

OIM UPDATE

March 2018

The month of March this year began with the Festival of *Purim*, and will conclude with the commencement of Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, with the remembrance of the Passover *seder*. These commemorations are conducted throughout the Jewish and Messianic Jewish communities, with an increasing number of non-Jewish Believers embracing the significance of Passover, in a variety of ways. These two annual convocations are derived from passages found in Esther 9:27-28 (*Purim*) and Leviticus 23:5-8 (Passover). Of course, when coupled with the annual *Chanukah* celebration, these are two of the three annual reminders of how God's chosen people have faced annihilation or great oppression, and how the Holy One has had to miraculously intervene to save them.

From generation to generation over thousands of years, the Jewish people have been remembering these historical events with plays, dramatic renditions, liturgy, and appropriate readings of the Holy Scriptures. These celebratory events are intended to teach each generation about the harsh reality that over the ages, different people groups have tried to obliterate them, by physical death or altering their cultural mores. In antiquity, the Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks almost succeeded, but by the grace of God, their plans were thwarted by faithful prayers and actions followed by miraculous displays of God's mercy. When Yeshua the Messiah came to Earth, He was able to fulfill His role as the Sacrificial Lamb according to the commandments found in the Torah of Moses.

Since Yeshua's resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, the goal of the Evil One has been to prevent Messiah's prophesied return and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom on Earth. Consequently, over the past two thousand years, the Romans, the Roman Catholic Inquisitions, the pogroms in the Russian Empire, the Nazi Holocaust, and now Islamic terrorists, have been examples of this unrelenting spiritual force occupying depraved individuals in different societies, with a desire to eradicate the Jewish people and frustrate God's plans for His Creation. Nonetheless, in a humorously macabre sort of way, the Jews have a tongue in cheek saying when it comes to these annual celebrations, when they state in a matter of fact way: "They tried to kill us, we won, let's eat!"

But joking aside, the real challenge for any society is overcoming the inherent depravity that has plagued humanity since the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Tanakh or Hebrew Bible not only chronicles the origin of humanity and the Fall, but also the history of Israel from the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In addition down through the millennia, the Rabbis and Sages of Judaism have concluded that there are 613 commandments or *mitzvot* present in the Torah. It is by attempting to adhere to most, if at least some, of these God-given laws, that the Jewish people have been able to culturally survive and even thrive down through the centuries.

Ironically, when the State of Israel was declared some seventy years ago next month, the then-proposed "constitutional assembly" was never able to fully formulate and approve an Israeli constitution. After all, basic survival of the nascent nation in a hostile Arab and Muslim neighborhood was of paramount importance, as the declaration of statehood was greeted with warfare from the surrounding powers. In addition, the adage of "two Jews, three opinions" was exacerbated by the Zionists, Orthodox, and both secular and religious Jews converging from a multitude of cultures, backgrounds, and languages from where they had been scattered. Hence, in lieu of a formal Israeli constitution, over the recent history of Israel, the "Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty and the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation," has addressed certain rights. But for the most part, due to the British Mandate from 1923-1948, British Common Law, with some vestiges from the previous four centuries Ottoman rule, and even a smattering of German civil law, formulate the Israeli legal system. Inevitably, the precedent from adjudicated cases forms a sound basis for much of Israeli civil and criminal law, and any perceived need for a "constitution" has no serious traction at this present time.

From an American perspective, this discovery about the overlooked fact that there was not a formal Israeli constitution, at first was alarming for me. The United States Constitution is so revered as the basis for our culture, that we proudly proclaim "We are a nation that abides by the rule of law." But because of recent circumstances in the American governmental system in the past several years that are finally coming to light, the possibility of a "constitutional crisis" has surfaced. But thankfully, based on statements written in the Federalist Papers published during the ratification period, one can joyfully conclude that the principal framers and writers of the American Constitution were appropriately aware of human beings' inherent depravity because of their Judeo-Christian beliefs. For example, in Federalist Paper #51 by James Madison, the following quotes indicate that when forming a constitutional republic employing democratic practices, such a system had to have a series of "checks and balances," in order to overcome basic human nature subject to corruption and the abuse of powers granted:

*"But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. **If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.**"*

"In framing government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."

"As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust, so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form."

Of course, in the later part of the Eighteenth Century when the American Revolution was being fought and the Constitution was being authored and ratified, the great majority of influential Americans believed in the Judeo-Christian principles found in the Bible. The authors of the Federalist Papers each understood the intrinsic flaw in human nature toward self-centeredness and susceptible to corruption. But such understandings are not the case in the post-Christian, secular humanistic, and progressively more pagan America of the Twenty-First Century. **But it needs to be because the very survival of Western civilization founded on these Scriptural truths is at stake.**

Israelis and Jews around the world (in general) are reminded three times annually, of the cataclysmic dangers that continue unabated by unsavory characters and hate-filled nations toward their extinction. But Israel is not alone. In fact, the United States of America because of its Christian heritage and God's blessings remains the strongest country in the world. Nonetheless, since it was also established on Biblical principles, it is also a prime target for destruction by the same nefarious forces.

Perhaps you, in all likelihood are an American follower of the Messiah Yeshua and the Holy One of Israel, then whenever the subject of the Constitution arises, you can boldly remind all who would listen about human beings' depraved and fallen nature and need for a Savior. For certainly the subject of the U.S. Constitution, the undisputed foundational building block of American society, is an increasingly frequent topic of discussion in a multitude of venues. Hence, American followers of the same Almighty God as Israel, should unequivocally declare without reservation, the seriousness of the blatant attacks on American society and values by corrupt individuals.

Maybe in God's mercy toward those who are humbly and prayerfully seeking His face, God will turn back with revival winds and heal the land, so America can continue to support and defend Israel! This is my prayer for this Passover season, when we remember God's deliverance of Israel from physical bondage *and* our personal deliverance from sin—in order to serve Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength!

Chag Samaech Pesach!

Mark Huey

KOSHER AND TORAH-BASED “MEANS OF GRACE”

by J.K. McKee

A major historical difference, that has been witnessed between Judaism and Christianity, has been how Christianity has often been responsible for promoting a dualism, where one’s inward heart condition is so important, that external actions of spirituality can be disparaged. Judaism, in stark contrast to this, emphasizes the wholistic unity of one’s being, where internal heart attitude *and* external deeds, are carefully balanced.¹

Within the Hebrew Tanach, external activities such as work, sexual intercourse, or eating and drinking, are all lauded as having value. Qohelet says, “Behold, this is what I myself have seen. It is beneficial and good for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy all of his toil that he labors under the sun during the few days of his life that God has given him—for this is his reward” (Ecclesiastes 5:17[18], TLV). Given the certain fact that human beings cannot earn favor before God for their salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9), Christian people throughout history have especially struggled with the fact that while works or deeds are not the *cause* of salvation, works or deeds are to *result* from salvation. James 3:13 directs, “Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct let him show his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom” (TLV). And, as James 1:27 specifies, “Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (TLV).

Certainly throughout history, there have been faithful Jews and Protestants who have recognized the significance of the external good works that God requires of His own. The famed word of Micah 6:8 states, “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). It should not be unreasonable to note that those who are best able to live forth such an imperative, are men and women who are disciplined in their relationship with the Creator. These are people who pray, they read and study the Holy Scriptures, they fellowship with those of the local faith community—and consequently they do look out for the needs of others.

Today’s Messianic community, because of its undeniable connection to its Jewish theological and spiritual heritage, will emphasize various physical

¹ Consult some of the relevant points appearing in the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, “Dualism.”

actions of God's people, that today's evangelical Protestantism not only considers unnecessary, but will backhandedly dismiss. Yet, once you start attending a Messianic congregation or fellowship on *Shabbat*, it is not difficult to be exposed to questions about eating what is considered clean or unclean, and various tactile objects such as prayer shawls or the *mezuzah*, which obviously have importance for not just the Torah or Law of Moses, but also Jewish heritage.

Many Bible readers are conditioned to take Yeshua's words of Matthew 23:28 to the Pharisaical leaders, and then see them applied to anyone who takes seriously outward forms of Biblical expression: "Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to people, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (PME). So, whether it be Messianic Jews who were raised in a normally religious home, (re)claiming a definite part of their heritage, or non-Jewish Believers integrating into the Messianic community and actually wanting to live in a similar manner to Yeshua and His early followers—such people can find themselves criticized for apparently being inwardly decrepit and bankrupt. However, such Messianic people would not be alone, as those in various holiness and piety movements in Protestantism since the Reformation have had similar accusations issued to them. It was thought that their significant commitment to doing good deeds, was apparently trying to compensate for a lack of salvation assurance.

While only our Heavenly Father knows the true intent of any man or woman trying to obey Him *internally and externally*, there is a strong spiritual value in performing external actions of faith. How one eats, and how one employs ritual objects such as *tzitzityot* or a *kippah*, can be spiritually edifying. Certainly in much Christian thought, the process of being immersed in water (baptized) as an outward sign of one's redemption, is critical not only for identifying with Yeshua's own death and resurrection (Romans 6:4), but also as a time for publicly declaring before the world of one's salvation. Various external instructions, appearing in the Scriptures, were called by John Wesley to be a "means of grace," whereby Believers can physically partake of deeper, internal spiritual realities. When Messianic people do anything that is external, whether it is specified by commandments in the Torah, or derived from Torah commandments, how are they partaking of deeper, internal spiritual realities? 1 Thessalonians 5:23 astutely admonishes,

"Now may the God of *shalom* Himself make you completely holy; and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept complete, blameless at the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah" (TLV).

Kosher (Kashrut)

The term *kosher* (כשר) does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but is instead derived from the verb *kasheir* (כִּשֵׁר), “to be suitable, fit to use” (*HALOT*).² A term used throughout Judaism is *kashrut* (כְּשָׁרוּת), “fitness, worthiness, legitimacy” (*Jastrow*).³ In most of the common usage that Messianic people will encounter—kosher, *kasheir*, and kashrut—will almost always be employed in reference to the Torah’s dietary instructions, and the list of clean and unclean meats in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. However, in Jewish usage, the term kosher will be employed in a much wider array of applications, involving not only food and diet, but also the condition of various ritual objects, as well as one’s moral and ethical behavior.

Today’s Messianic people often find various reasons for considering the kosher dietary laws important. Many Jewish people, who have come to faith in Yeshua, were raised in Reform Jewish homes which did not bother to keep kosher, but ate unclean meats, and so many of today’s Messianic Jews have actually reclaimed an important part of their ancestral heritage. Many non-Jewish Believers, often starting with the prohibitions of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:19-21, 28-29), find that adopting a kosher-style of diet is useful in emulating the Torah obedience of Yeshua the Messiah and/or for various health considerations. The workbook *Messianic Judaism Class* recognizes these significant reasons for today’s Messianic Believers and kosher, first noting how,

“[T]he animals that are forbidden to eat are predators and scavengers. You don’t know what a predator or scavenger has just eaten. It could be something diseased. Also some of the animals are high in fat and cholesterol.”⁵

It is then further stated,

“It is obedience to God. If the Ruakh HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) is leading you to be grafted in and you have been changing your lifestyle to identify more with Israel and with how Yeshua lived on this earth, then this is one more way to do that.”⁶

Principally within the Torah, one turns to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 for the list of clean and unclean meats, to begin one’s review of the die-

² Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1:503.

³ Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004), 677.

⁴ Consult the many useful thoughts offered by Ron Isaacs, *Kosher Living: It’s More Than Just the Food* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

⁵ *Messianic Judaism Class*, Teacher Book, 53.

⁶ *Ibid.*

tary laws. **Kosher land animals** (Leviticus 11:2-8; Deuteronomy 14:3-8) must have a split hoof and chew a cud. Clean land animals would include cattle, sheep, goats, deer, and various other sorts of wild game. Unclean land animals would include the camel, and most especially the pig. **Kosher fish** (Leviticus 11:9-12; Deuteronomy 14:9-10) must have fins and scales, which would automatically disqualify all popular shellfish such as shrimp, crabs, lobsters, and oysters as being kosher. **Non-kosher birds** (Leviticus 11:13-19; Deuteronomy 14:11-18) are mainly birds of prey or carrion eaters, with **kosher birds** determined entirely by Jewish tradition (i.e., chicken, duck, goose, and turkey). **Kosher insects** (Leviticus 11:20-23; Deuteronomy 14:19) mainly involve locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers.

Biblically Kosher and Traditional Jewish Kosher

In much of today's Messianic movement, Messianic people are seen witnessed following a dietary regimen which they label as "**Biblically kosher.**" This is a level of kosher which mainly avoids unclean meats such as pork and shellfish. Traditional Jewish kosher, as particularly witnessed in the Orthodox Jewish community, is much more strict. Traditional Jewish **kashrut** involves explicit details concerning the slaughter of animals, the removal of blood, separation of meat and dairy (based on Deuteronomy 14:21), as well as dishes and utensils intended for meat or for dairy. There are Jewish regulatory agencies which inspect the factories and equipment where processed foods are produced, to ensure their kosher status, and that no non-kosher items were used in their manufacture.

It is safe to say that today's kosher-friendly Messianic people do appreciate the higher level of standard observed by the Orthodox Jewish community, and like to see that various food products they purchase may have a stamp of approval. However, the higher cost of kosher-certified meat, for example, is prohibitive to many Messianic families who are not willing to completely eliminate meat from their diet. So, the meat of clean animals is usually purchased from the supermarket, but with various steps taken, such as soaking in water or broiling, to see that any remaining blood is removed.

Observance of kosher can, at times, become tense in various congregations' fellowship meal times. Some have "Biblically kosher" policies where only pork and shellfish need to be avoided, but where meat and dairy can be mixed. Others have stricter policies where all meat must have a kosher certification, and where meat and dairy cannot be mixed. Yet others follow a policy of *parve* (neutral), where meat is not served, but fish is served because those observing a strict level of kosher can mix fish with dairy. These are all areas where it is appropriate for each of us to be flexible and tolerant

of others' opinions.

Eating Controversies in the Messianic Scriptures

While any emphasis on the importance of the kosher dietary laws, is likely to immediately upset or confuse many Christian people who look at the Messianic movement, it cannot go overlooked how many Jewish people were raised not keeping kosher. Reform Judaism dismissed the kosher dietary laws in the late Nineteenth Century as not only being antiquated, but as instructions which would unnecessarily impede Jewish integration into modern society. So, while non-Jewish Believers led by God into the Messianic movement might have more obvious challenges when considering the value of a kosher style of diet, many Messianic Jewish Believers have a few challenges as well, as they were not raised with kosher being a part of their background. And, many of these same Messianic Jewish Believers may have come to faith in an evangelical Protestant setting, which was dismissive of the kosher dietary laws.

There are a number of significant objections that are raised, as they involve the ongoing validity and relevance of the kosher dietary laws. **Peter's vision of the sheet** in Acts 10, where he is shown a diverse array of unclean animals, and the declaration "What God has made clean, you must not consider unholy" (Acts 10:15, TLV), is commonly interpreted to mean that the distinctions of clean and unclean meats have been abrogated. While there are details to be evaluated, as to what "four-footed animals and reptiles and birds of the air" (Acts 10:12, TLV) may represent in regard to ancient paganism, Peter's own interpretation of his vision, as he met with the Roman centurion Cornelius, cannot go overlooked: "You yourselves know that it is not permitted for a Jewish man to associate with a non-Jew or to visit him. Yet God has shown me that I should call no one unholy or unclean" (Acts 10:28, TLV). The main issue communicated to Peter, by the vision, was the overturning of non-Biblical injunctions which prohibited Jewish people from interacting with outsiders, particularly in terms of sharing a common meal (*Jubilees* 22:16; *m. Ohalot* 19:7).⁷

Also frequently referred to by many people who are dismissive of the kosher dietary laws, is **the statement of Mark 7:19**. In most English Bibles it appears as "Thus he declared all foods clean" (RSV), and many will conclude that Yeshua the Messiah not only canceled the Torah's dietary code, but all forms of external ritual purity. Surely, it is absolutely true that "There is nothing outside the man that can make him unholy by going into

⁷ For a further evaluation of details, consult the analysis on Acts 10:1-48 in the *Messianic Kosher Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

him. Rather, it is what comes out of the man that makes the man unholily” (Mark 7:15, TLV), as internal purity of the heart is more imperative than external purity. However, the actual issue in view was not the kosher dietary instructions, but instead a ritual handwashing practiced by many First Century Jews (Mark 7:1-13), but not necessarily by Yeshua’s disciples. Bread eaten with unwashed hands does not defile someone, “For it does not enter into the heart but into the stomach, and then goes out into the sewer, cleansing all foods” (Mark 7:19, TLV). It has been widely recognized among commentators how the clause *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα) can be rendered as continuing the sentence, with “purging all the foods” (PME) speaking of the process of excretion.⁸

Kosher continuance is something detected in the Apostolic decree issued by the Jerusalem Council, to the new Greek and Roman Believers coming to faith in Israel’s Messiah. While they were not mandated or coerced to keep the Torah (Acts 15:1, 5), there were various stipulations that they had to observe for proper fellowship with Jewish Believers, and hence also interaction with the Jewish community. These included things strangled and blood (Acts 15:20, 29), which would surely limit the number of places where meat could be procured. *Were they to keep kosher?* A resource like the workbook *Messianic Judaism Class* concludes, “They are not required for Gentiles according to Acts 15, but Gentiles may keep them if they are led by God to do so.”⁹ Frequently, it is thought that non-Jews in today’s Messianic movement are likened unto the *gerim* (גֵּרִים) or sojourners in Ancient Israel, who were notably not permitted to catch unclean wild game (Leviticus 17:13), by necessity implying that the domesticated animals they would have eaten would be clean.

Problems in the Messianic movement tend to erupt when people are completely inflexible about the issue of kosher—especially from those whose faith tends to rise or fall on what people eat, rather than on internal heart cleanliness. If you keep a kosher style of diet on the outside, but do not take care that you are *internally clean* in your heart and mind, what have you achieved?

For fellowship meals at various Messianic congregations, one generally finds that pork and shellfish are off limits. The guidelines prescribed by the workbook *Messianic Judaism Class* are, “No Biblically un-kosher foods, please: no pork, no shellfish, no hunted meat.”¹⁰ Your Messianic congregation or fellowship might be a little more strict in some areas, as it may look

⁸ For a further evaluation of details, consult the analysis on Mark 7:1-23 in the *Messianic Kosher Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

⁹ *Messianic Judaism Class*, Teacher Book, 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

for a *hechsher* or an authorized symbol from one of the various Jewish kosher certification agencies. Some fellowship meal times do not permit the mixing of meat and dairy, they might be *parve* and permit fish and dairy, or they might be vegetarian. Other fellowship meal times might, in stark contrast, allow for meat and dairy to be served together, and one might even see fried chicken from a KFC or pizza from a local establishment, available for general consumption.

There are issues that do arise in the Messianic movement, as they concern the implementation of the dietary laws in modern settings, recognizing some of the more specific details of blood and fat, being sensitive to the diversity of opinions—but also recognizing various exceptions due to live circumstances. In the context of ancient missionary evangelism, Paul instructed the Corinthians, “If an unbeliever invites you over and you want to go, eat whatever is set before you, without raising questions of conscience” (1 Corinthians 10:27, TLV). There are going to be times when one might be served unclean things, and as a matter of being gracious to one’s host, they should be eaten (without taking seconds). As the workbook *Messianic Judaism Class* properly directs, “‘Go and preach the Gospel’ is a higher law than the dietary laws.”¹¹

Tzitzits and Tallits

An important Torah instruction is witnessed in Numbers 15:38, “Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner” (NJPS). The fringe, tassel, or *tzitzit* (צִיצִית) was originally to have a cord of *tekheilet* (תְּכֵלֶת) or blue, although the traditional dye employed for the *tekheilet* from the *chilazon* sea snail was lost for many centuries, with most *tzitzit* today being all white. Fringes or tassels were worn by Yeshua the Messiah, as witnessed throughout the Gospels. The general statement made in Mark 6:56 is, “And wherever He entered villages, towns, or countryside, people were placing the sick in the marketplaces and begging Him to let them touch even the *tzitzit* of His garment—and all who touched it were being healed” (TLV; cf. Malachi 4:2).

In Judaism today, the fringes or *tzitzityot* are to be attached to a four-corned garment, with the *tallit* (טְלִית) having developed in the post-Second Temple period. Orthodox Jewish males will often wear an undergarment called a *tallit katan* at all times, whereas other Jews will employ the *tallit* for

¹¹ Ibid., 54.

For a further evaluation of details, consult the analysis on 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 in the *Messianic Kosher Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

traditional morning prayers and daytime *Shabbat* services. Traditionally, the *tallit* is to be worn only during the daytime, with the exception of the evening services of *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Given how the command is issued to *b'nei Yisrael* (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) or the “children of Israel,” Conservative and Reform Judaism permits females to employ the *tallit*. There is a wide degree of variance witnessed in the Messianic movement regarding *tzitzityot* and the *tallit*, some of it sitting without the general bounds of Jewish tradition. It is safe to say, though, that homemade *tzitzits* tied to one’s beltloops, which one will frequently encounter in the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, sit well outside of what is traditionally witnessed.¹²

Tefillin (Phylacteries) and Mezuzah

Within the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6, where God’s supremacy and exclusiveness is declared, it is explicitly stated, “These words, which I am commanding you today, are to be on your heart. You are to teach them diligently to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign on your hand, they are to be as frontlets between your eyes, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, TLV). There is a definite need to see the Instruction of God placed impressed onto the human heart, and to convey the significance of His commandments to one’s offspring.

In Jewish practice, certainly from Second Temple times, it is seen how the direction to bind the Word on one’s hand and forehead is taken literally, via the tradition of wrapping *tefillin* (תְּפִלִּין) or phylacteries (derived from *phulaktērion*, φυλακτήριον). The *tefillin* are a set of two leather boxes, one for the arm and hand (the opposite of whether the user is right or left handed), and one for the head, containing four Torah passages written on parchment (Exodus 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21). Wrapping *tefillin* is something that takes place at traditional times of prayer. Various people in today’s Messianic movement are seen to wrap *tefillin*, whereas others interpret the commandment to bind God’s Word as something metaphorical. There are some who do not wrap *tefillin* because a pair of *tefillin* can frequently be very expensive, although they do not frown on the value of the tradition.¹³

When one walks into a Jewish synagogue, or the home of an observant

¹² For a further evaluation of details, consult the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, “Tzitzits.”

¹³ For a further evaluation of details, consult the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, “Tefillin.”

Jew—and certainly many Messianic congregations and Messianic homes—a *mezuzah* (מְזוּזָה) will be seen at the entry. The term *mezuzah* is today frequently taken to apply to the small case and parchment attached to the doorpost, which includes the Deuteronomy 4:6-9 and 11:13-21 instructions. Just as touching the Torah scroll during the *Shabbat* service is intended to honor it, the *mezuzah* will be touched as a sign of honor by those entering or existing a doorway that has one attached.¹⁴

Kippah (Yarmulke)

One of the most obvious elements of modern Jewish identity witnessed in the world today, is men wearing the *kippah* (כִּפָּה; or *yarmulke*, יארמולקע) or skullcap. The main idea behind wearing this small skullcap is that it shows submission to God. Other ideas is that wearing the *kippah* is a sign of mourning the destruction of the Second Temple, or that it is a symbol of how human beings have a Divine authority over them. Still, wearing a head garment like the *kippah* may simply be rooted in Ancient Near Eastern customs of people wearing things on their head keeping the sun off them. In various Jewish communities, and in modern Israel, wearing a particular style of *kippah* may identify you with a particular religious or even political sect.

Issues do arise in some Messianic congregations, particularly when non-Jewish Believers can be witnessed to be insensitive to the Jewish tradition of wearing the *kippah* or *yarmulke*. Many recognize that wearing the *kippah*, while not a Biblical commandment, is appropriate for synagogue protocol. Others, based on some statements appearing in 1 Corinthians 11, conclude that wearing men the *kippah* is prohibited. While a complicated passage for sure, when it is recognized that there were ancient First Century Corinthian issues in view, then 1 Corinthians 11:4 cannot be seen as prohibiting the *kippah*. As the Brown and Comfort interlinear renders *pas anēr proseuchomenos ē prophēteuōn kata kephalēs* (πᾶς ἀνὴρ προσευχόμενος ἢ προφῆτεύων κατὰ κεφαλῆς), “every man praying or prophesying down over [his] head.”¹⁵ What was considered dishonorable as something hanging down from the head (*kata kephalēs*) for the men in Corinth is stated in the text as long hair: “Doesn’t the natural order of things teach you—if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace for him?” (1 Corinthians 11:14, TLV).¹⁶

¹⁴ For a further discussion, consult Chapter 13 of *Torah In the Balance, Volume II*, “Messianic Believers and Religious Symbols.”

¹⁵ Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, trans., *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1990), 603.

¹⁶ For a further evaluation of details, including “covered” and “uncovered” in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 involving ancient hairstyles, consult the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, “Headcovering Garments.”