

A photograph of olive trees and a stone path in a garden setting, serving as the background for the top section of the newsletter cover.

# OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries  
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



DECEMBER 2025

1 PETER 2:9-11

JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH BELIEVERS  
IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD



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## STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries  
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts

All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the Believers after the Tribulation period.

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# OIM UPDATE

December 2025

*J.K. McKee*

**"But you are A CHOSEN RACE [Isaiah 43:20, LXX; Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15], A royal PRIESTHOOD [Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6], A HOLY NATION [Exodus 19:6], A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION [Isaiah 43:21, LXX; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2], so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY [Hosea 2:23]. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul" (NASU).**

## 1 PETER 2:9-11 JEWISH AND NON- JEWISH BELIEVERS IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD

It is not difficult, in reading through 1 Peter 2:9-11, that there is a wide variety of some significant titles of honor and distinction—which are directly taken from the Tanach or Old Testament—applied to the audience of the letter. These titles were principally directed to stimulate good and proper behavior, becoming of born again Believers, which reflect upon the righteous character of God. It is most convenient to see a figure like the Apostle Peter apply these titles to Jewish Believers, as they involve not only the vocational calling upon Ancient Israel to be a Kingdom of priests and holy nation, but also God's plan to restore Israel in the eschaton. However, a wide number of examiners of the Epistle of 1 Peter, including those in contemporary Messianic Judaism, have been forced to recognize how this letter, at the very least, had a mixed audience of First Century Jewish and non-Jewish Believers. That non-Jewish Believers could be described with honorificates designated for Israel, surely has a bearing on ecclesiology.

The audience of 1 Peter was stated by its author to be a wide

grouping of Messiah followers in Asia Minor. The Apostle Peter also went on to acknowledge how, at least a major part of his audience, were once engrossed in paganism—which decisively meant that a huge number, of those who received 1 Peter, were non-Jewish Greeks and Romans. Their condition as “aliens” was one of sojourning on Planet Earth, in anticipation of the return of the Messiah:

“Peter, an apostle of Yeshua the Messiah, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen...As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY’ [Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7]. If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Messiah*” (1 Peter 1:1, 14-19, NASU).

Obviously, the call to holiness is one which has been issued to all Messiah followers. Yet, when reviewing 1 Peter 2:9-10, and recognizing that the intertextuality seen describes not only behavioral holiness but also the restoration of Israel's Kingdom—that Jewish Believers *and* non-Jewish Believers, are participants in all of this together, is certain. Here are some of the main Tanach passages quoted in 1 Peter 2:9-10, appearing in order:<sup>1</sup>

- “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6, NASU).
- “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 699; Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., with Holger Strutwolf, *The Greek New Testament, Fifth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/American Bible Society/United Bible Societies, 2014), pp 764-765.



love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even you above all peoples, as it is this day*" (Deuteronomy 10:15, NASU).

- "'[A]nd you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:6, NASU).
- "But you will be called the priests of the LORD; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast" (Isaiah 61:6, NASU).
- "The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise" (Isaiah 43:21, NASU).
- "But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today" (Deuteronomy 4:20, NASU).
- "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2, NASU).
- "I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, '*You are my God!*'" (Hosea 2:23, NASU).

The role which 1 Peter 2:9-10 has for the people within today's Messianic movement, and what it specifically communicates, is one which is most important. **Not only are God's own to be a holy people who faithfully serve Him in the world**, but it cannot be avoided how the Apostle Peter applied a prophecy of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim coming back to Him (Hosea 2:23), to a mixed audience of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers. Similar to the challenges of interpretation present with **Romans 9:23-29** (previously addressed), so are there some challenges of interpretation present with **1 Peter 2:9-10**.

Many of today's populist Two-House teachers will just quickly conclude that Peter's non-Jewish audience were "Ephraimites" of some sort, which Peter did not say. The focus of Peter himself was on

*the vocational calling of Israel*—something which was not limited to his own Jewish people exclusively, or the nations. He applied a restoration of Israel prophecy, in the process of being fulfilled, to non-Jewish Believers—but more in the sense of all Believers being participants involved in it. And, **the ethical and moral aspects of this were more imperative.** From a standpoint of ecclesiology, all Believers, Jewish and non-Jewish, may be regarded as a part of the Kingdom realm of Israel where these prophecies will take place—meaning that non-Jewish Believers are hardly a part of some separate “Church” entity. From a standpoint of missiology, all Believers, Jewish and non-Jewish, are to live holy and upstanding lives, reflecting the love and righteousness of God to the world.

Recognizing some of the challenges present in 1 Peter 2:9-10, the titles which involve Ancient Israel and the restoration of Israel, and the audience of the Epistle of 1 Peter—what have some in Messianic Judaism said about this?

Stern, albeit reluctantly, recognized in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* that Jewish and non-Jewish Believers were addressed in 1 Peter 2:9-10, with the latter being addressed, in his estimation, a bit metaphorically. However, he spends more time focusing on the mistakes of replacement theology, than considering the ramifications of non-Jewish Believers being labeled with honors, presumably only intended for Israel proper, and what it means for ecclesiology:

“In the *Tanakh* these terms are applied to the Jewish people, Israel. Kefa applies them to the readers of his letter, who, according to 1:1N, are, firstly, Messianic Jews and, secondly, Messianic Gentiles who truly identify with them...Many Christian theologians have used this verse [1 Peter 2:9] as evidence that the Church (the Christians) has replaced Israel (the Jews). If I am right about who the readers of this letter were, then these Christian theologians are wrong. Even if I am wrong about the readers, Replacement theology is inconsistent with Ro 11:17-26, Ep 2:11-22, and other references at Mt 5:5N. I would put it this way: Christians are indeed a chosen people, priests for the King, a holy ‘nation’ (in a metaphorical sense), a people set aside for God to possess—not by way of superseding the Jews as God’s people, but by way of being joined to them by faith in

the same God and in the Jewish Messiah. A so-called 'Christian' who opposes or looks down on the Jews merely as God's 'former' people has missed the point altogether and is probably not a Christian at all."<sup>2</sup>

A much more textually and missionally engaged approach, to what the Epistle of 1 Peter communicates, is seen in the brief introduction to 1 Peter in the *Tree of Life—The New Covenant* (2011). It is appropriately stated how non-Jewish Believers, being described with the same titles of honor as Israel, is not at all some sort of replacement theology, but is instead a fact of how the Kingdom realm of Israel has been enlarged to incorporate the righteous from the nations:

"Peter was known as the *shaliach* [apostle] to the Jewish people, but perhaps that was not his only audience. In 2:12, exactly who should keep their conduct honorable among the Gentiles? Jewish readers in Diaspora who have contact with non-Jewish people? Gentile believers within the communities? Much of Peter's letter does seem to address Gentiles who have joined the believing community—[given the] talk about the futile way of life (1:18) and advice to stop past pagan lifestyles (1:14; 4:3-5).

"Peter includes Gentiles in the people of God by applying to them the language of the *Tanakh*. His readers in 1:4 have an inheritance; in 1:15 they are called as *kedoshim* [saints] to be holy; in 2:9 they are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation; in 4:17 they are the family of God. This is not the church 'replacing' Israel. It is the enlargement of Israel to now include Gentiles according to God's plan. It is the same idea we find in Paul's letter to the Ephesians (2:12-13)."<sup>3</sup>

From evaluating the audience of 1 Peter (1:1, 14-19) and the titles of honor directed to them (1 Peter 2:9-10), it is witnessed how a mixed Jewish and non-Jewish group of people in the First Century, were all to fulfill the vocational calling originally placed upon Ancient Israel—as well as be participants in the restoration of the Messianic Kingdom. This was not supersessionism or replacement theology, but

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<sup>2</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 747.

<sup>3</sup> *Tree of Life—The New Covenant*, 413.

rather an expansion of the borders and activities of Israel's Kingdom. Would such words, applied to non-Jewish Believers, truly indicate that they were a part of some separate entity called "the Church"—or the assembly of Israel which Yeshua came to build anew via His work? It is hard to see the Apostle Peter applying titles of honor, originally concerning Ancient Israel—to a mixed audience of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers—unless he considered both of them to be a part of the same community of God.

## The First Century Non-Jewish Believers and the Messianic Movement Today

There is a general sense, in much of the broad Messianic movement, that what was present in the First Century Body of Messiah, is something which is most ideal and beneficial to try to recapture. This should not include returning to a Mediterranean culture dominated by an oppressive power such as Rome, or include the presence of deplorable practices such as slavery and the oppression of women, or even Believers in Yeshua suffering public humiliation by the state. It does mean returning to the sense of unity and interconnectivity presented in the Book of Acts, with Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in camaraderie and solidarity with one another, as fellow brothers and sisters, *sharing "sacred space" on a weekly basis with one another*. While these people surely had their issues—as all human beings do—trying to recapture *some* of what they had, is an admirable goal, and one which many feel is present in today's mixed Messianic congregations of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers.

The Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:19-21, 29, issued by James the Just, made it quite clear that the new, non-Jewish Believers coming to faith in the Mediterranean basin did not have to be ordered to be circumcised as proselytes, or keep the Torah to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). There were some non-negotiable entry requirements to be observed by them, however, for table fellowship, given their new associations. When followed, abstinence from idolatry, sexual immorality, strangled meats, and blood, should have had the effect of seeing Greek and Roman Believers severed from their old spheres of social and religious influence. This would in turn make the Jewish community, and fellowships (be they formal or informal) of Jewish Believers, their new spheres of social and religious influence. There are examples in the Book of Acts and Pauline letters, where the Apostolic Decree was cer-



tainly followed, and there was a wide degree of involvement on the part of Greek and Roman Believers in the local Jewish community. There are also examples where the Apostolic Decree was followed, and there was a wide degree of exclusion, because of Messiah faith, with many Jewish Believers actually removed from the Jewish community. And, there are examples of where the Apostolic Decree was not followed, and where sin abounded. While there is variance, the Apostles' intention was to surely see the new, non-Jewish Believers, attached to a community which recognized Israel's One God.

Today's Messianic people tend to be in wide, general agreement that the First Century *ekklēsia* did not practice Sunday "church," and that there was no Christmas and Easter, certainly as holidays as we now know them in modern times. These observances, which have made contemporary Christianity doubtlessly distinct and in contrast to Judaism, did not begin to emerge until the Second Century and after the death of the Apostles and some of their immediate successors. While today's Messianic Believers certainly rejoice over the fact that Yeshua was born in Bethlehem, and that He was sacrificed and resurrected—a majority of today's Messianic movement does not observe Christmas or Easter.

The inclusion of Believers from the nations in the Body of Messiah, as noted by James the Just, was predicated on the basis of "the words of the Prophets agree" (Acts 15:15, NASU). While including the oracle of Amos 9:11-12 quoted thereafter (Acts 15:16-18), many more Tanach prophecies involving the nations turning to Israel's God and people, were doubtlessly in his mind. We see no forced Torah observance of the nations, as was sought by some (Acts 15:1, 5), because the course of prophecy instead needed to be fulfilled. This would have involved oracles like Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4, about the nations coming to Zion to be taught from Moses' Teaching. It surely involved Joel 2:28 and *kol-basar* or "all flesh" (RSV) receiving God's Spirit (Acts 2:17-21). Consequently, a major work of God's Spirit is to supernaturally write His Instruction on the hearts and minds of His people, as part of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17). No one, even Jewish Believers, needed to be forced to obey God's Law—**when the supernatural compulsion of God's own Spirit can work absolute wonders**. For, only the Spirit imbuing a heart and mind, can enable transformed men and women to truly have a love for God and neighbor.<sup>4</sup>

While there is every indication in the Messianic Scriptures, that the

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<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Mark 12:31; Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.

Apostles believed that the righteous from the nations were participants in Israel's restoration along with them—there is no indication that Believers from the nations *could participate* in every single aspect of such restoration. They were part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel, with a restored Twelve Tribes at its center, and with the borders of Israel expanding themselves, as envisioned by the Tabernacle of David oracle appealed to by James the Just (Amos 9:11-12). Believers from the nations would doubtlessly be welcome to visit the Land of Israel and express honor and respect to different sites of importance—but the territory of Israel's Twelve Tribes for permanent residence, was largely to be reserved for ethnic Israelites alone. While the new, non-Jewish Believers in the First Century would have to be purged of their paganism, there would still remain ethnic distinctions between Jewish, Greek, and Roman Believers. There would also still remain various cultural distinctions, simply by virtue of Greek and Roman Believers being conditioned by the geography and climate of diverse areas outside of the Land of Israel. While certainly needing to be reformed and influenced by a Biblical ethos, various types of clothing, cuisine, music, artwork, entertainment, architecture, and even literature, would certainly not all be synthesized to look and feel like First Century Israel or Second Temple Judaism.

In *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*, Kinzer properly acknowledges how a great majority of the early, non-Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah, were wide participants in the Jewish community alongside of Jewish Believers:

"At first, Gentile Yeshua-believers apparently expressed their solidarity with the Jewish people by participating along with Jewish Yeshua-believers in the wider Jewish world. They attended synagogue gatherings and experienced Jewish life directly. Only Yeshua-believing Jews would have accepted them as equals and as sharers in Israel's eschatological blessings, but this need not have prevented them from active involvement with the rest of the Jewish community."<sup>5</sup>

Most probably as an observation of what would come in the centuries following, increased anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire, and later forced conversions of Jews to Christianity, with Jews having to give up their heritage—Kinzer concludes that only a Body of Messiah composed of two sub-communities will really work in our modern time.<sup>6</sup> Today, what this should thus result as, is that the Messianic Jewish Synagogue and largely non-Jewish Christian Church, should remain largely separate. This is the only way, in the mind of those who support bilateral ecclesiology, that Jewish

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<sup>5</sup> Kinzer, 153.

distinction can be adequately preserved. So, unless a non-Jewish Messianic has thoughts of a Messianic Jewish proselyte conversion, he or she probably needs to consider returning to a standard church setting.

A slightly less stark position is presented by Resnik, speaking on behalf of one Messianic Jewish denomination, where he does acknowledge how “Messianic Judaism is not an exclusively Jewish movement, but includes a subgroup of uniquely called Gentiles who share in the life and destiny of the Jewish people. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine today’s Messianic Jewish community apart from the faithful and visionary participation of many non-Jewish leaders and members.”<sup>7</sup> Quite contrary to the actual circumstances of many congregations and assemblies on the ground, and the sentiments held by many people and a number of leaders, Resnik concludes, “We do not portray ourselves as an ideal restored first-century community...We do not...encourage Christians to leave their church in order to attend a Messianic congregation.”<sup>8</sup>

What is happening today, with many evangelical Protestants entering into Messianic congregations—while it may wish to be slowed or stopped by a number of Messianic Jewish leaders—is something which cannot be halted, if it is indeed a genuine move of God’s Spirit and salvation history. Even with some protestations seen that the Messianic Jewish movement is not trying to recapture some sort of First Century ideal, *this is what a majority of people in the broad Messianic movement believe is actually happening*. Even with many, many details needing to be sorted out, the notion that God is restoring His people to the ancient paths (cf. Jeremiah 6:16), is an unavoidable reality. As many non-Jewish Believers join with their Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters, in mixed assemblies—and this continues to get bigger—how will this be joined with other end-time prophecies concurrently taking place, such as the great apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3)?

## Being Careful and Watching One’s Terms

The position defended in this examination, is one which is adhered to by many people across the broad Messianic spectrum: non-Jewish Believers do have citizenship within the Messianic Kingdom of Israel, along with Jewish Believers. They are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13), fellow heirs (Ephesians 3:6), grafted-in to Israel’s olive tree (Romans 11:16-17), members of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). *But what are some of the implications of this?*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>7</sup> Resnik, *Introducing Messianic Judaism and the UMJC* (p 22).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23.

There has doubtlessly been opposition from a number of Messianic Jewish leaders, and even a number of Christian scholars, when an alternative to a bilateral ecclesiology model has been presented. When non-Jewish Believers being a part of Israel has been opposed by those of “the establishment,” it has usually been responded to with some less-than-constructive behavior, by non-Jewish Messianics. A widescale dismissal of mainline Jewish tradition in Torah observance, for example, is one of many negative things which has particularly manifested.<sup>9</sup>

While it is inspiring and moving to see non-Jewish Believers, via their connection to the Messianic movement, reconnect to their faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel—non-Jewish readers of the Bible need to exhibit caution, when reading the accounts of Ancient Israel in the Torah. *They should not simply personalize what they encounter*, but instead be able to read such accounts as primarily being ancient stories involving ancient people. Non-Jewish Messianics should be surely encouraged to look at such accounts as a part of their spiritual heritage—the consequences of Ancient Israel’s sin being endemic to all of humanity, and thus Yeshua’s sacrifice rightly affecting everyone—but the Torah is not a part of their ethnic or cultural heritage, unlike Jewish Believers.

While non-Jewish Believers are participants in the restoration of Israel via the return of Israel’s sovereign King Messiah, the promised return of the descendants of Israel to the Promised Land will not directly involve today’s non-Jewish Messianic Believers. This is because the tribal territories in the Holy Land (Joshua chs. 15-21; Ezekiel 47:13-48:35) are very specific to the Twelve Tribes of Israel (and perhaps also a handful of outsiders in the Millennium per Ezekiel 47:22-23). Non-Jewish Believers may be regarded as a part of a Kingdom of Israel with a restored Twelve Tribes at its center (cf. James 1:1), whose borders have widened themselves, but they are nonetheless not ethnic Israelites and are not entitled to permanent habitation in a rather small Land of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

While non-Jewish Believers should consider themselves a part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel (Amos 9:11-12), this does not make them ethnically or culturally Jewish. They can legitimately claim the Biblical story of Israel and the Jewish people as their own spiritual story (1 Corinthians 10:11); they cannot claim the post-Second Temple Jewish experience as their own story, as important as that story is to know and appreciate. As much as non-Jewish Messianics can all learn from and appreciate Jewish tradition and culture, and perhaps even integrate parts it into their praxis of faith—

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<sup>9</sup> Consult the relevant sections of the author’s book *Torah In the Balance, Volumes I & II*.

<sup>10</sup> Consult the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, “Non-Jews, Inheritance in Holy Land.”

most likely in congregational activities—it should never take away from the unique backgrounds and virtues of non-Jewish Believers’ own ethnic heritage. ***We are not all going to be exactly the same.*** There are, as the Apostle Paul says, “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18, NASU), which can be taken as all of the gifts, talents, and skills imparted to each of us by our Creator, by which we are to bless and enrich one another. Many of these qualities come directly from one’s own ethnic and cultural background, which for many are likely to have been molded by a Biblical ethos, and might have some useful perspectives which are different than those seen in contemporary Jewish culture.

Non-Jewish Believers should never expect, because of being granted citizenship in the Commonwealth of Israel, to similarly be granted citizenship in the modern-day State of Israel. Even when Yeshua returns, and with Jerusalem and the Land of Israel as the major global hub of activity, there is no indication that all Messiah followers will, in total, ever live in the Land of Israel (cf. Isaiah 19:23-24; Zechariah 14:16-19). Yet, the “nations” we see in the Millennium will be submitted to the rule of the Messiah and Jerusalem, and should be rightfully considered to be distinct ethnic groups, not independent political states.

Non-Jewish Messianic Believers should **never call themselves some sort of “Israelites”**—most especially because “Israelite” is most closely associated not only with ethnic descent from the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but the pre-exilic period of Ancient Israel’s history. Even when non-Jewish Messianic Believers associate with the proper term “Israel” in reference to themselves, in the company of Messianic Jewish Believers, some high degree of sensitivity must be employed. A non-Jewish Believer should not readily say that he or she is “Israel”—which is likely to confuse or offend various Messianic Jews—but instead say something like “I am grafted-in to Israel, as Paul says in Romans 11.” This should also be enjoined by appealing to concepts such as the Commonwealth of Israel.

While more caution and tact need to be employed by more of today’s non-Jewish Messianic people, many Messianic Jews themselves need to exhibit more sensitivity when interacting around non-Jewish Believers. Messianic Jews need to be historically accurate, in terms of not referring to the Ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai as either “the Jewish people” or “the Jews,” when the term “Jew” (Heb. *Yehudi*) was not readily employed until after the Babylonian exile.<sup>11</sup> Calling those at Mount Sinai “the Ancient Isra-

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. J.A. Sanders, “Jew,” in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 2:897; W.W. Gasque, “Jew,” in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 2:1056.



elites” is what is historically correct, and is something which cannot be refuted by anyone in Biblical Studies. Messianic Jews also need to be rather careful with those non-Jewish Believers in their midst who may be offended at the term “Gentile,” concluding that it always means “pagan,” and try to expel some degree of effort of employing valid alternatives like “the nations.”<sup>12</sup>

## The Final Stages of Salvation History

The final stages or phases of salvation history, with God’s plan to fully restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6), are beginning to take shape. This has involved both the arrival of the Messianic Jewish movement, and seeing many Jewish people brought to faith in Yeshua—as well as seeing many non-Jewish Believers exposed to and embracing their faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel and in Judaism. There should be no denying the fact that the Messianic movement is going to play a very prominent role in end-time events, culminating in the return of the Messiah. It should also be no surprise to see—if the Messianic movement is going to play a major and much more prominent role in future things—why there has been so much division, confusion, suspicion, and even some outright hatred at times among brothers and sisters. The enemy does not want to see God’s intentions come to pass.

The final stages of salvation history are likely a little further out than not, and so in the more immediate future, we face the next big phase of development within a Messianic movement having modern roots going back to the early Nineteenth Century. One definite option, which is often advocated by Messianic Jewish leaders who adhere to a bilateral ecclesiology, is to see Messianic Judaism be steadily and more formally acknowledged as a branch of Judaism, alongside of major branches such as Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform.<sup>13</sup> Yet given the fact that Messianic Judaism could only possibly be recognized as a formal branch of Judaism, per the existence of hyper-liberal branches such as Reconstructionist or Humanistic Judaism, may not serve such a cause as much as some Messianic Jews may think.

Now there is no problem, on my part, of Messianic Jews wanting to be recognized as Jewish by their own people. Messianic Jewish individuals being integrated to a wide degree with the greater Jewish world and Jewish community should not be an issue. But should being recognized as still “Jewish” by fellow Jews, take place formally *or* organically? Orthodox Jews generally tend to consider non-Orthodox branches of Judaism apostate or

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<sup>12</sup> This is examined further in the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, “Gentile, Term.”

<sup>13</sup> Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 212.

illegitimate to some degree. There will always be Jewish individuals who have a mistrust of Messianic Jews, because they believe in Yeshua, and are to some degree going to be associated with Christianity. And, even among Jews who acknowledge how Messianic Jews can still be regarded as Jewish, the issue of Yeshua as God will be debated, and there can be Messianic Jewish individuals who will deny Yeshua's Divinity to make Him more "palatable," so to speak, for other Jews. *Being recognized as another branch of Judaism*, for the next stage of Messianic development, *has many potential risks*.

Alternatively, and far more consistent with the Holy Scriptures, the next phase of Messianic development will **not involve** some formal recognition as another branch of Judaism—but will instead involve really considering prophetic words such as Zechariah 8:20-23; Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4. It will involve trying to recapture much of what was lost in the Second Century C.E., when emerging Christianity and post-Second Temple Judaism largely went their separate ways. It will involve seeing the Messianic community emerge into something more inclusive, for Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, and will seek to meet the diverse spiritual needs of all. It will be involved in seeing Jewish and non-Jewish Believers serve together, as equals, co-laboring in the Romans 9-11 salvation historical trajectory of "all Israel will be saved"—which is to certainly involve seeing a huge number of Jewish people come to know Messiah Yeshua!

Over the next two to three decades (late 2020s-2040s), far more Christian people, than ever before, are likely to be exposed to the Messianic movement and their spiritual heritage in Judaism—and if genuinely being called by the Lord, will be far more open to considering the value of Torah study and obedience, than those of the preceding generation. This is principally to do with the fact that not only, given the steady decline in morality, will there be a steadfast need to return to a Biblical ethic rooted in the Old Testament—but that hopefully such persons will not have most of the anti-Semitic social hangups, which many of this generation can still tend to have. In the meantime, there is much work still to do, to theologically and spiritually prepare for *the greater numbers* which will be coming into the Messianic community. The fundamentalism, complementarianism, and overall disengaged approach to issues which was demonstrated in the 1990s-2010s, **must find themselves fading away in the mid-2020s**.

If today's Messianic people sincerely desire to see our faith community used by God in the future, then among the sectors of the broad Messianic movement, there is going to have to be some significant housekeeping. Many people are going to have to make some concessions, and give some things up, which many are not going to want to give up. Given current controversies of ecclesiology, there does need to be some soul searching, and a retaking of spiritual inventory. As a definite shifting of the generations has begun, many of those who came before teachers like me were responsible for not only polarizing the theological options of Messianic people—but were also often responsible for a spiritual culture where extreme, overly-emotional positions and views, were only those which were likely to be heard and considered.

# Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?

The composition of the people of God, is a definite place where some critical thinking and reflection are surely needed by today's Messianic people. Ecclesiology is not an area of theology which enough adequately understand the importance of. Yet, given the end-time or eschatological significance of today's Messianic movement, ecclesiology is something many need a better handle on.

For today's Messianic movement, ecclesiology affects how Jewish and non-Jewish Believers read the Bible, and the instructions which God wants them to follow. Ecclesiology undeniably affects the unity of Jewish Believers and Believers from the nations as one in the Body of Messiah.

Is the *ekklēsia* an actual separate entity known as “the Church”? Or, is *ekklēsia* no different than the assembly of Israel itself—which takes Bible readers back to the mixed multitude of physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the welcomed persons from the nations, who received His Ten Words and Instruction at the base of Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 12:38)? Did Yeshua the Messiah come to found a separate group of elect called “the Church,” or did He come to rebuild and restore His Father's assembly of righteous ones (cf. Matthew 16:18; Jeremiah 33:7, LXX), restoring the Kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6)?

The basic choices of ecclesiology today's Messianic people have are rather striking: either God (1) has two groups of elect, or sub-peoples: Israel and “the Church”; or God (2) recognizes all as a part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel. How are we to approach non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement, and things like the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13), the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), or being grafted-in (Romans 11:16-18)? There is much which we need to be considering from the text of Scripture, as we evaluate what our future beholds.

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