

OIM UPDATE

November 2011

The start of November is always a time of reflection and introspection for our family, as we invariably recall the beginning of Outreach Israel Ministries back in 2002. While it is humbling to realize that nine full years have already transpired since we stepped out in faith to serve the Lord as an educational ministry, it is *most encouraging* to know that He has been pleased to provide for our needs through the faithful prayers and support of many of you who receive this newsletter. We are deeply grateful for your trust in our efforts, and pray that our dedication and work unto the Lord will continue to bless you—and the multitude of others—who freely receive our teachings because of your partnership with us.

In recent months, as many of you are aware, we have been expanding our outreach with the **Prison Ministry—Free Book Fund**, and have been delighted by the response from those desiring written materials, to further their understanding of what the Messianic walk of faith entails. Some of the feedback includes this letter from a prison inmate:

*Your insights into the Messianic faith have enabled me to restore a relationship with my pastor I thought was lost for good. No matter how I tried I could not get him to understand that we are not counting on works to save us. **But through your books I was able to show him how both faith and works coupled with obedience is what the Father requires of us.** Thank you.*

It is definitely through letters like these that we remain encouraged to press on to fulfill our family calling. We also receive inspiring messages like this, from a missionary in the Philippines, who is using our teachings with his students:

*A few years ago, I printed your writings for the current Torah Readings with your eDrashes. I was asked to go to **a group of emerging Christian Messianics**. As a result, last year, the senior home missionary of this Leyte Philippines area came to me and reported that as a result of me reading your eDrashes wearing my Kapah and Prayer Shawl, it convinced 1,000 communists to **abandon communism** and join their group. He was delighted! Thanks for your efforts!*

From the beginning of OIM, we have faithfully followed Yeshua's instruction, "freely you received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8b), and the fruit of following such a method for distributing our teachings continues to grow. This has been most clearly evident in the past two months, via our new outreach on our **Outreach Israel Facebook "like" page** (facebook.com/outreachisraelministries). This is another "free"—and extremely efficient and resourceful way—to impact others, who can then pass on our teachings. If you are on Facebook and have not yet "liked" our page, please go ahead and do so now, so you can send on our teachings to your friends!

Finally, in last month's issue of OIM News, I had a recent "reboot" of faith during the Fall high holidays. I have started to work on a new series of Torah teachings for this reading cycle, with an emphasis on the necessity of faith. With this in mind, I have been led to write this month's lead article on "A Messianic Measure of Faith." Hopefully, this word will encourage each of you to ask the Lord for an increased measure of faith, so that we can all continue to fulfill the good works He has prepared us:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

And as always, "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).

Advancing His kingdom, until the restoration of all things...
Mark Huey

A MESSIANIC MEASURE OF FAITH

by Mark Huey

Have you ever considered just what constitutes a *Messianic* walk of faith, and the measure of faith or one's trust in God that is required in order to properly live it forth? These important concepts have come to my mind frequently in recent weeks, as I made the concerted effort to "reboot" my personal walk of faith through the Fall feasts (see my article "Tishri: Seventh Month Reboot" in last month's OIM News), and began once again to reflect upon the new Torah cycle through an analytical lens of faith. In so doing, the concept of "walking by faith" has been steadily percolating in my thoughts, as I restudy the examples of both faithful *and* faithless persons, as their various actions are recorded for us in the Holy Writ. This has been a great blessing to me personally, as I reaffirm my faith by testing, and I reexamine where I need to be. As Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 13:5,

"Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Yeshua the Messiah is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?"

Once again I recognize the profound benefits of systematically reviewing the walk of faith, exhibited by the cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1) who have left an enduring legacy of what it truly means to place total belief and confidence in the Lord. Inevitably in my studies, I have been drawn quite often to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and have been reminded of the astute definition of faith that its author employs, by asserting, "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Here, we find a description of faith which refers to hope or belief in the Sovereign and Supreme God, as an intangible attribute that somehow imperceptibly wells up in an individual's heart, mind, and very soul. Faith is a characteristic of someone who believes in the Eternal One in ways that ultimately cannot be tangibly described.

With this somewhat theoretical meaning, I have instinctively been turning to some additional Scriptures, attempting to receive some further clarification about faith and its origin. One particularly intriguing verse I have been led to is Romans 12:3, in a section where the Apostle Paul wanted the Roman Believers to all get along and rely more and more on each other:

"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

In this statement, Paul informed his readers that the God of Israel has allotted to each person a "measure of faith," which leads one to conclude that the "measure" or amount of faith is not necessarily always equal, when it comes to

individual Believers. We know from countless examples in the Bible (Hebrews 11 and elsewhere) that different people have either exercised remarkable faith, achieving great exploits, or on the other hand, have displayed a lack of faith resulting by being largely remembered in disfavor.

Even Yeshua recognized a “measure of faith” in His teachings, as He spoke of the great or greater faith exhibited by the centurion who desired his servant to be healed (Matthew 8:5-10; Luke 7:6-9), or the Canaanite woman who pleaded for healing of her daughter (Matthew 15:22-28). Yeshua also described a littleness of faith, which can be measured when compared to the size of a mustard seed:

“And He said to them, ‘**Because of the littleness of your faith**; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you” (Matthew 17:20).

While a small amount of faith is not something to be disrespected, if sincere it possesses the capacity to perform great things for the Lord. So, each person’s “measure of faith” can range from being rather little, to being immensely great—depending on God’s sovereign allotment to chosen individuals. Additionally, in reviewing some of the surrounding verses of where Paul had made the assertion about a “measure of faith,” we see that he has also listed some of the spiritual gifts that should be exercised according to a “proportion of faith.” Faith is measured out in different proportions to its recipients:

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Messiah, and individually members one of another. Since **we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly**: if prophecy, **according to the proportion of his faith**; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:1-8).

In another listing of different spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul included the “gift of faith” as one of the many gifts, which the Holy One distributes as He wills to members of His people:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; **to another faith by the same Spirit**, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the

same Spirit works all these things, **distributing to each one individually just as He wills**" (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

With a recognition that God providentially allots *differing measures* of faith to individuals, and additionally distributes the spiritual *gift of faith* to certain of His followers—would it not be prudent for those lacking in faith to ask, or even *plead*, for Him to increase their measure of faith? Should it not be necessary for each of us to get on our knees and diligently ask the Father for the gift of faith? Yeshua directed His followers to ask their Heavenly Father for the good gifts:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:7-11).

Of course, it is critical to note that when any one of us asks the Heavenly Father for more faith, it is essential to fervently pray while not losing heart. *We might not receive what we request of Him immediately.* The primary example of this is mentioned by Yeshua in His example of the widow seeking legal protection from the unrighteous judge. He used this as a means by which to commend the need to have persistent faith:

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, 'In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, "Give me legal protection from my opponent." For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, "Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out."' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?'" (Luke 18:1-8).

With these examples of different measures of faith present in the Bible, it is my conviction—from witnessing the explosive growth of, and serving the Messianic community of faith for the past sixteen years—that the God of Israel has given a unique measure of faith, to many of those being led into this culminating move of the Holy Spirit. There is little doubt that since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, that we are certainly witnessing many of the end-time scenarios, foreseen by the Prophets of old, begin to take steady shape. When interacting with various thousands of Messianic Believers around the world, I have taken note that it is generally the zealous seekers of God, who by their own testimonies, are eventually led to embrace a Messianic lifestyle, just as our family has. I do believe we have entered into the season which the

Apostle Peter called “the restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21).

The need for today’s Messianic Believers to be allotted a measure of faith in the Holy One of Israel, is a bit heightened by how we see Paul’s description of the spiritual gifts being distributed (Romans 12:1-8), and preceded by the salvation historical summary of Romans chs. 9-11. Without going into great detail, these three chapters are immensely important for understanding the future redemption of Israel, First Century issues regarding a widescale Jewish dismissal of the Messiah Yeshua, and what it means for those from the nations to be “grafted in.” Our faith community has some distinct opinions and perspectives offered surrounding Romans chs. 9-11, some of them being good, *and* some of them likely in need of improvement. Perhaps about all of us can agree on is that we have not fully arrived at that point when “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26).

The modern-day Messianic movement obviously has some expected differences of opinion, given the divergent backgrounds and theological persuasions of Messianic teachers and leaders. Bringing Jewish and non-Jewish Believers together in one accord, is by no means something that is easy. In our family’s time in the Messianic movement, we have seen a great deal of discord, disharmony, and disrespect of both groups toward the other. From our perspective, while we have witnessed Jewish Believers disparage non-Jewish Believers, and vice versa—Paul was very strident to the non-Jewish Believers in Rome that the original calling that the Lord had placed upon the Jewish people was by **no means revoked**. While the good news has gone to all, and consequently all people are called of the God of Israel—widespread Jewish rejection of Yeshua does not validate a widespread non-Jewish disrespect of either Judaism or the Jewish people. Romans 11:28-36 summarizes how God’s mercy shown to the nations is to cause non-Jewish Believers to demonstrate mercy to the Jews:

“From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God’s* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; **for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable**. For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, **that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy**. For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR [Isaiah 40:13]? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN [Job 41:3]? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:28-36).

The brilliant Apostle Paul, in ending Romans ch. 11 with a doxology of great glory to God, was utterly overwhelmed with His plan for the ages. He waxed eloquent, being unable to fathom all of the unsearchable depths of God’s wisdom. While it has not always been easy because of negative human

attitudes, in our Messianic pursuits as a family we have done our best to make sure that we are agents of Yeshua's love, mercy, and grace to His Jewish people. Because of the mercy shown to us, being of the nations, we are to show mercy to them—so that they might be saved (cf. Romans 9:2). The requirement upon *all of us* as God's people, after all, is to serve one another as a living sacrifice *together*. We are to constantly act as though we are joined with one another in worship, so that our hearts and minds might be focused on the Father's will, and that we accomplish His purposes for the Creation with excellence, in the sight of His holiness. Romans 12:1-2 follows Paul's doxology with the following important admonition:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect**” (Romans 12:1-2).

Reflecting on this powerful exhortation, and its unique place in close proximity to Romans chs. 9-11, is surely something that should be a bit thought provoking for many of us. Romans 12:1-2 is an admonition that many of today's evangelical Christians hear, when they are told that they need to live more like Jesus. Romans chs. 9-11 are verses that many of us as Messianics read, when we try to figure out what is to take place regarding the Jewish people and the nations' place within the community of Israel. Not enough of us probably make a connection between Believers recognizing what is at work regarding the restoration of Israel *and* Believers all living as a (corporate) holy and living sacrifice! Yet, it is surely important if the Lord is in the process of preparing a generation for the eventual restoration of all things. And surely, while there are theological obstacles to be overcome in such a restoration process, making sure that we are all living holy lives where we execute the will of the flesh (cf. Romans 6:6)—is most imperative. Each one of us probably still has various issues of pride or self-importance that we need to see taken care of:

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to **think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment**, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

Is this at all connected to what Paul had said earlier, in Romans 11:17-21, about the wild branches from the nations, being engrafted into Israel's olive tree beside the natural branches of the Jewish people?

“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, **do not be arrogant toward the branches**; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either” (Romans 11:17-21).

Paul understood that even if someone were to totally dedicate his or her

life to the Lord's service, and avoid being conformed to the world by a renewing of the mind, there was still the base human tendency for some to think more highly of themselves, regardless of the measure of faith allotted. And so, he rightly admonished Messiah followers to instead have "sound judgment." Those who are in the Messiah, after all, are new persons who have been transformed by a cleansing of sin from their hearts and minds, and they are to be committed to a new life of holiness and love in Him:

"For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Messiah controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Messiah according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. **Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, *he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come***" (2 Corinthians 5:13-17).

A "sound mind" is not only present within a person who knows and proclaims the good news of Messiah Yeshua, but he or she *also understands* that living for the Messiah in love is of paramount importance—as definite evidence of being a "new creature."

A greater measure of faith is needed for all people within today's emerging Messianic movement. We are a unique faith community which possesses a significant amount of potential to make a difference for the Lord in our generation. There is a great amount of power when Jewish and non-Jewish Believers come together in one accord, worshipping God, knowing Yeshua, and being led by the Spirit. *The enemy knows this*, and it is precisely why there is so much division, religious politicking, and overall discord among different Messianic sub-groups. We have too much rivalry and contention, rather than cooperation and a focus on the actions of faith required of us (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:3).

Our goal as individual Believers is to come together in the unity that only the Lord Himself can bring, as we put our steadfast trust and belief in who He is and what He is doing. If we can do this, then no matter what measure of faith each one of us has individually received, the corporate obstacles that we all face together will eventually be overcome, and God's Kingdom will surely win! For assuredly, it is His ultimate plan that a group of saints will emerge who will know the Messiah Yeshua and obey His commandments (Revelation 12:14, 14:17). I believe that the Messianic community of faith is such a prophesied people. And with sound minds, not thinking more highly of ourselves, we will learn to surely love one another—despite our diversity of backgrounds—because we are new creatures in the Messiah Yeshua. So, let each of us press into the Lord ***for an even greater measure of faith***, so that He will hear our pleas, and grant us even more faith—in order to truly overcome the challenges that lie ahead!