

OIM UPDATE

October 2014

The recent season of repentance that includes the Hebrew month of Elul and the first ten days of Tishri, culminating with *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) on the tenth of Tishri, has provided another annual introspective search of the heart in order for us to draw closer to the Holy One of Israel. As the Lord would have it, He once again faithfully used His ineffable Word, to help distinguish between what is of the soul and what is of the spirit, as recognized in this descriptive text from the Epistle to the Hebrews:

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Providentially, in preparation for a *Yom Kippur* message focused on the Prophet Jonah, my research led me to a passage in Luke 11, where Yeshua mentions Jonah and reminded His audience that one “greater” than Jonah was in their midst, obviously referring to Himself. Then contextually, Yeshua, knowing that He is the Light to the world (John 8:12), linked sharing the brilliance of the light with others, as a testimony that the light or knowledge of the truth is within an individual’s heart. But, this included the caveat on how one is to “**watch out**” that the light within a person is not darkness:

“The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays” (Luke 11:32-36).

Upon reading and meditating on this passage, Yeshua’s admonition that His followers are to “**watch out that the light in you is not darkness,**” prompted me to take a closer look at the great gulf between light and darkness, resulting in this month’s lead article, “**Walking in the Light.**” Hopefully, some of the verses discussed will have as much of an impact on the readers as it had on me during this time of reflection, repentance, and then season of joy, as we entered the Feast of Tabernacles.

Once again, we are genuinely thankful for your prayers and financial support of the **Theological Defense Trust** and the **Free Book Prison Ministry Outreach**. Your faithfulness to the Lord allows us to continue our efforts to produce materials that He can use to advance His Kingdom until the Messianic restoration of all things. May He bless you mightily for partnering with Outreach Israel and TNN Online!

Blessings and have a wonderful season of His joy,

Mark Huey

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

by Mark Huey

The period of reflection (Elul through *Yom Kippur*) came to a close, and was then followed by the Season of Joy celebrated during the Feast of Tabernacles. This is a time to rejoice in the Holy One's promise that at some point in time, there will not only be a Millennial Kingdom with Yeshua the Messiah reigning over the Earth, but that eventually there will be a New Heaven and New Earth and New Jerusalem:

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.' And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true'" (Revelation 21:1-5).

However, before such an ultimate appointed time, after the first Heaven and Earth have passed away, it is imperative that followers of Yeshua the Messiah continue to walk in His light as witnesses who are **"always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence"** (1 Peter 3:15). After all, despite the seemingly endless proliferation of prognostications about the advent of the time of Jacob's Distress (Jeremiah 30:7) or the return and/or coming of the Messiah of Israel to rule and reign from Jerusalem, Yeshua categorically stated that no one, not even Himself, but only the Father, knows the hour of His coming:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:35-36).

Of course, not perceiving the unknowable hour of Yeshua's return does not relieve His followers from recognizing and adhering to His recorded words, which unlike the existing Heaven and Earth, will *not* pass away. Hence, Yeshua was warning His followers about the importance of His words, which are noted to be the words He received from His Father (John 12:49-50). The critical, truthful nature of Yeshua's words is confirmed by the Apostle Peter after he was filled by the Holy Spirit on *Shavuot* or the Day of Pentecost. In this statement from the Book of Acts, the Apostle Peter declared how Yeshua is the Greater Prophet foretold by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18), whose words must be obeyed, or the Father will require those very

words of them:

“Moses said, ‘THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED [Deuteronomy 18:15-16] to everything He says to you. **And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people**’ (Acts 3:22-23).

“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, **and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him**” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

When people read the words of Yeshua today, perhaps even in some of the “red letter” editions of the Bible, they should take note, because the recorded words of the Messiah and their implications are from the very heart of our Creator God. In fact, Yeshua Himself confirmed the statement of Moses reiterated by Peter, with some of His words issued to the crowds gathered in Jerusalem to commemorate the Passover prior to His execution, as recorded in John 12:

“And Yeshua cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. **I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.** If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. **He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.** For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak. **I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me**” (John 12:44-50).

Here, not only did Yeshua state the origin of the words He spoke, but also the consequences of rejecting Him and the words that He spoke. Of course, Yeshua also reminded His listeners that He had come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believed in Him would not remain in darkness. This is a key element of His ministry to those lost in the world, who do not have eyes to see or ears to hear, as some unfortunate application of prophecies made centuries earlier by Isaiah is witnessed:

“So Yeshua said to them, ‘For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.’ These things Yeshua spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not be-

lieving in Him. *This was* to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: 'LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED? [Isaiah 53:1]' For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 'HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM' [Isaiah 6:10]. These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; **for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God**" (John 12:35-43).

Yeshua continued in referring to Himself as the Light which will keep people from being overtaken by the darkness that dominates the world, in which fallen humanity resides. But His admonition is to receive the Light in order to walk in the Light, and eventually become children of the Light. Here, we see how the Word of God made flesh (cf. John 1:1) brought understanding to those who will ultimately have the light of truth revealed to them, because rather than loving human approval, they sought God's approval, and the mercy He freely offers to those who confess their sins and repent of them, in order to receive salvation.

At a later time, the beloved Apostle John who understood this message completely, summarized the essence of what Yeshua was stating, in the opening chapter of his first epistle:

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Yeshua the Messiah. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, **that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.** If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; **but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Yeshua His Son cleanses us from all sin.** If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:1-10).

The challenge for followers of Yeshua is to walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, and for them to avoid walking in the darkness of this world. Yeshua stated it unequivocally in John ch. 8 to various Pharisees, after He forgave the woman caught in an adulterous act, for her to go and sin no more:

“Then Yeshua again spoke to them, saying, **‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life’**” (John 8:12).

In many regards, Yeshua declared the obvious distinctions between light and darkness, not only to religious leaders seeking to find fault in Him, but also everyone who sincerely wanted to know the truth and obtain peace with God. In the case of Nicodemus, who was more than curious about the ministry of Yeshua, the recognizable passage found in John 3 touches on how the Light has come to the world, but that certain people loved darkness because their deeds were evil and they did not want them exposed by the presence of the Light:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. **“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God”** (John 3:16-21).

Having addressed a number of verses that speak about light and darkness, and how Yeshua freely brought those concepts out in His comments to a variety of people—there is one warning that comes in the context of describing one of Yeshua’s other analogies about the eye being the lamp of the body, and the need to keep it clear:

“Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness” (Luke 11:35).

Here, Yeshua cautioned His Disciples to make sure that the “light in you” (the knowledge of Him) would not be darkness or masquerading as light. This is a sobering warning that should remind all Messiah followers how imperative it is to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

However, a more exhaustive warning to “watch out” that perceived light is not darkness, is found in 1 John. As just mentioned, John understood that knowing Yeshua meant that a person would walk in the same manner as Yeshua walked:

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from

the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. **The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.** But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:3-11).

Of course, walking in the manner Yeshua walked, absolutely means that a person will walk in the Light, evidence of which will be present by keeping His commandments, which would necessarily include things like observing the appointed times. The promised result is a progressive sanctification, leading to completeness and perfection over the course of one’s walk of faith.

Let each of us give thanks for the seasonal opportunities to fervently seek the Lord, according to His appointed times (Leviticus 23). If we obey His commands and show up, we are guaranteed one thing: the Lord God Almighty will meet us, because His appointed times are *absolutely* on His calendar. The questions we can ask ourselves reveal the deepest thoughts of the human heart and soul. *Are the feasts of the Lord on our calendars? Do we relish the opportunity to spend time with Him in the Light of His Son Yeshua?* These are questions that we each must honestly answer, understanding that we can never fool the omniscient Creator God. For we must be reminded that there are fundamental distinctions between those born of the Spirit, and the natural, often unregenerated, self:

“For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. **For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. **But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.** But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM [Isaiah 40:13, LXX]? But we have the mind of Messiah” (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

May we each have not only the mind of the Messiah, but a willing heart filled by the Spirit of the Most High which desires to seek His face always, while walking in the Light!

FAQ from TNN ONLINE

How am I to approach the whole issue of genetically modified foods? Are they kosher? Many people in my Messianic congregation only eat foods that are certified “organic.”

The specific issue, of **Genetically Modified Organisms** or **GMOs**, is one which far too few people have even been informed about. There are scientific, economic, political, but most especially ethical factors, regarding the presence of GMOs in the commercial food supply. Some GMOs are relatively simple scientific modifications of various fruits and vegetables, which would tend to cross different strains of DNA from the same species of plant, perhaps to make a crop more resilient in a particular environment for growing. Other GMOs are far more complicated, and one will see DNA strands from different species, both plant and animal, crossed over. Because of the controversial nature of GMOs to many people, there is a trend for various countries or U.S. states to legislate that commercial food products which have been genetically modified, or processed foods with GMOs as ingredients, be labeled as such. And, there is the ongoing research about GMOs regarding whether or not they are genuinely healthy for human consumption, or may instead be a cause of cancers or other debilitating diseases. It should be no surprise why within the past one to two decades, there has been a growing movement in the West insisting upon certified “organic” fruits, vegetables, and meats.

Bible readers, contemplating some of the issues of GMOs, should be immediately reminded of the thrust of Deuteronomy 22:9: “You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, or all the produce of the seed which you have sown and the increase of the vineyard will become defiled.” Much of what you see happening, within the realm of GMOs, is precisely the cross of DNA, or the mixing of seed, from different species of plants and animals. Sometimes the reasoning for splicing together DNA of different species, is so that a crop can grow in vast quantities, and feed millions of people. At other times the reasoning is so that a farming conglomerate can maximize yields and profits. For certain, any kind of DNA modification on the parts of scientists and corporations, does beg the question of **how far human beings can “play God.”** There are key questions of human survival to be probed when wanting to have a certain type of grain or cereal to feed the starving masses of the third world. There are more economic and political questions to be pressed when food companies only want to make money.

Are Genetically Modified Organisms or GMOs “kosher”? It would be hard to say that if DNA strands from an unkosher animal were crossed with a fruit or vegetable, for that modified fruit or vegetable to be considered kosher. But, as Lisë Stern describes in her 2004 book *How to Keep Kosher*, the Jewish community has been deliberating about the issue:

“GMOs are products that have been genetically altered. At this writing, the jury is still out in terms of kashrut, although some rulings have been made. In ‘A Jewish Perspective on Genetic Engineering’ on the website www.besr.org (Business Ethics Center of Jerusalem), Rabbi Akiva Wolff writes, ‘According to most authorities, genetic material from non-kosher species is not itself nonkosher and does not render the new host organism non-kosher.’ The Star-K website states, ‘If it looks like a tomato, smells like a tomato, feels like a tomato and tastes like a tomato, it’s a tomato and and it’s kosher.’ The issue is still being debated, and it is of concern to many, especially those who are advocates of eco-kashrut.”^a

The eco-kashrut movement, mainly in Reform Judaism, primarily focuses its attention on the controversies of mass commercial farming, worker treatment, ecological sustainability, humane treatment of animals, and also organic foods vs. GMOs.

The evangelical Christian community, because of the issues which are closely interconnected to GMOs, is going to have to address this topic much more forthrightly—especially given the uncomfortable realities pertaining to what genetic engineering ultimately represents. Simply consider the short summary provided by the *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* (2003) on genetics and genetic engineering:

“Genetics is the scientific study of genes, chromosomes and genetic variation, especially with a view toward discovering their role in determining the traits that characterize a human person. Genetic engineering is the utilization of the findings of genetics to alter living entities by means of techniques that add genetically determined characteristics to cells that would not otherwise have possessed them. Generally, this involves the production of recombinant DNA (hybrid DNA produced by combining pieces of DNA from different sources). Currently, genetic engineering is used in agriculture as well as in the production of pharmaceuticals and vaccines. The interest in human genetics has resulted in the *Human Genome Project, the attempt to determine the chromosomal location of every human gene, for the purpose of increasing human knowledge as well as eventually curing genetically based diseases. Some ethicists welcome genetics and genetic engineering, because of the po-

^a Lisë Stern, *How to Keep Kosher: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding Jewish Dietary Laws* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), 72.

tential for *good that the resultant technologies promise. Others argue that any manipulation of the genetic code is in effect 'playing God,' and can only have disastrous consequences."^b

The issues surrounding bioethics are some of the most pressing that students, seeking an advanced theological degree for ministry, are going to have to face into the 2010s and beyond.^c They involve an entire array of issues ranging from abortion, to suicide and euthanasia, to homosexuality, to contraception, to gene therapy, among others. Within this framework, the ethics of Genetically Modified Organisms has to be considered.

A wide number of today's Messianic people are very health conscious, and so not only will the ethical dimensions of GMOs need to be considered, but also the risk of consuming them will also need to be evaluated. Scientific studies evaluating the health benefits, or lack thereof, of GMOs, will become more and more public knowledge—and a center of great debate—over the next two decades. Fortunately, there are not only many people in Western countries who are greatly disturbed about the presence of GMOs in the commercial food supply—but also companies which realize that GMOs might not be good for business—that markets might very well begin to see things shift to the point where processed food items including GMOs will have to be identified as such. The kosher status of processed food items including GMOs will certainly be picked up by many of the major certifying agencies as well.

As with all things that people eat, we each need to be conscious of the sources of food we consume, and it is to be certainly advised that we be aware of the controversies associated with GMOs, and some of the, albeit complex, controversies associated with bioethics.

^b Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith, eds., *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 46.

^c For a general summary, consult C. Horn III, "Bioethics," in Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), pp 166-169; Allen Verhey, "Bioethics," in Joel B. Green, ed. et. al., *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp 95-101.

TNN ONLINE EDITOR'S UPDATE

October 2014

Dear Friends:

This past Fall high holiday season, is probably the first since 2009, when I have not found myself in some period of transition. In 2009, I had just finished seminary, and did not know what was going to quite be in my future. In 2010, we had just announced our family and ministry intention to move back to Dallas. In 2011, we were waiting to move from Central Florida. In 2012, we were getting ready to just move. In 2013, we had moved and were getting established in a new place and with new friends. Now in 2014, no longer finding ourselves in a period of transition, we instead find ourselves in a period of **consolidation**. We are not moving again, and for myself, I am able to be content and work in a way that few are able to do. I am able to be flexible to be sure, but I am also able to coordinate projects and research assignments in a way which insures their eventual completion.



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This October sees the formal release of the *Messianic Kosher Helper* by TNN Press, which was a publication that definitely took a great deal out of us to see released, having started just over a year ago. Very soon, our Romans Bible study will be completed, and with it a new Romans commentary coming out. Before I get to the long work involved with the *Messianic Sabbath Helper*, there are a number of smaller things I would like to finish first, which I will be announcing over the next month or so. Be sure to be following us on Facebook regularly, as I do write updates, just about every day, per what is going on in the Messianic community (which are also posted to the main Outreach Israel and TNN Online websites).

What does this new period of consolidation mean? It hardly means slowing down, in terms of being on top of the theological and spiritual issues facing our Messianic faith community. It does mean that some of the edge of living, from the past several years, has been taken off. This kind of a relief is really important for my own personal morale, given the many open files and lists I have compiled of things to do!

Do be sure to take a look at the re-tooled **Article Database** section on the TNN Online website! I will also be re-tooling the **Bible Messages** section over the next few months, with a number of key updates.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee