

OIM UPDATE

March 2016

This past month I had the privilege to travel to Israel for the fourth time in my life—something I highly recommend for any serious follower of Yeshua the Messiah! Predictably during my visit, my mind flashed back on the previous tours and times spent traversing the Promised Land, a place which has been a large part of my thought life since becoming a Believer. After all, when Margaret and I first visited Israel in 1994, with a Zola Levitt Ministry tour, we were convicted by the Holy Spirit that upon returning to the United States, we needed to begin celebrating the feasts of the Lord. While we did not necessarily know exactly what that entailed, upon discovering a Messianic Jewish congregation in Dallas, Texas, we rapidly discerned that this was where the Holy Spirit wanted us to learn more about the Messiah and the entire scope of the Holy Scriptures. Needless to say, once engrossed in our pursuit of the Holy One *from a Genesis-to-Revelation perspective*, we have never turned back! Quite frankly it was simple: upon reading and comprehending the blessings offered for obedience found in Deuteronomy 28, versus the curses imposed for disobedience and errant actions, it was obvious to us which way of life we would pursue. It did not matter an iota to us that we were not Jewish, but instead, simply born again children of God, who by His grace, had stumbled into some rather elementary truths which bore witness to our hearts and souls. As a result, our family has been blessed beyond our wildest expectations!

Of course our spiritual journey, like those of many others we have met over the past few decades—who have also been supernaturally drawn to study and embrace the Hebraic and Jewish Roots of our faith—has had some challenging twists and turns. But through it all, Margaret and I have been able to model to our five children, just what it means to walk by faith like our father Abraham. A walk of faith is something that is extremely difficult to do in the modern era of instant gratification, with a multitude of means accessible to satisfy your wants and desires. At times this has not been easy, given the perplexing comments and intense discussions we have endured from family, friends, and fellow Christians—who have had serious concerns about our choice to serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in a much different way than they have. But without a doubt, we would not have chosen a different path for our lives, because when we come to the end of our days, we simply yearn to hear from the lips of our Messiah Yeshua, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

This month’s lead article, entitled “**A Patient Pursuit**,” reflects on how each of us has to persevere in our walk with the Messiah, despite our fervent desire to have Him return to rule and reign from Jerusalem. In the event that our Heavenly Father delays His return, it is incumbent upon each of us to

patiently wait and persistently do the things He has called each of us to do, to advance His Kingdom here on Earth in the interim. With this in mind, Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics continue to bridge the gap between Christianity and Judaism, by producing books and materials written to help others understand the Creator's promises to bring His believing family back together via the banner of the Messiah (Ephesians 2).

Your support of our mission is greatly appreciated, as we have established the **Theological Defense Trust** and the **Prison Ministry Free Book Fund** to write and disseminate our materials to those seeking balanced, scholarly, and loving perspectives on what the Holy Scriptures describe is happening in this hour of restoration. Thank you for your prayers and financial partnership in our efforts to produce sound teaching that we believe in His time, will be critical for the emergence of the "one new humanity" (Ephesians 2:15) our Heavenly Father is bringing together.

"May the LORD bless you, and keep you; may 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).

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

A PATIENT PURSUIT

by Mark Huey

Among the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23, patience has generally been one of the most difficult to manifest, given the human propensity to measure things through finite limitations. This is especially true when day by day, week by week, month by month, and inevitably year by year—what one perceives to be happening from a spiritual perspective seems to be moving along at a snail's pace. Nevertheless, as noted in the following statements in the Book of Lamentations—waiting upon the Lord, while seeking Him, ultimately ends in salvation for the soul:

“The LORD's **lovingkindnesses** indeed never cease, for His **compassions** never fail. *They* are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I have hope in Him.’ **The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the LORD**” (Lamentations 3:22-26).

When given the opportunity to reflect on life from a viewpoint of time and experience, the blessing of knowing that the Creator God's lovingkindness, compassion, and faithfulness never cease, is to bring joy and hope to the believing heart. Just resting in Him in order to receive His peace and love, should sustain one through the trials and tribulations of life. Such difficulties are designed by our Heavenly Father to conform His children into the image of His Son Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel. Paul's words of Romans 8:28-30 have doubtlessly brought comfort and direction to me many times:

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

As a result of these timely influences of life, cherished memories flooded my mind, as the Mediterranean coast of Israel appeared on the horizon after a twelve year hiatus from last visiting the Promised Land, and some twenty-two years from first touring Israel in 1994 with my wife Margaret. After all, it was on our initial visit to Israel that the Holy Spirit convicted our hearts that upon returning to the United States, we needed to celebrate the feasts of the Lord. As serious students of the Bible and Spirit-led followers of the Messiah, we simply wanted to obey these distinct promptings of the Holy Spirit, even though “celebrating the feasts” did not necessarily coincide with the teachings of my Bible Church background and Margaret's Wesleyan upbringing. However, the impressions received from multiple encounters with the Holy Spirit during our journey through the Land of Israel could not be ignored...

Upon our return to Dallas with vibrant enthusiasm for Israel and what we had experienced during our trek in 1994, we were eventually led to a Messianic Jewish congregation where we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles or *Sukkot* for the first time. This was not, however, our first celebration of a Biblical feast, because we had both participated in various Passover *seders* during the 1980s. But this was different. During those previous encounters, the Passover emphasis was on the thematic connection of learning what the Jewish community was doing at this time, remembering the deliverance of their ancestors from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, and how it paralleled the Christian Believer's deliverance from the bondage of sin. Evangelical Christians studying the Passover was something that was to enrich their understanding of the work of Jesus, but it was not treated as bearing any direct significance for their faith practice, as something that should be annually remembered. For Christians, it was far more important that Easter be remembered, where the resurrection of Jesus Christ was to be commemorated.

However, for whatever Divine purposes in our lives—given the definite promptings from the Spirit of God—something was innately triggered in a more complete understanding about the feasts of the Lord influenced by our first trip to Israel. Inevitably, we finally searched the Scriptures for ourselves and discovered that the feasts were not necessarily “Jewish feasts,” although the Jewish people had faithfully commemorated them for thousands of years, and they are doubtlessly a part of their ethnic and cultural heritage. From the text of the Scriptures, however, they are regarded as the *moe'dei ADONAI* (מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה), “The LORD's appointed times” (Leviticus 23:2) or “the appointed feasts of the LORD” (NIV). This simple reading of the text changed our walk forever. We reasoned, without equivocation, that because we were adopted children of God, wild olive branches grafted into the olive tree of Israel (Romans 11:17-24)—and abiding in the vine which Yeshua the Messiah Yeshua claimed to be—we certainly wanted to bear fruit for His Kingdom. As noted in these words spoken by Yeshua to His Disciples at the Last Supper,

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:1-7).

Despite a number of Christian teachings—which insisted upon rigid distinctions between Jews and Christians, the Old and the New Testaments, and between Israel and the so-called “Church”—it just did not make Biblical sense to us, that non-Jewish Believers in Israel’s Messiah were not participants in the Kingdom work inaugurated in the Jewish Messiah of Israel. Through further study of the Word—even though we were non-Jewish Believers from the nations—we discovered that we are a welcomed part of the Commonwealth of Israel, as fellow brothers and sisters, who share in the same faith heritage as the Jewish people **and most especially Jewish Believers in Messiah**. As Paul explained it to the Believers in Asia Minor,

“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; 52:7; 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 2:11-12, PME).

Following our first commemoration of the Feast of Tabernacles, we began faithfully attending the Messianic Jewish congregation, because the Holy Spirit was confirming in our hearts week after week that He was present and He wanted us to learn more about the Jewish Messiah. After all, if we were going to be conformed to His image, we needed to immerse ourselves in a setting that best reflected the First Century assemblies which Yeshua’s Apostles would have founded. This radical decision on our part did not come without some raised eyebrows and comments from family, friends, and fellow Christians—who said that we were “trying to become Jewish” or were placing ourselves “back under the Law.” Yet, because these well meaning people had no idea what the Spirit of God was *showing us*, they were simply confounded, choosing to criticize, but not willing to search the Scriptures which were opening up to us in profound ways. This was the path that God had us on, and it would have been better if they simply had wished us His

blessings.

All of a sudden, the basic foundational building blocks of our entire faith system became a source of truth, which had never been too consciously emphasized during our previous Christian experiences. The Torah of Moses was studied in a systematic way, so that the instructions and worldview of Yeshua and His Apostles made much more sense. The prophecies and expectations of figures such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others also started to make more sense—especially when we began to realize that within recent years, many of those prophecies about the return to of Israel to the Holy Land had been realized. Pretty soon, the ancient history of Israel and why the people had to endure the hardships of being cast out of the Promised Land made even more sense.

The bottom line for us was simple: if we were going to be fruitful branches attached to the Vine of Yeshua, and be conformed to His image, we needed to know Him in the context of His Jewish identity and the First Century saints who followed in His footsteps. It became abundantly clear to us that in the context of a Messianic Jewish setting, we would be able to more fully understand who Yeshua was and do what He did during His ministry. In a matter of months, we were learning Hebrew and joined the new member's class, and becoming members of the congregation we never regretted our decision to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, we would not be doing what we are doing today if we had quenched the Spirit of God and His leading!

This past month, February 2016, I once again had the privilege to walk in the unique land where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, the Prophets, and Yeshua and His Disciples walked. On my journey, thoughts reflected back to 1995 and the early days of our Messianic Jewish walk with the Messiah. I distinctly remember how back then, Margaret and I both thought that other faithful Christians would certainly like us, see the obvious errors of their theology and various inconsistencies in Christian history, and embrace the Messianic perspective. We optimistically concluded that once godly people put together the current events of the time (the 1993 Middle East Peace Accord) and realized that the many prophecies of the Bible were apparently taking shape—that a deeper and more complete walk with the Messiah would involve them embracing their Hebraic Roots like a rushing river of revelation, as it was for us. *We did not anticipate that it would be a relatively small trickle of people*, rather than the flood of urgency we experienced in entering into the Messianic movement. Nevertheless, our personal search propelled us into our sojourn for truth, which we have often labeled our “spiritual scavenger hunt.” Along the way over the years, we have discovered the lamentable understanding that the enemy of our souls has been very accomplished in keeping the Body of Messiah divided, contentious, and full of strife for the past two millennia. This realization causes much consternation among those who yearn for the unity that Yeshua sought for His Disciples, and those who

would come after them:

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, **that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me**” (John 17:22-23).

Of course, this is where *there is a definite need to be patient* when the will of the Almighty comes into the picture. In our limited, self-centered focus on life and how things work, we human beings often contemplate things in light of our individual time on the planet. We think that things should be occurring according to our timeframe, and not the Lord's. This can be frustrating at times, but as men and women of God have learned down through the ages, *waiting upon the Lord* is not just a trite expression; waiting upon the Lord is something that we must do with joy, peace, and especially love for others. In order to comfort my soul, as I looked back over the past twenty-two years and anticipated the next twenty more years or so of service—Lord willing—I went to the Scriptures to see how patiently other followers of the Creator God dealt with the vagaries of time. And to my surprise, I was humbled by the overwhelming fact that **the very Creation** itself is waiting patiently for the Creator to accomplish His will:

“**For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.** And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.** For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? **But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.** In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*” (Romans 8:19-27).

In reading these words from the Apostle Paul, the thought came to my mind: Who am I to complain or even question, when it comes to the patient pursuit of God during my brief time on Earth? What right do I have to grumble about things not going the way I thought they would, given the fact that **the very created order** has to wait patiently for the Lord's will to unfold?

Upon reflecting upon many of the followers of the Holy One who have preceded us, it is obvious that each of those mentioned in the Holy Writ had to deal with waiting upon the Lord. *No person gets a pass on the requirement to patiently wait for the Lord's will to be accomplished.* Even the father of our faith system, Abraham, who was given many unconditional promises, and all

those listed in Hebrews 11—had to look toward the future, while each maintaining their individual hope in the Eternal One who communicated so much to each of them:

“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

If the Holy Scriptures have been given to us as both an instruction manual *and* as a testimony of those who have preceded us in the walk of faith—who are we to *not* follow the example of previous saints and patiently pursue the Holy One of Israel, despite the fact that we can only fathom a glimpse of what the Almighty is doing? Mortals that we are, we are most certainly ignorant about His timing for all that will eventually occur. When you look at the lives of Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, the Prophets, and even Yeshua, the need to wait upon the will of the Father is paramount for living a life that is pleasing to Him.

A classic example of patiently pursuing the will of the Father and waiting upon the Almighty One, actually comes from a response that Yeshua gave to His Disciples on the Mount of Olives, when they queried Him about the timing of the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom. The Disciples’ expectations of the Messiah’s reign was one rooted within the expectations of Israel’s restoration in the Tanakh, and was something they were to indeed be looking for:

“As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”” (Matthew 24:3).

After expressing a series of warnings, Yeshua’s answer to His Disciples was that the Father was in control of the timing of His return and future consummation of the age:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matthew 24:36).

It is rather absurd for humans to think that they can calculate the exact day or hour of the Messiah’s return! Frequently, this is the result of impatient people, who have over the centuries concocted all sorts of hypothetical scenarios based on guesses, presuppositions, biases, misinterpreting prophecies, and misreading current events. We are doubtlessly one day closer today than we were yesterday to the Messiah’s return. But we need to exhibit patience and fortitude as it steadily approaches.

As I concluded my retrospective expedition into my post-Israel tours memory, and recalled all of the conclusions I have made about what I thought was going to happen—it made me ultimately realize that my time is

much better spent by **patiently pursuing the Holy One of Israel**. By seeking His face, learning more about His ways, attempting to walk like Yeshua did during His time on Earth, and humbly admitting that I need more patience and perseverance to be conformed to His image—*there is considerable work to be done!*

With the remembrance of *Purim* or the Feast of Lots soon to take place, and with the commemoration of Passover or *Pesach* also to take place within the next month—with these festivals remembering the deliverance of the Jewish people from the evil Haman, and the Exodus of Ancient Israel from slavery to the Egyptians—followers of the Messiah, who want to walk like Him, can indeed remember the Father's ongoing plan of salvation history and the rescue of His people over their enemies. Be thankful wherever you are in your walk with the Messiah, and know that patiently pursuing Him is a life-long exercise. As always, keep your eyes firmly fixed on Yeshua, in order to run the good race. Do not become weary, and never lose heart:

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, **and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yeshua**, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart**” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Patience is a virtue, and waiting upon Him in all that we do, will in the end, give each of us the peace, joy, and love we need to endure to either the end of our mortal sojourn here on this Earth *or* the eventual return of the Messiah to this Earth. May we each follow in His footsteps and *patiently pursue Him* with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. In the meanwhile, we can follow the example of the Apostle John and plead for the Messiah to come quickly, as is found in the concluding remarks of the Book of Revelation:

“**The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’** And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, **‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Yeshua.** The grace of the Lord Yeshua be with all. Amen” (Revelation 22:17-21).

Patiently pursue the Messiah until the restoration of all things...

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS UPDATE

March 2016

Dear Friends:

If I were to ask many of you the question, “Do you believe we are in the end-times?”, many of you would answer in the affirmative to this. And when I say the “end-times” here—while it may be technically true that the Last



Days started at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at *Shavuot*/Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21; cf. Joel 2:28-32)—the “end-times” I am referring to involves a recognition that the basic components of global government and a New World Order are in place, requiring only logistical and technological improvements, and perhaps a further wave or two of social changes, to become broadly operative.

I do not believe that the antimessiah/antichrist is going to take over Planet Earth anytime soon. In fact, I think it is likely *several decades* away. But neither do I think that for Believers in Israel’s Messiah, things are entirely normal any more. We do have to think very carefully about how we spend our time, our financial resources, and in how we invest our energies in preparing for the season leading up to the Second Coming of Yeshua. My day is dominated with how I can produce materials to help bring stability to the Messianic movement, and prepare the way for the many people—particularly like how my family entered in twenty years ago—whom the Lord is sovereignly drawing in. Even if I think that the Messiah’s return is not imminent, I have very little time and patience for engaging in unnecessary bickering and receiving flatteries, as the cosmic clock is ticking.

This past month has been dominated with the American presidential primaries. What makes this important, is how the American president is the most powerful person on Earth. I am grateful that many of you, who live in the United States, participate in the political process, and that you have strong opinions on the issues. I encourage everyone to go out and vote. But let us also understand how if many of the political figures were living in the First Century C.E., they would have been responsible for executing Yeshua the Messiah (1 Corinthians 2:8) and persecuting the Believers. Unlike those in the First Century, or even Ancient Israel, **those living in modern democracies do have some modicum of choice regarding who their leaders will be.** But when we go to choose, all we will be deciding is how fast or how slow we want the end-times to come, and with it the degradation of society. *We are not going to be voting in a massive spiritual revival.* The “religious Right” is now a minority in America. But we can get a line extension in time—time which is particularly needed for our maturing and emerging Messianic movement, and for the work we need to do.

Speaking of some of that work, this past month continues to see me post YouTube video podcasts every weekday. Our Wednesday Night Bible Study on 2 Corinthians is underway. Steady progress is being made on *Salvation on the Line*.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee