



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



JANUARY 2024

THERE IS NO MESSIANIC JEWISH MONOLITH
Are Non-Jewish Believers Really Second Class Citizens?

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Cover Image: Johannes Krupinski

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

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OIM UPDATE

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J.K. McKee

One of the most significant issues, which just about every man or woman in the contemporary Messianic movement has had to sort through at some point, involves the controversial question: **Are non-Jewish Believers**

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second class citizens in the Messianic community? This is a question which gets circulated at various high points, during different seasons in the development of our theology and spirituality. And, this is a question which can be quite provocative and divisive at times. Yet, it is also a question which tends to be asked by many of those, not only seeking some degree of resolution, but who want to precisely stop any schisms, rivalry, mistrust, or bitterness to break out among Messiah followers.

What is the short answer I give to the question? *Everyone's experience is different.* And the reason behind this kind of short answer is: there is no Messianic Jewish monolith. Anyone who looks back at Biblical history, going back to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, should be able to easily recognize how the original population at Mount Sinai was diverse! While the people were to be bound by the common experience of having been delivered by God via the Exodus, whether it be Ancient Israel in the Promised Land, Second Temple Judaism, or modern Judaism—there has always been a wide degree of internal diversity.

So, as it concerns the issue of non-Jewish Believers being involved in today's Messianic movement, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. There are Messianic Jewish congregations and leaders which are welcoming and inclusive, there are those which are not too welcoming or inclusive, and then there are those which are in some phase of improvement. Likewise, there are non-Jewish Believers drawn to Messianic things who are eager to learn, actively participate in the Messianic mission of Jewish outreach and evangelism, and will humbly take correction when necessary. There are other non-Jewish people who enter into Messianic venues, whose personality may come into immediate conflict with Messianic Jewish Believers, and who are probably not too compatible with the Messianic mission and being sensitive to various Jewish matters.

Ancient Israel Was to be a Welcoming Community

During the period of the judgments upon Egypt during the Exodus, the God of Israel declared to the Egyptian Pharaoh, "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth" (Exodus 8:16, NASU). While the God of Israel was in the process of humiliating the Fifteenth/Thirteenth Century B.C.E. superpower—because of them enslaving His chosen people—He did so with the express intention of demonstrating His mightiness to the whole of humanity. The assertion, of the Lord in Exodus 19:5, further demonstrates how His selection of Israel proper as His own, is hardly to the isolation of His intentions for the world at large: "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine" (NASU). The selection of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and the unique destiny that the Creator has had for them—was not so that they could be a special and unique people, closed off and isolated unto themselves.

As God delivered the people of Israel from their Egyptian servitude, it is recorded how it was not only ethnic Hebrews—but also a "mixed multitude" (Exodus 12:38, NASU) or "Many other people" (NIV)—who left with them. These were non-Israelites who recognized the One God of Israel, and joined into the community of Israel. Throughout the Torah, they are often classified as being *gerim*, sojourners or aliens, who were definitely a part of the community of Ancient Israel along with those native born.

Various *gerim* or sojourners were often a particularly vulnerable class, along with widows and the poor (cf. Leviticus 19:10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:14). It was explicitly commanded of Ancient Israel in Leviticus 19:34, "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God" (NASU). Deuteronomy 10:19 also stated, "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (NASU). Many of the *gerim* doubtlessly entered into the community of Ancient Israel, because of the mechanisms in place for material support, such as being able to glean from fields. Not having a home elsewhere, native born Israelites were to be sure to welcome them in and love them—not forgetting the goodness and kindness of the God who was faithful to deliver their own ancestors from the oppression of Egypt. The sojourner, among the different groups of Ancient Israelite society, was enjoined to learn and keep the commandments of Moses' Teaching (Deuteronomy 31:12). While it is naïve to conclude that the native born and sojourner within Ancient Israel were exactly the same, it is fair to deduce how the native born and sojourner had far more in common than not.

That Ancient Israel was to be a community which made an impact beyond itself, is easily seen in the prayer issued by King Solomon at the dedication of the First Temple:

“Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name” (1 Kings 8:41-43, NASU).

The physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who we would acknowledge as Israel proper—had a God-given responsibility to be welcoming of any outsiders who would enter into the community, recognize the One God of Creation, and honor His statutes.

There are many Messianic Jewish individuals, and congregational leaders, who legitimately recognize how the community of Ancient Israel was to be welcoming and loving of the outsiders who entered in. They have used this as a framework for approaching the many non-Jewish Believers who have come into their congregations and synagogues, so that they might find a place of belonging. But, this has sadly not been the case with everyone.

The Distinction of Israel Proper

Given the fact that throughout the Tanach (OT) Scriptures, our Creator had made significant promises to the physical progeny of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—it should be no surprise how He has doubtlessly been concerned with their preservation and uniqueness. Severe warnings were issued by Moses to Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy, as the population was being readied to enter into the Promised Land. Among the many admonitions made, Deuteronomy 18:9 does stand out: “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations” (NASU). The Lord was not going to free His people from Egyptian bondage, and prepare them during the wilderness sojourn—for them to only enter into their inheritance, and find themselves engulfed by Canaanite paganism.

That there were major levels of success *and* failure, on the part of Ancient Israel and the Jewish community—to not be ensnared by pagan influences—is witnessed throughout both the record of the Tanach and ancient history. Significant challenges ensued for the exiles which returned from Babylon, regarding intermarriage with local pagan women. The Book of Ezra

specifically detailed the problem of how Jewish men had married foreign wives—which they had to put away precisely because it would have endangered the survival of the Jewish people. The threat of pagan assimilation—a temptation to abandon the One God of Israel, and the ways of His Torah—was especially piqued during the Maccabean Crisis, when observance of various Torah practices was threatened with death by the Seleucid Greeks.

To be sure, while many in either Ancient Israel or the Second Temple Jewish community, unfortunately succumbed to temptation—many were seen to rightfully stand against the influence of paganism, and stress the significance of fidelity to God’s Instruction and the importance of their heritage. Yet by the First Century C.E., as the good news of Yeshua the Messiah began spreading into the wider Mediterranean—various overly-conservative Jewish Believers had to have much of their worldview challenged, especially as it concerned the integration of Greeks and Romans into the community of faith. Much of Second Temple Judaism, particularly among a sect such as the Pharisees, was concerned with maintaining Jewish identity and cohesion, wanting to erect safeguards against pagan influence: especially polytheism and sexual immorality. While in much of the Diaspora, various Greeks and Romans were attracted to the ethics and morality of the Torah, and voluntarily took on many Torah practices such as the Sabbath and dietary laws—it was widely believed that unless a non-Jew were circumcised as a proselyte, that one could not participate in the future age (m.*Sanhedrin* 10:1). The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 came together, and ruled how the new, non-Jewish Believers did not have to be circumcised as such to be reckoned as saved members of the community of faith, as redemption for both Jew and non-Jewish came from the grace of the Lord Yeshua (Acts 15:11).

The restoration of Israel’s Kingdom, as anticipated by the Prophets, was to be something which involved not only Israel proper but those from the nations as well (i.e., Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 60:3). James the Just testified how the Tabernacle of David was being restored (Acts 15:15-18), quoting Amos 9:11-12 in its Septuagint version—a picture of a restored Twelve Tribes of Israel at the center, and then enlarged borders to welcome in the righteous from the nations, into Israel’s Kingdom realm. To be sure, the First Century Apostles wanted to see Jewish and non-Jewish people not only brought to saving faith in the Messiah of Israel, but for them to be co-laborers in the restoration of Israel’s Kingdom, heralding the return of Yeshua (cf. Acts 1:6). Certainly, across today’s Messianic community, it is recognized how the restoration of Israel envisioned by the Apostles, is still something to be realized. But, it is also probably true that the modern Messianic movement is the first faith community, since the First Century, to consciously place this Apostolic expectation at the heart and center of its mission and ethos.

One New Humanity Brought Forth

One of the things which today's Messianic Jewish movement has been entirely right to stress in its reading of the Apostolic Scriptures (NT), is that Jewishness and Jewish identity are something important. When a Jewish person comes to recognize Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel, the last thing he or she should conclude, is that this constitutes giving up one's Jewish heritage—yet this is precisely what has been witnessed throughout many centuries of historical Christianity! Many non-Jewish Believers, entering into the Messianic movement, have had a significant theological adjustment when truly weighing the gravity of Paul's assertion, "Then what is the advantage of being Jewish? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Much in every way. First of all, they were entrusted with the sayings of God" (Romans 3:1-2, TLV). Even a seemingly negative word, such as Romans 11:28-29, detailed how in spite of a widescale First Century rejection by the Jewish people of their Messiah, they were still to be regarded as chosen of God and possessing an irrevocable calling: "Concerning the Good News, they are hostile for your sake; but concerning chosenness, they are loved on account of the fathers—for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (TLV).

Much of the warning issued in Romans chs. 9-11, to the non-Jewish Believers, was to not be arrogant or hostile, to a Jewish community which had largely dismissed Yeshua as Messiah. Many of us in today's Messianic community are indeed witnessing some of the expectation of Romans 11:11-12: "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their false step salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy. Now if their transgression leads to riches for the world, and their loss riches for the Gentiles, then how much more their fullness!" (TLV). We believe that the many multitudes of Messianic Jewish people, on the scene of history today, is an indication of how the world is getting closer to the return of the Messiah. **And for this, we should all rejoice!**

However, the place of non-Jewish Believers, and specifically the issue of Jewish and non-Jewish equality in the Body of Messiah, has been one of the most difficult matters for our faith community to sort through. Some of this is due to various overly-conservative theological influences, and some of this is due to a number of insecurities on the part of some of the older, Messianic Jewish pioneers. Many are unwilling to sit down and reevaluate some of their long held beliefs, and others who want to see various reforms and changes implemented, can get impatient and even a little hostile. Throughout much of the broad Messianic movement, you will indeed hear the exclaim that "Jew and Gentile are to be one new man in Yeshua," but probing

what this actually is to mean *and* the spiritual power accessible, is an ongoing process for many of us.

Galatians 3:28 is commonly regarded as one of the most significant Biblical passages, regarding human equality in the Body of Messiah. Paul asserted, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for you are all one in Messiah *Yeshua*" (TLV). It is entirely correct to recognize how this verse stresses the universal availability of *Yeshua*'s salvation to all ethnicities and classes of people, and those of both genders. It is also entirely correct to recognize how these groups of people hardly disappear or go away, because of Messiah faith. But it has also been frequently recognized that a schism which was introduced via the Fall (i.e., Genesis 3:16), has been overturned via the work of *Yeshua* on the tree and the post-resurrection era He has inaugurated. Many examiners will note how the three categories Paul indicated in Galatians 3:28, appeared in an ancient Jewish prayer—where an observant Jewish male would have thanked God for not being made a Gentile/pagan, a slave, or a woman:

"R. Judah says, 'A man must recite three benedictions every day: "Praised [be Thou, O Lord...] who did not make me a gentile; Praised [be Thou, O Lord...] who did not make me a boor; Praised [be Thou, O Lord...] who did not make me a woman" (t.*Berachot* 6:18; Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew With a New Introduction*, 2 vols. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002], 1:42).

It is rightfully concluded how the Apostle Paul's words in Galatians 3:28 *directly subverted* this ancient Jewish prayer—and in the same order no less! While natural distinctions among human people do not disappear because of Messiah faith, they do understandably find themselves partially blurred, because of the overriding significance of *Yeshua*'s sacrifice and resurrection for all concerned. Distinctions which naturally exist, be they of ethnicity or gender, are not to be barriers to service in the Body of Messiah. Rather, all who are in the Messiah possess gifts, talents, and skills which are to mutually bless and enrich one another. A wide number of non-Jewish Believers, who have participated in the Messianic movement at one point or another, have not always seen a wide array of their abilities and contributions properly employed—because not enough within our faith community, at present, are willing to consider the egalitarian implications of Galatians 3:28.

Today's Messianic movement has been correct to stress how in *Yeshua* the Messiah, Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to be "one new man"—or perhaps better stated, "one new humanity" (Grk. *hena kainon anthrōpon*). Yet in the famed passage of Ephesians 2:14-16, the emergence of a one new hu-

manity—notably purged of the sin-laden effects and prejudices of the old humanity—had to be inaugurated by the sacrificial work of the Messiah, His termination of an enmity between the Jewish people and the nations, and what was specified as Him breaking down the middle wall of partition separating the two groups:

“For He is our peace, who made both *groups* one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the *religious* Law of commandments in dogmas, that He might create in Himself the two into one new humanity, *so* making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the wooden scaffold, having killed the enmity by it” (Ephesians 2:14-16, PME).

It is entirely incorrect to conclude that Jewish and non-Jewish Believers becoming one, means they become exactly, one-hundred percent the same; the vision of Revelation 21:3 is a people of God made up of “peoples” (NRSV). But what is definitely seen is a stress on the common work of Yeshua on behalf of all, and the tearing down of necessary barriers for inclusion within the Kingdom of God.

Within the Second Temple, a barrier wall was erected, separating out the Court of the Gentiles from the interior complex. Its intention was to prevent the introduction of pagan desecrations. Greeks and Romans who crossed this barrier, were to immediately be executed (Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 15.417; *Wars of the Jews* 5.194). Yet, while intending to protect the sanctity of the Temple and Judaism, the barrier wall in the Second Temple complex was never something specified to be constructed in the Torah itself—and it symbolically represented any Second Temple Jewish mechanisms to have people prevented from coming to the God of Israel, rather than being welcomed in by the God of Israel. Clearly, the work of Yeshua the Messiah, being sacrificed on the tree for all human sinners, was to render whatever the dividing wall represented, **entirely inoperative for those in Him**. Many of today’s Messianic Jewish leaders recognize how the Kingdom of God is to be a welcome place, for all who turn to the God of Israel via His Son Yeshua—and indeed how the barrier wall of the Second Temple was not at all something He intended.

One of the most significant representations of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, in the Body of Messiah, is witnessed in Paul’s depiction of the olive tree (Romans 11:17-24). His main intention was actually to warn the non-Jewish Believers not to be arrogant against the natural branches of the Jewish people, stressing how if the God of Israel would prune His tree of natural branches to make room for wild branches—He could just as easily prune His tree of wild branches grafted-in. The olive tree metaphor contained a warn-

ing not to rejoice over the widescale, First Century Jewish dismissal of Yeshua as Israel's Messiah. Nevertheless, the olive tree metaphor did contain the assertion, "For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree" (Romans 11:24, TLV). Non-Jewish Believers were to be reckoned as wild olive branches, alongside of natural olive branches, in the olive tree. Non-Jewish Believers were not apple or cherry branches grafted-in to the olive tree. All were reckoned to be olive branches—meaning that while there were various kind of olives, each possessing various distinct flavors as it were—their commonality as olives is noticeably more important. And while there are various debates seen regarding what the olive tree, either wild or natural branches are grafted-in to, actually is—the Tanach background behind Paul's metaphor indicates how Israel was the olive tree:

"The LORD called your name, 'A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form'; with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless. The LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you because of the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me by offering up sacrifices to Baal" (Jeremiah 11:16-17, NASU).

"Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity and receive *us* graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips. Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses; nor will we say again, "Our god," to the work of our hands; for in You the orphan finds mercy.' I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like the lily, and he will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*. His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree and his fragrance like *the cedars of Lebanon*. Those who live in his shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine. His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon" (Hosea 14:1-7, NASU).

One of the ongoing challenges within today's Messianic community, regarding the presence of the one new man/humanity—is in reorienting the spiritual motives and focus onto common faith in Israel's Messiah **first**. Natural identities, be they Jewish or non-Jewish, are hardly to disappear in the Messiah; **but His completed work in being sacrificed and resurrected for us, is to be where we primarily center our identity as redeemed human beings.**

Are Non-Jewish Believers Really Second Class Citizens?

The original question of whether non-Jewish Believers are second class citizens in the Messianic Jewish movement, depends not only on what venue one is a part of, **but also the extent to which common faith in Israel's Messiah is given the main priority for spiritual identity and focus.** Today's Messianic movement is rightly acknowledged to be *the emerging Messianic movement*, because this is an issue which many are still sorting through, on various levels. And this is why it is often stressed why non-Jewish Believers have to be specially called by the Lord into the Messianic community, certainly at its present phase of theological, spiritual, and sociological development. You have to be willing to be patient, and let time and the Holy Spirit, naturally take their course and perform some work.

One of the major things, which today's Messianic Jewish movement might improve upon, is in discussing some of the challenges and difficulties faced by the Jewish people and Messianic Jewish pioneers—which many, if not most, of those from a Hebrew/Hebraic Roots, or even One Law/One Torah to Pronomian Christian perspective, are not taking into conscious consideration. This not only includes the complicated history of Church and Synagogue over many centuries, and broken promises by the Gentile world powers to the Jewish people—but also the high rejection of the Messianic Jewish pioneers by fellow members of the Jewish community. Many non-Jewish people who enter into Messianic venues, demanding immediate equality and involvement in the assembly—are not at all informed about how many of the Messianic Jewish pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s were considered dead by their Jewish families, the Jewish community, and how Messianic Judaism was originally setup to be a safe place of solace for Jewish Believers in Yeshua. Perhaps if they took this into more consideration, a greater level of forbearance would manifest.

For the future, as we get closer to the return of Yeshua, Jewish and non-Jewish Believers more ably functioning together as one new man/humanity, should be better seen. At many Messianic Jewish congregations, non-Jewish (male) Believers, are definitely witnessed in all levels of local leadership. At the recent 2024 IAMCS Rabbis Conference, I indeed saw many non-Jewish Believers licensed as Messianic Pastors and Teachers (and this actually included two females). While all of us are limited by our humanity, the Messianic experience, and Messianic spectrum, have demonstrably changed from when our family was originally summoned by the Lord into this in 1995. ***There is still much progress to be made.*** I continue to steadily find my own place as a teacher and leader. But I have confidence that our best days are ahead of us, provided we are willing to make the adjustments and improvements, as He supernaturally guides us to His purposes.