



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



FEBRUARY 2024
OVERCOMING
OUR INSECURITIES

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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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OLM UPDATE

February 2024

J.K. McKee

OVERCOMING OUR INSECURITIES

At the beginning of January, my parents, Mark and Margaret Huey, and myself, attended the 2024 IAMCS Rabbis Conference in Orlando, FL.

The stated theme of the conference was *They Overcame*, based on Revelation 12:11: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even in the face of death" (TLV). The conviction of the conference leaders, at least, was that 2024 is going to be a year of significant drama and change—and so each and every one of us needs to be aware of how we will not be able to persevere and endure through what is coming, **without a testimony of the Messiah's work within us.**

Thankfully, there were a number of main presentations and ten-minute talks, which either directly or indirectly, did help to focus the attention of attendees on things to come and our necessary reliance upon the Lord. But, the significant majority of short presentations did not have any indirect association with the theme of overcoming. As I looked across the ballroom, when I heard the few presentations which spoke about the challenges of our present time—I visibly witnessed a number of Messianic Jewish leaders get very uncomfortable, squirming and twitching, often with grimaced or negative faces.

A great deal of our ministry work, as Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics, is spent helping people who have been hurt by much of the negative impact of the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement. We have been able to successfully aid many people transition from the far Right to the near Center, in various matters of Torah legalism, and especially in dealing with Christian family and friends. The Messianic Jewish community does possess a stability, which the Hebrew Roots movement does not. There are no questions, when you attend most Messianic Jewish congregations, as to whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is God, what the canon of Holy Scripture is, what terms to use when speaking about God, what religious calendar is followed, and how many traditions should be employed. Messianic Judaism, on the whole, sits somewhere within the *halachah* of much of Conservative and Reform Judaism, and within the theology of a sufficient amount of

evangelical Protestantism. **And most thankfully, the salvation of Yeshua the Messiah is considered to be the most important thing, for many Messianic Jewish people.**

This is not to say that various sectors, of Messianic Judaism, to be sure, do not have issues which they are still wrestling with. Each and every one of us, whether we are Jewish or non-Jewish, does have some fear or phobia we struggle with—and which we are often able to hide. This year, however, especially in light of the Israel-Hamas conflict which started on October 7, 2023, the fears and insecurities of many Messianic Jewish people, are more easily discerned. The significant rise of anti-Semitism across the world, understandably has many Jewish people and Messianic Jews on a knife's edge. *Many non-Jewish Believers, in the Messianic movement, are only capable of sympathizing with their Jewish brothers and sisters—but cannot fully understand what they might be going through.* We all rightly recognize this as major road signs of the impending end-times.

This is a time which we should be using to diagnose our various insecurities as a faith community, so we can be better equipped as an emerging Messianic force—for God's truth and salvation—in the near future.

A Common Fear of Today's Messianic Jews

One of the biggest concerns, witnessed throughout Jewish history—and something which has doubtlessly passed into the Messianic movement's experience—is the belief that the Jewish people are only one generation away from extinction. In much of Biblical and post-Biblical history, the main avenue by which Jewish people are seen to give up their heritage, has been through assimilation. In the Scriptures, warnings are affluently given to Ancient Israel not to adapt the pagan ways of the Canaanites. In the Second Temple period, the Jewish community had to avidly fight against Greco-Roman polytheism, and the attempt to abandon a Torah lifestyle. Fast forwarding to more modern times, it has been held throughout a great deal of traditional Christianity, that Jewish people who embrace faith in Jesus, actually cease being Jewish. And one of the biggest accelerators of abandonment of one's Jewish heritage, has doubtlessly been intermarriage—because of the deep concern that one's half-Jewish or quarter-Jewish children or grand-children, will assimilate into wider non-Jewish culture and society.

The Messianic Jewish movement was originally setup as a place for matters of Jewish outreach and evangelism, and in providing Jewish Believers in Yeshua a place to continue in fidelity to their heritage and traditions. Messianic Jewish congregations were to be a place where the dangers of assimilation could be stopped, and Jewish Believers in the Jewish Messiah

could still be Jewish. Many of the Messianic Jewish pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s, were not only rejected by their families and the Jewish community—but often regarded as dead. They did endure a great deal of trauma and psychological catastrophe! Some, even today in the 2020s, have still not overcome a number of those difficulties. Because of the significant struggle they have had to endure—in fighting for a Messianic Jewish movement, where Jewish Believers could still be Jewish—it should be much easier for non-Jewish Believers to understand the common emphasis that they must be *especially called into the Messianic movement* at its present phase of development.

In recent days, because of the post-October 7 rise of anti-Semitism, there are many Messianic Jewish people who have understandably wanted to protect themselves and their Jewishness. Thoughts of the past, especially from the Second World War, have readily been invoked. *Many I have encountered are operating from the premise that the entire world is about to turn against the Jewish people.* Yet, there have been strong showings of solidarity, on the part of millions of evangelical Christians, and even non-Believers, all across the world, for Israel. But along with this, millions of other evangelical Christians have been relatively silent. Regardless of what specifically is going to happen, we should each be able to recognize **how this is a time to transition into overcomers, and identify areas of insecurity which need proper resolution.**

Are You Part of a Unique Move of God—or Not?

One of the significant traits of today's Messianic movement, has been recognizing our faith community as composing "the end-time move of God." But what is this supposed to mean, exactly? What it should never mean, is completely pausing one's life—such as abstaining from work (2 Thessalonians 3:10) or marriage (1 Corinthians 7:26)—entirely because of the idea that the Last Days and Final Battle are somehow "at hand." People who believe themselves to be part of a religious movement, which is going to culminate in the return of the Messiah Himself to Planet Earth, should go about their lives as normal *as possible*. Yet, those same people should also be willing to orient their value system, activities, and life goals **to contribute to the Romans chs. 9-11 salvation historical trajectory of "all Israel will be saved."**

Having been part of the Messianic movement for almost three decades, and having had some unique experiences—I do not know the extent to which many of today's Messianic people, Jewish or non-Jewish, have actually altered their lives to being a part of "the end-time move of God." Some of

the things which other teachers and leaders simply assume they are going to have in life, have widely been withheld from me—in spite of various actions taken by me or my family. My life, my ministry work, and my perspective on many matters, mainly as a teacher and researcher—has led me to conclude that Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are definitely here, to help us through some difficult growing pains in the decade to come (2024-2030s).

Insecurities: Moderniphobia

More than any other, the biggest area where today's broad Messianic movement demonstrates a great deal of insecurity, involves matters of the modern world. Consistently, throughout my family's experience—either attending a Messianic congregation *or* serving in ministry—a significant majority of our faith community goes out of its way, to neither discuss nor reason through issues of modernity and post-modernity.

We do understand how many Jewish Believers have gone through various traumas and rejections, in coming to Messiah faith. We also understand how many non-Jewish Believers, in being led into a Messianic approach and Torah foundation, have also experienced high levels of ridicule and dismissal by others. Yet, when we look at the Messianic mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity—and couple that with how our movement is presumably going to herald the return of Israel's Messiah to the Earth—we have to almost radically, now in 2024, see our major insecurities in this area removed.

It is hard for me to believe, but it was nineteen years ago in 2005, that I had started classes at Asbury Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL. Among some of the first classes, my fellow students and I were introduced to extreme minimalism—the idea that most of what took place in the Bible, up to the so-called Jewish “return” from the Exile to Babylon, was actually contrived fiction. While Asbury on the whole is still a conservative institution, nobody gets a theological education without being exposed to critical and liberal approaches to the Bible. My thought then is the same as my thought now: **far too many of today's Messianic leaders and teachers would drop out.** Many congregational leaders and rabbis I have gotten to know over the years since, would not permit themselves to be exposed to critical and liberal points of view, simply as a matter of information, knowing that these ideologies will be encountered in the wider world of ideas.

Whether we like it or not, ideas involving the reliability *or* untrustworthiness of the Bible, circulate in many Christian *and* Jewish arenas. Certainly, if any of us were to venture outside of our local Messianic assembly, and visit a local church *or* synagogue, we would encounter many people who

look at Genesis chs. 1-11 as Ancient Near Eastern mythology repackaged into the Bible, and who would affirm that God probably directed some form of evolution to bring forth the human species. And now, many diverse approaches are being witnessed to the topic of sexuality and gender, among those who turn to the Scriptures for some kind of direction. Unfortunately, mentioning that these matters are out there, in various Messianic venues, might get you silenced.

Today's Messianic community finds itself at the intersection, of much of what takes place, in contemporary Judaism and Protestantism. But far too many leaders and teachers—perhaps because of various past traumas and rejections—think that they do not have to deal with actual contemporary matters, taking place on the ground, right now. And the result is that our faith community is only really attracting fundamentalist Christians, who want some kind of an emphasis on the Old Testament. This is not going to work well for us in the long term at all. **So how does the Lord need to deliver our faith community from modernophobia?**

Insecurities: Ethnophobia

A major issue, which certainly most non-Jewish people who get exposed to the Messianic movement encounter, involves Jewish and non-Jewish equality *and* the demonstration of some degree of ethnophobia, on the part of various Messianic Jewish people. That the people of Israel had a Divine vocation to be a light to the nations of the world (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6), is undeniable. That, given the great tragedies the Jewish people have experienced throughout history at the hands of the nations/Gentiles—the Jewish community is often deeply concerned about its self-preservation and integrity—is entirely understandable. It is also to be rightly recognized how not all of the major issues, of the maturation and development of the Messianic movement, are going to be solved in a single generation. Yet, many non-Jewish Believers—including my own family—can testify to how they have experienced some level of discrimination, at some point by someone in a position of leadership and teaching, within Messianic Judaism. That there is significant room for improvement is an understatement.

Judaism is mainly an ethno-religion, focused on the preservation of an ethnic group associated with religious beliefs, traditions, and customs. It has been entirely wrong, and indeed reprehensible, for institutional Christianity throughout history, to demand that Jewish people who confess faith in Yeshua or Jesus as Messiah, stop being Jewish, start being Christian, and must dismiss all traces and signs of their Jewish heritage. The Messianic Jewish movement has been right to establish congregations and synagogues where

Jewish Believers in Yeshua can maintain their Jewish heritage, and remain connected to the Jewish community. That Jewish identity is something worthy and important to be preserved, is something which no fair-minded non-Jewish Believer in Israel's Messiah should deny or think is insignificant. Yet, if the formal Messianic Jewish movement were to operate exclusively on the value system of an ethno-religion, then serious questions are raised regarding whether it can be legitimately billed as "the end-time move of God" designed to herald the return of Yeshua to the Earth. Such an "end-time move of God" may involve being outnumbered ten-to-one in some cases, per the expectation of Zechariah 10:23: "ten men from every language of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew" (TLV). Some modifications, somewhere, will have to be made.

Significant questions and controversies are present in Diaspora Messianic Judaism—mainly in North America—because it has become majority non-Jewish. Many Messianic Jewish Believers in Messianic congregations recognize how in the Last Days, the nations will come streaming to Zion, to be instructed from Moses' Teaching (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4). They do not consider their Jewish identity infringed upon, when non-Jewish Believers—who are sincerely and genuinely called by the Lord—partake of Torah practices such as the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed times/*moedim*, or a kosher style of diet, **and** serve alongside them as co-laborers in the Messianic mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity. But this is hardly everyone. There are Messianic Jewish people out there who do consider their Jewish identity infringed upon, when non-Jewish Believers—even being led by the Holy Spirit as a part of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; cf. Romans 8:4)—take on these kinds of Torah practices as a part of their growth in sanctification.

To some Messianic Jewish people, non-Jewish Believers from the nations—remembering the Sabbath as future salvation history unfolds (Isaiah 66:23)—is actually a severe threat to the survival of the Jewish people. Sadly, such Messianic Jewish people (although not all) are that insecure. While they *want* to be the end-time move of God, when *actual prophecies* of the Last Days begin to manifest—even with the caveat that non-Jewish Believers have to be specially "called" to it—they balk and protest. And to be honest, among the many examples to be considered, if non-Jewish people keeping the seventh-day Sabbath is tantamount to canceling out a Messianic Jewish Believer's or a Jewish person's distinctiveness—then the 21-22 million Seventh-Day Adventists, outnumbering the total worldwide Jewish population of 17-18 million, constitute a mortal threat to world Jewry! This is, sadly, how insecure a number of Messianic Jewish people are.

The biggest threat to the generational survival of the Jewish people, is the one matter which has plagued Ancient Israel and the Jewish people throughout history: **intermarriage**. While non-Israelites and non-Jews have always been a part of the ancestral line of Biblical greats, intermarriage brings with it the great threat of whether or not children or grandchildren, will continue to be a part of the people of Israel. The threat of intermarriage on succeeding generations, is greatly present within the liberal/progressive Jewish community today. And, it is also tangibly present throughout a great deal of the Messianic Jewish community as well.

It cannot be denied how some of today's well-known and outspoken Messianic Jewish leaders, are not fully Jewish. Many of them have a non-Jewish parent or grandparent, who ironically was instrumental to being involved in bringing their family line to Messiah faith. Sometimes these non-Jewish forbearers and their contributions are not acknowledged to the extent they should be. At the same time, there are Messianic people who strongly encourage intermarriage, so a couple can somehow jointly represent the virtues of being "one new man" (cf. Ephesians 2:15). And then, there are Messianic Jewish leaders, who while wanting to have an inclusive congregation or assembly—where Jewish and non-Jewish Believers can be one in the Lord—would, at least indirectly, discourage intermarriage, as it can add to the already unacceptably high complications of marriage and divorce rate, in the Twenty-First Century. Many of the half- or quarter-Jewish children of intermarriage, do end up assimilating into mainstream Christianity and dismissing their Jewishness. If Messianic Jewish Believers, in the Diaspora, are greatly concerned about their ethnic survival, then they need to either consider making *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, or in finding appropriate spouses for their young men and women from the Land of Israel.

There is no easy answer to some of the insecurities resultant from ethnophobia in the Messianic movement. The main contributing reason, as I have even witnessed from the mouth of various Messianic Jews, is that they often cannot take the risk of fully trusting a non-Jewish person—especially in light of the circumstances surrounding Nazism and the Holocaust. To this, a number of non-Jewish people who get involved in things Messianic, often do not survive, because they see various negative, Jewish stereotypes—as reprehensible as they may be—reinforced in their (limited) minds, in some of the behavior of a few Messianic Jewish people, who may not treat them with a great deal of respect. That this is a mess, which only the Adversary could have put together, is beyond question. But these are matters we have to work through. **So how does the Lord need to deliver our faith community from ethnophobia?**

Insecurities: Femiphobia

It is not difficult to recognize, when attending many Messianic congregations and larger conference events, that the widescale position one encounters, regarding women and women in ministry, **is in vast need of improvement**. This also extends to the types of marriages one will frequently witness, and whether or not a husband and wife are co-equal partners and co-equal leaders of the family, in mutual submission (cf. Ephesians 5:21ff), or operate in some kind of hierarchical model where the husband leads and the wife follows. While there are various exceptions, and there are people who indeed recognize how reforms are surely needed, on the whole today's Messianic movement does demonstrate a significant degree of femiphobia.

In our family's experience over many years, today's Messianic movement shirks at a great deal, of wanting to consider discussions and propositions made in a much of evangelicalism, concerning male and female equality. When the presence of female leaders in the Apostolic Writings is mentioned, such as Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2), the deacon Phoebe (Romans 16:1), or the female apostle Junia (Romans 16:7)—there tends to be a wide deafness. Many are, for whatever reason, incapable of thinking of the restrictive instruction of 1 Timothy ch. 2 as being anything other than universal for all times and places, rather than it being situation specific to Timothy having to sort out the fallout from a false teaching which impacted Ephesus. We are very thankful, at least, that today's Messianic Judaism recognizes how polygamy, a man having multiple wives, was not God's original intention (Genesis 2:23-24)!

Yet, for some reason or another—and perhaps what you have encountered is different from what our family has seen—far too much of today's Messianic community has an unbalanced approach to relating to God, when the place of women is factored in. There can be, for example, a huge emphasis on the Body of Messiah being some sort of "bride," in spite of Paul's analogy described as a bit of foolishness (2 Corinthians 11:1-2ff). We do not hear enough discussion on the redeemed as sons and daughters, children of God; as servants of the King; as laborers in the field of God; as soldiers fighting in a spiritual war.

While everyone's experience is different, when we look at a majority of Messianic congregations and synagogues, it is easily discerned how they tend to be led almost entirely by men. And when we see that main people being attracted to Messianic congregations, at present, are fundamentalist Christians—we should hardly be surprised. A majority of today's evangelical Protestants—and certainly members of the Jewish community—would expect both males *and* females to serve together, and be involved in decision

making. Much of the unwillingness, to consider evangelical positions much more favorable to women serving in formal leadership capacities in ministry—very much based in reasonable exegesis of the Holy Scriptures—often comes in the form of thinking that opening up positions of leadership to women, will then be a slippery slope leading to LGBTQ+ persons in leadership. But that is no more inevitable than how a Torah observant lifestyle will lead to gross legalism, or how a person reading ancient Jewish literature will eventually deny Yeshua as Messiah. **So how does the Lord need to deliver our faith community from femiphobia?**

Overcoming Our Insecurities

Even though I have just talked through a number of the significant insecurities I believe today's Messianic movement has—and needs to definitely work through in the days ahead, to improve its effectiveness—each and every one of us has our own insecurities to deal with. We live in an increasingly complicated world, with sin and God-lessness on the exponential rise. We see apostasy all around us. We see many things getting hopelessly out of control. Every day we go before the Lord in prayer, and often ask Him *to just get us through this...*

I have been outmaneuvering and outflanking different opinions and points of view, I disagree with, my entire ministry career. There are some things about the development of the Messianic movement, which I have witnessed over the past decade, I am not happy about—and I am sure that many of you may share these feelings. We find ourselves in the midst of a spiritual war, and with our God in Heaven continually trying *to get our attention*, so that we might be readied to take on new challenges. And it doubtlessly takes faith, and the ability to recognize how we mortals cannot see everything (Hebrews 11:1)!

I was recently challenged in a morning prayer time, regarding how each one of us can better see our insecurities overcome. The most interesting verse came to mind, as Yeshua said, "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' [Psalm 118:26]" (Matthew 23:39, NASU). Far too frequently, in one's Messianic experience, the first words which can be invoked when meeting someone, might be: *Are you Jewish? Are you Messianic? Are you Torah observant? Are you...some human label?* Far too infrequently, the goodness and blessing of Israel's God, from one person to another, is not invoked.

Those who are able to extend God's blessings, *shalom*, and welcome to another, are those who have largely overcome their insecurities. How do each of us need to be better committed to His grace in our lives?