

OIM UPDATE

August 2017

Typically each year, the 9th of Av on the Hebrew calendar arrives in late July or August, with an annual reminder that the enemies of Israel continue to harass and spew hatred toward the Jewish people. This year is no different, as deadly disputes with Muslim worshippers on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem remind Believers around the world to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). According to Rabbinic tradition, on this day shortly after deliverance from bondage in Egypt, the ten spies who returned from surveying Canaan conveyed a bad report because they feared the inhabitants. This lack of faith had serious immediate consequences that included the death of every man over twenty years of age (other than Joshua and Caleb), during the forty-year delay wandering in the desert, before entrance to the land promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

“Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, ‘We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.’ But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us.’ So they gave out to the sons of Israel a **bad report of the land** which they had spied out, saying, ‘The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size. There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.’ **Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!’**” (Numbers 13:31-14:2).

Still, the long term ramifications of troubles on this day, including most significantly the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E. and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E., have been recorded. Hence, the Jewish people have observed a day of fasting on Tish B’Av throughout the centuries, and thankfully, the recent turmoil is subsiding as of this writing.

The Ninth of Av essentially begins the countdown to the month of Elul that with the first ten days of Tishri constitutes the forty-day “Season of Teshuvah” (Return or Repentance) prior to *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement. Interestingly this year, the 29th of Av occurs on August 21, and in the continental United States, there will be a total solar eclipse that traverses the country from Oregon to South Carolina. Some prophecy teach-

ers are hyping people with some wild end-time prognostications about what this means from a Biblical perspective. Do not fear! This scientifically predictable event is simply a celestial occurrence that astronomers can accurately calculate from the consistency of God's created order, repeating patterns year after year and even century after century: **"Who commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars"** (Job 9:7).

Instead, Believers should marvel at the majesty of the Creator God, and perhaps use this unique solar eclipse as an opportunity to share the good news with those stirred up by the hyperbolic conjectures!

In addition, we are praising the Lord for all of the Internet traffic being generated on the Messianic Apologetics website and mobile app! The increase in website hits this past month has required **www.messianicapologetics.net** to recently be upgraded to handle the higher volume. As we have experienced in the past, what initially seems to be an obstacle, is really turning into an opportunity! One of our long term goals has been to see that there be an associated video or audio podcast associated with every written post on Messianic Apologetics. We are using our recent server transfer as a prompt from the Lord to see that this comes about. Please continue to pray that the upgrades will enhance the outreach of our ministry efforts!

Finally, Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics want to be sure that we are a voice of reason and stability, providing fair resolution and consensus, as pressures continue to mount against people of faith from the world, as anti-Semitism and growing anti-Israel sentiments are on the rise. We want to especially thank those of you who have faithfully supported our efforts over the years. We continue to need your financial support in order to dedicate the time and energy required to continue in the work that the Lord has assigned us. We especially need many of you to sign up for a regular monthly contribution via PayPal at **www.outreachisrael.net**.

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Blessings, Mark Huey

A SPIRITUAL SCAVENGER HUNT

by J.K. McKee

Every single one of us, as a redeemed man or woman of faith, has been on some kind of life journey that has led us to the salvation of Yeshua the Messiah, and hopefully into a place of contributing to the purposes of the Kingdom of God. One of the questions that I frequently ask myself, as a person who has been involved in the Messianic movement since 1995, very much is: *How did I get here?* A follow up question to this is: *What does God actually want me to do here?*

I truly came to dynamic saving faith on August 8, 1995. While this concerned dealing with some demonic issues from my family's past, as well as some issues involving the death of my father in 1992¹—within several months of repenting of my sins and being born again I was in the Messianic movement. My mother Margaret, and her new husband Mark Huey, had gone on a Zola Levitt tour to Israel in December of 1994, where they had the impression that when returning to the United States, they needed to be focusing on the Biblical feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23). And, by the Fall high holidays of 1995, we were attending a Messianic Jewish congregation, and getting acclimated to things like the weekly *Shabbat*, a kosher-style of diet, and various mainline Jewish traditions and customs.

One of the things that was very appealing for Mark and Margaret Huey, entering into the Messianic movement, was the fact that my mother was an Arminian, and my new stepfather was a Calvinist. While we all came from a broadly evangelical Protestant background, this new blended family knew that it was going to have to chart a new spiritual course. Throughout the second half of 1995 and into 1996, we tried attending *Shabbat* services on Saturday, while also going to Sunday Church. By the Spring of 1996, we had fully crossed over to the Messianic Jewish congregation. Not only was our faith in the Messiah being enriched and enlivened at new levels—with there being significant "hands on" spiritual activities to be considering—the Jewish community is one which indeed likes to talk about significant issues. Fellowship times either before or after the service, or getting to know new friends at their homes, was a substantial blessing. *We were a family that liked to talk about the Bible, things of the Lord, and current events.*

¹ Some of my experience in coming to salvation is covered in my articles "The Assurance of Our Salvation" and "Why Hell Must Be Eternal."

Our full transition into the Messianic movement was also enjoined in the Spring of 1996 by our family encountering a number of—at the time—compelling voices, “quasi-Messianic” we would say now, who were making significant predictions about the end-times, the return of Yeshua, and the Middle East peace process. In the Summer of 1996, my parents made a point to attend both the MJAA Messiah conference in Grantham, PA and the UMJC conference in Sturbridge, MA, mainly with the purpose of getting acclimated to this movement we were getting involved with. But when they returned home to Dallas, they got plugged in more and more to the prophecy teachings and predictions. Certainly for a new family, with three who had lost their father several years earlier, the thought that Yeshua was soon going to return, was something that grabbed our attention. In fact, it grabbed our attention for a number of years!

At the beginning of 1997, our family moved out of Dallas to a small farm north of the city. Over the course of 1997, while we continued to maintain our connections to the local Messianic Jewish congregation, my stepfather helped host a series of prophecy conferences. In March of 1997, I launched my first website, where I posted a number of opinion articles on both end-time prophecy and Messianic themes. On August 15, 1997, I started the website Tribulation News Network or TNN Online. And, in forecasting the future with the close of the Millennium and Y2k impending, my stepfather actually got involved with a shortwave radio operation based out of Central Honduras. In the Spring of 1998, and with some end-time concerns being present, my family sold its major assets and sent two containers with all of our possessions to the island of Roatán in the Bay Islands of Honduras.

It was my stepfather’s plan in 1998 to go back and forth between Roatán and the mainland, doing work for the shortwave radio venture and some real estate consulting in the Bay Islands. We would then see what the global-prophetic situation in the world would be. None of this came to pass. For eight months (April-December) we rented a number of picturesque homes on Roatán, with our two containers still on the dock waiting to be opened. Due to the intervention of Hurricane Mitch in October-November 1998, one of the deadliest storms on record, we knew it was time to return to the United States. An opportunity opened for my stepfather to do some consulting work for a ministry in Oklahoma. We are thankful that we did not lose anything due to Hurricane Mitch!

I am most especially thankful that even though my high school career was not what others would have wanted it to be, that I did finish my senior year through a homeschooling correspondence program, and that in the Fall of 1999 I was able to enroll at the University of Oklahoma. As we returned

to the United States in 1999, any end-time preoccupation, fear, or paranoia did get removed from us, and we instead returned to witnessing what God was doing through an increasingly expanding and diversifying Messianic movement. As I was finishing up the first year of my college studies in 2000, my parents accepted an offer to consult with another ministry out of Central Florida. This venture ended in 2002, but by this time we had become a part of an independent Messianic assembly in the Greater Orlando area.

Throughout my college studies at the University of Oklahoma, my TNN Online website, Theology News Network, was something which definitely kept my attention, and it also kept me away from associating with the wrong crowd. I was working on my bachelor's degree in political science, and as a result took classes not only in political philosophy and theory, but also in histories ancient and modern relevant to Biblical Studies, and was able to take some modern Hebrew and classical Greek. Being on my own for these years, with my website as a hobby, did get me to focus on what being part of the Messianic movement *meant to me*. I was not really a part of a Messianic congregation or fellowship, and so I instead would spend *Shabbat* often in Bible study or in writing for my website. I did try to be a part of various on campus ministry groups, which had some success for a season, but eventually did not work out too well by the time I graduated. While there were sincere evangelical Christian people at OU, it was obvious that the Messianic movement, its focus on Israel, and reconnecting with the Tanach or Old Testament, were just too foreign. And, I do have to admit that I was not always too kind or graceful in response to criticism I would receive. *It was good that this happened while I was in college, and not when I entered into full time ministry.*

In the Fall of 2002, my parents launched Outreach Israel Ministries, which at the time had a very broad vision of incorporating many different possible ventures. When I graduated from college in 2003, I returned to Central Florida, TNN Online became a division of OIM, and our ministry began releasing its first series of educational resources. For the most part, these books, bearing titles like *Hebraic Roots: An Introductory Study* and *Introduction to Things Messianic*, were written with the intention of helping aid many non-Jewish Believers, like our family, in getting acclimated to the Messianic movement.

To be sure, as we got started in the first full two years of ministry, in 2003-2005, we had a lot to learn. Mark Huey and I did some speaking trips throughout the U.S., Canada, Israel, and the United Kingdom. In 2005, I started attending the Orlando campus of Asbury Theological Seminary, where I would work on my M.A. in Biblical Studies. As a result of our major

travels in 2004, where we encountered all sorts of people identifying with the label “Messianic”—Jewish Believers, non-Jewish Believers, people part of Messianic Judaism, people part of break-off sects and new sects bearing provocative labels²—**we realized that we had a huge amount of work ahead of us, and that even some of our own attitudes and viewpoints needed to change.** As a result of the first few semesters of attending Asbury Seminary, where I was able to reconnect with much of my Wesleyan upbringing, I was having, for the first time, to deal with the Holy Scriptures and the world of the Bible in a much more complex and detailed way. In learning new skills involving Biblical exegesis, Hebrew and Greek, and accessing technical commentaries and resources—I found myself being much better equipped to defend many of my convictions as a part of the Messianic movement. I also realized in 2005-2006, that a number of the things that our family picked up in our early days entering into the Messianic movement, were in serious need of reevaluation, even dismissal, being rather simple and downright unsupportable.

My seminary experience from 2005-2008 is something which I have not commented about too frequently among Messianic people, precisely because I know that on the whole many Messianic people are skeptical, if not hostile, to religious studies education. *I did not attend seminary to “convert” people to my Messianic beliefs.* I attended seminary to acquire skills, and be able to join into a larger conversation of Biblical Studies. And this is something that I was able to do. When I graduated in Spring of 2009, I was blessed to receive the Zondervan Biblical Languages Award for Greek. But immediately following seminary, our ministry would have to start absorbing all of the new knowledge and resources that I had access to, and things certainly started to change.

One of the biggest things that shifted for us in 2009 was seeing that our ministry books be transferred out of spiral combs and into printed paperback books. It was at this time that I was able to totally dedicate all of my time to ministry work, and as titles were prepared for paperback release, updates reflecting my seminary training and degree would be steadily reflected. Yet as we all know, God has a unique way of being able to “jump start” things...

As the 2000s came to a close, and in particular as my youngest sister Maggie started finishing high school, our family knew that our time in Central Florida would be concluding. In the Summer of 2009, my mother, Maggie and I went on a college scouting trip out to the University of Oklahoma. I

² These provocative labels included, but were not limited to, the Two-House and One Law/One Torah sub-movements.

had not been back since my graduation. When the three of us walked into the Armory at OU, where the Naval ROTC unit was based, we all received the distinct impression that Maggie was going to OU. Of course, this did not affect me directly; I would be returning to Central Florida and be continuing my work of editing our books for paperback release, and working on new Bible studies. In the late Spring of 2010 we again went on a roadtrip out to OU, as Maggie had been accepted and was getting ready to start college in the Fall. My work was continuing.

Our family had originally believed that were we to move out of the Orlando area, that we would move northward to Jacksonville, where we have extended family. In late August 2010, my mother and I went to Jacksonville to help move my grandmother from her assisted living unit into a new memory care unit. While we were there, my stepfather Mark was on a trip visiting friends and other family members. I remember distinctly walking out of the Allegro in Orange Park, and telling my mother that I would seriously consider moving back to Dallas rather than move to Jacksonville. *This was quite a change, because neither one of us ever wanted to live in Dallas again.* Yet, with my sister Maggie now at the University of Oklahoma, and knowing that there was a vibrant and significant Messianic community in the DFW Metroplex, we definitely started feeling the pull West.

We announced our intention to relocate to North Texas in the Fall of 2010, but we had no idea that it was going to take us over two years to do it. For my part, I knew that I had to gear up, seeing that all of our books were prepared for paperback release—and that if the Lord wanted us to go through any major theological changes, namely in the form of refining and expanding our teachings on various issues, **now would be the time to do it.** While 2011-2012 were hardly easy years for me, 2011 was a significant year for some theological transitions. 2012 was spent formatting all of our ministry books for both paperback and eBook release. At the end of 2012, my parent's house in Kissimmee, FL finally sold, and by December we were all living in North Dallas once again—in the same exact zip code where we had originally moved in 1994, no less!

The Spring of 2013 was widely spent getting reacclimated to the DFW area, after being gone for fourteen years. What was most important to us was getting reconnected with the Messianic friends we knew from our early days in Messianic Judaism, back in 1995-1998. By the late Summer of 2013, we quickly got plugged into Eitz Chaim Messianic Jewish Congregation, as we had been good friends with the main leaders, David and Elizabeth Schiller, in the late 1990s. Because EC is an assembly which encourages participation from members, by the Winter of 2014 we had all taken the New Mem-

bers class, our family began helping out with the different festivals (in particular the congregational Passover *seder*), and by the Fall of 2014 Mark Huey had been asked to become a *shammash* (deacon), by the Fall of 2015 being further elevated as an elder. I had given several teachings on *Shabbat*, and had renewed my own friendship with David that I had back in 1996-1997 when I was in my teens.

2014-2015 were important years not just in terms of transitioning to a new life back in North Texas, to take on new theological and spiritual challenges, and to consolidate ourselves—they were also very important as we began to discern what our own long term purpose would become as a family ministry. While we all agree that moving back to Dallas was the best decision we ever made, because we are human, no place on Earth is entirely perfect. Things in the United States shifted immeasurably with the legalization of homosexual marriage in the Summer of 2015. When this happened, I actually felt in a similar manner to how I did in 1996-1997, when we were encapsulated with end-time prophecy. If anything, American society crossed a Romans ch. 1 “red line,” **and we were all shown a “road sign” that End Game is approaching.** I myself have had the distinct supernatural impression that with as many things that I have researched and written on, that I would have to be targeted with my life, and would not be able to have all of the same opportunities that those who preceded me had. In June of 2015, the tnonline.net domain was actually stolen from me during the few hours that the domain was needing to be re-registered, and so I made the necessary upgrade from TNN Online to **Messianic Apologetics**. This was a vital change for the future!

Mark and Margaret Huey like to frequently describe the journey our family has been on as a “spiritual scavenger hunt.” *We went from one place and experience...to another place and experience...and so on...* The journey of human life is always something that is ongoing. We learn new things every day through our experiences and interactions, with both the Lord and other human beings, as to how to be more effective in His service. But as far as the bulk of experiences that our family has had—in moving from place to place, in being called into Messianic education, and in interacting with broad and diverse sectors of this emerging faith community—on the whole our “spiritual scavenger hunt” is over. Much of what we are involved with today concerns our effectiveness as Messianic people, fine-tuning our strengths and abilities, and with new stages of development which are likely to equally excite and frighten us all.

Our family was first called into Messianic ministry to help others from evangelical backgrounds, adequately transition into a Messianic lifestyle—

extending grace and mercy to others who were not similarly called (at present), and making sure that this was a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in their lives (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27). Our ministry experiences to the present day included things that we could both anticipate and not anticipate. Like everyone, we have had our good days and our bad days, we have had to firmly stand up for the truth of God's Word, and we have had to admit where we have made mistakes and correct them.

Salvation history is on a decisive trajectory: "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26ff). This is something that involves not only a massive salvation of Jewish people, but will culminate in the return of Israel's Messiah—and with it the completion of not only many prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel's Kingdom, but will involve Yeshua Himself reigning over this planet. Today in the Messianic community, we see Jewish people coming in substantial numbers to Messiah faith. We also see non-Jewish Believers embracing their Hebraic and Jewish Roots in substantial numbers. Together, we should not only be united as "one new humanity" (Ephesians 2:15, NRSV), purged of old hostilities and mistrust of the other—but we should be employing the virtues and strengths of our shared Judeo-Protestant heritage for what is to be anticipated in the future.

If there is anything that I have learned on the spiritual scavenger hunt, it is that suspicion, division, and rivalry begin when we fail to communicate with one another, and when we do not even bother to consider the vantage point or perspective of someone else. A figure like Paul knew better than this, when going out to reach the diverse groups of people in the First Century Mediterranean (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). My many writings and studies to date bear significant attention to detail. For some, this is just information overkill. For others, it is a documented record of wanting to not only hear multiple witnesses in a case (Deuteronomy 19:15), it demonstrates a deep seated commitment on my part to be fair, and even what it means to "love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10, NRSV).

Your journey into the Messianic movement is not the same as my family's journey. Your journey may have been less, or even more, difficult. Like all people in this unique and special move of the Holy Spirit, there are things we have had to give up. I personally take a great deal of comfort from Yeshua's word, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for My name's sake, will receive a hundred times as much, and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29, TLV). Yet, each one of us needs to maintain a sense of purpose, a steadfast will, and a consistent resolution to accomplish the Messianic mission—and to arrive at the culmination of history. *May we stay true to the call!*