

OIM UPDATE

January 2012

2012 is now upon us, and Outreach Israel Ministries has entered into a definite season of growth and exposure, perhaps unlike ever before. There are new technological tools available, which we are taking active usage of: from regular Internet and e-mail posts, to Facebook and Twitter, to now eBooks via Amazon.com. While I personally find it a bit challenging at times—definitely being from the “analog generation”—I know that there are scores of young people out there, who compose the growing base of the Messianic movement, who get all of their news *and* much spiritual teaching through an electronic venue alone. We are discovering, more and more, that there are tens of thousands of Messianic Believers and those sympathetic to the Hebraic Roots scattered around the globe—and we are **impacting** a much greater number of them. We receive feedback from new readers, with messages that read very much like the following:

First and foremost I would like to thank all of you at TNN Online and Outreach Israel for the wonderful work you do to edify and uplift the body of Messiah Yeshua. It is truly a blessing of Adonai to have a ministry that I believe really walks in the Spirit of God. I have been really enjoying your teachings and materials and they have really helped me in my spiritual growth as a Messianic believer....

It is responses like these, which really propel us **to work harder**, in order to serve the rapidly growing Messianic community of faith, and the many issues which need to be addressed.

This year, our ongoing **TNN Press Book Printing project** is going to get into high gear—with a significant number of releases. This has definitely been jumpstarted the past two months, since we announced the release of eBooks for Amazon Kindle. Throughout 2011, a wide number of paperback release titles were prepared, and we are now in a position to see these titles, and our current paperback releases, formatted for both paperback *and* eBook. We know that coupling these two formats together is going to be extremely beneficial for seeing our Messianic perspective given significant exposure, especially as the new electronic books are able to be immediately downloaded by people. The first half of this year or so, will be dedicated to getting the proverbial “backlog” of prepared titles released.

As this project gets into high gear, we know that our **Prison Outreach** will also get much bigger as well! While it is easy for many of you to acquire eBook versions of titles, your support is needed as those incarcerated still require physical copies of our materials.

The start of another calendar year is always a time of important reflection, as we consider not only where we have been, but what we might be seeing in the future. This month's lead article is entitled “**Time Marches On,**” and considers some of the things we are likely to encounter in 2012 in our world, here in the United States, and most especially in our Messianic faith community. What are we going to do—as men and women of God faithful to Him—as we serve Him and desire to be useful for His purposes?

Thank you for your continued prayers for my mother, Jean Huey, who had major open heart surgery at the beginning of this month! My brother and I were with her before and after her operation, and she is in very good spirits during this recovery period.

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

TIME MARCHES ON

by Mark Huey, with J.K. McKee

For sincere followers of Yeshua the Messiah, the end of every secular year, or the beginning of another year, can definitely be a time for reflection on what has recently transpired, while contemplating what is to come. Many take this particular season to make plans for the future, in light of whatever present circumstances exist. Individual, family, and organizational goals and aspirations are complimented with personal decisions to discontinue things that are not productive. Many initiate resolutions to seek God with more prayer or intercession, more praise and worship, or more study of the Holy Scriptures. Others make pledges regarding self-improvement to read more books, exercise more and lose weight, diet properly, volunteer more, communicate more frequently and meaningfully with spouses, family, and friends—and all sorts of good intentions to better oneself spiritually, mentally, physically, and relationally. From a ministerial perspective, we would highly recommend any or all of the above.

Those of you who are reading this newsletter, and who are Messianic Believers, have a unique responsibility and call as a part of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) to not only obey God's commandments—but be able to properly represent Him to the lost and dying world of unbelievers which surrounds us. Each generation, including the current one, has its degree of wickedness and perverseness—just like in the days of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:5) or Yeshua and the Apostles (Acts 2:40). So, every one of us as God's people should recognize that with the advent of 2012, there will be many godless perversions and distractions. *Each of these things, if not approached properly with discernment and wisdom, will take us away from the task of serving the Lord.* So, as you embark on yet another year of representing the Holy One of Israel to this generation, you just might want to ask yourself whether you are fully prepared for what will come your way in the days, weeks, and months ahead. After all, every generation should be mindful of the words of the Prophet Hosea, who admonished his contemporaries about the consequences of rejecting knowledge of the Lord:

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6).

A lack of knowledge comes through a lack of study of God's Instruction, and a lack of discipline and commitment to walk in His ways. If we are not submitted to the Lord, then we will be unable to understand how He not only sees the world, but how He has appointed us to be vessels of His goodness and light to others. There is a priestly call on each of us to represent God and intercede for the lost of Planet Earth (1 Peter 2:9), and today's Messianic community definitely possesses a significant amount of potential to make a concentrated difference in the lives of others. There is a considerable power and strength when Jewish and non-Jewish Believers come together in one accord, employing all of their gifts and talents, for the Father's purposes.

Alas, while it is easy for us to compose a newsletter article that will exhort you to continue to press into the Lord and His ways—as *time marches on* this year, there are some distinct challenges presenting themselves to each of us. Some of these concern things in the world that are entirely out of our control, and some of these concern other things that can be directly affected by the choices we make and our level of spiritual maturity (or lack thereof). Ultimately, we want to be those who are able to know our place within the plan of God, contributing to His objectives—rather than find ourselves influenced by those who are working against it.

So as you consider the coming year, and possibly make some life choices—what do you need to know about some of the potential obstacles that today's Messianic movement finds in front of itself?

2012 Paranoia Over the Mayan Calendar

It should be really hard for us to imagine this, but there are Christians *and* Messianics alike who actually think there is “something” to the pagan, Mayan calendar ending this year. Obviously as we look at 2012, we recognize that the secular Gregorian calendar we use today has some roots in Ancient Rome, that there might be a few more years than just 2,012 “officially” listed since the birth of the Messiah, *and* most especially that such a calendar is used for the keeping of time in history, business, and commerce **without** any huge religious overtones. Even though today's broad Messianic movement has its issues with the Hebraic calendar, and different systems, it can still be widely agreed that the current Hillel II Jewish calendar does have some Biblical basis to it. Even some of today's Christians, who think that they can calculate the return of the Messiah, look to the modern Jewish calendar, and not the Gregorian calendar, to do so.

Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online **do not believe** that it is appropriate to try to calculate or pinpoint the return of the Messiah—using *any* calendar system or scheme devised. The Lord will return for His people when they are largely ready and prepared for it. 2 Peter 3:11-12 speaks to this end: “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” It is far more difficult to make sure that one is prepared as a holy vessel of God and mature Body of Messiah, for the future time of Yeshua's Second Coming—than calculate some formula of numbers. Every day, we are to inspect ourselves to make sure that we are free from sin and evil influences, and that we are serving God's purposes.

So, knowing that we are to be free from sin and evil influences—why do we actually have Christian *and* Messianic ministries feeding their followers sensationalistic hype about the year 2012 and the end of the Mayan calendar? This is from a calendar system in Ancient Central America, which was totally detached from not only Ancient Israel, but *any* other ancient civilization encountered in the Bible. Why would anyone, true to the Holy Scriptures, think that the end of the Mayan calendar, somehow signals the end of the world? What we can ascertain, with some certainty, is that the end of the Mayan calendar is going to signal **a major test for God's people** and their forbearance. The general signs we are supposed to look for concerning the end are in Yeshua's Olivet Discourse of Mat-

thew 24. Unfortunately, there will be Messianic Believers caught up in some Mayan calendar paranoia, who are not as concerned about living in holiness as they should be.

2012 American Election

If you are like any typical, American family when a presidential election is looming, you are going to find those who sit at the Right, Left, and Center of the political spectrum. *Our family is no different this time of year*, as we have members of our extended family who support multiple candidates in different parties. Yet, we have all been greatly disturbed about the course America has taken over the past four years, particularly with the weakening of the economy and our national prestige and security. Aside from our different political views at times, we **each agree on the responsibility we have to go vote as citizens**—because if we choose not to vote for president, we have no right to really complain when we do not like how things are going.

The American election will signal some sort of major change for the United States, in either a return to an older, conservative way of doing things, *or* a continued trend toward higher levels of debt and more bureaucracy. We should be under no allusions to think that the U.S. has some kind of special covenant with God—because it does not—or that the weakening of the U.S., with whomever is elected president, can be totally avoided. That countries rise and fall in influence is a fact of history. America still may have some important international work ahead of itself, even with a steady decline. In spite of some of the negative talk you may encounter, we do encourage you to participate in a positive, constructive way in the political process this next year.

Distinctions Versus Commonality in the Messianic Movement

One of the things that we have do have some control over, as individual Messianic Believers, is to recognize a trend which has become more pronounced over the past few years in our Messianic faith community: **a significant emphasis issued regarding distinctions among God's people**. What this is commonly used to do is to say that because Jewish and non-Jewish people have differences, that they need to know their appropriate “roles,” and hence non-Jewish Believers do not really need to keep God's Torah. While there are theological, social, and demographic issues intertwined with this to be certain—which includes gauging spiritual realities both *before* and *after* the resurrection of the Messiah—the religious culture of distinctions, being more important than common faith in Yeshua, has been present within a whole host of Christian denominations, and is not limited to the Messianic movement by any means. It is also a religious culture that has earned many groups a significant reputation for arrogance, and for causing fellow brothers and sisters to be suspicious, untrustworthy, and resentful of one another. It is something which needs to be removed from the Body of Messiah.

Distinctions do exist among God's people—but in view of who we are as sinners and our common need for redemption, distinctions among people **are far less important to God** than they are to any of us! And, such distinctions for those

in Messiah do get decisively *blurred* to a wide extent (Galatians 3:27-28). Our ministry, from its very beginning, has always done its best to emphasize the common faith we are to have in Yeshua, as sinners saved by grace, as being the most important. Any distinctions that we have, either as groups of people or individuals—are not to be a reason to divide or segregate—but are rather to be viewed as means by which all of our skills and abilities can contribute to the mission of God, as we mutually submit ourselves one to another (Ephesians 5:21).

Time Marches On: What are we to do?

We certainly enter into 2012 with a renewed sense of purpose and confidence, even though we are in a continued period of ministry and familial transition. This year, the TNN Online website turns 15, and later Outreach Israel Ministries will be 10. If the experience that we have had in this time has taught us anything, it is that **patience is a commodity in low supply for too many of today's Messianic Believers**. Yet, patience is a fruit of Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and as Ephesians 4:2 emphasizes, “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, [show] tolerance for one another in love.” Needing to be patient not only concerns the appointed moments in future history when God will move, but also concerns how men and women of God are to treat and relate to one another.

As an educational ministry, many of you know the volume of articles, books, and publications that we have produced. *There are no plans to stop producing*. But a great number of these resources have only been produced with a significant amount of patience, and in many cases because another side to an issue has had to be presented first. Proverbs 18:17 is a difficult word for some of us to take seriously, because it says, “The one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines” (NRSV). In many cases, we have had *to wait* to address an issue, because our perspective and engagement level would not only be appreciated—or even understood—unless someone else “out there” in the world of ideas had gone first. Having a peace in the heart and mind, as Messianic teachers, has not always been easy when being forced to follow this pattern.

We will be continuing to make progress on the work that the Father has given us throughout 2012, knowing that it is in His perfect timing that things get accomplished. But for you, who may not be in a full time position of educational ministry—what are to do to, to properly stay your course of faith? How do you make sure, that as time marches on—that you march along with it, rather than be marched over by it?

Other than recognizing the sure sovereignty of God Himself, orchestrating human events (Isaiah 46:10-11), what would it mean for you to implore Him for more knowledge, wisdom, and abilities to contribute something to the Body of Messiah? What does a verse like 1 Corinthians 12:31 mean to you? “[E]arnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way”? When the Lord finally returns and the Kingdom is restored to Israel, what role will you have played in it coming to pass? Will you be able to be a “crown of exultation” (1 Thessalonians 2:19) to those who trained you in the faith? Or, will you be barely spoken of, because you did not serve Him as well as you should have?

Brothers and sisters, let us improve ourselves in 2012, helping one another in acts of kindness and love (cf. James 2:15-17)!

Elements of the World (Galatians 4:3, 9; Colossians 2:8, 20): I have heard that the Torah actually composes the “elemental things of the world”? Is there any truth to this claim?

The specific clause *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου)—“the elemental things/spirits of the world”—appears in full in Galatians 4:3 and Colossians 2:8, followed by the shorter *stoicheia* in Galatians 4:9, and *tōn stoicheiōn* (τῶν στοιχείων) in Colossians 2:20. There is no single interpretation as to what this encompasses, agreed upon by all interpreters, as such “principles” could involve: (1) the ABCs of one’s religious observance, (2) what many of the ancients believed were the basic elements of the universe (i.e., earth, water, air, fire), or (3) cosmic spiritual powers like angels or demons. With these three major options alone to be considered, it should not be surprising as to why there is no full consensus as to what *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* means when read within the Pauline letters.

The second usage of “elemental principles of the world” in Colossians 2:8, 20 is much easier to consider, as more information is given to us within the wider text of Paul’s writing. A fair number of Colossians interpreters are agreed that the issue confronted by Paul to his audience relates to a proto-Gnostic, mysticized Judaism, involving appeals (or even worship of!) made to angels (Colossians 2:18) and/or various spirit powers rather than Yeshua the Messiah.^a The local Judaism infecting the Believers at Colossae, which in turn had been infected by the local mishmash of Hellenistic, foreign, and mystical religious and philosophical beliefs in Phrygia, was leading many of the Believers astray. Some have concluded that the errors present among the Colossian Believers may be appropriated as a warning for people today errantly influenced by horoscopes or fortune-telling, yet in the Colossians’ case there may be more of a connection to mystery religions and cults.

While it is not at all difficult to see what *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* can mean in regard to Colossians 2:9, 20—as there are concrete examples of religious asceticism stated in the text (Colossians 2:18, 20-23)—what *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* might mean in regard to Galatians 4:3, 9 is much more complicated.

Being subject to *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* is a problem that can be Jewish (cf. Galatians 4:3), while at the same time it is more easily discernible as pagan. Paul writes the non-Jewish Galatians, “now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?” (Galatians 4:9). Various Galatians interpreters conclude that here Paul has just associated God’s commandments and paganism as basically being the same thing.^b The foolish Galatians, being led astray by the Influencers/Judaizers, are

^a Cf. F.F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp 97-98; Peter T. O’Brien, *Word Biblical Commentary: Colossians, Philemon*, Vol. 44 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 110; *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), pp 187-193.



returning to a style of life that they should have left behind in paganism, following rules and regulations that are nothing more than worldly principles. While it is likely that Paul used *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* in Colossians to refute errant, Gnostic/mystical practices, the first usage of *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* is said to be employed in a much different way.

Is God's Torah nothing more than "elementary principles of the world" to Paul? While it is not difficult to see how human beings approaching God's Torah can turn it into something via their own observance (i.e., like the sectarian "works of law" witnessed in 4QMMT) into just fleshly rudiments—**this is surely not the Torah's fault!** Paul is the same one who would communicate "we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14) and "We know that the law is good if one uses it properly" (1 Timothy 1:8, NIV). In fact, he says "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Romans 8:7, NIV).

Is it at all possible that there is another explanation for what Paul means in Galatians 4:3, 9? While it may not be a popular one among today's Galatians expositors, there is indeed another way we can look at this. Paul asks the Galatians, "how can you turn back again...?" (RSV) or return (Grk. *epistrephō*, ἐπιστρέφω) to the elementary principles of the world. **All should be agreed that the Galatians were going back to things they should have left behind in paganism.** But is Paul associating First Century Judaism and paganism as being quantitatively indifferent? Are God's commandments in the Torah no different than a pagan philosophy or superstition? Or, if some sects of First Century Judaism had been errantly affected by aspects of paganism (such as the Hellenistic concept of Fate; cf. Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.172)—could those errantly influencing the Galatians similarly be part of a sectarian Judaism that advocated rituals similar to those in paganism?

Consider how Paul previously has asked the Galatians "who has bewitched you...?" (Galatians 3:1). While it is easy for people in today's West to consider such a question to only be a rhetorical device, the fact remains that in ancient times various religious sects really did use witchcraft to cast spells and hexes on people, and parts of Judaism were not immune to this, either. Likewise, Paul says of the Influencers/Judaizers that they "do not even keep the Law themselves" (Galatians 6:13). How could he say this if these people were just misguided legalists, only forcing ritual circumcision and proselyte conversion onto the non-Jews in Galatia? Given how *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* is later used in Colossians to depict errant, syncretistic Jewish practices—is it so impossible that the Influencers in Galatia could have also brought in errant, syncretistic practices? These could be things able to "bewitch" them.

The idea that the Influencers/Judaizers in Galatia could have advocated some kind of proto-Gnostic or mystical Jewish errors is not one often seen in contemporary Galatians interpretation, but it cannot be totally taken off the table. In worrying about the Galatians observing "days and months and seasons and years" (Galatians 4:10), is Paul really up in arms about the Galatians remembering

^b Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians*, Vol. 41 (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1990), pp 180-181; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp 298-299.

things like the Passover—which he actually instructed the Corinthians to observe (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)? Or would he be more concerned about the rituals and customs associated with the appointed times, brought in and practiced by the Influencers/Judaizers, which were affecting the Galatians? Samuel J. Mikolaski's comments are well taken:

“Are these Jewish or pagan observances? In writing to the Galatians, Paul clearly has Judaizers in mind. Did these worship elemental spirits? Astrological elements were at times infused into Jewish as well as pagan practices.”^c

An alternative to be considered to Paul associating God's commandments with paganism—and that the Galatians should not be following God's Torah—is that in being affected by the Influencers, **the Galatians were following errant religious rituals that saturated the Influencers' style of Torah observance.** The problem would not be the Galatians remembering the Sabbath (especially since Paul met many of them at *Shabbat* services, per his visit to Galatia in Acts 13:13-14:28) or the appointed times, but rather *how the Influencers observed them*, infused with ungodly pagan rituals that the Galatians should have easily recognized as originating from “those who by nature are not gods” (Galatians 4:8, NIV).

If this is to be considered, then it does not seem difficult as to why Paul would say that the Influencers/Judaizers break the very Torah they claim to uphold (Galatians 6:13). They have already merited the Torah's curse upon them for failing to be a blessing to others per God's promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:8, 10), but they deserve it further by encouraging the Galatians to follow ungodly rituals *actually opposed by the Torah* (i.e., Deuteronomy 18:10-14) that negatively affected their sectarian branch of Judaism, and considered by Paul to be classified among the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). (Consult the FAQ entry on **Galatians**, and the editor's commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, for a further discussion.)

Realizing that there are First Century Judaisms, *plural*, that are depicted within the Apostolic Scriptures is a difficult step for many readers to make, as many prefer to over-simplify the circumstances within the New Testament. Some branches of Ancient Judaism were affected by paganism. Not only are we supposed to realize this, but we are also required to make closer observations in reading the text, and ask ourselves some critical questions like whether Paul does associate God's commandments and paganism as being the same thing. *Messianics today do not believe that the good rabbi from Tarsus associates God's commandments as being synonymous with paganism.* Yet, some Messianics today do not heed the warning given by Paul against *ta stoicheia tou kosmou*, sometimes failing to realize that they may have been affected by various Jewish errors, which in turn have been affected by paganism. Fortunately, though, this does not concern a considerable majority of traditions employed today by the Synagogue, or even by Messianic Judaism, in its remembrance of the appointed times (cf. Philippians 4:8).^d

^c Samuel J. Mikolaski, “Galatians,” in D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, eds. *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 1100.

^d For a further evaluation of the options available, consult D.G. Reid, “Elements/Elemental Spirits of the World,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 229-233.

KOSHER YOUR PLATE

edited by Margaret McKee Huey

It is my intention to bring our Messianic cooks timely recipes of interest in each issue of the OIM News. In this issue, I have included two recipes for cozy Winter meals!

Moogie's Cole Slaw

16 oz shredded cabbage
2 shredded carrots
3/4 cup of your favorite salad dressing

Mix above ingredients

You can also add 1/3 cup cheese to slaw that compliments the salad dressing

Add salt and pepper to taste, chill until ready to serve!

Yield: Enough salad for 6 people as a side dish.

*for Greek Salad dressing add feta cheese

*for Italian Salad dressing add parmesan or asiago cheese

Wheat Germ Bread

1 ½ - 2 cups white flour
1-cup whole-wheat flour
2-tablespoons butter
2-tablespoons molasses
½-cup wheat germ
2-teaspoons salt
2 packs dry yeast
1½ -cups hot tap water

Mix 1-cup whole-wheat flour, wheat germ, salt and yeast. Add butter, molasses and not water. Blend mix for 2 minutes with electric beater at medium speed. Add ½-cup white flour. Mix 2 minutes at high speed. Add remainder of white flour to make stiff dough. Rise in a warm place for 1 hour until double in bulk. Beat down by hand. Bake in greased 1½-quart casserole dish in preheated 350-degree oven for 45 minutes. Tastes wonderful!

Please submit your recipes to Margaret Huey at the OIM office for inclusion in this column and our upcoming cookbook "Kosher Your Plate."