

OIM UPDATE

March 2014

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! (Psalm 133:1).

In the past month, the verse above has come to mind several times for a variety of reasons. First, our family has been led to formally join a local community of faith at a Messianic Jewish synagogue, where love and unity of the body are encouraged, along with an emphasis on individually exercising spiritual gifts. We have been participating in a new members class, where the workbook being followed is thorough and balanced. In fact, upon rereading many of the Scriptural references that justify why Messianic Judaism is considered a “restoration movement” of congregations, it reaffirmed in my heart that the decision our family made almost twenty years ago to pursue a Messianic lifestyle is absolutely validated by the Holy Writ. We praise the Lord for not only the Holy Spirit guiding us along this path—but that we were open to His leading, able to hear His voice, and were not concerned about leaving the relative comfort of the traditional evangelical Christian settings, where we were originally reared in the faith. Hallelujah!

However, our lifelong connections to the Christian community are still something we widely cherish, recognizing that our Heavenly Father still has a huge number of sincere Believers *targeted*—to eventually follow a similar faith journey as we have, as the promised restoration of all things proceeds along at the Master’s patient pace:

“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 3:19-21).

With this in mind, we know what the Lord has promised, and realize that He can use each of us to share about our Messianic perspective and convictions. This understanding led me to attend a day-long conference, the Greater Dallas Movement Day, within the past month. As a result of witnessing some 1,400 or so sincere Christians coming together in unity via the gospel of Christ, I have been compelled to write this month’s lead article, “**Repentance Movement**,” in order to relate what was being conveyed, and to especially encourage Messianic Believers to maintain loving relationships with our Christian brethren. After all, as the Psalmist reminds us, “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity” (Psalm 133:1, NRSV)—or in the case of this symposium, come together in order to be exhorted to participate in good works via the banner of the Savior. Hopefully, some of my thoughts will help give those who read this newsletter some insight, on how the Holy One has uniquely placed each one of us in positions of godly influence to family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. After all, it is our individual responsibility to be at all times and in different settings, “ambassadors” for the Messiah (2 Corinthians 5:20), and a “sweet aroma of

the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

As a result of this understanding approach, I have noticed that when I have invited my Christian friends to attend next month's congregational Passover *sedar* outreach, there is a noticeable joy, with genuine expectation, gushing forth from their hearts. *Praise the Lord for this feedback!* Hopefully, they will be able to attend the commemoration, in order to unite with fellow Believers and worship the Lamb of God, and learn more about a Messianic perspective and the appointed times of the Lord.

We are always thankful for your prayers and financial support for the **Theological Defense Trust** and the **Prison Ministry—Free Book Outreach**. Your faithful partnership allows us to minister to many incarcerated souls, with free newsletters and books, and continues to keep us focused, on all of the writing projects which are in progress and on the drawing board.

May you each enjoy this month's *Purim* celebration, as the Spring Feasts of the Lord approach!

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

REPENTANCE MOVEMENT

by Mark Huey

Recently, I spent a day at an event labeled “Greater Dallas Movement Day” at the Dallas Convention Center, with over 1,400 professing Christian Believers from area churches and ministries. The primary objective of the symposium was to stimulate some collaborative, **gospel-led** efforts, to address: poverty, homelessness, sex trafficking, race relations, fatherlessness, poor education, neighborhood revitalization, immigrant absorption, and other societal challenges that plague the metropolitan area. In summary, the stated mission of the organizers was “city transformation through Christian communities working together,” which is certainly a worthwhile goal for those who claim Yeshua as their Savior and Lord. As I listened to one well-meaning talk or panel discussion after another, I continually prayed to the Lord about how and/or if our ministry, dedicated to the Messianic community of faith, could be involved in some good works in any of the needy areas being discussed. For certainly, the tragic human conditions resulting from a secularized, post-modern society, are in desperate need of the **only** solution found in belief and trust in the faithfulness of Yeshua’s sacrifice for the sin of humanity. After all, good works led by the Spirit of God, are what Believers are destined to perform, as a number of Bible passages came to mind, including the following:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. **For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them**” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

As the day proceeded from one session to another, the two themes of **movement and repentance** were mentioned several times, but without anyone voicing what seemed to me in my hearing, the obvious connection between the two. **So I decided to write this article in order to discern what I was hearing.**

First, a number of the speakers were utilizing different passages from the Book of Acts, and in particular, the early chapters which deal specifically with the supernatural move of the Spirit of God on Pentecost (*Shavuot*), and the formation of the early assemblies likened to a “movement.” In fact, one of the more profound messages delicately criticized in a comparative manner, the “institution” that the “church” has become—versus the “movement” that was initiated in Jerusalem after the ascension of the Messiah. Significant emphasis was placed on the three miraculous manifestations of the wind of the Spirit, the appearance of what is described as tongues of fire, and the ability of many to speak in other known languages (Acts 2:1-4) that occurred to the one hundred and twenty gathered in the Upper Room. This demonstrable move of the Spirit eventually resulted in three thousand Jewish people, asking for forgiveness, repenting of their sin, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Subliminally without stating it directly, the speaker was exhorting the vast majority of attendees who had become “institutionalized” by their various Christian affiliations, to return to the formative days when a “movement” commenced. This was when the move of the Spirit was provoking many—regardless of race, gender, or station in life—to collaborate in their efforts to not only spread the gospel, but unite in addressing the ails of their generation, as noted in the balance of Acts 2. Needless to say, despite the enthusiastic plea for unity and the hope for the inauguration of another “movement” as this message came to a close—there was no noticeable rushing wind or fire falling in the assembly hall, with the controversial subject of tongues being sarcastically dismissed, as a topic for future discussion.

The second much more uncomfortable theme was an indirect call for individual and/or corporate repentance by multiple references to one increasingly popular passage from the Old Testament. In a verse that has become a rallying credo among Christian leaders seeking a solution to cultural challenges, multiple speakers recited this ancient prescription for return-

ing to the Lord for His forgiveness and restoration:

“And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Surprisingly, many of these sincere Christians gathered, with heartfelt desires to perform good works via the banner of the gospel, recited the memorized verse along with several of the speakers, without the benefit of a projected visual aid. Hence, throughout the day when the verse was repeated, I pondered whether this compelling verse could be used by the Lord to initiate repentance among His people, or whether it was merely a rote response because of its frequent modern-day usage. My mind wandered, as I compared this verse to the significance of John 3:16 for evangelization, which according to many surveys is the best known passage from the entire Bible. Salvation history reflects how the Spirit of God has used this one memorized verse, *“for God so loved the world...,”* as a catalyst to point many people to the Lord. For the liberating message that God *“gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life,”* has reverberated in the minds and hearts of countless millions, who have been saved.

Needless to say, I contemplated whether the Lord could use the words spoken to Solomon to initiate true repentance and a genuine move of the Spirit among His people to change the culture. I reflected on the powerful instructions from the Almighty to Solomon found in 2 Chronicles 7:14, and revisited the wider context (2 Chronicles 5-8) and what had occurred on the Temple Mount prior to Solomon receiving these words. I noted that this was another recorded time when the glory of the Lord was tangibly present, consuming sacrifices with fire, and literally forcing the priests and attendants to fall on their faces in adulation (2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3). **Quite frankly, the thought of movement was replaced by the image of being perfectly still, prostrated before the Lord, in awe of His holiness.**

It was difficult to not think about how powerful it would be for those earnest Christians gathered, who were faithfully repeating 2 Chronicles 7:14 at this day long event, to be further informed about *all* that was being communicated to Solomon after the completion of the Temple. While I am confident that the Bible scholars in the crowd would be able to determine that the dedication of the Temple was taking place during the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), I am not convinced that the Lord's admonition to Solomon to walk according to the commandments, and keep the statutes and ordinances, or suffer the consequences of disobedience would necessarily be embraced, or conveyed to others when taught:

“Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's palace, and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the LORD and in his palace. Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, even to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to be ruler in Israel.’ But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. As for this house, which was exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’ And they will say,

“Because they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers who brought them from the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this adversity on them” (2 Chronicles 7:11-22).

For many in the Christian community, those commandments, statutes, and ordinances found in the Tanakh (Old Testament), are no longer considered to be applicable to Christians in the post-resurrection era. Generally speaking, most Christians have been told that Jesus nailed all of these “laws” to the cross (based on a common misinterpretation of Colossians 2:14, which instead regards the penalties of sin), and therefore, modern-day Believers are widely absolved from personal responsibility because Jesus “paid it all.” And yet, one of the strongest admonitions in 2 Chronicles 7:14, after humbling themselves, praying and seeking the face of the Lord, is for people to **turn from their wicked ways** or blatant disobedience to what the Lord has established and revealed in His Word.

The problem is simply this. If people **do not** know what their wicked ways are according to the Holy Scriptures, how are they going to turn from them? Is not turning from one's wicked ways another way to describe repentance? Was it not the wholesale repentance preached by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (the day when many Christians have been taught “the Church” was born), that resulted in three thousand people being saved?

“Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Yeshua the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.’ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:37-41).

In many regards, given the Scriptural evidence found in 2 Chronicles and the Book of Acts, the “movement” so desired by the organizers of this **Movement Day** gathering—might be initiated by a unified people humbling themselves, praying to the Almighty by seeking His face, and turning from the wicked ways of disobeying God's holy Word. But for whatever reasons, despite nibbling around the edges of the concept of people repenting and turning from their wicked ways, there was the conditioned promotion by the group leaders to fall back on institutionally-approved programs that have had a modicum of success attacking some of the societal problems targeted. In other words, despite the voiced recognition that the wholehearted repentance of the people gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (*Shavuot* or the Feast of Weeks) was the Spirit-led fuel to inaugurate the incredible movement of God described in the Book of Acts, this humble approach was not wholeheartedly endorsed by any of the messages shared.

Needless to say, I came away from the day with mixed feelings. First, I purposed to consider the good things that 1,400 earnest Christians had to consider over the course of the day. I thought about not only the “movement” theme of the day long event (Greater Dallas Movement Day), but just how the Lord has providentially used the move of His Spirit to accomplish His objectives down through the millennia—despite the obstacles of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Certainly, the “institutionalization” of the Christian Church has, at times, affected the move of the Spirit. But because the Spirit of God was still able to reach me and countless others with the gospel or good news—I am and will always be eternally grateful for those faithful saints who persevered, while even in different denominational settings, to preach repentance, the forgiveness of sin, and eternal life. For without their good works noted above, events like a “Movement Day” gathering, centered on the unity found by preaching the gospel, would never take place. Therefore, I do not want to be critical of what I witnessed, but rather be thankful that these people were gathered via the banner of Christ.

On the other hand, upon further reflection—primarily because our family has been intimately involved in what has been labeled the “**Messianic Movement**” for almost twenty years—I considered how this end-time move of the Holy Spirit can be useful to further

advance the Kingdom of God, especially given its emphasis on studying the Torah and the Prophets in conjunction with the Apostolic Writings. However, despite that seemingly appropriate moniker to what the Spirit of God has been doing for the last several decades among believing Jewish and non-Jewish seekers, I had never really considered a difference between a “movement” and “move” of the Spirit. This curiosity led me to look up an elementary definition of the term “movement,” in order to see if the term is applied correctly to the Messianic community of faith:

“Movement: a group of people with a common ideology, especially political or religious one, the organized action of the group.”

It appears from this short description that there are two common denominators which characterize a movement: (1) **a common ideology**, and (2) **an organized action of the group**. For many involved with the Messianic community of faith, although there are many similarities in ideology or theology, it would be difficult to state that they are common, identical, or always the same. Additionally, given all of the fractionalization that has occurred in the past several decades, one would be hard pressed to say that there was any single, coordinated, “organized action” of the group, but rather a multitude of unique actions by different individual communities of Messianic Believers. Hence, without doing a thorough, semantic analysis between move and movement, I simply concluded that it really did not matter what people called those who have taken up a “Messianic” lifestyle. The more important observation is that there has simply been an obvious move of the Holy Spirit to reconstitute Jewish and non-Jewish assemblies, which have not been prevalent since the First Century community of Messiah followers.

At this point in my “movement” analysis, I had to pause and comparatively reflect upon what transpired at the dedication of Solomon’s Temple in 2 Chronicles 5-7, and the days surrounding Pentecost (*Shavuot*) described in Acts 2. Was there something in common with the people gathered? Was there any organized action by the followers of the Holy One? Here were two very incredible recorded times when the Spirit of the Lord appeared, with visible evidence of His presence among those ancient people gathered at one of the feasts of the Lord. At the Temple dedication, it was priests and petitioners literally falling down on their faces as the glory of the Lord descended and filled the House of God, and some time later, with fire coming down from Heaven to consume the burnt offerings and sacrifices. Notice in these passages that the **unity** of coming together at the Feast of Tabernacles was noted in these manifestations of the Spirit of God:

“When the priests came forth from the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions), and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets in **unison** when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with **one voice** to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD *saying, ‘He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting;’* then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God” (2 Chronicles 5:11-14).

“Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’s house. **All the sons of Israel**, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, *saying, ‘Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting’*” (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

Next, in contemplating what occurred on the Day of Pentecost, it is first critical to understand that after His resurrection and before His ascension to Heaven, Yeshua spent the first forty days of the Omer Count commanded in Leviticus 23:15-16 with the Apostles, giving them further instruction about the Kingdom of God. Additionally, He promised the Apostles that within a short while after His departure, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in order to be empowered to take the gospel to the remotest part of the Earth:

“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.’ **Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away”** (Acts 1:3-12).

Do notice that after the Apostles went a short distance to Jerusalem to pray with the additional people (eventually one hundred and twenty) who gathered in the Upper Room (Acts 1:13), they were of one mind, or in other words, they were unified in their pursuit of the Holy One. For the final ten days of the Omer Count, until the fiftieth day (Pentecost), unity prevailed as they were devoting themselves to prayer, and probably wondering exactly what the Messiah meant when He promised a baptism of the Holy Spirit:

“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Yeshua, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14-15).

Finally, when the fiftieth day of the Omer Count came and the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) commenced, there was still the unity that Yeshua so desired for His disciples:

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1).

Of course, as noted earlier, this is when the visible miracles occurred which ultimately led to the three thousand being saved, and the profound “movement” of the good news to the nations was initiated with power from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

So when thinking through all of this, it became obvious that **when God’s people are of one mind, in unity, and perhaps**—as in the case of the Temple dedication at the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), and the Day of Pentecost (*Shavuot*)—**gathered to celebrate one of His appointed times** (Leviticus 23), **powerful manifestations of the Spirit have taken place.** So would it not be expected that the Adversary (1 Peter 5:8), the enemy of our souls, has observed these supernatural, life-changing events, and purposed to do everything possible to prevent these awesome testimonies from occurring again? After all, powerful moves of the Holy Spirit have resulted from these gatherings, especially the launching of the “movement” or move of the Holy Spirit from Jerusalem, after the Day of Pentecost.

Over the course of much of religious history, the “father of lies” (John 8:44) has been working overtime to create division, strife, and acrimony among the brethren, in order to **thwart the unity** that the Messiah so desires for His people to have (John 17:22). Satan recognized the unifying importance of the appointed times (*moedim*) of the Lord, and decided to alter the significance of the three annual communal gatherings in Jerusalem associated with them (Exodus 23:14-17; 34:23-24; Deuteronomy 16:16). After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the Devil took full advantage of the dispersion of the Jews from Israel to put much of

his plan into action. Over a series of years, because of the magnitude of the supernatural events that took place on the Day of Pentecost, the Adversary was able to methodically, convince a growing number of non-Jewish converts that the inauguration of the promised New Covenant (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34), meant that only internal holiness was necessary, and that many external rituals—like honoring the appointed times of Leviticus 23, to some degree—were unnecessary of God's people. Eventually, this clever deception led to the "replacement theology" perspective, which in many respects has been embraced by the great majority of non-Jewish Christian people.

In the Third and Fourth Centuries C.E. a variety of ancient edicts, issued by the emerging Roman Catholic Church, forbade Christians from commemorating what were considered Jewish rites, such as the remembrance of the Passover or seventh-day Sabbath. Instead, it was widely reasoned that Christians should focus their exclusive attention on the resurrection of the Messiah. While the resurrection of Yeshua is surely worthy of commemoration, decisively divorcing it, from the themes of the Exodus and Passover, has not at all been helpful. Consequently, much of the prophetic importance of the appointed times of the Lord has been overlooked or ignored by too many Believers!

Needless to say, for over 1,500 years, the wall of separation between Jew and non-Jew, which Paul wrote about to Believers in Asia Minor—which was broken down by the sacrifice of the Messiah, in order for the "one new man" or "one new humanity" to emerge in Him—was widely rebuilt and fortified. This reconstituted barrier, between Judaism and Christianity, has made the following passage virtually unintelligible, with the various convoluted interpretations that have over the centuries, reinforced separation, rather than the unity God desires:

"Therefore remember, that once you, the nations in the flesh—who are called 'Foreskin' by the ones called 'Circumcision,' *which is in the flesh, made by hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Messiah, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who were once far off, have been brought near in the blood of Messiah. For He is our peace, who made both groups one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the religious Law of commandments in dogmas, that He might create in Himself the two into one new humanity, so making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the enmity by it. And HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR OFF, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR* [Isaiah 57:19; 52; Zechariah 9:10]; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:11-22, author's rendering from *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*).

Without elaborating on all of the different interpretations, suffice it to say that in many regards for almost two millennia, the Lord has allowed the Adversary to temporarily thwart His desire for unity among His own from all peoples. However, during the past century and increasingly in several recent decades, the Spirit of the Most High has been doing a "new thing" (Isaiah 43:19), among Jewish Believers and non-Jewish Believers (which some have labeled the "Messianic movement"). Provisionally, they are being drawn together in Messianic congregations and synagogues, where the Messiah Yeshua, with His sacrificial work of atonement, is the focal point of the assembly. These groups are collectively returning to the ancient paths (Jeremiah 6:16) and making the convocations of the Lord (Leviticus 23) an integral part of their collective worship. This does not only mean correctly remembering the weekly *Shabbat*, but also emphasizing the other appointed times or *moedim* of the Lord, when people are to come together in unity to worship Him. Groups of Jewish and non-

Jewish people are being led by the Holy Spirit, to return to what was most evident in the First Century assemblies. This was when the early followers of the Messiah recognized that the household of God was being built on the cornerstone Yeshua, with the foundation of the writings of the Prophets and the Apostles being critical for the balance of the structure. At that time, individual “temples” (1 Corinthians 6:19) of the Holy Spirit were being fitted together, to become a much larger corporate temple where the Spirit of God would reside (1 Peter 2:5). As a result, the ensuing miracles of healing, deliverance, and salvation were the norm in many of those early assemblies, so that the faith of those gathered soared to great heights. However, because these fledgling groups were from mixed heritages and backgrounds, differences of opinion naturally arose. This led the Apostles to write a number of epistles to help clarify specific misunderstandings. Nevertheless, as the Apostle Peter conceded in the closing of his second epistle, the writings of the preeminent Apostle Paul, who was prolific in attempting to correct errors in the young assemblies, contained some things that are “hard” to understand:

“Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; **just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Peter 3:14-18).

Here in unequivocal terms, the Apostle Peter warned followers of the Messiah that unprincipled people, who are untaught and unstable, will distort the Scriptures to their own destruction. Lamentably, these distortions have resulted in the centuries of separation and diversion from God’s intended plan to restore the Kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6).

But at this time, the emergence of the Messianic movement is a sign that the “patient Lord of salvation,” mentioned by Peter, is on the verge of reconstituting assemblies that can bring significant meaning and clarification to the ancient texts. For example, when sincere Christians memorize 2 Chronicles 7:14 and truly want to humble themselves—in order to pray, seek the face of the Lord, and turn from their wicked ways—there is a growing number of Messianic assemblies where people can actually learn what some of these “ways” truly are. Understanding the foundational texts of the Torah is critical, because in these first five books of the Holy Writ, the Lord describes what He requires and what He forbids. Amplification is found in the Prophets and Writings. Clearly it is in these words—all Scripture—which Paul refers to his disciple Timothy, when telling him where to go for instruction:

“**All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work**” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

As I stated at the inception of this article, my primary motivation for this writing exercise was to discern what I was hearing while attending a day long event of sincere Christians, whose stated mission was “city transformation through Christian communities working together.” One obvious goal was to encourage good works via the auspices of a “movement” of God. But the mere mention of certain Scripture passages that dealt with repentance, eventually forced me to conclude that a genuine, God-ordained movement, or even a move of the Holy Spirit, is *not* possible without true repentance, followed by unity of purpose. And yet, repentance was not the primary theme of this get together. *After all, the inherent problem with “repentance” is that it requires an admission that one is going the wrong way.* It means a return to God or a turning away from what one is doing (like wicked ways once they are identified), **and to do it no longer!** Repentance is not a “feel good” subject to dwell on, when most seekers of the Most High would prefer to focus their attention on love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Hence, repentance did not become the motivating theme of this symposi-

um, because for the most part, the great majority of those gathered believed they were doing things right.

When one thinks about the gospel, the very heart of the proclamation of the good news is repentance. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) are full of the declaration to repent, in order to believe in the message that the Kingdom of God is at hand. At the event I attended, there was a frequent reference to the account found in Acts about the Day of Pentecost and what happened shortly thereafter. However, other places in the Apostolic Writings where the declaration to repent comes directly from the Messiah, are found in the Book of Revelation, chs. 2-3, where Yeshua admonishes the seven assemblies, **pointing out what they are doing that is appropriate, but commanding them to repent of their evil ways, which they are conducting in their assemblies.** Ironically throughout the day, I never heard one mention of these convicting Scriptures—and yet, when acknowledged and repented of by the faithful—true confession and repentance can deliver the company of Believers from these errant wicked ways!

So let me conclude with this encouragement to my Messianic brethren, who are currently a part of a community of Believers, who are pursuing the Holy One from a rather unique perspective. First, because we have received the Holy Spirit's blessing to more specifically repent from our aberrant ways, and are consciously striving to return to what was modeled by the First Century Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, **we each need to maintain a humble heart, recognizing that by the grace of God Almighty, He has revealed to us a more complete way to worship and approach Him.** Then with contrite hearts, we need to lovingly share (as the Spirit leads) with those family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or acquaintances in the marketplace, about why we are committed to follow the prescribed ways of the Lord found in the whole counsel of God. This can include why we remember the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, or why we celebrate the Passover *sedar* or Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*), and the Fall high holidays of *Rosh HaShanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkot*. If people you encounter indicate an interest in what you are sharing, then consider asking them to a *Shabbat* service, or a Passover *sedar*, or some other commemoration. While they may not know the significance of what they are attending, you can be confident that the Lord is showing up for His appointed times with His people—and that He is delighted that you are sharing it with others He may be wooing by His Holy Spirit.

Finally, when it comes to any of the "good works" which are being conducted by sincere followers of Jesus (like the Movement Day organizers), I would suggest that if you are being prompted by the Holy Spirit to get involved, do so with the right spirit, no matter what the societal effort. Your willingness to take part will perhaps give you an opportunity to share your Messianic perspective when you are questioned by others, who also love the Lord Jesus, *and* why you refer to Him more often as Yeshua. Remarkably over the past twenty years, the Spirit of the Most High has deliberately increased the frequency of the name Yeshua being spoken among Christians from many different quarters. *Yeshua is no longer a foreign word.* Perhaps you can share that the name Yeshua means "salvation" in Hebrew, which just might generate a dialog about Him and His ways. Remember that for most reading this article, there was perhaps a time, in the not too distant past, when the Hebrew name Yeshua was not what *you* called the Messiah. But as you are probably now aware, His Hebrew name does mean "salvation"—*and* He still requires repentance in order to receive His forgiveness, mercy, grace, and most of all, His never ending love.

Lastly, as I close my thoughts on repentance and movement, I am reminded that "He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4). Therefore, He is in constant movement, patiently waiting for different times when He wants to move through His people individually or corporately. In every case, He does so through humble and repentant hearts, which I pray will be the hallmark of the Messianic community—as it is challenged to patiently as led by the Spirit of the Lord, advance the Kingdom of God and restoration of Israel, until the restoration of all things...

TNN ONLINE EDITOR'S UPDATE

March 2014

Dear Friends:

The month of February was a very busy time for me, as I have been trying to think strategically, and sort through a number of the things I mentioned in the January 2014 Editor's Update regarding the various TNN Press projects on the horizon for this year and beyond.



As I write this, I have just finished writing the commentary on Romans ch. 8, for our ongoing Wednesday Night Bible Study examination. This means that the future volume *Romans for the Practical Messianic* is now just about half-way complete. The examinations immediately in front of me, with Romans chs. 9-11 in view and what they say about the First Century Jewish people, the nations, the future redemption of Israel, and the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom—are likely to be intense! But, even with some “innovative” interpretations likely to be offered for a number of passages, I believe that what is coming is going to be very, very helpful, for long term Messianic examination.

A great deal of my attention this past month has been focused on making progress for the forthcoming *Messianic Kosher Helper* volume, and steadily examining the various Bible passages associated with the subject of kosher and eating. I presently have just finished examining all of the major passages in the Torah itself regarding kosher and eating, and now have a number of passages to examine from the Prophets of the Tanach. It is my hope that within the next month or so, the Tanach or Old Testament passages will widely be finished.

I have no idea at this point how large the *Messianic Kosher Helper* is going to be. All I know is that the only main reason why I started working on this first, before the planned *Messianic Sabbath Helper* volume, is that there would *actually* be *less* work to do. Yet, the volume of work on the topic of “kosher” is pretty large and wide! The way things stand today, we are soon to cross the 400 -page mark on this publication, with all of the material and information this will contain. And, as I consider a few of the other things that we need to be focusing our ministry attention on—many of our new publications are hardly going to be “small.” Attention to detail is something that really should matter to Messianic people of the 2010s—especially to people like myself (33) and my sister Maggie (21), who come from a generation which does not want to be patronized or talked down to *any more*. **We want to be presented with a well reasoned, intellectual, and spiritually uplifting case for significant theological convictions.**

Until next month... J.K. McKee