

OIM UPDATE

November 2014

At different times during our walk of faith serving the Holy One of Israel, we have been encouraged by a confluence of events that in many respects, confirm the path of ministry to the Lord we have chosen to pursue. Accordingly, we do not necessarily believe in the concept of “coincidences,” but rather the providential sovereign will of the Almighty One in our affairs. Hence, when we recognize significant correlations or “signposts” along what we have labeled to be our family’s “spiritual scavenger hunt,” we take notice and praise the Lord for reaffirming His will for us in this unique way. Such was the case over the recent weekend of October 31 to November 2, when we were blessed to participate in a Messianic conference in the DFW Metroplex.

Margaret, who has a knack for remembering anniversaries, birthdays, and noteworthy dates, did not at first realize the significance of the timing until late on Friday, October 31st, as we were about to celebrate the twelfth anniversary of the birth of **Outreach Israel Ministries** the next day. For a number of reasons, it seemed like a twelve year long chapter of our life together was coming to a close. When November 1st arrived, we felt like Act I of a three-act play had ended. Now we were embarking on the next twelve year phase of our walk, in an atmosphere of genuine brotherly love among the Messianic Believers, who were gathered to worship and praise the Holy One of Israel. Appropriately, beyond the ambiance of unity and love, the theme of the “one new man (humanity)” written about by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:15 thematically permeated the weekend gathering. What a blessing to behold!

For the first time in too many years to count, we felt the unprejudiced love of the Messiah from both the Jewish and non-Jewish attendees at the convocation. What a delight to personally witness a fulfillment of the “new commandment” mentioned by Yeshua to His Disciples, during the discourse at the Last Supper:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

Additionally, we were able to experience the joy of dwelling or communing together in unity, as best expressed in the opening verses of this Psalm, which is often quoted in the Messianic community of faith:

“A Song of Ascents, of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever” (Psalm 133:1-3).

With much of this on my heart and mind, I have been led to write this month's lead article on **“The Blessing of Echad,”** which will hopefully encourage others to practice love and seek unity among one another in these trying times. After all, whether these are the “days of Elijah”—as the popular Messianic song

written by Robin Mark (a Methodist praise and worship leader) in 1994 reminds us—these are the days when many of the themes in that song are becoming a reality, especially among Messianic Believers. *The return to the Spirit of the Word noted by Elijah, the righteousness expressed by Moses, the unity forecast by Ezekiel, the restoration and rebuilding of the tabernacle of praise during the reign of David—are all evident in so many ways among those seeking a Messianic lifestyle.* Needless to say, our family members were all personally blessed, inspired, and recharged to carry on the work of the ministry that has consumed our lives, since Margaret and I went on a tour to Israel twenty years ago next month.

Additionally, we continue to provide books for the **Free Book Prison Ministry Outreach**, which needs your ongoing and continued support. Our **Theological Defense Trust** resources continue to undergird our needs, so that a critical tool like the *Messianic Kosher Helper* is now available, and the new *Romans for the Practical Messianic* commentary will be available next month. Thank you for your continued prayers and financial support for these, and many more ongoing projects!

May the Lord bless you and keep you, as you partner with us to advance His Kingdom, until the Messianic restoration of all things...

Shalom,
Mark Huey

THE BLESSING OF ECHAD

by Mark Huey

Recently, our family had the privilege to participate in a regional gathering of like-minded brethren from Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds, who came together to praise and worship the Holy One of Israel in spirit and truth. After nearly twenty years of attending a variety of Messianic-oriented conferences, convocations, and Biblical feasts, we would have to attest that for the first time in a number of years, much of the spiritual tension we had discerned and observed in the past, was not evident at this gathering. Instead, there was an overwhelming spirit of love, unity, peace, and genuine brotherhood that uniquely centered on the “one new man (humanity)” message communicated by the Apostle Paul:

“For He is our peace, who made both *groups* one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the *religious* Law of commandments in dogmas, **that He might create in Himself the two into one new humanity, so making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the enmity by it.** And HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR OFF, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR [Isaiah 57:19; 52; Zechariah 9:10]; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. **So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,** having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Messiah Yeshua Himself being the corner *stone*,** in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:14-22, PME).

Tangible evidence that these words penned by Paul almost two thousand years ago were noticeably being manifested by the mixed multitude congregated, was truly something to behold. After all, during our Messianic walk of faith, we have listened to numerous messages on—and even written multiple times about—these powerful words used to describe the blessed unity our Heavenly Father desires for Jewish and non-Jewish followers of the Messiah Yeshua to build upon. Clearly, Believers from all nations and backgrounds are to be considered “fellow citizens of God’s household,” and come together by being focused on Him, as the Rock and Cornerstone of the assembly the Holy One is drawing together. For once in far too long, we experienced the blessing of *echad*, perhaps best represented by the words of the Psalmist:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell to-

gether in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Paradoxically, for reasons one can attribute to the ungodly influences of the world, the flesh (1 John 2:16), and the enemy of our souls, the Adversary (1 Peter 5:8), unity and love toward one another among the brethren has not been a great hallmark of too much of the Messianic community of faith. Despite Paul's statements quoted above, that the dividing wall of enmity between the Jewish people and the nations was torn down by the blood atonement of Yeshua the Messiah, unsavory barriers have existed. Even Yeshua's own exhortation to His Disciples that "by this [*agapē* love] all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35), such has not always been met with unconditional love among those in Messianic environments. Nevertheless, despite these categorical declarations, differences of opinion have retained the ability to keep faithful Jewish and non-Jewish people divided. *This should not be the case.*

Remarkably, for the first time in nearly two decades of pursuing a Messianic lifestyle, we experienced a level of maturity by followers of the Messiah that was quite refreshing and encouraging. It was almost like the majority of people in attendance understood the blessing of coming together in unity around the Messiah, regardless of heritage, background, gender, race, or bloodlines. As a result, there was genuine appreciation and respect for different spiritual gifts, talents, abilities, and unique callings without any jealousy or animosity. Recognizing this attitude confirmed in our hearts that there was hope for a future restoration of Israel, that all the Prophets foresaw and foretold in their prophecies (Acts 3:19-21).

The historical controversies that have plagued the ability of God's people to be a "light to the nations" (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6), since the resurrection of Yeshua and the First Century, are too many to number. Consequently, the place on the Judeo-Christian religious spectrum where the two adherents (Judaism and Christianity) to the foundational teachings of the Tanakh (Genesis to 2 Chronicles/Malachi) come together *and* overlap, is where the greatest friction exists. The age old-enmity between Jew and Gentile, noted by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians, and in other places like Romans chs. 9-11, has seemed irreconcilable despite claims by recognized leaders in the Messianic community of faith that they are born again followers of the Lord. The inevitable rub of who is right and who is wrong when it comes to interpreting and defining Messianic theology, has persistently been a fertile ground for influential voices to directly or indirectly sow discord, strife, and division. Lamentably, those ancient generational issues of contention are exploited by some—whether knowingly or subliminally influenced by personal selfish ambition (James 3:14-16). Or,

this may be the result of a lack of spiritual maturity, or perhaps worse: the absence of a heart of flesh truly occupied by the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

However, from our limited perspective at this specific gathering, an air of mutual appreciation and acceptance appeared to permeate the milieu primarily because the overwhelming focus was on **the enduring work of the Messiah**. Many of those divisive obstructionist barriers that have existed for far too long, were not visibly noticeable, or even discernible. If nothing else, the ancient dividing wall that was literally opaque for centuries prior to the sacrifice of the Messiah, was no longer an invisible impediment in the minds and hearts of the attendees. The surreptitiously concocted spiritual barrier between the Jew and non-Jew, that for nearly two millennia has been like a translucent fog distorting the Lord's desired unity among His people, was gone. In its place there was a more transparent, loving appreciation, for the unique aspects of brothers and sisters united in the Messiah of Israel. There was a noticeable awareness, voiced in different ways in many of the messages conveyed, that the dividing wall between Jew and non-Jew had been abolished. Without openly declaring these truths, there seemed to be an innate knowledge among the speakers that any dividing wall was really a part of some clever, deceptive "**speculation**" that had to be destroyed or refused, as noted in these statements from the Apostle Paul:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. **We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah**" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

"**But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels**" (2 Timothy 2:23).

We now eagerly await the next developmental stage to increased unity in the Messiah, when those with the spiritual eyes to see—despite the challenges of looking through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12)—will ultimately recognize that to everyone in the Messiah, there is absolutely *no* barrier at all. Any perceived dividing wall has simply been a figment of manipulated imaginations which have been duped by the worthy adversaries that consist of the world, the flesh, and the Evil One.

As it happened in typical conference programs, the weekend moved from message to message building up to a crescendo at the final evening session. Invariably during the course of the previous general session talks,

each of the speakers and even praise and worship leaders, mentioned in some manner or form, the wonderful reality of unity among the brethren best represented by “one new man (humanity)” references. Needless to say, the repetitious theme seemingly orchestrated by the Holy Spirit was incredibly inspiring to witness. Ultimately, I was particularly blessed when the concluding keynote speaker (a respected elderly non-Jewish man of God, who has served the Lord for sixty years, and spoke at the gathering for the final day afternoon and evening sessions) was prompted by the Holy Spirit to read Isaiah 54:1-8. During the course of his remarks, without necessarily aware of what had been declared throughout the weekend, he categorically affirmed in a profound way the work of Jew and Gentile to work together to accomplish the purposes of the Holy One of Israel. In listening to this passage of Scripture, it was like the Word of God was in many ways summarizing what had just been communicated and absorbed over the previous few days of the conference:

“Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no *child*; break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one *will be* more numerous than the sons of the married woman,’ says the LORD. ‘Enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities. Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; and do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of *one’s* youth when she is rejected,’ says your God. ‘For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,’ says the LORD your Redeemer” (Isaiah 54:1-8).

How wonderful and comforting it is when the Creator God speaks directly to His children through His Holy Word—especially when delivered by a dedicated servant of the Lord, who was simply tuning into what the Holy Spirit wanted to communicate to those in attendance! Without lifting up the speaker—because he was simply a mouthpiece for the Lord—for me it was almost like hearing the Word from one of the ancient patriarchs of Israel, who was/is highly respected for his walk with the Holy One of Israel. Nevertheless, as I saw things, the prophetic declarations from Isaiah applied perfectly to what transpired throughout the

weekend. Jew and non-Jew experienced the blessing of *echad*/unity through the universal love of the Messiah, without any historical barriers impeding the flow.

Providentially, the opening verse from Isaiah 54 is actually referenced in Paul's letter to the Galatians, where he elaborates on some of the controversial issues of faith versus works, and differences between those born of the flesh versus those born of the promise. In some of the concluding points of Galatians ch. 3, where those justified by faith in Yeshua are considered Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise, there is the absolute declaration that in Him, all barriers between race, station in life, and gender are removed. In fact, according to Paul's statements, "all are one":

"But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Messiah Yeshua might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. **Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Messiah, so that we may be justified by faith.** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Messiah Yeshua. For all of you who were baptized into Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. And if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise**" (Galatians 3:22-29).

To bolster these statements and arguments, Paul goes into a rather lengthy discussion where reference to Isaiah 54 is made, noting that there was a persistent persecution of those born of the Spirit by those born according to the flesh:

"For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. **For it is written, 'REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND'** [Isaiah 54:1]. And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. **But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.** But what does the Scripture say? 'CAST

OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN' [Genesis 21:10]. So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman" (Galatians 4:22-31).

However, returning to the Isaiah 54 passage in vs. 2-3, there is the prophecy that the great increase in the numbers of those from the "desolate" one will require the enlargement of the tents in order to accommodate an even greater number of children. This multitude of souls will possess nations and are children of the free woman, and by extension "heirs of the promise" made to Abraham to be a "father of nations" (Genesis 17:4-5):

"Enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities" (Isaiah 54:2-3).

In many respects, putting all of this together, the attendees were actually able to catch a glimpse of what the Father has ultimately in store for all the encompassing "seed" of Abraham at the End of the Age. It is a mysterious promise regarding the inclusion of the redeemed from the nations into the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12), but best expressed in informative passages found in Romans chs. 9-11 about some of the inherent problems between the relationship challenges of Jews and those from the nations at large. In the following summary statement, the partial hardening to Israel has been lifted, when the fullness of the nations has come in, with the ultimate blessing of all Israel being saved taking shape:

"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB' [Isaiah 59:20]" (Romans 11:25-26).

I believe this gathering gave us a brief peek at what the glorious consummation of the age will look like. Eyes will be opened to what the Father has communicated through His Word. Hearts will be turned to loving one another regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, or station in life. People from all tongues, tribes, and nations, will be united in the Messiah Yeshua. Proper respect for the unique role of the Jewish people in the plan of salvation will be understood, as the mystery spoken of by Paul is better comprehended. When Jew and non-Jew can come and work together around the *echad*/unity and love found in Yeshua, the testimony to the watching world will be overwhelming. Thankfully, that day is on the not too distant horizon. Hallelujah!

Needless to say, we were extremely encouraged to move forward with the ministry call that is upon our family. But in closing, I was also reminded of some of the harsh realities that we are all going to have to contend with as the End of the Age approaches, and we have to once again live in a world that will become like the days were in the time of Noah (Matthew 24:27-28). Thankfully, the balance of Isaiah 54 points out those days, but comforts us with not only the continuance of the covenant of peace, but that through it all, no weapon formed against the chosen children of the Holy One will prosper:

“For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. **For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,**’ says the LORD who has compassion on you. ‘O afflicted one, storm-tossed, *and* not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, and your gates of crystal, and your entire wall of precious stones. All your sons will be taught of the LORD; and the well-being of your sons will be great. In righteousness you will be established; you will be far from oppression, for you will not fear; and from terror, for it will not come near you. If anyone fiercely assails *you* it will not be from Me. Whoever assails you will fall because of you. Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and brings out a weapon for its work; and I have created the destroyer to ruin. **No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from Me,**’ declares the LORD” (Isaiah 54:1-17).

The spiritual and personal blessings of *echad* are far too many to enumerate. But thankfully when the Father gives us an opportunity to experience it, may those times encourage us all to seek it with all our heart, soul, and strength, forevermore!

Until the “united” Messianic restoration of all things...

TNN ONLINE EDITOR'S UPDATE

November 2014

Dear Friends:

This past October saw the formal release of the much-announced **Messianic Kosher Helper** publication, and all of the people whom I have seen purchase it—while greatly appreciating it—have been overwhelmed by its size at 674 pages! I am not at all surprised to hear reports of how many people will be taking this book, reading through Part I, and then waiting until they need help on a Bible passage like Isaiah 65:1-16 or 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 (accessible in Part II), to look at it again. This book was produced with the intention of it being an encyclopedic reference tool, as it were. But, for many of you who are looking for an overview of the dietary laws, and some of the major issues that today's Messianic people face regarding their significance, we have taken five chapters from Part I of the *Messianic Kosher Helper* and formatted them into the 140 page **Kashrut: Kosher for Messianic Believers**, which can be used as a congregational handout, with references made to the much larger book for further reading.



Just into this November, we concluded our lengthy Romans Bible study. The writing of the **Romans for the Practical Messianic** commentary is completed, which means that it will now go into final editing for release in both paperback and eBook for Amazon Kindle sometime in December. This is a major accomplishment for me personally, as it goes back not just over a year when we started—but to two exegesis classes at Asbury Theological Seminary (Spring 2007, Fall 2008). Already, I have begun compiling notes on the next study, which will begin in January 2015. We will be examining the letter of 1 Corinthians, on what I am sure will be a very informative and useful study, as this letter tends to be very elusive for today's Messianic people. It is quite a commitment, as 1 Corinthians logically has to be followed by 2 Corinthians.

I also continue to work on the final chapters of *Torah In the Balance, Volume II*, which will likely be released in either January or February 2015.

One of the distinct impressions that I have had, ever since moving back to Dallas two years ago, I can only best describe via a military analogy. I live in a significant center of North American Messianic activity, and while there are many Messianic leaders of notoriety in this area—there tends to be a huge gap present between such leaders, and the issues that the people at large are actually talking about. It is as though there are a wide number of flag officers, generals and admirals if you like—but there are not a wide number of command officers: the colonels and majors, the captains and commanders, who see the situations present with their own eyes. There are a wide number of theological and spiritual issues which do not get addressed, because many of the leaders of note either just dismiss them, or do not know about them as they just tend to talk among themselves.

Twenty years ago, a movie that meant a lot to me when I had just moved to Dallas the first time, *Star Trek: Generations*, was released. Captain Kirk told Captain Picard some important advice, which I have taken to serious heart in terms of how I conduct my own work:

*Don't let them promote you. Don't let them transfer you. Don't let them do *anything* that takes you off the bridge of that ship, because while you're there... you can make a difference.*

Indeed, I find myself in very much the same situation as a “captain” of sorts!
Until next month...

J.K. McKee