

OIM UPDATE

January 2015

Another secular year has arrived with the tug of the world, the flesh, and the evil one constantly vying to distract God's faithful ones away from the leading of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, every Believer should recognize the reality of the incessant *unseen* spiritual war being fought, summarized in this statement written to Believers in Asia Minor by the Apostle Paul:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Ephesians 6:12).

However, if one remains unaware or ignorant or is blinded to the fact that the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31,14:30,16:11) cleverly manipulates people for his nefarious purposes, one can become subject to his snares (1 Timothy 3:7, 6:9; 2 Timothy 2:26). Hopefully this year, as we all continue to mature in our respective walks with the Messiah of Israel, we will not only bear the fruit of the Spirit, but crucify the flesh in order to live and walk by Holy Spirit of God:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Messiah Yeshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-25).

With this being said—given the cacophony of the world system distracting the small, still voice of the Spirit—I want to caution one and all. Do not let the diverse array of spiritual and fiscal prognostications that are inundating Messianic and Christian blogs and social media regarding 2015 **paralyze you from being about the work of God's Kingdom!** The Adversary would prefer that followers of the Messiah take a passive approach to being engaged in the marketplace of ideas and thought. Do not succumb to his wily ways, but instead, be everything that the Holy One has created you to be until your very last breath!

For me personally, I have been convicted to take up the banner of seeking revival for America through prayer and outreach efforts. As this month's lead article "**Revival Required**" describes, the Holy Spirit has communicated the critical need for the United States to experience a genuine revival in order to forestall the inevitable judgment that begins in the household of God. Hopefully, an increasing number of dedicated followers of Yeshua the Messiah, who are praying for transformation and/or revival, will begin to see some of the fruit that is evidenced by changed hearts. *Perhaps the Holy Spirit has convicted you likewise.* If so, please join us not only in prayer, but in taking the message of revival and restoration to all who have the ears to hear.

We continue to work on many writing projects that are part of the ongoing **Theological Defense Trust** library of resources. The **Free Book Prison Ministry Fund** continues to need your financial support, as well as the general fund to keep us focusing on preparing materials for the broad Messianic community around the world! Thank you for your prayers and ongoing support of our efforts.

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

Blessings and shalom,
Mark Huey

REVIVAL REQUIRED

by Mark Huey

In post-Christian, secular humanist, modern-day America, the subject of a desperate need for spiritual revival has been increasingly percolating from an array of diverse voices. My attention was particularly piqued prompting the subject of this article, when my eighty-seven year old mother, a nominal Christian who has not attended church regularly since the 1960s, uncharacteristically declared our societal need for revival. Needless to say, I was pleasantly surprised by her unsolicited comment that was her commonsense solution to the country's moral and spiritual declension, primarily because of concern for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Providentially in the previous week, I had listened to three messages that in various ways described the critical need for revival in the United States, by those chosen to be a part of the Almighty's beloved family. Consequently, this confluence of references to "revival" made me realize that the Holy Spirit has increased the volume of a specific call for repentance that leads to revival among His children and those whom they touch.

Interestingly, these other revival-laced exhortations came from diverse places on the Judeo-Christian spectrum. But it was obvious that the three messengers, with their respective beliefs in the Messiah, had heard from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In each case, the bottom line was without reservation: revival is desperately required. The sobering message was clear: unless America turns radically from its wicked ways and humbly seeks the Holy One of Israel (2 Chronicles 7:14), judgment will first be unleashed upon the household of God:

"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER [Proverbs 11:31, LXX]? Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1 Peter 4:17-19).

For the Bible student who knows that "on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed" (Deuteronomy 19:15), the rapid succession of these three warning words in the context of gatherings of like-minded followers of the Messiah was alarming. However, the contrast of the appeals and admonitions, while seemingly complimentary, revealed some of the distinctions that continue to prevail in the communities of faith which recognize Yeshua as the sacrificial Lamb of God and atonement for the sin of humanity.

In the first instance, a sincere Christian ministry leader (who is also a friend and former prayer partner) spoke of the imperative for "revival now," and the need to "preach the gospel" in various cities around the United States, at his annual fundraising event. Since this ministry concentrates on evangelism, utilizing a derivative of revival in their name, it was predictable that "revival" would be the theme in their attempt to raise resources for their efforts. Based on the results presented in video testimonies, it appears that this ministry is bearing fruit for God's Kingdom by those who claim to have had their lives changed.

One of their practical evangelistic tools is a New Testament “only” Bible with precut tabs to readily find the Scriptural verses to the familiar “four spiritual laws” format for leading someone to Christ. On previous occasions I have asked the ministry leader why he does not use a complete Bible. His response was to do so when in future time he begins to witness to Jewish people, who need the Old Testament. But because the preponderance of his current outreach is to the inner city populations, an effort to reach the Jews has been put on hold, until the pinnacle of his future aspirations come when he can take the gospel of revival to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, without questioning the practicality of witnessing to Jews in Jerusalem with a “tabbed” English Bible, or disparaging the New Testament-only method for evangelism, I wanted to encourage our brother in the call that is upon his life to share the gospel to the lost, wherever they are located. After all, according to the Prophet Isaiah,

“So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

I was just delighted that the Lord was leading people, who were committed to preach the gospel from the Word of God to whomever and wherever they were being led. For most assuredly, the thoughts and ways of the Holy One are beyond our comprehension, as noted in the preamble to this verse found in Isaiah 55:8. *It was God’s responsibility to save people, not ours.* On the other hand, *it is our personal challenge to hear His voice and obey.* So I began to pray fervently about revival, and asked the Father to bless the efforts of those He was calling to take the gospel to various cities in America.

Two days after attending this ministry fundraiser, I was at the weekly *Shabbat* service at our local Messianic congregation, with the recent thoughts of revival still circulating in my mind and heart. Now in a more familiar surrounding, the Holy One brought the theme of revival two times through a prophetic word from one of the members, and then the weekly message taught by the congregational leader. **The one-two punch of these messages—without either speaker knowing what the other was going to declare—was a profound confirmation by a “three fold” witness that a time for revival was critical for the United States going forward.** Of course in the Messianic setting from my perspective, there was more balanced usage of the entire Bible for references made about the imperative for revival, or suffer the consequences of judgment upon our land and the people who reside in America.

The prophetic warning came first, and was concise and to the point. The continual slide, from decadence to debauchery to perversion, has led to a national freefall headed to destruction. Unless the Lord intervenes by moving the hearts of His people to repentance resulting in revival, then the inevitable judgment is destined to come first to the household of God. While the admonition was not necessarily overly emotional, it was extremely convicting, as the truth of these words bore witness by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. During the exhortation there were a number of confirming yeas and amens, but upon conclusion, the deafening sound of silence was finally broken when the congregational leader came forward to deliver his message.

Provisionally, the lengthier message was in many regards an amplification of

what had been spoken prophetically moments earlier. In fact, the title of the message was “Reviving America—Confronting the Strongholds,” with the theme of revival. However, in a most profound way, the teaching compared the demise of Ancient Israel, succumbing to the spiritual strongholds of Baal, Ashtoreth, and Molech over time, with what has been increasingly transpiring in America over the past hundred years. From the love of money and wealth epitomized by the spirit of Baal-worship that dramatically rose after World War I, to the perversion of sexual relationships promoted by the spirit of Ashtoreth that has accelerated since World War II into the sexual revolution of the 1960s, to the murderous desecration of life and the worship of Molech as abortion became legal with *Roe v. Wade*—the parallels between Ancient Israel and America are uncanny.

The pendulum-like history of God’s people that moves toward and away from the Almighty does tend to repeat itself, as first epitomized in the forty-year swings found in the Book of Judges. References to the different revivals in the history of Ancient Israel, because of the influence of relatively righteous kings like Hezekiah and Josiah, were mentioned, along with the seasonally-timed noting of the Maccabean revolt from 167-160 B.C.E. against the influence of the Seleucid Greeks, as well as the revival that kept the Lord from judging the Ninevites found in the Book of Jonah. The sincere exhortation was to look at the evidence that America has wandered away from worship of the Living God, and fallen into the trap of mixing the worship at best—if not totally embracing or even worshiping these spiritual strongholds at worst—with little if any regard for the Holy One of Israel. The bottom line was a strong warning to **pray for mercy and revival** or suffer the consequences of God’s judgment.

Upon hearing this third admonition in three days about the need for revival, I was convinced that the Almighty was trying to get my attention. I was so moved by the repetition that I sent e-mails to a number of people with a link to the video of the congregational message—because I was confident it had the potential to “go viral” on social media—which lamentably did not happen. But about a week later when I heard my elderly mother, who rarely if ever uses Christian terms, mention “revival” as the only solution to remedy America’s demise—I was reminded of the statement that “out of the mouth of babes” (Matthew 21:16) came forth some truth. In an odd, inverse of age sort of way, a “childlike” elderly person returning to her youthful ways was simply making an observation about the state of our society, and referring to the only solution that made any sense to her—or for that matter, all who call on the name of the Holy One of Israel, no matter where on the Judeo-Christian spectrum someone resides!

This delving into the concept of revival had me look directly into the mirror of my soul in order to discover the extent of my own personal repentance leading to revival, before I could encourage anyone else to get right with the Lord. An admonition by James came to mind concerning self-examination and becoming an effectual doer of the word:

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, **not hav-**

ing become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:22-25).

This heart revealing passage then led me to consider the recorded supplication and prayer of Daniel, one of the most godly figures who has ever lived. In this **intercessory prayer for restoration or revival**, Daniel had realized that Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy-year banishment of the Southern Kingdom to Babylon was on the verge of expiring. He faithfully implored the Almighty to have mercy on him and his fellow Jews, so they could be restored to the Land of Israel, and Jerusalem in particular. As you read this incredible prayer, note the humility and absolute commitment to plead with the Lord with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, while **confessing his own iniquities** and the rebellious nature of his fellow countrymen:

"So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek *Him* by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, 'Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God *belong* compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done *anything* like what was done to Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice. And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *have become* a reproach to all those around us. So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications

before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (Daniel 9:3-19).

As I read and reread this prayer, I was convicted of my own relative lack of commitment to pray for revival, not only in my own heart, but also among my fellow followers of the Messiah and those destined to be part of God’s family. With this confession being stated, I want to encourage everyone who reads this article to take some time in the days, weeks, and months ahead to seriously pray for revival, perhaps using elements of Daniel’s prayer as a model or guide. In other words, do not be just a hearer of the Word, but instead, be a doer of the Word!

These prayers should be not only for our personal revival, but also that revival will come to America in order to forestall the inevitable commencement of Jacob’s distress (Jeremiah 30:7) and the judgments associated with the End of the Age, widely found in the Book of Revelation. For despite many of the End of the Age prognostications that permeate the Messianic community of faith—coupled with the false prospects of a rapidly approaching rapture that will sweep away the Christians who believe this disputed teaching (for a review, see *The Dangers of Pre-Tribulationism* by J.K. McKee), the judgments that are going to befall the world before Yeshua returns to establish His Kingdom are horrific in nature. Instead of hoping for events to commence, such as a Greater Exodus or the beginning of the Great Tribulation, why not pray fervently for a great revival? A worldwide revival that will not only bring in a tremendous harvest of saved souls—but also prepare this generation and future generations to carry on the work of the Kingdom *until* the Messiah does finally return—is something that has significant spiritual consequences for the people of God.

In closing, we personally believe that prior to the return of the Messiah there will be a group of “end-time saints,” who will have faith in Yeshua the Messiah and obey His commandments (Revelation 12:17; 14:12). They will be about the Father’s plan to bring His people together in mixed assemblies of Believers (cf. Ephesians 2:10-22) that are reminiscent of the communities that developed in the First Century among Jewish Believers and Believers from the nations who responded positively to the good news that the long prophesied Messiah of Israel had come as Savior of the world. In the interim until He returns to establish His Millennial reign, we can have more periods of refreshing or revival that all of the Prophets foresaw and declared, according to the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:

“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).

Let us each follow in the pattern of faithful souls like Daniel, James, and Peter—and purposely repent and return to the Lord in prayer and supplication for personal revival, as well as the revival of the Jewish people and salvation of the world. In so doing, we will each get a more complete understanding that *until the day the Messiah returns or we go to be with the Lord, ongoing revival is required!*

Until the Messianic restoration of all things...

TORAH PRACTICES as a Means of Grace

by J.K. McKee

Anyone who makes the decision to be submitted to the instruction of God's Torah—even with the necessity of the compulsion of the Holy Spirit via the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27)—is going to quickly be made aware of the fact that the Torah requires various physical actions to be performed by God's people. While it is abundantly true that the thrust of the famed Micah 6:8, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (NRSV), as well as Yeshua's emphasis upon "the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Mathew 23:23), require men and women of God to be innately in tune with the right way to think and act toward other people—**this does not all of a sudden mean that physical actions are to be discarded.** In fact, good works such as feeding the hungry or providing aid to the poor, are themselves physical actions.

Challenges abound in too much of today's Messianic community—and it does not matter if one is a Jewish or non-Jewish Believer—because there is likely not a proper orientation for people approaching the more tactile and ceremonial-styled aspects of Moses' Teaching. People have read Yeshua's word of Matthew 6:7, "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words," and then can automatically assume that any regimented sort of prayer—particularly that from the Jewish *siddur* or prayer book—must be dead and off limits. The famed admonition of Matthew 23:5, "They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long" (ESV), would seemingly also nullify the value of *tefillin* and *tzitzits*. Are Yeshua's rebukes of the Pharisaical leaders not consequential of those who were outwardly religious, but inwardly deceased (Matthew 23:27)? Were these people not too concerned with more important matters of helping others in need (Matthew 23:4), and outward religion just got in the way of things?

A proper approach, toward physical acts of spirituality, is noted in the Apostolic Scriptures, for sure, to have been a challenge with many of Yeshua the Messiah's contemporaries. Yet, challenges with outward acts of spirituality is hardly a problem exclusive to Judaism, as Christian history bears many examples of how outward acts of worship, and forms of semblance and accolade, have largely been empty. The word of Isaiah 29:13, "Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*," is applicable

across the board. Whether it was Ancient Israelites just going through hollow motions of animal sacrifices intended to appease God, as it were, or Medieval Roman Catholics repeating unintelligible Latin liturgy in European cathedrals—human people seeking the God of Creation have fallen into traps of allowing outward spiritual practices to become an end to themselves.

Many of us from evangelical Christian backgrounds (with some of this also having affected contemporary Messianic Judaism), have a latent skepticism toward outward “doings” *specified in Scripture* because of how the Protestant Reformation tended to widely dismiss the opulence and gaudiness of Roman Catholicism, whose corruption was epitomized by selling indulgences to get people out of Hell, while lining the pockets of its priests and clergy. Even more so, those who would consider themselves “charismatic,” tend to have an even greater challenge with outward “doings,” as there can often be an intention of everything conducted needing to be more-or-less spontaneous. While there was certainly much outward ritual from Catholicism that the Protestant Reformers rightly discarded and eliminated, even in an entirely New Testament sense, there are outward observances which are widely agreed to be observed by Christian Believers. The common Protestant “sacraments,” if you like, that are outwardly observed among evangelicals today, are mainly the rites of baptism and communion.

By any cursory examination of the Torah and Judaism, there are many more outward observances that are kept—often from infancy to death, no less. For today’s Messianic Believers, who are consciously guided by the instruction of God’s Torah, how should they approach the value of these ordinances? Are they just hollow and dead by nature—or hollow and dead for those who misuse and misappropriate them? Given the fact that aside from the many different applications and *halachot* present in the Jewish theological tradition—individual people and families in today’s Messianic movement need to have the right approach to outward Torah instructions, so they are able to receive the right blessings of God which come from them. None of the instructions pertaining to *Shabbat* or the appointed times, traditions and customs surrounding prayer and worship and liturgy, or the disciplines involving Torah study and Bible reading—are at all immoral or ungodly. But, we all have to make sure that we have a balanced spiritual equilibrium, so we do not fall into the trap of just going through outward motions, when our hearts and minds are focused on things of the world and not the Lord (cf. 1 John 2:16).

The “Means of Grace” in the Wesleyan Tradition

While I cannot speak for everyone who has entered into our still-emerging and developing Messianic faith community, I can say that in the more early days of our family’s Messianic experience (1995-2004), that we had some levels of strong skepticism toward various outward forms of Jewish tradition. Coming from an evangelical Protestant background, we had been affected by some commonly held views surrounding outward forms of spirituality, and the thought that they were unneeded for most Believers. Of course, we were observing the

weekly *Shabbat*, the appointed times of Leviticus 23, eating a kosher-style diet, were certainly respectful in the assembly of those wearing *tallits* or *kippahs*, and generally found a Torah service with traditional liturgy to be spiritually edifying. It was the second decade of our family being Messianic (2005-2014), particularly as I went to seminary, when my personal engagement and familiarity with Jewish theological resources (among others) improved,¹ and we saw an overall need to become more well-refined and polished in terms mainline Jewish tradition—that contributed to us adapting a philo-traditional view, to many of the things that various Messianic people tend to be skeptical, and a few even hostile of.

One of the things, interestingly enough, which significantly influenced me to adopt a philo-traditional view to many of the mainline Jewish practices Messianic people (especially non-Jews) wrestle with, was reconnecting with my Wesleyan and Methodist heritage at Asbury Theological Seminary. I learned, for the first time, about the customary way that Wesleyans “do theology” via the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of: **Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.**² *It was so logical and so practical*, not to mention the fact that it bore witness with both my heart and mind. Tradition has a place, but not **the** place, in how we serve God and worship Him.

In his own ministry in the Eighteenth Century, John Wesley—who had originally been an Anglican priest—had to sort through various extremes that had manifested in the fallout of the immediate post-Reformation period. Radical Reformers had eliminated all of the outward ceremonies of Catholicism, the English Kingdom had gone back and forth between Protestant and Catholic monarchs, and the Church of England tried to balance some semblance between various Catholic rituals and a Protestant theology. The Methodist movement was certainly more conservative in terms of outward ritual—based partially on Wesley’s desire to want to use monies appropriately to help the poor—but there would still be outward rites to be performed, based in the New Testament, for Christians to observe.

John Wesley addressed the value of outward rituals for Christian Believers in his Sermon XVI, entitled “The Means of Grace,”³ basing it partially on Malachi 3:7: “Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances...” (KJV). In delivering this message, Wesley’s setting of the Eighteenth Century, and the complicated religious history of the British Isles, does need to be recognized—as his intention was to widely issue a word of how not all outward

¹ Consult the author’s article “The Role of History in Messianic Biblical Interpretation,” appearing in his book *Confronting Critical Issues*.

² “The four ‘sources’ on which Wesleyan theology is often constructed and defended: Scripture, reason, tradition and experience. There is some debate today as to whether the Wesleyan quadrilateral actually dates to Wesley himself, although there is general agreement that it does represent Wesley’s own theological approach” (Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999], 121).

Also consult the observations present in Hugo Magallanes, “Wesleyan Ethics,” in Joel B. Green, ed. et. al., *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp 833-836.

forms of religion are bad and are to be disregarded. Wesley opens with the acknowledgment of how from the early centuries of emerging Christianity, “the whole body of Christians [was] agreed that Christ had ordained certain outward means for conveying His grace into the souls of men. Their consistent practice set this beyond all dispute.”⁴ He made specific note here of Acts 2:42, 44, which records, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common.” So, as mundane as it may seem, gathering for teaching and fellowship, is actually an outward observance, and can hardly be disregarded.

Of course, as would be seen throughout the centuries of Christianity—and certainly in Medieval Catholicism—various outward practices and observances grew stale and cold, with many Christian people thinking or concluding that going through the motion of outward observances, would be all that was necessary to please God and enter Heaven. *One cannot totally blame the Protestant Reformers for casting out much outward, Catholic observance.* At the same time, as Wesley acknowledged, there are outward religious practices that do indeed please God and are most edifying to Him when observed properly. Wesley spoke to those Christian people, who while wanting to definitely focus on the important moral and ethical dimensions of faith, were still able to correctly see how outward ritual did have a place as well:

“Others seemed to imagine that though religion did not principally consist in these outward means yet there was something in them with which God was well pleased: something that would still make them acceptable in His sight although they were not exact in the weightier matters of the law, in justice, mercy, and the love of God.”⁵

The sanctification of a born again Believer unto God, is something which is to engulf the whole of one’s being (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23). A dilemma can often exist among those people who see legitimate value in outward forms of religious rituals, especially given the historical, and widespread abuse of such things, most especially observed in the Roman Catholic Christianity of the Middle Ages.⁶ Many in the Reformation, in wanting to see the faith purged from excesses, had grown tired of all, or at least most, forms of outward ceremony.⁷ Even when looking almost exclusively to the New Testament, this can run into some significant problems, because there are key, outward forms of obedience, which Wesley highlighted as being important for Christian people—which he specifically labeled as a “**means of grace**”:

³ Alice Russie, ed., *The Essential Works of John Wesley: Selected Sermons, Essays, and Other Writings* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2011), pp 189-204.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

“By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or action ordained of God and appointed to this end: to be the ordinary channels by which He might convey to individuals either preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

“I use this expression ‘means of grace’ because I know none better; and because it has been generally used in the Christian church for many ages, in particular by our own church {Anglican}, which directs us to bless God both for the means of grace and hope of glory; and teaches us that a sacrament is ‘an outward sign of inward grace and a means whereby we receive the same.’

“The chief of these means are prayer (whether in secret or with the congregation); searching the scriptures (which implies reading, hearing, and meditation on them); and receiving the Lord’s Supper: eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of our Lord Jesus. And these we believe to be ordained of God as the ordinary channels of conveying His grace to the souls of individuals.”⁸

For John Wesley, the principal means of grace for the Christian Believers he was reaching out to in the Eighteenth Century, were: prayer, the Scriptures, and the Lord’s Supper. By employing these outward means of religion and spirituality, men and women would be able to tangibly experience and partake of the blessings of the grace of God in Messiah. In his message, in highlighting Scripture as a means of grace, he makes important light of 2 Timothy 3:15-17, and is clear to emphasize the value of the Old Testament in the spiritual direction of Christian people:

“It should be observed that this is spoken primarily and directly of the scriptures which Timothy had known from a child, which must have been those of the Old Testament for the New was not then written. How far then was St. Paul...from making light of the Old Testament! Behold this, lest you one day wonder and perish, you who make so small account of one half of the Word of God! Yes, and that half of which the Holy Spirit expressly declares that it is ‘profitable,’ as a means of ordained of God for this very thing, ‘for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,’ to the end that ‘the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.’”⁹

Wesley’s other teachings and sermons certainly do go into further detail about applying and refining what various “means of grace” can do to born again Believers desiring greater maturity and blessing, in their walk with the Lord.

Adapting the “Means of Grace” for Messianic Observance

The Wesleyan tradition’s emphasis on outward observances such as prayer, Scripture reading, and the Lord’s Supper composing the three major **means of grace**, certainly was able to help many Christian Believers of the Eighteenth and into the Nineteenth Centuries, have a better handle on how outward observances are indeed or-

⁷ Ibid., 191.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 197.

dained of God and spiritually edifying. As I was able to reconnect with this spiritual heritage of mine at seminary, I can honestly report that it has significantly guided me in having a philo-traditional orientation to the mainline customs and procedures witnessed in the Messianic movement, which are inherited directly from the Jewish Synagogue.

For today's evangelical Protestants, *prayer* mostly involves various individual and corporate times of interceding before God, and is almost entirely conducted on some kind of a spontaneous basis, notwithstanding the names of various people and life needs one should legitimately bring before the Lord. In some Protestant traditions, especially Anglicanism, there are liturgical prayers either taken directly from Scripture or adapted from Scripture, which are used in worship. One of the things that can catch contemporary Believers completely off guard, is how Acts 2:42 records, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (RSV), *tais proseuchais* (ταῖς προσευχαίς). There is most certainly a place for the traditional, liturgical prayers of the Synagogue, to be employed as a means of grace for today's Messianic people—either in their individual times of entreating the Lord, or in corporate worship on *Shabbat*. Historically speaking, the Synagogue has certainly preserved many traditional liturgies, hymns, and psalms (not necessarily present in the Book of Psalms) originally used in Temple worship that have made their way into the *siddur* (סדר) or prayer book.¹⁰ Certainly for those who need a more regimented time of prayer and focus upon God, those who would wrap *tefillin* or phylacteries, should be rightfully thought of partaking in a tactile means of grace.

There are obviously many different ways, both regimented and more spontaneous, that God's people today employ to read His Word, *Scripture*. One of the most important things that I have encouraged all Believers to do—and actually developed two workbooks for¹¹—is to survey the books of the Bible. I have also frequently recommended a pattern of Messianic people: (1) reading the weekly Torah portions, (2) being engaged in a more-or-less systematic study of a specific book of Scripture weekly, and (3) reading Bible passages daily for personal enlightenment and encouragement. Some of these are best facilitated through one's local Messianic congregation or fellowship, but they also involve a degree of personal responsibility. Scripture being employed as a means of grace involves both personal reading and corporate times of instruction. And, by extension, it can also involve the employment of a traditional Torah service and Hebrew canting, whereby participants certainly connect with the ancient past.

The third major means of grace in the Wesleyan schema is *the Lord's Supper* or communion. Today's Messianic community does not have a uniform position on communion,¹² but it should not be difficult for us to recognize how communion being employed as a means of grace for past generations of Christians, can now be applied to remembering the Passover *sedar* as a means of grace, and then the appointed times or *moedim* in total. The appointed times specifically including Messianic substance to them (Colossians 2:17), decisively highlight them as an important means of grace, whereby

¹⁰ The valid statements of Daniel C. Juster, *Growing to Maturity* (Denver: The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations Press, 1987), 228 on the *siddur* need to be recognized here:

"Eighty percent is either direct Scriptural quotation or creative intertwining of Scripture passages. ...Fifteen percent is prayer material inspired by Scripture....Only a small portion contains anything contrary to Biblical faith."

¹¹ *A Survey of the Tanach and A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic.*

we understand the salvation history plan of God, and its personal importance in light of our redemption.¹³

The great usefulness of approaching various Torah practices as a means of grace—which not all Believers today’s employ in their faith experience—is that it can indeed recognize how for all of those in Yeshua, the curse of Torah violation has indeed been remitted (Galatians 3:13; Colossians 2:14), yet the work of the Holy Spirit is to compel fulfillment via the New Covenant (Romans 8:1-4). The pace of the Holy Spirit, in seeing the commandments and instructions of God transcribed onto the psyche of the redeemed, is something that necessarily takes place *on His timetable*, and not ours. Some born again Believers do proceed on the sanctification path faster than others. All born again Believers should be facilitating congregations, assemblies, and fellowships where love for God and neighbor are paramount, and where people are encouraged to grow in the Lord, in a manner by which they do progress in holiness, but also in maturity. For those Believers who do not partake of as many physical or outward means of obedience, they can and do miss out on many blessings, because they do not participate in God-ordained means of grace. Yet, missing out from many of His blessings, and *in a fuller quotient* of His grace changing their hearts and minds—is a far cry from not possessing His salvation.

There is, to be certain, a wide degree of variance of interpretation and application surrounding many of the outward forms of Torah observance—for which today’s Messianic movement does need to have a balanced approach, as it allows for much legitimate variance. The Holy Scriptures do direct the redeemed in Yeshua to have good works, and these include both our inward morality and outward acts. Torah practices that God is restoring to all of His people today, approached as a **means of grace**, should give each of us a degree of solace and peace, when we see some people doing more than ourselves, and other people doing less than ourselves. Our job as fellow brothers and sisters in the faith, is to “stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24), and presumably in this process, the Lord will teach and direct each of us—through the good will of others—into those areas where we need to see improvement. As it has been asserted many times, “What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification**” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

¹² Consult the FAQ entry on the TNN website, “Communion.”

¹³ Some further thoughts are offered in the author’s article “Some Thoughts for Our Messianic Future,” appearing in the June 2007 issue of Outreach Israel News.

TNN ONLINE EDITOR'S UPDATE

January 2015

Dear Friends:

This month we begin the second half of the 2010s. *How far have we come as a Messianic community in this decade?*



Speaking for myself, and for Outreach Israel and TNN Online, I know that we have come quite a long way—with the array of topics addressed and publications we have released. Still, the very nature of what we do as a Messianic educational ministry, is looking out for those topics and issues which have still yet to be addressed for the people within our faith community. I think that significant progress was made between 2010-2014, but more definitely lies in store for 2015-2020.

Unlike my anticipation of the new decade starting in 2010, the start of 2015 almost caught me unaware. Perhaps it was due to the lengthy projects completed in 2014, with more lengthy projects for the next year... Alas, one of the things that got my attention this past month, regarding the passage of time, was putting together eight paperback books for the back issues of Outreach Israel News from 2007-2014 (soon to be formally released). In the process of copying and pasting from individual files, I certainly got to review the course of our ministry over the past eight years of service. *We have come a long way* in the scope and breadth of what the Lord has given us to do, but there has also been a consistency of the message. We have certainly had to be adaptable and flexible to circumstances, and we have had to explain different positions and views in more detail. But, fine-tuning one's beliefs is what a life of faith is all about!

2015, much like 2014 before it, is going to have some year-long commitments, with the new 1 Corinthians Bible study, as well as the ongoing work on the *Messianic Sabbath Helper*—both of which I will be sure to be posting regular updates on! There are some other research and writing projects beyond this, which we will announce as they are firmed up.

As I simply said on Facebook to start this New Year,

I (JKM) want to wish each of you a Happy New Year 2015! We are now half-way through the 2010s, I have been living back in Dallas, TX for a full two years, *and* I am in my mid-thirties! Much has happened with Outreach Israel and TNN Online in this decade, and we are most enthusiastic and anticipatory as to what the Lord has on the horizon for all of us!

Until next month...

J.K. McKee