

OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



JUNE 2023
MY FAMILY'S
MESSIANIC EXPERIENCE
1995-2022 Part 3 of 3



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Cover imagery: J.K. McKee / Personal Photo

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries
and Messianic Apologetics*

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

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

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

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

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

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

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

Outreach Israel News is the monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries, a non-profit organization with an emphasis on reaching, teaching, and encouraging the Messianic community. Subscription to **Outreach Israel News** is without cost and supported only by donation.

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OIM UPDATE

June 2023

J.K. McKee

The following teaching has been excerpted and adapted from the 2022 updated edition of *Introduction to Things Messianic*

2013-2018: Messianic Jewish Reconnections

It was rather surreal moving back to Dallas in late 2012 from Central Florida, to the same zip code where I had originally moved in 1994 from Northern Kentucky. Dallas Take II had begun! My entire family was now in North Texas, with my sister Maggie just a few hours away at the University of Oklahoma. But I was realistic about what had just started for our family and ministry. 2009-2012 was not an easy time for the Messianic community, particularly with many sorting through and responding to the theological changes of First Fruits of Zion,¹ their association with branches of Messianic Judaism avidly supporting bilateral ecclesiology, and more than anything else a prevailing spiritual ideology of distinctions among God's people being more important than common faith in the Messiah. Our family and ministry were not overly rigid, and certainly were open to adjusting and refining our theology where appropriate. So as 2013 began, I was quickly writing the publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*, supportive of an "enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel" ecclesiology, based on Amos 9:11-12—with a restored Twelve Tribes at the center, and enlarged borders to welcome in the righteous from the nations. Yes, Jewish and non-Jewish Believers had their differences and they were not

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¹ Some of these changes are represented in the materials: Toby Janicki, *God-Fearers: Gentiles & the God of Israel* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012); D. Thomas Lancaster, *Grafted In: Israel, Gentiles, and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2009); *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians: Sermons on a Messianic Jewish Approach* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011); Boaz Michael, with Jacob Fronczak, *Twelve Gates: Where Do the Nations Enter?* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012); *Tent of David: Healing the Vision of the Messianic Gentile* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2013).

exactly the same—but such differences should not be as pronounced or over-emphasized as bilateral ecclesiology proponents were advocating. Emphasizing differences first tends to create division and suspicion, rather than unity and partnership.

What were we going to do, and where were we going to fellowship, as a family, upon returning to North Texas? Not unlike 1995, our family returned to Baruch HaShem, where we originally got started in the Messianic movement. The congregation and its facilities were much larger now—but the main reason we first attended, was to reconnect with our old friends from the late 1990s. Most of them had gone on to other places. One of those friends was David Schiller, who had started a new work, Eitz Chaim, which met in nearby Richardson. This was a much smaller fellowship, which hosted an oneg lunch after *Shabbat* services. Many of our friends from our previous time in Dallas were attending this congregation. During Spring 2013 we often visited between Baruch HaShem and Eitz Chaim every other *Shabbat*, but after returning from our family's annual reunion in Gulf Shores, AL, I had decided that Eitz Chaim was where the Lord wanted me—and my parents subsequently agreed. Reconnecting with David and Elizabeth Schiller, joining Eitz Chaim as members in 2014, and my stepfather Mark Huey becoming a deacon in 2014, and then an elder in 2015, were some of the major activities which led to our present association with Messianic Judaism.

Anyone who has been a part of the Messianic Jewish community, knows that issues of ecclesiology (study of the people of God), Jewish Believers, and non-Jewish Believers, are not uniform. Regardless of what some leaders and teachers choose to write on paper,² the situation on the ground, in actual Messianic congregations, tends to be much different. While the 2010s began with a wave of some Messianic Jewish groups emphasizing a distinctions first ideology, to keep various non-Jewish Believers away from things of Torah (i.e., *Shabbat*, festivals, kosher)—the fact is that on the ground, non-Jewish Believers make up the majority of today's Messianic Jewish community, and also provide Messianic Judaism with the vast majority of its financial resources. In spite of various protestations and theological machinations, non-Jewish Believers are coming into

² Some of this was seen in the early 2010s with: David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); IAMCS Steering Committee (2014). *One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement, A position paper of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS)*. Available online via <<http://iamcs.org>>.

an understanding of the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6), and are embracing their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures in tangible ways. I am very thankful to say that my personal involvement in Eitz Chaim, in 2013-2014, was significantly due not only to my previous friendship with David Schiller in the late 1990s—but also because I did not feel that he, as a Messianic Jew, felt his Jewish identity was somehow infringed upon because our family was Torah observant. He could tell from the ministry that we had built in the time we were away from Dallas, that it was a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and that we were trying to indeed facilitate Jewish and non-Jewish Believers as “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15) working in common cause together.

It does take a few years for one to get reacclimated to a new setting, and so a great deal of my initial time back in North Texas was spent working on additional publications, which had been open files back in Central Florida. These notably included *Confronting Critical Issues* (2013), the massive *Messianic Kosher Helper* (2014), and *Torah In the Balance, Vol II* (2015). Later studies would be *Salvation on the Line, Volumes I & II* (2017, 2018), defending Yeshua's Divinity, and *Men and Women in the Body of Messiah: Answering Crucial Questions* (2018), sorting through an egalitarian ideology. A number of notable things would develop as we waited upon the Lord, became active members of a Messianic Jewish congregation, met some new Messianic Jewish friends, and began to get a feel for a sector of Messianic Judaism which has to be experienced firsthand in person.

In 2014 the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) was hosting its regional conference in Grapevine, TX, just north of DFW Airport, and our local assembly, Eitz Chaim, was an active participant. Because my stepfather had just been ordained as a deacon in 2014, this immediately gave our ministry the ability to exhibit our publications. While I know that I was skeptical at first, we were very much welcome to attend and we did well. I was introduced to a number of the MJAA leaders, including Joel and David Chernoff, as well as the late Mark Dayan who helped facilitate the MJAA conferences. It was a first step toward our family and ministry becoming more formally involved in Messianic Judaism.

It would have been our plan to exhibit at the 2015 Messiah Conference in Grantham, PA, but Summer 2015 was full of too many family activities, as my sister Maggie married Taylor Willetts in May. Upon returning to Dallas in June 2015 from our annual Gulf Shores, AL family

vacation, the domain tnnonline.net had been quickly swooped up, as the automatic renewal had not processed while I was away. Seeing my domain held hostage for tens of thousands, rather than attempt to get it back, we took this as both a prompt and a sign, that it was time for TNN Online-Theology News Network to transition into **Messianic Apologetics**, messianicapologetics.net.

Throughout a great deal of June and July 2015, I had to go through our website and books, changing non-time sensitive references from “TNN Online” to “Messianic Apologetics.” While this was taking place, the Hebrew Roots Network, a largely non-Jewish affiliation, was holding its conference in Dallas. We knew a number of people who were attending, and so my parents Mark and Margaret Huey went downtown for a few dinners. They certainly asked why our ministry was not exhibiting its publications—and the reason was, is that while we did apply for a book table, we were rejected, being told that our ministry “did not have a stable and secure message.” This dismissal was a signal that in 2015, the Lord wanted us to be veered in a Messianic Jewish direction.

Something else which notably took place in 2015,³ as a side event of sorts, is how Steve Harper, formerly a vice president at Asbury Theological Seminary while I was attending—and one who laid hands over me at my graduation in May 2009—came out publicly in favor of homosexual marriage in Spring 2015, right before it was made legal in the United States. This was an indication, to me at least, of a major jump forward in the Last Days scenario.

Many of us recognize the huge societal changes which took place in 2016-2017, because of the unexpected election of Donald Trump as president here in the United States. Our own family’s Messianic experience took a huge leap forward, with some unexpected circumstances. In early 2016, my stepfather Mark Huey and his brother Doug, were taking Grandpa Huey (now deceased-2018) to an MRI appointment at Baylor, Scott, White in Dallas—and while waiting they ran into an acquaintance of Doug, who worked for the hospital system. Mark immediately struck up a conversation and discovered that this gentleman helped with moving surplus and secondhand but almost new, medical equipment and supplies, from the Baylor, Scott, White hospital network, to international venues of need, often via the help of various Christian ministries. My stepfather asked him if they would give equipment to Israel, and shortly

³ Steve Harper, *For the Sake of the Bride: Restoring the Church to Her Intended Beauty* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014).

thereafter he was talking with Joel Chernoff and Hank Rich of the MJAA's Joseph Project. Within a year, my stepfather was working as a consultant with the Joseph Project, fundraising mainly in the North Texas area—but most especially with seeing a new source of humanitarian aid opened up for this enterprise. Much of what Baylor, Scott, White has been able to provide the Joseph Project, has helped enhance its relations with the Israeli government.

My stepfather working with the Joseph Project made our ministry's first time at the Messiah Conference go very smoothly. In July 2016, we attended Messiah 2016 at Messiah College (now University) in Grantham, PA. This was followed up by me being able to have a speaking slot at the MJAA Regional in Grapevine, TX in November 2016. My parents, Mark and Margaret Huey, then attended the annual Rabbis Conference of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS) in Orlando, in January 2017. Messiah 2017 in July was much easier, as by now our family and ministry were becoming more widely known. I was able to speak at Messiah 2017 and Messiah 2018. The MJAA became very welcoming of us, with various leaders definitely recognizing that we were the kind of non-Jewish Believers who God had definitely called into the Messianic movement. While attending the IAMCS Rabbis Conference in January 2018, my mother Margaret saw someone being ordained as a Messianic Teacher, which was something appropriate to look into, with me being non-Jewish and part of an educational ministry. Being ordained as a Messianic Teacher would help our ministry credibility, and also serve as an economical way to continue my education. My parents shortly attended the MJAA Regional in Irvine, CA that following February 2018, and Joel Liberman (MJAA president 2019-present) quickly saw that my application was processed and approved.

2019-2021: Rebooting Toward the Future

For the first six years in our time back in Texas, our family rented a large house in North Dallas, which was able to fully accommodate my parents, myself, and our ministry offices. It was our intention to buy this house, and as 2018 came to a close, the owner announced his intentions to sell. Upon returning from the IAMCS Rabbis Conference, the second week of January 2019, our offer was not received. Immediately we had to find a new place for our family and ministry—and so only by the grace of God, within six weeks, in late February 2019, we had closed on a much

larger and newer house. This was located, in of all places, the McKinney area. We were returning to the very area where we had left for Honduras in 1998! *We had literally come full circle!*

The move out of North Dallas to McKinney was hurried. The new home we moved into needed some remodeling work, including our new ministry offices. A wide number of things happened behind the scenes, while we were remodeling—because as different home remodeling projects were taking place, our own family had to go through some substantial spiritual remodeling. This would also include a ministry reboot and rebranding for Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics, with our ministry websites going blank for a period of about six weeks in Spring 2019. Spring and Summer 2019 were not an easy time for me, as I was under a great deal of spiritual stress and demonic attack. I had a great deal of prayer and reflection to go through, not quite knowing what the Lord was preparing me for.

In December 2019 our ministry exhibited at the MJAA Regional in Orlando, FL; we returned in January 2020 for the IAMCS Rabbis Conference; and in February 2020 our ministry exhibited at the MJAA Regional in Irvine, CA. I especially got a feel at these three consecutive events, about much of the possible state of Messianic Judaism. And, on the return drive from California, I came down with the nascent Coronavirus, having picked it up at the conference from various guests at the hotel.

Today as I write this (August 2022), there are still many questions left unanswered regarding COVID-19. But in March 2020, it was clear enough to me why I had gone through some of the supernatural drama I did in 2019: COVID-19 and the lockdowns were going to change everything, and the Body of Messiah would be doing things much differently in the future. While a number of people were predicting the immediate end of the world because of the Coronavirus scare, I knew to be more pragmatic and graded with my words. I do believe until this day that the COVID-19 situation was used by the Lord to get the attention of many, in a very significant way, and that things could no longer be “business as usual.” I believe that COVID-19 was intended to be a huge wake up call to many people, especially in the still-maturing and emerging Messianic movement, for them to get serious about issues and matters which have been put to the side too often.

Then another severe matter, for which even more questions abound, came with Election 2020. Once again, the Lord was trying to get the attention of many.

I am not so sure that as many people who should be paying attention, actually are. Far too many, especially because of the failed end-time predictions at the turn of the Millennium, do not want to be bothered about current events. So we wait...

2022 Onward: More Will Come

Following several years of being on hiatus from larger Messianic conference-level events, canceled because of COVID-19 issues, I was formally ordained as a Messianic Teacher by the IAMCS at the 2022 Rabbis Conference in Orlando. It was an important rite of passage, and a symbol that our family's ministry activity is being conducted in alignment with the original work of the Messianic Jewish pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s. The original Messianic Jewish vision of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity is rooted within Bible passages such as Paul's expectations of Romans chs. 9-11. Yet in reality, a dual mission has emerged for much of the Messianic community, as many people from the nations are indeed streaming toward Zion to be instructed from Moses' Teaching (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4).

Many more non-Jewish families, such as my own, have entered into the Messianic movement. Some have been welcomed, and others have felt turned away. As we have entered into the 2020s, new challenges regarding the non-Jewish question, and likely new waves of pessimism, immaturity, insecurity, and some religious politics are likely to present themselves. While much of the Messianic Jewish movement likes to call itself "the end-time move of God," how much of this is more marketing versus an actual praxis of faith, is hard to tell at present.

My family is unique in that over the years we have had direct interaction with all of the various sectors of the broad Messianic movement, and the sub-movements which have split off: Messianic Judaism, Two-House, One Law/One Torah, Hebrew Roots, and now Pronomian Christianity. I believe that while not always positive at times, we have had all of these interactions, to be substantially equipped for the tasks of the future.

Reading through just some of my family's Messianic experience, you have probably seen that at various points we have had a number of legitimate reasons to leave the Messianic movement, and return to a more established, sometimes more stable, and often more welcoming evangelical Protestantism. **I do not believe that our family was called into the Messianic movement; I believe our family was assigned to it.**

While my record of full-time ministry for over twenty years bears the

significant labor of writing and producing books, studies, and commentaries—there are some things you have probably noticed which have not been present. In all of the time I have served in Messianic ministry, and in all the venues and congregations I have been a part of and places I have visited, I am, at the age of 41 in late 2022 (longer than the life of my late father), a single man. The opportunity for marriage to a strong woman, from a compatible background and values, has never presented itself in all of my time in Messianic ministry. Similarly, I have never been approached, in spite of my academic credentials and formal ministry training, to serve on the leadership board of a Messianic congregation. Perhaps these will be resolved in the future, but if nothing changes, I will still continue.

I have come a long way since *Introduction to Things Messianic* was originally released in 2005. Our own Messianic movement has come a long way since our family was directed into it in 1995. We believe that the Messianic movement is the end-time move of God. Whether this involves the formal Messianic Judaism we are presently serving with, in North America, is something which involves questions regarding its long term future and viability. The original Messianic vision of Jewish outreach and evangelism will doubtlessly continue. Many non-Jewish Believers, such as my family, will be exposed to their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures and matters such as *Shabbat* or the Biblical festivals. Some will embrace them wholeheartedly as we have, others will be enriched for a season, and others will not be that impressed. I completely agree: **if you are not-Jewish, you need to be supernaturally called, summoned, and assigned by the Lord into this movement.** But far more important than the non-Jewish question, will be for us to consider the place that the Messianic community is to play in the Last Days, and its adaptability to future events and revelations...

2023

Continuing in 2023, some old and new venues have opened up for ministry outreach. In February, Messianic Insider was relaunched as a weekly show, addressing pertinent theological topics and issues. This Spring, I began to do 60-second McKee Moment Shorts—almost daily! We believe this will be a great, easy way for you to stay up to date with what we are doing. And, just this past month, I opened three new files on new writing projects: a new commentary in the Practical Messianic series, a study of Yeshua's Messiahship, and a study of end-time prophecy.