating material to stimulate their followers!** It certainly appears, from our experiential knowledge, that the Holy One did use the lunar eclipses of the 1990s to arouse many thousands to gain a serious interest in the Messianic perspective. For this, we as a family are very grateful. While considering these conclusions, though, a thought provoking question came to mind: **Is the Lord going to once again use the lunar eclipses of 2014-2015 to draw even more people into the Messianic fold?**

Apparently for the past two decades, the Lord has selectively prepared an initial group of people within the Messianic community, to be equipped to handle a dramatic increase in those who will inevitably read or hear about things like the lunar eclipses via the Internet. While there has always been an interest in prophecy and the end-times for many Christians and Jews—coupling the festivals of the Lord with lunar eclipses or “signs” in the skies—will be an especially dramatic visible means to make the Biblical connections. Obviously, the number of

people who will be further exposed to the appointed times of Leviticus 23, and by extension, the Messianic community of faith, is unknowable. But I would venture to say that by 2016, given the continuing perilous predicament of the world with the State of Israel in the news almost daily, coupled with the thirst for answers to the ills that plague humanity, and the prolific use of the Internet for knowledge—the numbers of evangelical Christians and curious souls looking for truth, could conceivably be exponentially greater than it was in the mid-1990s. But regardless of the number of people who will be asking questions and looking for answers, the Messianic community of faith should be conducting serious soul searching, in preparation for the possible onslaught of inquisitive individuals potentially coming into the fold. For *if* the End of the Age is on the horizon, and the Lord is preparing a group of people to fulfill the prophecies found in Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 about the saints who will be at war with the Beast System, having a testimony of Yeshua and obeying His commandments, *then* sound Biblical doctrine is imperative to withstand the possible onslaught.

Intensely looking for the return of the Lord and the commencement of the Great Tribulation, is not just a modern-day concern, but was something addressed explicitly by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians. Rather than speculate about what might happen, and the timing of Yeshua's return based on human assumptions via previous false teachings about lunar eclipses and other false signs and wonders—the following Scripture passage unequivocally explains what should be expected to occur *prior* to the Great Tribulation and return of the Messiah. It is here in absolute terms that Paul introduces the sobering statement that God will send a “deluding influence” after the falling away or apostasy, and the revealing of the man of lawlessness:

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let **no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.** Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through

our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us. Now may our Lord Yeshua the Messiah Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17).

If one simply reads Paul's straightforward answer to the First Century confusion about the "gathering together to Him" expectations of those in Thessalonica—it is apparent that some deceivers, perhaps because the mystery of lawlessness was already at work, were indicating that the time had come or was imminent. To dispel those rumors, Paul made it abundantly clear that a number of recognizable events must first take place before the Lord would return. First there is going to be a great falling away or apostasy from the faith when the "restrainer" (concluded by many to be Michael, the archangel of Israel) arises (cf. Daniel 12:1). Following this, the antimessiah or antichrist will reveal himself and take his place at the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. But before the lawless one is defeated by the Lord, many false signs and wonders will be performed by false prophets and teachers in order to test God's people, and if possible, deceive the very elect (Matthew 24:24). Lamentably, Paul stated that it is because people did not receive the "love of the truth" so as to be saved, that they will judged and susceptible to the deluding influence that the Lord ultimately sends, and instead chose to take pleasure in wickedness.

Rather than taking pleasure in wickedness, Paul mentioned faithful ones, and gave thanks to the Lord, for those "brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13, TLV). In other words, once someone chosen by God from the beginning has received the blessings of salvation and being forgiven from sins, then the arduous process of **personal sanctification** commences by the indwelling power of the Spirit and growth in faith.

In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he amplified what sanctification required of the Believer in Messiah, with these words affirming his later teaching referenced above:

"Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Yeshua, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Yeshua. For this is the will of God, your **sanctification**; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in **sanctification** and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; *and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is **the avenger** in all these things*, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in **sanctification**. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you" (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8).

Note that the obvious references for individuals to maintain moral sexual purity, are complimented by the admonition that no one transgress and defraud

another, because saints are not called for the purpose of impurity, but instead sanctification. So, if a person is not “by faith” advancing in his or her pursuit of holiness, being sanctified, then this may be tantamount to rejecting the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This should be a serious “red flag” for those who claim to be Believers! It is possible that the Spirit of the Most High might not always be influencing or leading a Believer’s decisions—even though the Holy Spirit is supposed to be doing this, increasingly, over the elapsed time of one’s walk of faith. If purity and honesty toward others are not foremost in your thoughts, it is highly recommended and prudent to consider some further advice offered by Paul:

“Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Yeshua the Messiah is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Paul had told the Believers in Thessalonica to stand firm in the understandings and traditions he taught to them, so that they might have good works:

“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us. Now may our Lord Yeshua the Messiah Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in **every good work and word**” (2 Thessalonians 2:15-17).

Before this conclusion of 2 Thessalonians ch. 2, where Paul summarized his explanation about the coming of the Lord and the Great Tribulation in great detail—there is **not** any mention of lunar eclipses falling on the Biblical feast days, when full moons and occasional eclipses tend to naturally occur. After all, predictable astronomical events like solar and lunar eclipses have occurred down through the centuries. However, the much more horrific “blood red” moon preceding the return of the Messiah, is notably also coupled with a serious darkening of the sky and hurling of stars (Joel 2:31; Revelation 6:12). The significant events listed above in 2 Thessalonians ch. 2, are what people should be decisively looking to occur, including the most obvious construction of a Temple where the antimesiah/antichrist will declare that he is a god or God Himself!

Despite the explicit explanatory teaching found in 2 Thessalonians ch. 2, it is highly likely that the “blood red” moons (an obvious misnomer because these are merely lunar eclipses and not cataclysmic astronomical events that immediately precede the Second Coming of the Messiah) of 2014-2015 will get tremendous coverage on the Internet. Many false teachers and false prophets will try to exploit these eclipses for various reasons, but Messianic Believers should not be fooled or afraid! After all, the clear teaching of Moses is that false teachers would be used by the Lord to test His people regarding whom they love and how they should be handled (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22). Additionally, the Messianic Writings are replete with warnings from Yeshua and His Apostles about the proliferation of false teachings, false prophets, and deception as the End of the Age approaches (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24; 2 Corinthians 11:13, 26; 2 Peter 2:1, 3; 1 John 4:1).

In spite of the Biblical warnings not being heeded by many of the undiscerning—aberrant and misguided teaching will still cause a great number of Christian people, as well as those from all other types of backgrounds, to be exposed to and interested in the Biblical feasts and their connection with the work of the Messiah. *This is a good thing to anticipate*, because among those who will be exposed to exploitative teaching about the “blood red” moons will be many who need to *first* know the Lord and the salvation He has provided. Additionally in God’s sovereign way, He can use various teachings to expand the knowledge of people worldwide about what He is currently doing via the prophesied restoration of all things (Acts 3:19-21). The issue confronting Messianic Believers today is **whether they are prepared for a possible torrent of people who will be curiously drawn into their assemblies and fellowships**, in order to look for answers to many of the questions that will arise from all of this sensationalistic teaching.

It is our hope and prayer that many of those who were touched by the Spirit of God through the lunar eclipses of the 1990s, and are now a part of the Messianic community, will have matured enough in their walk of faith to the point of being useful for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the upcoming years. This will not only include sharing the good news with the curious, but exhibiting a godly, Torah observant lifestyle that glorifies the Messiah in every way. After all, the sanctification process that Paul outlined to those in Thessalonica should have been likewise, accomplishing much in the hearts and lives of those drawn into the Messianic movement over the past two decades. Rather than being swept away by the hype associated with the anticipated lunar eclipses, these natural phenomena will simply be reminders, and perhaps an inspiration to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord recognizing that the Holy One is using these events as the “restoration of all things” progresses.

May we all be reminded that our patient and longsuffering Heavenly Father loves His children so much, that He would even use astronomical events, coupled with the technological advances of the world, to wake up and stimulate those chosen to be preparing for the great and terrible day of the Lord! How awesome is our God that He has raised up the Messianic community to be a witness to the multitude searching for truth and guidance in the tumult that is approaching. *Use us all, Lord, to Your glory!*

TNN ONLINE EDITOR'S UPDATE

July 2013

Dear Friends:

June was a relaxing, as well as an exciting month. As my family has been doing since the 1970s, the third week of June was spent with my extended relatives in Gulf Shores, Alabama, where I got some well needed rest, relaxation, and I was also able to spend some time reflecting on the past year—and in particular the past seven months or so since our family and ministry move to Texas.



One of the biggest things that I was able to do this year, on some of the bad weather days inside, is that I spent some time looking around Facebook on my laptop. I found out that the Messianic Facebook scene is a great deal more active than I thought it was, and that given the amount of time I spend on the computer every day, that I needed to start making use of the Outreach Israel Ministries Facebook page much more (facebook.com/outreachisraelministries). You see, there are many, many Messianic and Hebrew Roots related posts circulating around Facebook everyday. Many of these are just random people wanting to get their thoughts heard by someone. Obviously, given the wide amount of books, commentaries, articles, FAQ entries, and even back issue newsletters—Outreach Israel and TNN Online have much to say! **Be sure that if you have not been following us on Facebook that you start doing so.** We are posting much more than just duplicating our e-mail updates! I am posting a short op-ed piece about every day, often with a link to something of ours that might otherwise go overlooked. *This is exclusive to our Facebook page.* I know that being a bit more aggressive on Facebook is going to be an important way for us to keep our fingers on the pulse of much of our faith community.

In the first week of July, we finished our study of the Epistle of James—so be looking for *James for the Practical Messianic* to be released in paperback and eBook for Amazon Kindle later in the Summer. This month I will be formatting into eBook a number of titles that have been sitting on my desk, and I will be preparing for our next Wednesday Night Bible Study on Paul's letter to the Romans, likely now beginning at the end of August or early September. *I do need to take a few weeks off between ending one study and starting another one.* In addition to this, I am presently finishing up the last two chapters in the forthcoming *Messianic Torah Helper*, which is already over 500 pages. This is going to be a massive compilation of material, intended as a follow up read to *The New Testament Validates Torah*, and helping to orient Messianic people to many of the miscellaneous, yet extremely important, issues that we tend to face with the subject of "the Torah" comes up.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee