

**Are Non-Jewish Believers Really
A PART OF ISRAEL?**

confronting issues series

Are Non-Jewish Believers Really

A PART OF ISRAEL?

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC
APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

ARE NON-JEWISH BELIEVERS REALLY A PART OF ISRAEL?

© 2013 John Kimball McKee

repaginated 2016

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the author(s).

Cover photos: Istockphoto

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

P.O. Box 850845

Richardson, Texas 75085

(407) 933-2002

www.outreachisrael.net

www.messianicapologetics.net

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Apocrypha are from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), © 1952, Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

table of contents

INTRODUCTION	ix
NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS:	
MESSIANIC JUDAISM	1
ARE NON-JEWISH BELIEVERS REALLY	
A PART OF ISRAEL?	17
Ecclesiology: A Subject in Flux.....	22
The Jewish People Are Distinct.....	23
A Brief Summary of the Messianic Movement	29
Models of Ecclesiology Present in Contemporary Protestantism and the Messianic Movement	36
The Term Ekklesia	42
What do the Apostolic Scriptures say regarding non-Jewish Believers and Israel?	53
Matthew 16:18-19.....	54
John 10:14-18	62
Acts 1:6.....	66
Acts 2:36-39.....	70
Acts 15:15-18.....	72
Romans 2:28-29	83
Romans 9:3-6	89
Romans 9:23-29	93
Romans 11:16-24	99
Romans 11:25-29	108
Romans 16:4.....	119
1 Corinthians 10:1-11, 18.....	122
Galatians 2:7-10.....	126

Galatians 6:15-16	130
Ephesians 2:11-13; 3:6	136
Titus 2:13-14	161
1 Peter 2:9-11	165
Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6.....	170
Zechariah 8:23 Ten Taking Hold Versus Making Proselytes.....	174
The First Century Non-Jewish Believers, and the Messianic Movement Today	179
Being Careful and Watching One's Terms.....	183
The Final Stages of Salvation History	186
Non-Jewish Believers Really Being a Part of Israel.....	189
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	195
BIBLIOGRAPHY	197

abbreviation chart and special terms

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	understand what a Biblical text means on its own
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	Ger: German
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	GNT: Greek New Testament
Ara: Aramaic	Grk: Greek
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	Heb: Hebrew
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Ba'ali, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	KJV: King James Version
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore</i> (1996)
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to	

LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*
NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world

OT: Old Testament
PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
TLV: Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible—New Covenant (2011)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
Yid: Yiddish
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

Introduction

The *Confronting Issues* series began in 2007, as a selection of small stapled booklets, comprising a rather forthright article or two produced by Outreach Israel Ministries and (now) Messianic Apologetics. Today in 2012-2013, because of the significant wave of changes and transitions occurring within the broad Messianic community, the *Confronting Issues* series has been retooled a bit, into small books, addressing some of the major debates of the day. It would be our hope and prayer that these new releases are able to interject a well-needed perspective into the conversation regarding the different topics of importance, offering fair-minded and constructive solutions, which carefully address the Biblical text, and can sincerely help Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in their walk with Yeshua the Messiah.

The current Messianic Jewish movement has been around for a half century or so, since the 1960s. Along with this have been various non-Jewish Messianic offshoots, in various ways focusing on the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots or the Jewish Roots of Christianity, and/or Torah study and observance for Believers, on various levels. A great number of genuine positive things have been seen, as Jewish people have come to faith in Yeshua, and non-Jewish Believers have been exposed to the origins of their Messiah faith in Judaism. But in all of the time that has taken place, Messianic theology has not at all developed to the degree that it should have. With all of the years that have gone by, and with certainly all of the resources that have been invested into either Jewish ministry or Hebraic Roots, one would naturally expect much more to have been written and compiled on an entire array of important theological and spiritual issues—a transcribed legacy of documented research and worthwhile postulations to hand to the next generation, as they continue the work of the Kingdom of God.

In the 2010s, there is going to be a significant amount of “catching up” to do in Messianic theology, particularly as there are too many assumptions made by people in our broad faith community which need to be challenged, or at least evaluated on some significant level. A less charismatic and a more systematic approach to many, many issues is

necessary. Many of the people, and even some leaders and teachers, within parts of the Messianic community, need to be less anti-intellectual than they might tend to be—and/or need to steadfastly avoid the great amount of problems caused by a group-think or horde mentality. Many people also need to steadfastly avoid the violent currents and eddies which have been caused by a rather uncivilized Messianic blogosphere, and an abuse of other online social media.

A distinct area of theology that Messianic people are likely to hear more and more about in this decade is **ecclesiology**. But other than being some technical term, what is ecclesiology and what does it involve? A standard definition of ecclesiology is provided by the *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*:

“The area of theological study concerned with understanding the church (derived from the Greek word *ekklēsia* [ἐκκλησία], ‘church’). Ecclesiology seeks to set forth the nature and function of church. It also investigates issues such as the mission, ministry and structure of the church, as well as its role in the overall plan of God.”ⁱ

The composition of the people of God, as broad and deep as this sector of theology is, is a definite place where some important, imperative, and critical thinking and reflection are surely needed by today’s Messianic Believers. Ecclesiology is not an area of theology that enough Messiah followers adequately understand *or* appreciate the importance of. To far too many, it is just a big word without a great deal of significance. Yet, given what many of today’s Messianic Believers, Jewish and non-Jewish, are convicted of, have read in Scripture, and have had the witness of the Holy Spirit of regarding the likely future of the still-emerging and still-developing Messianic movement, ecclesiology is something that is very important.

Why is understanding ecclesiology so important? Initially, given the predisposition to describe the theological sector of ecclesiology as “The study of the church as a biblical and theological topic” (*Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*),ⁱⁱ the question for many Messianics is whether or not the term *ekklēsia* should even be translated as “church” in English Bibles. Given the background of the term *ekklēsia* (ἐκκλησία) via the Greek Septuagint, often rendering the Hebrew term

ⁱ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 42.

ⁱⁱ Donald S. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 85.

qahal (קהל),ⁱⁱⁱ alternative translations such as “congregation” or “assembly” are vastly preferred. Still, there is much to be considered, explored, probed, and asked about ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology widely affects a person’s eschatology, or approach to end-time events that are supposed to occur prior to and subsequent to the Messiah’s return. For today’s Messianic movement, ecclesiology affects how Jewish and non-Jewish Believers read the Bible, and the instructions that God wants us to follow. **Ecclesiology undeniably affects the unity of Jewish Believers and Believers from the nations as one in the Body of Messiah.**

While there are many important components of ecclesiology, such as those persons who are qualified to lead and teach groups of Messiah followers,^{iv} what we are principally concerned about in this publication concerns the relationship of non-Jewish Believers—especially those who are a part of the broad Messianic movement—to Israel. Are these people just specially called of God to help with some form of “Jewish ministry,” and to live in solidarity with Messianic Jews, those who are Jewish Believers in Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah of Israel, Torah observant along with them? Or, do non-Jewish Believers in Israel’s Messiah (whether they recognize it or not) actually possess citizenship in an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel, which incorporates the righteous from the nations into the *malchut haElohim* (מְלִכּוּת הָאֱלֹהִים), the Kingdom of God? The latter position, that non-Jewish Believers are a part of an expanded or enlarged Kingdom of Israel, is the view of many, many people in the broad Messianic community—including not only many individual non-Jewish Believers, but also many individual Jewish Believers. **It is also the position defended in this publication.**

What does this mean in terms of the *ekklēsia*? Is the *ekklēsia*, an actual separate entity known as “the Church”? Or, is *ekklēsia* no different than the assembly of Israel itself—which takes Bible readers

ⁱⁱⁱ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 196 describes how *ekklēsia* “in the Septuagint [is] often equivalent to קהל [*qahal*], the assembly of the Israelites,” and would have been specifically employed by the Apostles to describe the First Century Body of Messiah’s undeniable origins in Ancient Israel.

Cf. K.L. Schmidt, “*ekklēsia*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp 397-402.

^{iv} I.e., the debate in much of evangelical Christianity between complementarians and egalitarians, and whether or not females can be ordained leaders in the Body of Messiah.

Be sure to consult the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, “Women in Ministry.” Also consult the useful publications James R. Beck, ed., *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

back to the mixed multitude of physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *and* the welcomed persons from the nations, who received His Ten Words and Instruction at the base of Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 12:38)? Did Yeshua the Messiah come to found a separate group of elect called “the Church,” or did He come to rebuild and restore His Father’s assembly of righteous ones (cf. Matthew 16:18; Jeremiah 33:7, LXX), restoring the Kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6)?

The next big phase of Messianic theological and spiritual development will be in place for the next two decades or so (2010s-2020s). *What will we do?* Obviously, being open to the Holy Spirit is absolutely required and imperative, but so is evaluating Holy Scripture, and having a focus centered on the legitimate trajectory of salvation history. We also have to be willing to recognize how riddled much of our faith community has been with religious politics and maneuvering, and try our best to stay out of it for the sake of the Lord’s purposes, and for our own objective reasoning.

Much of what is discussed in this publication will lay out for you not only some answers to critical questions, but also put forward some challenges, per what is foretold to take place in future prophecy. This publication is intended for both Jewish and non-Jewish Messianics alike, but understandably might have a little more importance for the latter group, in the event that they are struggling to find a place of comfort and solace in the current Messianic movement. And, given the many extremes we have seen in the broad Messianic community regarding the people of God since the mid-to-late 1990s, all of us need to be admonished a bit, and to return to a more reasonable and fair-minded course of direction.

The title of this publication, *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*, is certainly a bit provocative. It first includes a reproduction of a research paper written by my youngest sister, Maggie McKee-Huey, who is (as of the school year 2012-2013) a junior at the University of Oklahoma, which she wrote for a religious studies class. The main section is a rather long exegetical article, from which this publication’s title is derived—“**Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?**”—which seeks to address and consider the subject of ecclesiology, and issues common to the Messianic movement as they concern things like the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13), the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), being grafted-in (Romans 11:16-18), and whether “the Church” really is a second group of elect.

Regardless of where you stand on Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in the Kingdom of God, a wide range of changes are approaching our

Messianic faith community—which are going to leave a demonstrable impact on all of us, as we approach the final stages of time before the Messiah’s return. The basic choices of ecclesiology we have are stark: either God (1) has two groups of elect, or sub-peoples: Israel and “the Church”; or God (2) recognizes us all as a part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel. Will the Messianic movement emerge into something that tends to be exclusive *or* inclusive? There is much that we need to be considering from the text of Scripture, and what many have said and are likely to say, as we evaluate what our future beholds.

J.K. McKee
Editor, Messianic Apologetics

New Religious Movements: Messianic Judaism

Maggie McKee-Huey

Author's Note: The following is a college paper that my sister, Maggie McKee-Huey, wrote for a class called New Religious Movements at the University of Oklahoma (Honors 3993), where she addressed and summarized the history and development of modern Messianic Judaism. The two primary sources employed by her were Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Messianic Judaism* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000) and David H. Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement With An Ancient Past* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 2007), which are likely books that many of you have already read or encountered at some point or another.

This paper proves to be a very informative and enlightening piece on many of the components of the developments of the modern Messianic Jewish movement in the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries, and should prove to be rather helpful as we each evaluate what is in store for the future of each individual Messianic Believer, Jewish or non-Jewish. Above all, I personally hope that it will allow each of us to pause, and consider the staged development of the broad Messianic movement, from the earlier Hebrew Christian movement of the late Nineteenth Century, to the emergence of Messianic Judaism in the Twentieth Century and the dynamic growth of numbers of Jewish Believers embracing Messiah Yeshua and maintaining their Jewish heritage, and now to a future stage of expansion involving many non-Jewish Believers embracing their Hebraic and Jewish Roots in a very tangible way.

Given the fact that this was composed for a university class audience, and in particular her professor, keep in mind that there are some terms used by my sister, which would not necessarily be used by me in my own theological writing. My sister was also limited by space and the requirement constraints of her paper in the two resources she considered (Cohn-Sherbok and Stern), as she was not able to consider the perspectives of others who have written books on Messianic Judaism inside and outside the movement from a scholastic perspective, notably persons such as Daniel C. Juster, Carol Harris-Shapiro, Mark S. Kinzer, or Richard Harvey.

This paper, when addressing the “Messianic movement,” is also relatively limited to the “Messianic Jewish movement,” and not the broader Messianic movement, which at times may be regarded to include not only Messianic Judaism, but also the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, Two-House sub-movement, and various Hebrew/Hebraic Roots persuasions.

Within the last century, Messianic Judaism has become a significant new religious movement in relation to two of the world’s most recognizable religions, Judaism and Christianity. The movement primarily focuses on Jews who believe in Yeshua (ישוע), the Hebrew name for Jesus (itself derived from the Greek Iēsous, Ἰησοῦς, employed throughout the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible, particularly as the title of the Book of Joshua).¹ They assert that even though they believe Yeshua is the Messiah, as believed by Christians in Christianity, they are just as Jewish as their brothers and sisters who follow the other branches of Judaism. The Messianic movement strives to break the “middle wall of partition” that has occurred over the last 2,000 years or so between Christians and Jews since the first century.² In doing so, the movement has created a paradox for Jewish Believers who want to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah, while still being accepted in the Jewish community. In understanding this movement and its dilemma, we must look at it through an academic approach and from some prominent figures inside and immediately outside of Messianic Judaism.

In his book, *Messianic Judaism*, Dan Cohn-Sherbok provides a critical and academic analysis of the Messianic Jewish movement and its role among mainstream Judaism, as well as Christianity. He is a well-respected author and historian on Judaism and Jewish History, and is currently a professor of Judaism at the University of Wales. As a Jewish scholar/theologian, he presents an historical and chronological view of the movement, as well as its current state and context in Judeo-Christian societies. Cohn-Sherbok’s book concentrates primarily on the history of Messianic Judaism and its emergence in the Twentieth Century. He also covers the fundamental differences of the movement from traditional Judaism, as well as its earlier form of Hebrew Christianity, and discusses different areas of opposition to Messianic Judaism. In doing

¹ If you need to, consult the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, “Jesus, Pagan Name.”

² David H. Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement with an Ancient Past* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2007), 13.

so, he illustrates the movement's role and how it pertains to Messianic Jews, non-Messianic Jews, and Gentile Christians.

Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement with an Ancient Past, written by a Messianic Jew and scholar for the movement, David H. Stern, presents a detailed account of the historical background of the beliefs of the movement and what has changed since the time of Yeshua. The book itself is an updated revision (written in 2006) of his original book, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, which was written in 1988. Stern is considered to be one of the most prominent leaders in the Messianic Jewish community. He has written several books on the movement itself and its doctrines, as well as having produced a version of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) and the New Testament in the *Complete Jewish Bible*. He discusses the reasons and beliefs of the movement, what the role and destiny of Messianic Judaism are, and how important it is to evangelize Jews. Also, he presents opinions on what the movement needs to improve upon and where it needs to grow in order to usher in God's plan, as well as what its implications mean in today's world. Stern presents the movement in a step-by-step approach, providing a basic outline to follow for Messianic Jews and non-Messianic Jews, as well as for Gentile Christians, secular Jews and Gentiles to follow and understand.

One of the main points both authors are concerned about is the debate on who a Jew is in the context of Messianic Judaism, as well as how this concept pertains to the movement. In Orthodox Judaism, a Jew is defined as "anyone who is born of a Jewish mother or has converted to the faith through Orthodox authorities."³ Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and other forms of Judaism believe this to some extent, as well as those who are born of a Jewish father. The Messianic movement holds that a Messianic Jew is "a person born of a Jewish mother or who converted to Judaism, who is a genuine believer, and who positively acknowledges his Jewishness."⁴ What is interesting to note is that when Cohn-Sherbok discusses this topic he uses David Stern's examples of categories of Jews from his earlier edition, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, as one of his resources.⁵ In Stern's revised book, he uses this same assessment emphasizing what it means to be 100% Messianic and being 100% Jewish at the same time.⁶ The primary objective of his

³ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 172.

⁴ Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 176.

⁵ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 173.

⁶ Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 4.

book, though, is not necessarily defining how Jews are still Jews in the Messianic movement; rather it is about restoring the Jewishness in the Gospel and Christianity.

According to Messianic Judaism, as both authors assess, believing in Yeshua is without a doubt Jewish and is the next step in Judaism. The concept of being a “fulfilled” or “completed” Jew is also a way to understand this view. The strongest argument about the Jewishness of the Messianic movement, which both authors bring, is that Yeshua was Jewish, his disciples were Jewish, the Gospel was brought by the Jews, and that Yeshua is the Jewish Messiah.⁷ However, the question is can Jews cease being Jewish, if they do not follow the traditional practices? According to Orthodox Judaism, the answer is yes. However, Orthodox Jews also believe that Orthodox is the only true and correct form of Judaism, therefore Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Humanistic, along with Messianic Judaism, are not valid forms of Judaism.⁸ Cohn-Sherbok, though, states that “Messianic Jews maintain that a person who is born Jewish can never lose his ancestral birthright, Scripture teaches that Jewish status is dependent on belief.”⁹ Moreover, he provides Messianic Judaism a definite case in asserting that it can be a branch of Judaism since Messianic Jews follow the *Torah*, understand its divine authority, and fully support Israel, whereas other forms of Judaism, such as Reconstructionist and Humanistic, do not follow these and are still considered to be part of Judaism to some extent.¹⁰

Messianic Jews view Messianic Judaism “as a spiritual renaissance, a return to the faith of the follower of Yeshua.”¹¹ They are fulfilling the promises of God in the restoration of all of Israel (cf. Romans 11:26). Stern asserts first and foremost, “let us reaffirm that Messianic Gentiles and Messianic Jews are equal before God in the Body of the Messiah.”¹² In saying this, he implies that Gentiles, as much as Jews, have a role in the Body of Messiah and have been grafted into the Olive Tree, a metaphor of God’s Kingdom (Romans 11:16-17).¹³ The main reason, and probably the only reason why Messianic Judaism is viewed as “fundamentally distinct” from traditional Judaism, is the simple fact that Messianic Jews believe in Jesus.¹⁴ Believing in Yeshua (Jesus) and

⁷ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 174.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹² Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 175.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 204.

following the New Covenant makes one a Christian and therefore not a Jew in the eyes of many Jews and Christians who are not Messianic. Stern asserts that “the New Testament does not cancel or replace the *Tanakh*; rather, it is built upon it—or, more accurately, assumes it.”¹⁵ In comparison to Judaism, Cohn-Sherbok emphasizes that Messianic congregations “do not rigidly follow the pattern recommended in the various prayer books produced by the movement; instead, they modify their observance in accordance with their spiritual needs.”¹⁶ In other words, Messianic Jewish assemblies tend to modify Jewish traditions to complement their Messianic take, but Stern notes that many efforts have been made to “Messianize liturgies, but there has yet to be one definite way accepted by the Messianic community as a whole.”¹⁷ Both Stern and Cohn-Sherbok do agree that Messianic Judaism is not legalistic, because members live by faith in Yeshua. However, they do assess the need to live by a Jewish lifestyle, because it is part of the calling and was not done away with, rather it has been renewed by the Messiah (cf. Romans 11:29).

There are many different views on Messianic Judaism that both authors present, both in favor and in opposition. A general consensus of the opposition, as Cohn-Sherbok presents, “Regard[s] the Messianic claim that Yeshua fulfilled scriptural prophecies about the coming of the Messiah,” and how “anti-Messianics assert that such proof texts have been misquoted, mistranslated or taken out of context.”¹⁸ Although, as Stern notes, there are some non-Messianic Jews who “acknowledge that there was a Jewish Christian community in ancient times but deny the possibility of a Messianic Jewish Community today.”¹⁹ He sees that Messianic Judaism brings together what has been lost to the greatest schism in world history. The main problem as to why this has happened was that the “issue in the early Church was whether without undergoing complete conversion to Judaism a Gentile could be Christian at all.”²⁰ Both authors maintain that the basic premise of the Messianic movement is that every person is one in Yeshua in the New Covenant (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17) and that is what matters most. However, as Cohn-Sherbok points out, “Many evangelical Christians are opposed to Messianic Jews

¹⁵ Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 110.

¹⁶ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 87.

¹⁷ Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 173.

¹⁸ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 183.

¹⁹ Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 63.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

because they are regarded as too Jewish: they are viewed as rebuilding a wall of partition.”²¹ This is the problem members of Messianic Judaism face.

The organizational structure of Messianic Judaism is a topic both authors discuss in their books. Stern primarily focuses on how the movement is currently set up with organizations like the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA), the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), and the International Association of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS), just to name a few, which focus on uniting Messianic Jewish congregations around the US and the world. Today there are over 120 Messianic Jewish congregations in the U.S. alone.²² He also explains, many times throughout his book, what the Messianic movement needs in order to move forward, such as investing in education and Jewish evangelism. However, Messianic Judaism has no one-set way of practices throughout the whole movement, in that there are many different interpretations and most congregations are independent. Stern describes what unites the Messianic movement in it “being committed to God, with the Messiah Yeshua and his Holy Spirit in us; being part of his Body, the Messianic Community, brothers in spirit to all Messianic Jews and Gentiles, being Jewish, brothers in the flesh to all Messianic and non-Messianic Jews...”²³ Theological differences along with methods of practice are what divide the movement today, which, in part, shows that Messianic Judaism is still an emerging movement. Cohn-Sherbok also sees that the Messianic movement is in a period of transition from its earlier roots in Hebrew Christianity, which started to happen in the early 1970s.

Another aspect that is important to Messianic Judaism is the Land of Israel. The State of Israel which is in place today was established in 1948. One of the main issues Messianic Jews face in making *aliyah* (meaning “going up”) or settling in the Land of Israel is what they are considered to be according to the Law of Return. As defined by this law, Messianic Jews are not allowed to return as Jews to the Promised Land, because they are seen by the Israeli government as having changed their status of religion away from Judaism.²⁴ Stern, in particular, stresses how important it is for Messianic Jews in trying to make *aliyah* to Israel, and how the movement “should create suitable institutions for promoting...and assisting Messianic Judaism and Jewish evangelism in

²¹ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 80.

²² Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 189.

²³ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.