

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

Many people in today's broad Messianic community are willing to question just about everything. There are ongoing debates as to whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is genuinely God, or if He is just a supernatural yet ultimately created being. There are people who believe in doctrines such as psychopannychy ("soul sleep") and annihilation. There are discussions about the origin of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament), and whether they were originally written in Hebrew or Greek, *and* what texts should be considered canonical or spurious. There are people who think it is acceptable to include Medieval Jewish mysticism as a part of their regimen of Bible study, considering the Kabbalah to be "okay." There are people who try to synthesize every single saying of Yeshua the Messiah with the Jewish Sages of many centuries later—and then there are those who want nothing to do with the Jewish Sages. There are those who have put together their own restored "Biblical calendars." There are even people you will encounter, from time to time, who believe that Planet Earth is a flat disk and not a sphere. And of course, may we never forget all of the ongoing and increasingly diverse series of end-time prognostications we encounter...

Certainly with some of the open-mindedness and variance of opinion "out there"—on a whole host of issues—mainstream discussions and debates taking place in academic Jewish and Christian settings, would seemingly be permitted. It has to be observed, in all of my family's twenty-three years (since 1995) of being a part of the Messianic movement, there is one huge issue which Messianic people, congregational leaders, and teachers of note are seldom willing to discuss or evaluate. In fact, this issue is often considered to be off-limits, if not completely *Verboten*. In spite of there being a range of issues that Messianic people feel free to discuss—including at times strongly questioning the Divinity of Yeshua—it is odd that contemporary discussions over **men and women in the Body of Messiah**, and

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

specifically women in ministry, cannot frequently be brought up. If there are people we may encounter in our midst who think that certain books of the New Testament might not be too inspired of God, then surely we can discuss whether or not husbands and wives should be co-leaders of their families, and whether or not males and females can be co-leaders of the local assembly.

Where does today's Messianic community stand on men and women?

To many people in today's broad Messianic movement, the issues involving the place of husbands and wives in the family, as well as men and women in the local assembly, is a done deal. *Husbands lead the family, and wives abide by their husbands' decisions. Men lead the congregation, and women are there to help facilitate congregational functions.* Any position about men and women in the Body of Messiah which might invoke terms such as co-equal, shared responsibility, and mutual submission are often viewed as compromise with the prevailing culture at best, or capitulation to liberal theology at worst. You do not just throw around the term "egalitarian" in the Messianic movement, unless you really are willing to experience some blowback.

"In December 1987, the newly formed Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood met in Danvers, Massachusetts, and wrote the *Danvers Statement*,"¹ a document that almost all of today's Messianic congregational leaders and teachers would probably be seen to agree with.² Many people in today's broad Messianic movement would sit to the Right of the Danvers Statement. Anyone holding to any sort of egalitarian position, where women can serve as the equals of men within the teaching and leadership structure of a local assembly—even when agreeing with various remarks within the Danvers Statement—is still going to sit to the Left of the Danvers Statement. Where appropriate, our analysis of "Answering Messianic Questions," will make light of the Danvers Statement—if for any other reason to use it as a frame of reference for where today's Messianic people stand on men and women in the Body of Messiah.

The majority of the formal and academic writing you will encounter, which will invoke the label "Messianic" in some way, will with a handful of exceptions, almost always represent a

¹ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 83.

² *Ibid.*, pp 83-86.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

complementarian view of men and women in the Body of Messiah. The 2001 compilation book *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, represented essays in favor of women serving in leadership,³ and those favoring male exclusive leadership in the assembly.⁴ In 2013, a chapter on “Messianic Judaism and Women”⁵ appeared in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, and while recognizing that there are younger people in the Messianic Jewish movement, at least, considering egalitarian perspectives, that a more traditional role for women as homemakers and serving in a secondary capacity to men, should probably be preferred. It is fair to say that as the 2020s approach, the Messianic Jewish movement will continue to be widely complementarian. However, the younger people in Messianic Judaism are very likely to be more open-minded and considerate of egalitarian perspectives regarding men and women, and specifically female leaders, within the Body of Messiah. It is, however, to be witnessed that a recent Messianic Jewish book released on the issue of marriage (2017), was only intended to be read by men and not by women.⁶ This at least demonstrates that facilitating discussions on men and women in the Body of Messiah, where females can expect to be afforded more opportunities, is going to be something long and hard fought in sectors of the Messianic Jewish movement.

When moving outside of the Messianic Jewish movement, into other sectors, complementarian to rigid patriarchal perspectives, involving men and women, are what one is most likely to encounter. The perspectives of the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, reflect those of male leadership within the Body of Messiah, with females taking a secondary role.⁷ The Two-House sub-movement, at times, has been favorable to females taking on some leadership and teaching

³ Ruth Fleischer, “Women Can Be in Leadership,” in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Voices of Messianic Judaism* (Baltimore: Lederer Books, 2001), pp 151-157.

⁴ Sam Nadler, “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” in *Ibid.*, pp 159-168.
Nadler is also the author of *Developing Healthy Messianic Congregations* (Charlotte: Word of Messiah Ministries, 2016).

⁵ Rachel Wolf, “Messianic Judaism and Women,” in David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts, eds. *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), pp 98-106.

⁶ First Fruits of Zion, with Grant Luton and Russ Resnik, *Adam Loves Eve: The Bible’s Guide for Men Seeking a Better Marriage* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2017).

This book broadly follows the outline provided by Shalom Arush, *The Garden of Peace: A Marital Guide for Men Only*, trans. Lazer Brody (Jerusalem: Chut Shel Chessed Institutions, 2008).

⁷ Tim Hegg (1992). *The Role of Women in the Messianic Assembly*. Torah Resource. Retrieved 27 February, 2010, from <<http://torahresource.com>>; *What God has Joined Together: Biblical Foundations for Marriage* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2007).

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

roles,⁸ but the Ephraimite movement has also been heavily stigmatized by one of its major leaders endorsing and practicing polygamy⁹—something which evangelical Christian complementarians today, and all evangelical egalitarians, forthrightly reject as an aberration. On the whole, the perspectives regarding men and women one is likely to encounter in the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, go beyond complementarianism, and instead will favor a patriarchal view of gender, with (married-)male privilege strongly emphasized.

As we move forward in time—and particularly as more and more Messianic young people receive a higher level of formal theological training than their predecessors—that the pendulum will, albeit slowly, be shifting toward a more egalitarian position of men and women in the Body of Messiah, is inevitable. In our present season, it has already created tensions beneath the surface, as there are doubtlessly reforms which must be instituted regarding our approach to men and women in the Body of Messiah—theological reforms and cultural changes which tend to be opposed in various ways. While many of today’s Messianic leaders and teachers from the Baby Boomer generation recognize some need to maintain a relationship with those of the Millennial generation who will succeed them—there tends to be very poor, cross-generational communication, on issues such as men and women in the Body of Messiah.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah and Some Personal Messianic Experience

Each of us is affected by our experience when it comes to people in the world at large, in the *ekklēsia* or Body of Messiah, and especially when it comes to approaching issues and controversies involving men and women. For over a decade now (2007-2018), I have had considerable difficulty and consternation with many in our contemporary Messianic movement, in simply *opening up the discussion and dialoguing* about issues involving males and females in the Body of Messiah, the equality of men and women, and males and females serving as co-leaders within the assembly and husbands and wives serving as co-leaders of the family. **Few of today’s Messianic teachers and leaders are willing to recognize that there are other points of view out there**, aside from a complementarian ideology. Far too many are

⁸ Batya Ruth Wootten, *Mama’s Torah: The Role of Women* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 2004).

⁹ Moshe Koniuchowsky, *Sex and the Believer: Shocking Freedom of Sexuality in Torah* (Margate, FL: Your Arms to Israel Publishing, 2008).

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

obstinate to give other points of view a hearing, even if it simply means reading through a general resource such as *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (James R. Beck, ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005]).

In my experience, broadly speaking, if one is found in today's Messianic movement to either adhere to, or at least be strongly sympathetic to, an egalitarian ideology where women will be taking on a higher level of leadership than has been historically and traditionally seen in the Body of Messiah over many centuries—then such a person is widely thought to at best to be compromised, and interpreting the Scriptures irresponsibly. More likely, though, such an egalitarian or egalitarian-friendly person is believed to be in conformity with the spirit of the age and not the Holy Spirit.

What are some of the things I have witnessed, which caused me to reevaluate some of my views regarding men and women?

Even though as of 2018 my family has been a part of the Messianic movement for twenty-three years (since 1995), I have never once been part of a Messianic congregation where women have been incorporated into the leadership structure or apparatus, where the big decisions are made; all of the major decisions have been made by men. In twenty-three years, I have never been part of a Messianic congregation where the male congregational leader has ever said that his wife is his equal. Instead, all that has been emphasized is that the male congregational leader's wife submits to his authority and leadership—not that the husband and wife share leadership of their family, and are both involved in all major decisions, be they family or ministry related. Coming from a professional middle class family, where both men and women have accomplished some truly amazing things, I have been underwhelmed—to say the least—by a complementarian ideology present in the Messianic movement that is holding us back in far too many ways, **especially as we steadily approach the Messiah's return!**

Being part of the Messianic movement from 1995-2004, when I bothered to pay attention to issues involving males and females in the Body of Messiah, I heard some kind of complementarian viewpoint present. On occasion, I would hear opinions reflective of a complementarian-lite approach, which would advocate for a greater inclusion of women in the leadership and decision making structure of Messianic congregations. But early in my Messianic experience, my personal Bible studies were not too concerned with men and women, gender roles, or leadership. When I started my M.A. in Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in 2005, though, I was immediately thrust into an egalitarian environment. I had no objections of any kind

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

to being taught by female instructors, and certainly to having female student colleagues. Yet I was a bit perplexed when hearing about females being ordained as pastors and leaders. Some of my fellow male students, from various denominational traditions, let their voice be heard how they were opposed to it—and yet other male students were quite supportive. I knew that rushing off to judgment would be inappropriate—and that as I was making many adaptations as to how I was approaching the Holy Scriptures, the theological tools I was employing, and some of my methodology I was having to see altered—that if the Lord wanted me to consider changing my view of women in ministry, it would be done graciously and I would be open.

In a theology class I took in Spring 2006, one of our assigned textbooks was *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), edited by Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, where different topics were presented from multiple perspectives. *This is the best way for anyone to encounter the different facets and contours of something debated in theology.* One of the topics we had to consider was indeed, “The Women in Ministry Debate.”¹⁰ I found it informative, but was not particularly ready to change my complementarian-lite position—although I did know that I would have to not be dismissive of egalitarians.

By the Spring of 2007, however, things began to steadily change, as I found myself more and more open to an egalitarian ideology. I took two classes that semester at Asbury, Exegesis of Romans and New Testament Introduction. At the beginning of Exegesis of Romans, we spent three weeks analyzing Romans 1 issues involving homosexuality, and our seminary at the time took a firm stance against the homosexual lifestyle and gay marriage. At the end of Exegesis of Romans, we had to weigh some of the demographic details of Romans 16, and reckon with the presence of a female apostle, Junia—something which surely affected present debates over women in ministry. In New Testament Introduction, while the discussion did not arise until near the end of the class, I was first presented with translation and perspective issues in 1 Timothy 2 that I had never heard before. So much of the debate has been polarized between those who hold the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus) to uphold a complementarian ideology, and those who think that these letters are Deutero-Pauline and from a

¹⁰ “The Women in Ministry Debate,” in Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp 225-235.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

generation or two after Paul's death, that I was quite relieved to hear a perspective which held these letters to be authentically Pauline and that they could be interpreted somewhat differently. *Being in a Messianic movement that adheres to the post-resurrection era validity of the Torah, after all, certainly required me to interpret some Pauline passages differently!*

By the end of Spring 2007, I had posted an FAQ on the then-TNN Online website, "**Women in Ministry**," which presented a number of the options that I had to consider from New Testament Introduction. While presenting multiple points of view, though, I had already privately moved from being a complementarian-lite to an egalitarian. In Summer, 2005, at my local Messianic congregation at the time, in Central Florida, I had witnessed that a new series of elders and deacons were appointed. They were obviously all male. By Spring 2007, over half of these male elders and deacons had been asked to step down or were removed, and some of them who had continued in leadership were incompetent and inept—with a huge (physical) stress placed upon the main congregational leader. Being a seminary student who was having to study many aspects of ministry—especially men and women as co-leaders of the Body of Messiah—I found myself saying things along the lines of, "They would prefer unqualified and unstable men to be in leadership, and not qualified and stable women, especially when there are clear examples of it in the Apostolic Writings."

In 2008, while it hit more independent Messianic and Hebrew/Hebraic Roots sectors, there was a wave of teaching that endorsed polygamy as a valid practice for contemporary men in the Body of Messiah. When you have an educational ministry with a website, it does not matter where questions originate or who is asking them, as an issue like polygamy is clearly present in Holy Scripture and all students of God's Word confront it. This issue, and some of the stir it caused, served as a major roadsign for me that *everything regarding men and women in today's Messianic movement was up for some review*. I was very upset at the broadscale silence that I witnessed when the polygamy controversy hit, although I suspect that many just wanted it to go away and not give it any publicity. Recognizing that an endorsement of polygamy was representative of a failure in Messianic Biblical Studies, I wrote two lengthy articles in late Summer 2008, "**Addressing the Frequently Avoided Issues Messianics Encounter in the Torah**,"

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

followed by **“Is Polygamy for Today? The Case Against Polygamy”** (reproduced in this publication).¹¹

Surely, if there would be voices out there endorsing polygamy, then it would be entirely proper for there to be voices out there endorsing egalitarianism. At the end of 2008, my egalitarian views started to be more consciously integrated into various teachings, as I started the new year by releasing **“How Are We to Live as Modern Messianics?”** In the Spring of 2009, I also updated the “Women in Ministry” FAQ entry with some more data, as the polygamy fiasco did cause me to start acquiring many resources, books, and commentaries which were somehow related to contemporary debates between complementarians and egalitarians. This was highly important given the fact that within my Wednesday Night Bible Study podcast, I was going through **Ephesians** (2008-2009), **the Pastoral Epistles** (2010-2011), and later would go through **1 Corinthians** (2015), all letters which have significance to present discussions about men and women in the Body of Messiah.

When our family moved back to North Texas in 2012, my egalitarian ideology was hardly something that I hid from anyone. As I got reintegrated into the local Messianic Jewish community, people knew, when they asked me, that I did not hold to the more standard or customary positions regarding women in ministry, that you would find in the Messianic movement. But, from 2013-2016 I would honestly answer, “It is not the most important issue for me right now, although I am planning to address it another day—and only plan to do so within the venue of our own ministry.” In the Spring of 2017, I heard a congregational message, from a guest speaker, which greatly offended me, as it defended a highly patriarchal view of male authority in the contemporary Body of Messiah. *The other day had arrived.* Throughout 2017 I worked on the lengthy analysis, **“Men and Women in the Body of Messiah: Answering 50 Crucial Questions,”** cross-examining the complementarian ideology of John Piper and Wayne Grudem from the resource *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood* (reproduced in this publication, which you should have already read by now). This analysis, however, would only be able to address evangelical Protestant complementarianism, and not some of the unique factors present regarding men and women in today’s Messianic movement.

¹¹ I would be keen to reference the newly released article, which is negatively disposed toward polygamy, Toby Janicki. “Polygamy: Does the Bible Allow for Multiple Wives?” Messiah Journal Issue 128, Spring 2017/5778.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

In our family's twenty-three year journey of being involved in the Messianic movement (1995-present), and my fifteen year journey of being involved in full-time Messianic ministry (2003-present)—you will seldom ever hear me say that there is an issue where I believe that the Messianic movement as a whole is **wrong**, and where I am **right**. The issue of men and women in the Body of Messiah, however, is one where our family's experience for almost a quarter-decade, my seminary training, my continued education and review of issues, and our own family's ideology of wanting all people to achieve great things—can find itself at odds with a majority of the present Messianic movement. Of course, seeing females elevated into greater positions of authority is not a salvation issue, but it can directly influence our effectiveness as we move into the future. We also know that we are not alone in our egalitarian convictions, although many prefer to keep a lower profile about them—mainly because of the small size of the Messianic community. And, like I said several years ago: **this is a topic we prefer to address in our own ministry venue**, and not necessarily at our local congregation or at major conference events. Yet, given the way things stand in 2018, with great uncertainties in our world and the steady erosion of religious freedoms, it is time for a candid discussion about the place of men and women in the Body of Messiah, and some of the mistakes that our faith community has made.

Answering Messianic Questions

While in one's local Messianic congregation or fellowship, one is more likely to hear complementarian perspectives on men and women in the Body of Messiah, it is hardly as though there is a complementarian monolith within the Messianic movement. When looking slightly below the surface, there is a wider array of opinions detectable. Most of these would be classified as complementarian-lite, with females taking on much more responsibility for leadership and teaching within the assembly, but with the position of senior congregational leader reserved for a male. There are a few, who might be seen to be egalitarian, and be willing to argue, at least in principle, that a female could be a senior leader of a Messianic congregation.

Varied perspectives regarding females in positions of Messianic leadership, is actually not new to the Messianic movement of the Twenty-First Century. In her chapter, "Messianic Judaism and Women," appearing in the 2013 *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, Rachel Wolf discusses how a number of the female Messianic Jewish pioneers were raised in independently-thinking Jewish environments, and were

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

somewhat perplexed when highly conservative Christian perspectives were adopted by much of Messianic Judaism in the 1970s and 1980s:

“Most of the established female leaders in the Messianic Jewish community grew up in Jewish contexts that valued independent thinking. Early Messianic synagogues tended to adopt conservative Christian views, and though some Messianic Jewish women embraced this outlook on women’s roles, others looked to Jewish sources as models. There is tension when it comes to identity because Messianic Jewish women come from a variety of backgrounds, and we find ourselves within a developing Messianic Jewish culture that includes many Gentiles.”¹²

Some of the factors which have contributed to a mainly complementarian ideology prevailing in current Messianic Judaism, do involve some of the formal training of various leaders and rabbis at highly conservative (and dispensational) evangelical Protestant institutions. Not enough were, who have been formally trained in religious studies, or are going to be, theologically exposed to an egalitarian ideology. Many of the Jewish Believers in today’s Messianic movement, raised in either a quasi-progressive Jewish environment or a nominally-religious Jewish environment, as Wolf notes above, are at somewhat of a conundrum as to the limitation of women in today’s Messianic Judaism. Many of the non-Jewish Believers attracted to the Messianic movement, come from highly conservative theological (and political) backgrounds. My own family would be an exception in this regard, as we are a bit more moderate. Our Wesleyan theological and spiritual heritage has a history of using women, whereas those from other Protestant traditions in today’s Messianic community, are more likely to not have used women as much.

As I have been preparing to address some of the specific questions and issues which have arisen regarding men and women in today’s Messianic movement, I ran across the website for an independent Messianic fellowship, and saw the following asked in their FAQ section: “What is your stance on women teaching in the congregation?” I read the answer, and it is obviously reflective of the common position that women are to be valued in the assembly, God can surely use and speak through women, yet ultimately males should be those teaching and leading the assembly as a whole:

¹² Rachel Wolf, “Messianic Judaism and Women,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 101.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

Women have equal citizenship with Messiah (Galatians 3:28), are amazing at mentoring in small groups (Acts 18:26), excel at instructing younger females (Titus 2:3-5), and often receive the gift of prophesy (Acts 21:9, Judges 4:4). Yet despite all of this, the bible tells us to not place women in an authority over, or in a teaching capacity to, men in the congregation (I Corinthians 14:34, I Timothy 2:12). Now why would the bible do this, given all the amazing and powerful accounts of women in the scriptures? In II Chronicles 34 for example, when the long lost Book of the Law had been found, King Josiah sent his messengers to speak with a woman named Huldah, on what the Lord wanted them to do. And not only did he hear the prophetic words of Huldah, King Josiah gathered all the elders, men, inhabitants, priests and Levites, then made some decrees based on what she said. So to say Huldah indirectly instructed Josiah's Kingdom would be an understatement (she did so much more), yet we are still instructed to teach men with other men. The bible does this, to challenge men toward accepting the role God has given them and be ready for the responsibilities of being a man. This has little to do with what a woman is, or is not, capable of doing. So our stance on women teaching in the congregation, is aligned with our instructions from the Brit Chadashah (New Testament), which says for women to refrain from teaching, or having authority over men in the congregation, to encourage our males to accept their spiritual responsibilities. And keep in mind that this does not subtract from women's equal citizenship with Messiah, ability to teach in small groups, capability to instruct younger females, adeptness with children's ministries and amazing gift of prophesy....¹³

When I read the statement about Huldah, "to say Huldah indirectly instructed Josiah's Kingdom would be an understatement (she did so much more), yet we are still instructed to teach men with other men," I detect that the leaders of this independent Messianic group would privately like to see females in much greater positions of teaching and leadership, yet they have concluded that the Apostolic Writings are limiting of it. I would suspect that there are many people within today's Messianic movement, who feel the same way. They know that God uses women the same as men, but that because of certain Bible passages, that women cannot be used to the same degree as men in positions of leadership and teaching.

People who are engaged with some of the theological discussions and debates, particularly in evangelical Protestantism, from the past four to five decades, know that one cannot just refer off hand to 1

¹³ Messiah Echad. (n.d.). *What is your stance on women teaching in the congregation?* Retrieved 22 December, 2017, from <<http://messiahechad.org/faq>>.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

Timothy 2:12 or 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, regarding the place of women in the assembly. Complementarian interpreters who are negative to women occupying positions of leadership in the *ekklēsia*, recognize that there are situation-specific issues in both of these passages. Conservative egalitarian interpreters, recognize that 1 Timothy 2:12 has translation issues, and that there are textual debates involving the authenticity of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

It is undeniable that when I have evaluated some of the evangelical Protestant discussions on men and women in the Body of Messiah—in particular regarding men and women serving as co-leaders in the assembly, and husbands and wives as co-leaders of the family—that today's Messianic movement has some *unique homespun challenges*. Because we do believe in some continuance of the Torah or Law of Moses, some are inclined to want to establish a Twenty-First Century quasi-patriarchy, rather than interpret some Torah instructions contextually for Ancient Israel *first*, before deducing some modern applications. Many of the instructions witnessed in the Torah, were actually case laws intended for Ancient Israel because of circumstances that arose for this burgeoning nation in the Ancient Near East. The bodies of Jewish literature and *halachah* from the Second Temple period and immediately afterward, bear significant witness to how Judaism has wrestled with applying ancient instructions, for later time periods.

As we address various Messianic questions surrounding men and women, our purpose is not to evaluate all of the internal family decisions that husbands and wives need to make regarding their different responsibilities, their economic disposition, or their sexual practices. Our purpose is to evaluate whether or not the Messianic movement, as a whole, has misevaluated the Scriptural trajectory regarding what occurred between men and women as a result of the Fall, the restoration of such equality in the post-resurrection era, and the offenses and injustices which have been committed by a sufficient number of today's Messianic leaders and teachers by relegating females to a secondary place in the assembly and in the home. In our discussion on men and women in the Body of Messiah, we will also not overlook some of the discrimination which single people have had to endure.

“Men and women have equal value and dignity in the eyes of God from Creation, but they have been created to occupy different leadership roles.”

How often, in a Messianic setting, will any of us be prone to hear that males and females are to be regarded as equals—versus hearing that males and females only have equal dignity? The latter concerns the value and worth of males and females, while the former can regard the opportunities afforded to each in the home and in the assembly. Being a part of the Messianic movement for over two decades, and certainly interacting with people of all sorts and varieties, I seldom hear it ever emphasized that men and women are equals.

The 1987 Danvers Statement, a complementarian mainstay, affirms that “Both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.”¹⁴ Egalitarians hardly believe that men and women are exactly the same, and do affirm various differences—even though they do believe at Creation that Adam and Eve were to tend the Garden of Eden as equal partners, something not affirmed by most complementarians. Still, both complementarians and egalitarians would agree on a number of crucial points:

1. Males and females were both created in the image of God: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26-27, NRSV).
2. The female originated from the male: “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man” (Genesis 2:21-22).
3. The male, Adam, is astounded at the appearance of the female, Eve: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23).

¹⁴ Piper and Grudem, 84.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

4. A Biblical marriage is intended to be between one man and one woman: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is imperative, in affirming the equal dignity of males and females, to recognize how all human beings are created in the Divine image (Genesis 1:26-27), something which for Ancient Israel would have placed it squarely in conflict with many of the religions of the Ancient Near East—where only monarchs, royal families, and various aristocrats or dignitaries would be considered made in the image of gods or goddesses. In Egypt, the Pharaoh would certainly have been regarded as the son of Ra, whereas the Egyptian population as a whole—and certainly the Israelites—were expendable mortals.

In affirming the equal dignity of males and females, it is also imperative to acknowledge the response of the male Adam to the arrival of the female Eve: "This-time, she-is-it! Bone from my bones, flesh from my flesh! She shall be called Woman/*Isha*, for from Man/*Ish* she was taken" (Genesis 2:23, Fox). The response of Adam to the arrival of Eve was one of recognizing Eve as having originated from himself, and hence to undeniably have the same equal value as himself. Eve was not a deformed male, because of having different reproductive anatomy as a female. Eve was to be treated the same as Adam's bones and flesh. Unfortunately, too much of human history bears witness to the many injustices, abuses, exploitations, and even murders that have taken place by men toward women, because females are not viewed as being of the same bones and flesh as males. Throughout classical Greece and Rome, because females were not believed to have equal dignity along with males, homosexuality was practiced by many, with females believed as only being important for reproduction. Today, however, the significant bulk of pornography that one finds lamentably available, involves the objectification and the de-humanization of females. The 1987 Danvers Statement is entirely correct to protest against,

"[T]he growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayals of human sexuality."¹⁵

While there can be common ground established between complementarians and egalitarians regarding the **equal dignity** of males and females—with a recognition that the former has been seen to demean and abuse the latter throughout far too much of human

¹⁵ Ibid.

history—there are theological and ideological differences between complementarians and egalitarians as well. Complementarianism has been the principal ideology of Messianic Judaism to date. Referencing Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28, Sam Nadler indicates how “men and women have equal spiritual status before God. They are equally forgiven and equally valued by him.”¹⁶ Yet his essay in the 2001 compilation book *Voices of Messianic Judaism* was entitled “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” and so one wonders if those who would only affirm “equal spiritual status” for males and females, could ever affirm “equal status” for males and females. There are those in evangelical Protestantism, to be sure, who would hold to a minimalist complementarian or complementarian-lite ideology—although with males occupying the extreme senior positions—and who would easily affirm that males and females are equal, and not just of equal dignity.

Much of what surrounds the equality *or* equal dignity of males and females—and whether males were specifically intended for a senior leadership role and females for a junior leadership role—is affected by how one interprets God’s statement “I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18) or “I will make him a helper as his partner” (NRSV). Many have approached the female being *ezer kenegdo* (עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ) as a junior partner to the male, whereas others have approached it as an affirmation of the female originally being a co-equal partner and co-leader along with the male. The fact that God is described numerous times as a helper of Israel (Psalm 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11; 146:5), serves as a sure indication of how a helper hardly is required to be an inferior. In fact, in the case of the Lord, such a helper to Israel would contextually be required to be a superior. So, it is hardly inappropriate when egalitarians have concluded that Eve being the helper of Adam, that Eve was to be his equal, and at least before the Fall, as a co-leader along with him (Genesis 1:26).

In his 2017 article, “The Two Shall Become One Flesh,” Russell Resnik fairly concludes, “The woman...is formed from him, is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, not subject to his dominion but a sustainer beside him.”¹⁷ This is a remark which can be taken as egalitarian-friendly, but some further conclusions drawn are more complementarian. Resnik first appreciably affirms, “Man and woman both share in the divine image and are equally essential to the meaning

¹⁶ Nadler, “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 165.

¹⁷ Russell Resnik. “The Two Shall Become One Flesh” *Messiah Journal* Issue 128, Spring 2017/5778:25.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

of humanness so that the humanity of each is completed when they unite,"¹⁸ which is what is intended by Genesis 2:24 and a proper marriage between one man and one woman. He goes on, however, and says, "Within marriage, the inherent equality of male and female as divine image bearers is expressed in tension with differing roles of male and female."¹⁹ Conservative egalitarians hardly believe in the exactness of males and females, as both have different reproductive anatomy, and unique skillsets and attributes innate to gender. It is contextually deduced, however, that what Resnik means by "differing roles" concerns leadership, as he concludes, "These differing roles are accentuated, and to some degree set against each other, as a consequence of exile from the garden. They persist into the Messianic community and are upheld in the Apostolic Writings."²⁰ Resnik may be seen to uphold the co-leadership of males and females as was originally intended in Eden, but that was something lost as a result of the Fall, and has yet to be restored to the Body of Messiah. Such statements will facilitate a complementarian ideology for today's Messianic movement, particularly of the variety witnessed in the 1987 Danvers Statement, which was seen to oppose,

"[T]he increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership of redeemed wives."²¹

Egalitarians conclude that Adam and Eve were created as equals, and were originally intended to be the human co-leaders who would tend the Garden of Eden together. This is something that egalitarians conclude was lost as a result of the Fall (Genesis 3:15-16), but is something that was spiritually restored as a result of the resurrection of the Messiah (Galatians 3:28). While complementarians may be witnessed to haphazardly throw around pejorative terms like "feminism," because egalitarians believe in the equality of all human beings, they are in a far better position than complementarians to not only promote the equal worth and value of all in the Body of Messiah—**but most especially oppose the oppression, abuse, and (sexual) exploitation of females that has been seen since ancient times.** In her essay, "Women Can Be in Leadership," appearing in *Voices of Messianic*

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp 26-27.

²⁰ Ibid., 27.

²¹ Piper and Grudem, pp 83-84.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

Judaism, Ruth Fleischer summarized a number of inconvenient realities which contemporary complementarians too often try to overlook:

“Until modern times, indeed, until the twentieth century, men largely regarded women as chattel, as possessions that might be traded, bought or sold, or given by parents in return for a consideration. Baby girls were a liability in ancient Greece, and elsewhere, often left to die on mountaintops. Girls were seen as less capable of intellectual activity, of physical prowess, and of self-control. Yet, women have been outstanding scholars, rulers, writers, doctors, scientists, and artists, especially in the last few hundred years as more and more doors are open to them.”²²

“Mankind fell from grace because Adam did not lead, permitting his wife to lead and be deceived by the serpent.”

It is witnessed that complementarian and egalitarian readers of Genesis 3:1-19, which records the Fall of humanity and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, often read it very differently. In the 1987 Danvers Statement it was insisted, “Adam’s headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin,”²³ as male principal leadership would be assumed because Adam was created first. Egalitarian interpreters, in stark contrast, do not assume that simply because the male was created first that all major leadership responsibilities were to rest with him.

Easily overlooked by even the best Bible scholars, is how Adam as the first human was given the instruction to not eat from the forbidden fruit: “The LORD God commanded the human...” (Genesis 2:16, Common English Bible). While we are not told in Genesis 2 how much time transpired between the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve, we can assume that a sufficient amount of time occurred for not only for Adam to be lonely—but also to interact enough with the Creator, His Creation, the animals, and for him to have a good idea about what would be lost if the single command not to eat from the forbidden fruit were violated. Egalitarians will widely stress that Adam being created first, should not be taken an indication of principal male leadership in the *ekklēsia* and in the family, but instead as an indication that Adam

²² Fleischer, “Women Can Be in Leadership,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, pp 153-154.

²³ Piper and Grudem, 85.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

had more practical knowledge and experience with the Creator and His Creation before the arrival of Eve.

Eve was surely informed by Adam about how God had declared the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil off limits (Genesis 3:1-2). Yet in her dialogue with the serpent, she is witnessed as saying, "God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die'" (Genesis 3:3). There is nothing in the account of Genesis 1-3 up to this point which specifically states that touching the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and its fruit would cause death. Eve knows that the tree and its fruit are quarantine, so much so that she is seen adding to God's instruction, so that touching the forbidden fruit will not take place. *Eve is thinking for herself*, but Eve also demonstrates a naïveté likely resultant of Adam not having adequately informed or taught her as to the dynamics of God, His Creation, and the Garden. Eve is witnessed as being deceived by the serpent because of her ignorance (Genesis 3:4-5), she eats the fruit, and then she passes the fruit onto Adam who also eats (Genesis 3:6). The innocence of Adam and Eve was lost (Genesis 3:7a).

Adam and Eve make themselves coverings due to their nakedness (Genesis 3:7b), and they are confronted by God (Genesis 3:8-9) who asks them about such nakedness (Genesis 3:10). God asks, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Genesis 3:11). Rather than being honest with his Creator, Adam instead shifts the blame to Eve: "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12). When asked what she did, Eve tells God, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Genesis 3:13). The later testimony of 1 Timothy 2:14 is clear that "*it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." Eve was legitimately deceived by the serpent into eating the forbidden fruit, whereas Adam was not, as he knew exactly what he was consuming.

As a consequence of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, a curse is issued by God upon the serpent (Genesis 3:14-15). A curse is also issued upon the woman, first involving pain in childbirth: "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children" (Genesis 3:16a). The statements which follow, appearing in Genesis 3:16b-17, are especially subjected to very different conclusions from complementarian and egalitarian interpreters:

"'Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you,

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

saying, “You shall not eat from it”; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.”

Fundamentalist patriarchalists will read “Your desire will be toward your husband, yet he must rule over you” (TLV), as meaning that in the Creation order, various females have a strong hormonal desire to have a husband, and when they find one, he will consequently be his wife’s leader. Concurrent with this, the Fall of humanity is squarely placed on how Adam listened to and followed his wife, letting Eve be the leader and not him (Genesis 3:17a). In a diverse number of Messianic settings across twenty-three years (1995-2018), I have seen Genesis 3:17a, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife” (NKJV), directed to husbands in the assembly, with the explicit direction that they are not to take the advice of their wives too seriously in terms of family matters.

It should hardly be a surprise that egalitarian readers of Genesis 3:16b-17 have a completely different approach to the curse issued upon humanity at the Fall. Genesis 3:16b, employing the Hebrew term *teshuqah* (תְּשׁוּקָה), communicates “Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (NJPS). Further on in Genesis 4:7, God is seen informing Cain, who later murders his brother, “Sin couches at the door; its urge [*teshuqah*] is toward you, yet you can be its master” (NJPS). The *teshuqah*, “urge” (NJPS) is a forceful action, then resultant in a forceful action. As a part of the curse in Genesis 3:16b, wives will have an urge for their husbands, and the husbands will then be forced to master them. *This is describing a battle of the sexes which ensues as a result of the expulsion from Eden.*

Adam does bear responsibility for eating the forbidden fruit, and readers should be honest enough to recognize that it does involve how he responded to Eve’s activity: “To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat of it,” cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life”’ (Genesis 3:17, NIV). The statement “Since you listened to your wife...” (NLT) is hardly unqualified, as though husbands from this point in history onward should never listen to what their wives have to say. In total, “listened to the voice of your wife,” **is joined with** “and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you.” While nothing is stated specifically in the text as to what Eve said to Adam, to cause him to eat the forbidden fruit, it is said that “the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6). What Eve told Adam had to relate to how the serpent had deceived her, by saying, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

Adam listening to his wife Eve, is qualified along with Adam eating the forbidden fruit. Adam clearly should have corrected Eve for her error, informing her once again as to how terrible things would happen if they ate the forbidden fruit, and the two of them should have cried out to the Creator for His mercy right then. Eve's limitation was not that she was created as an inferior person with a lower level of intelligence than Adam; Eve's limitation was that "Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13, RSV), relating to her experiential education. Adam's advantage was not that he was created as a superior person with a higher level of intelligence; Adam's advantage was that he had greater knowledge of the Creator, His Creation, and of the dynamics of the Garden.

Egalitarians do believe that "your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16b, NJPS), is indeed part of the curse resultant of the Fall of humanity. Egalitarians also believe that the work of the Messiah on the tree has inaugurated a post-resurrection era where the curse can be lifted, and the mutual partnership of man and woman intended by Genesis 1:26 can be restored: "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (TNIV). Among Messianic Jewish teachers, Fleischer recognizes the need to return to what has been lost, "[the] harmony of the sexes within God's plan. Not the elevation of one sex over the other, not the servitude of one sex under the other, but a program that utilizes the gifts and calling of each, individually, as men and women, to advance the kingdom of God."²⁴

"Torah only presents males as capable leaders of the community, not females."

Complementarians of all varieties are going to appeal to the examples of males in leadership, throughout the Scriptures, as being normative for the leadership of the local assembly. This is especially

²⁴ Fleischer, "Women Can Be in Leadership," in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 151.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

true of many people in the Messianic community, who read the Torah on a weekly basis, they encounter males appointed to leadership positions in the community of Ancient Israel, and it may very well be that when they see any females in positions of spiritual leadership today—they feel that something is significantly off and/or that something needs to be seriously corrected.

It is difficult for any reader of the Torah to avoid how males were appointed to positions of leadership and administration in the community of Ancient Israel:

“Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear *the burden* with you” (Exodus 18:21-22).

“Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.’ You answered me and said, ‘The thing which you have said to do is good.’ So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over you, leaders of thousands and of hundreds, of fifties and of tens, and officers for your tribes” (Deuteronomy 1:13-15).

Deuteronomy 1:13 specifies, *havu l'khem anashim chakamim u'nevonim v'idu'im* (הָבּוּ לָכֶם אַנְשִׁים חַכְמָיִם וְנִבְנָיִם וְיֹדְעִים), “Provide yourselves (with) men, wise, understanding and knowledgeable” (Fox). God says, *v'asimem b'rasheikhem* (וְאַשְׁמֵם בְּרָאשֵׁיכֶם), “I will set them as heads-over-you” (Fox). The term *rosh* (רֹאשׁ) or “head,” contextually here does mean, “chief (place, position)” (*BDB*) or leader.²⁵ There is no avoiding how in the wilderness, those who were chosen to be leaders who would help resolve challenges in Israel, were males.

We have probably all witnessed, from time to time, a congregational teaching where the appointment of male leaders in Ancient Israel, was referred to as support for male leaders in the assembly. While he recognizes that within the Tanach, there were females who demonstrated various gifts and talents, notably including prophecy, Nadler concludes in “Male Leadership and the Role of

²⁵ *BDB*, 910.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

Women,” “there is no evidence that there were any female elders in Israel; when there is any description of elders it is always ‘men.’”²⁶

Let it never be said that egalitarians oppose male leaders in the assembly. At the same time, let it be realized that there are contextual issues present in passages like Exodus 18:21-22 and Deuteronomy 1:13-15. In this scene, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, sees Moses being overwhelmed with having to issue judgments for every small dispute that erupts in the community, and recognizes that he needs to appoint leaders to whom he can delegate power (Exodus 18:14-20). The intended audience is the newly freed company of former Israelite slaves; the male leaders were likely Israelite elders who had grown up in Egypt, and had probably been slaves themselves at one point. It is not inappropriate to deduce that a number of them may have been used as intermediaries between the Egyptian taskmasters and their Israelite slaves, and as such had been introduced to some basic education in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Females being appointed as leaders in Ancient Israel, at such an early stage of national formation—and in a staunchly patriarchal Ancient Near East—would have been impossible. It would have been confounding enough to see various former male *slaves* taking on positions of leadership.

Later in the Scriptures, we can deduce that males were those serving as elders in the post-exilic Jewish community (Ezra 10:14) up until the period of the Second Temple (Luke 7:3-5). Egalitarian readers of Scripture do not deny the place of male leadership in the community up to this point, nor do they deny the continuing importance of males in leadership. Where egalitarians and complementarians diverge, is in evaluating the trajectory of Scripture leading to the post-resurrection period. Egalitarians widely affirm that up until this point, there has been a steady progression back to the equality of male and female lost in Eden—such as seeing former male Israelite slaves given positions of leadership in the community, something that would have surely been eschewed by their former Egyptian masters. But resultant of the sacrifice and resurrection of Yeshua, something has shifted (cf. Galatians 3:28), and a new status for people has been inaugurated, that needs to be accounted for. Many complementarians would agree that females in the post-resurrection era are afforded far more honor and respect than in any other time period in the Bible, but would often stop

²⁶ Nadler, “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 161.

short in seeing females appointed to senior positions of leadership in the assembly.

While he recognizes male leadership in pre-resurrection era contexts, Nadler believes that only males can occupy senior positions in the assembly due to passages such as 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, obviously delivered in the post-resurrection era:

“[T]he Levites did not earn their role as priests among the twelve tribes of Israel, but had it ascribed to them by God. The role ascribed to men pertains to the leadership of the congregation as a whole. This includes setting the overall direction of the congregation, keeping the congregation in line with biblical principles, and seeing that the congregation is spiritually nurtured. These are the functions of the *z'keynim* in our congregation. Not all men are suited for the role of elder. In selecting elders from among the men, we seek to follow the biblical criteria set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 as well as the demonstration of leadership in the congregation.”²⁷

All those of who encounter Exodus 18:21, “You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain” (NJPS), would recognize that the virtues of competence, trustworthiness, honesty, and rejecting inappropriate monies **are required of all spiritual leaders for all time periods**. But whether all leaders at all time periods have to be of the male gender, is another question all together. The instructions of Exodus 18:21-22 and Deuteronomy 1:13-15 involve leaders appointed for the community of Ancient Israel, appointed over different numerical groups. There can be no one-for-one transference of such requirements for any modern setting, as these are not universal requirements for leadership, for all places and times. Complementarians should be honest enough to recognize this.

Are the requirements for elders listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, universal for all places and times? Or are these principally instructions for Timothy in the vicinity of Ephesus and Titus on the island of Crete, to see the communities of Messiah followers firmly rooted and established? In my twenty-three years of being in the Messianic movement since 1995, I have personally never even seen such questions asked, much less answered. Yet, whether the instructions involving congregational leadership in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 are universal or situation specific, are factors that complementarian examiners—much less egalitarian examiners—have had to weigh. Why are there no requirements issued in Titus 1 for deacons, but there are

²⁷ Ibid., pp 165-166.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

requirements issued in 1 Timothy 3 for deacons? If one can assume that the believing community on Crete was not sufficiently large enough to require various deacons, then a situational issuance of the instructions of 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9 must be considered as a legitimate interpretational option. A conclusion drawn by conservative egalitarians, who read such instructions as situational *and* weighing examples of females in leadership in the Apostolic Scriptures, is that 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9 cannot be used as prohibitions against female leaders. This is especially true given the presence of the female Apostle Junia in Romans 16:7, as the gifting of apostle would be considered of greater weight than that of elder!

“Torah presents men as head or leader of the household, not women.”

In just about every Messianic setting I have ever been involved with, when the role of husbands and wives within the family is discussed, it is automatically assumed that the husband is the “head of the household,” meaning that he is the leader with whom final authority resides. This is a mainstay of complementarian thought, as the 1987 Danvers Statement declared, “Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community...”²⁸ Unless one has been seriously engaged in academic debates between evangelical complementarians and egalitarians over the past three to four decades, one is not likely to have heard any proposal that the term “head,” as it appears in various places in our English Bibles, could mean anything other than “leader” (aside from the physical head of a human or animal).

It cannot be denied that the Hebrew term *rosh* (רֹאשׁ) can mean “**leader, chief**” (*HALOT*).²⁹ The term *rosh* is used throughout the Hebrew Tanach to describe leaders within Ancient Israel. In a random passage like Joshua 22:21, where it is seen that “The Children of Re’uven and the Children of Gad and the half tribe of Menashe answered; they spoke to the heads of the thousands of Israel” (Fox), the Hebrew reads *rashei al’fei Yisrael* (רֹאשֵׁי אֲלָפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). However, contextually this is not speaking about fathers being the leaders of small families of a wife and several children; contextually this is speaking

²⁸ Piper and Grudem, 85.

²⁹ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 2:1166.

about the leaders of large clan units that compose sub-divisions within the tribes of Ancient Israel. And, it also cannot go unnoticed how the Hebrew *rashei al'fei Yisrael* was rendered in the Greek Septuagint as, *tois chiliarchois Israēl* (τοῖς χιλιάρχους Ἰσραηλ), “the officers of thousands of Israel” (NETS). The Hebrew *rosh* was rendered as *chiliarchos* (χιλιάρχος), “lit. ‘leader of a thousand soldiers’” (BDAG).³⁰ While these leaders in Ancient Israel were doubtlessly male, complementarian examiners should be fair enough to recognize the difference between commanders of sub-divisions within the Twelve Tribes, versus the leadership responsibilities of husband and wife within the family.

The two main places in the Apostolic Writings, where it is commonly concluded that males are to be the “head of the household” are 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:22-23. About the only thing that readers of 1 Corinthians 11 can all agree on, is that the Greek *kephalē* (κεφαλή) contextually has to mean the physical head of a man or woman in some of the verses (1 Corinthians 11:4-7, 10). However, it is quite safe to say that a significant majority of today’s Messianic congregational leaders and teachers, have never been exposed to how the Greek term *kephalē* frequently does not mean leader, but instead “the head or source of a river” (LS),³¹ or “source, origin” (LSJM).³² And indeed, given how in English, the term “head” frequently does relate to leadership, getting many of today’s Messianic people to think of the term “head” meaning something other than leadership, is going to be bereft with challenges.

In the Torah we encounter descriptions such as “head of his father’s household” (Numbers 1:4) and “head of the people of a father’s household” (Numbers 25:15), and so it is automatically assumed that many usages of “head” in the Scriptures just mean “leader.” Within the Pentateuch, the Hebrew *rosh* (רֹאשׁ) can mean “leader, chief” (HALOT),³³ yet the Greek Septuagint most often renders *rosh* as *archōn* (ἄρχων), “a ruler, commander, chief, captain” (LS),³⁴ or something comparable. When “Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the sons of Israel” (Numbers 30:1) or Ancient Israel’s leaders, *rashei ha’mattot l’onei Yisrael* (רֹאשֵׁי הַמַּטּוֹת הַבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) is rendered by the LXX as *tous archontas tōn phulōn Israēl* (τοὺς ἄρχοντας τῶν φυλῶν Ἰσραηλ), with *rosh* communicated as *archōn*.

Many, when reading a passage like 1 Corinthians 11:3, assume that “But I want you to understand that Messiah is the head of every man,

³⁰ BDAG, 1084.

³¹ LS, 430.

³² BibleWorks 9.0: LSJM Lexicon (Unabridged).

³³ HALOT, 2:1166.

³⁴ LS, 122.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah,” that there is a Creation hierarchy present. This Creation hierarchy begins with something like “God is the *leader* of Messiah, Messiah is the *leader* of man/male, and man/male is the *leader* of woman/female.” **Yet, that is precisely not the order presented in 1 Corinthians 11:3**, as the relationship between God, the Messiah, male, and female is not presented in either a descending or ascending order. When *kephalē* has been approached as either “source” or “origin”—“But I want you to understand that the source of every man is Messiah, and the source of the woman is the man, and the source of Messiah is the Godhead” (1 Corinthians 11:3, PME)—are actually three pairs of relationships expressed, leading from Creation to redemption. Adam as the first human being, originated from the Messiah as Creator; Eve as the first woman originated from Adam; and from the Godhead (*ho Theos, ὁ θεός*) the Messiah was incarnated as a human being to be sacrificed for the salvation of all humanity. An unambiguous term that Paul could have used, if “authority” or “leader” were expressly intended in 1 Corinthians 11:3, is *exousia* (ἐξουσία), “power or authority to do a thing” (LS),³⁵ appearing in 1 Corinthians 11:10.³⁶

Recognizing that the equivalent of the Hebrew *rosh* is typically the Greek *archōn*, Paul’s statement of Ephesians 5:22-23 employs *kephalē* instead: “Wives...to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly], He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.” This instruction is preceded by the overarching principle of submitting mutually to one another, “be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah” (Ephesians 5:21), meaning that there are actions to be demonstrated not only of the wife submitting to her husband (Ephesians 5:24, 33b), but of the husband submitting to his wife (Ephesians 5:25-27, 33a). A huge factor in favor of *kephalē* meaning “source” or “origin” in Ephesians 5:23—“For the man is the source of the woman, as Messiah also is the source of the assembly, *being* Himself the Savior of the body” (PME)—is how a husband has to treat his wife the same as he would treat his own body: “So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies” (Ephesians 5:28a). Adam declared of Eve, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” Contrary to this, there is a plethora of

³⁵ LS, 276.

³⁶ For a further evaluation of details, especially as they involve the issue of head covering garments on males and females, consult the author’s commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

classical Greco-Roman materials, to be sure, which demeaned females as being weak, deformed, and sub-human.³⁷

Conservative egalitarians hardly believe that male leadership in the family is something that should go away; conservative egalitarians believe that the Apostolic Scriptures present an ideal of husband and wife leading the family together, in submission to each other. There are scores of successful marriage examples in evangelical Protestantism, of where the husband and wife are co-equal partners and co-leaders of the family. Such is the model I was presented from my parents Kimball and Margaret McKee, who very much functioned as though they were Aquila and Priscilla. This is not a model that I have seen too often in today's Messianic movement, and I personally do not believe that our faith community is at all aided by broadly supporting a complementarian model of males leading and females following, which can frequently be rooted in the idea that females are ultimately inferior to males—no matter how much some Messianic complementarians may protest it.

“Torah upholds male leadership in the family, because the husband has the right to cancel the oaths and vows of his wife and daughters.”

Making an oath or vow, or some kind of binding commitment, is a very serious ordeal in Holy Scripture, and should not be taken lightly (cf. Deuteronomy 23:21-23). Ecclesiastes 5:4 is clear, “When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for *He takes* no delight in fools. Pay what you vow!” Readers of a passage like Numbers 30:1-8, are all astutely aware of the severity of vows, but can be at a loss for how to consider this instruction in a modern—especially post-resurrection era—context. Does a passage like Numbers 30:1-8 ascribe some kind of reserve powers to a husband and father, who is able to cancel the vows, oaths, and commitments of his wife and daughters? Liberal interpreters are often seen to dismiss this instruction as a product of Ancient Israelite patriarchy, as something with no relevance for modern people.³⁸ Numbers 30:1-8 directs,

³⁷ For a further evaluation of details, consult the author's commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

³⁸ Thomas B. Dozeman, “The Book of Numbers,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter's Bible*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 2:236.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

“Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the sons of Israel, saying, ‘This is the word which the LORD has commanded. If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. Also if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, and binds herself by an obligation in her father’s house in her youth, and her father hears her vow and her obligation by which she has bound herself, and her father says nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand and every obligation by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if her father should forbid her on the day he hears *of it*, none of her vows or her obligations by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the LORD will forgive her because her father had forbidden her. However, if she should marry while under her vows or the rash statement of her lips by which she has bound herself, and her husband hears of it and says nothing to her on the day he hears *it*, then her vows shall stand and her obligations by which she has bound herself shall stand. But if on the day her husband hears *of it*, he forbids her, then he shall annul her vow which she is under and the rash statement of her lips by which she has bound herself; and the LORD will forgive her.”

Many people in today’s Messianic community believe that Numbers 30:1-8 do ascribe the authority to today’s husbands and fathers, to cancel the words issued by their wives and daughters—and thus the husband and father, as a male, has an authority that females do not have. *This is power, however, that can be quickly and easily abused.* I have sat through congregational messages, where principal, and certainly final, male leadership and authority—for both congregation and home—has been emphasized from Numbers 30:1-8. Yet, are the statements appearing in Numbers 30:1-8 set in stone? Almost no Messianic teacher or leader I have heard, invoke Numbers 30:1-8 as a passage supporting exclusive, or at least principal, male leadership, has ever really bothered to demonstrate that *he* has consulted a variety of resources on the Book of Numbers—which will certainly make some effort to place these statements in some context for the Ancient Israelites who originally received them.

Surrounding the instruction in Numbers 30:1-8, are details involving the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11), and general inheritance that was to take place among the sons of families and within the community of the twelve tribes of Israel (Numbers 36:1-13). These words are given in specific contexts for Ancient Israel, and can be properly deduced as case law. In order to properly appreciate these stipulations, a Bible reader must first evaluate

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

these passages for what they meant to those who originally received them. Females in Ancient Israel inheriting property in a situation where a father had no sons, was surely something revolutionary and subversive for a high patriarchal Ancient Near East. Seeing that “no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another tribe, for the tribes of the sons of Israel shall each hold to his own inheritance” (Numbers 36:9), would have been very critical for the first few centuries after the Conquest—but clearly would have been read and applied differently for the post-exilic, Second Temple Judaism of Yeshua the Messiah. These kinds of words, appearing in the Torah, have no doubt produced various interpretations and applications, as useful principles, by Jewish and Protestant examiners wanting to appreciate the high value of God’s Law.

As one reviews the instruction of Numbers 30:1-8, are we, or are we not, dealing with Ancient Israelite case law? Are these instructions set in stone, so that male husbands and fathers have some sort of reserve powers that female wives and mothers do not have? Or, were these instructions given in a particular ancient context that needs to be accounted for? Commentators on the Book of Numbers are frequently witnessed as favoring some ancient context in view. Timothy R. Ashley indeed indicates, “The form of the legislation (as is common in other passages dealing with vows) is casuistic or case law, which amounted to legal precedents drawn from specific cases.”³⁹

In Numbers 30:1-8, it is seen that husbands and fathers are responsible for what their wives and daughters say. While complementarian readers would conclude that this is an important responsibility of a husband and father as leader of the family, even egalitarian readers who believe in husbands and wives serving as co-leaders of the family, should recognize that husbands and fathers should still be responsible for what their wives and daughters say, and thus what they might commit the family to. Yet it is too frequently overlooked, because of too many modern assumptions we can bring to the text, that *females in Ancient Israel could actually make vows*. Martin Noth describes, “Here it is presupposed at the beginning that women have the right to undertake, on their own initiative, obligations of the kind mentioned.”⁴⁰ Ashley further observes, “Ch. 30 reinforces the right of women to make vows...and limits a husband’s right to void a vow by

³⁹ Timothy R. Ashley, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 574.

⁴⁰ Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 225.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

requiring that his objection be made when he first hears of his wife's vow and not long after a long period of reflection."⁴¹

As modern and post-modern readers of Numbers 30:1-8, we tend to be prone to only see the restrictions present via a husband and father being able to cancel the words of his wife and daughters, as a means of protecting them. **We instead need to recognize that Ancient Israelite females were being given rights that their contemporaries in other societies would largely have not had.** As Ronald B. Allen puts it, "the very fact that women were making vows in this antique age is a step of great significance."⁴²

Is it at all unreasonable to suggest that there were situations envisioned in Ancient Israel, designed to regulate females making oaths or vows, and husbands and fathers being given the authority to cancel them? Commentators have certainly proposed some valid options which need to be considered. Philip J. Budd indicates that the context of the instruction is "the patriarchal character of Israelite society, and the economic dependence of women upon men." He further states, "The husband and father must be protected from any excessive commitments made by women who are not ultimately responsible for finding the resources by which those commitments can be honored."⁴³ That females could be seen making oaths, vows, or other statements which would have involved the transaction of money or property—for which they could have been taken advantage of in a broadly patriarchal environment—would necessarily require a husband or father to have the reserve power to cancel such commitments. It has also been interjected, by Ashley, that the context of the Numbers 30:1-8 instructions is the Conquest, "when fathers or husbands would likely be absent on military maneuvers for longer periods of time."⁴⁴ This would also represent a situation in which females in the largely patriarchal Ancient Near East could be taken advantage of, when conducting business transactions.

How inflexible or flexible are the instructions of Numbers 30:1-8? In this passage, husbands and fathers have authority over the vows or commitments made by their wives and young daughters. Yet it cannot go overlooked how there is one glaring demographic absent: young sons. If a young son were to make a vow, oath, or commitment on the

⁴¹ Ashley, 576.

⁴² Allen, in *EXP*, 2:959.

⁴³ Philip J. Budd, *Word Biblical Commentary: Numbers*, Vol 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 324.

⁴⁴ Ashley, 576.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

part of the family's flock or harvest, for example, would it not be appropriate for his father to have the power to cancel such a word? Of course it would! Gordon J. Wenham observes how "Although this looks at first sight like a comprehensive discussion of the topic, there are certain obvious omissions. For instance, vows by sons bound by parental authority are not discussed..." He then concludes, "Such omissions are typical of ancient oriental law: the biblical documents are not comprehensive codes but collections of interesting and important cases."⁴⁵

If the instructions of Numbers 30:1-8 are indeed Ancient Israelite case law, then what does it communicate for today's Messianic people? *This is a place where we have to look for more of the spirit of the Torah than the letter* (cf. Romans 7:6). Husbands and fathers are stated to have the authority to cancel the oaths, vows, and commitments of their wives and daughters. Few complementarians in today's Messianic world would dispute that fathers have the authority to cancel the oaths, vows, and commitments of their sons as well. But how might egalitarians, who believe in a new status for human beings in the post-resurrection era (Galatians 3:28), and promote an ideology of mutual submission (Philippians 2:4; Ephesians 5:21), approach the instruction of Numbers 30:1-8?

An egalitarian approach to Numbers 30:1-8 should not dispute the authority given to husbands and fathers to cancel the oaths, vows, and commitments made by their wives, daughters, and even sons. An egalitarian approach would conclude that mothers certainly have the authority to cancel the oaths, vows, and commitments made by their daughters and sons. And, an egalitarian approach would conclude that wives, who are co-equal leaders of the family with their husbands, would indeed have the authority to cancel the oaths, vows, and commitments made by their husbands. The instruction of Numbers 30:1-8 for its Ancient Israelite recipients, afforded significant rights and liberties to females, in permitting them to actually make oaths and vows. But now in the post-resurrection era, the oaths and vows of males do not have to stand on their own (Numbers 30:2), as wives as the significant helper or ally of their husbands can step in and look out for their husband's well being and protection. As Dennis T. Olson concurs,

"The portrait of family and marriage relationship in these laws in which a father or husband has veto power over a woman's religious

⁴⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Numbers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981), 206.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

decisions with no reciprocal right on the part of the woman obviously reflects a different and ancient social situation that is not analogous to many families or marriages today. Reciprocity, joint decision making, and the sharing of responsibilities would be considered a more viable model of family and marriage life for our contemporary context."⁴⁶

We have probably all seen situations where a husband has made a particular commitment for his family, perhaps in something as simple as making an appointment, and then his wife has had to step in and cancel it, because she knew that there was a previous engagement at the same time. There are likely scores of examples we could also think of, where a husband has written a check, or paid for something with the wrong credit or debit card, and then his wife has had to step in and cancel payment because of lack of funds. These would be some practical, reciprocal, mutually submitted approaches to the Numbers 30:1-8 instructions, in light of the post-resurrection era and its egalitarian realities.

“Women occupying positions of prominence or leading is an exception in the Bible; it is not something normative to God’s order.”

Frequently heard among evangelical Christian complementarians, is the thought that when females are seen to take positions of leadership in the Bible, it is because males have not done their job. So, any scene where it is witnessed that females have had to step up and take the lead, did not take place because a female was genuinely endowed by God with a gift of leadership, but instead took place in order to shame the males who should have been leading. The view of the 1987 Danvers Statement expressed a concern for “the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness.”⁴⁷

A large majority of today’s Messianic movement, in all of its diverse sectors, would sit to the Right of the Danvers Statement. There are various culturally-conditioned statements appearing in the Tanach, which are reflective of how in the patriarchal Ancient Near East, women were not the equals of men, and were inherently weaker and defenseless (i.e., Isaiah 19:16; Jeremiah 50:37; 51:30; Nahum 3:13). Yet, in the discussions and debates over men and women in the Body of

⁴⁶ Dennis T. Olson, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Numbers* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1996), 175

⁴⁷ Piper and Grudem, 84.

Messiah, many of us have doubtlessly witnessed a passage like Isaiah 3:12 invoked, repeated, and then embellished and even exaggerated: “O My people! Their oppressors are children, **and women rule over them.** O My people! Those who guide you lead *you* astray and confuse the direction of your paths.” Almost no one in the contemporary Messianic movement is going to bother recognizing that there is a textual issue present, regarding the reading of “women,” in Isaiah 3:12. As indicated by the Left of Center *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*,

“[B]ased on the LXX, it is probably better to read the Hebrew *noshim*, as ‘creditors,’ instead of *nashim*, ‘women.’ If *women* is retained, however, note how Israel’s male-centered worldview lodged legitimate authority only in the hands of men.”⁴⁸

The more conservative NET Bible notes the presence of “an emendation (with support from the LXX) of נָשִׁים (*nashim*, ‘women’) to נוֹשִׁים (*noshim*, ‘creditors’; a participle from נָשָׂא, *nasa*).”⁴⁹ Isaiah 3:12 is notably rendered in the NET Bible as, “Oppressors treat my people cruelly; creditors rule over them. My people’s leaders mislead them; they give you confusing directions.” This follows a reading of the Hebrew *n-sh-y-m* (נָשִׁים) as *noshim* (נוֹשִׁים). This was translated into the Greek Septuagint as *apaitountes* (ἀπαίτουντες), “extortioners” (LXE) or “creditors” (NETS). Recognizing the textual issues in the MT, and how it was translated in the LXX, is not something that most of today’s Messianic people are going to do. However, the original reading of Isaiah 3:21 being *noshim*, indicates that **Isaiah 3:12 should not and cannot be used to speak against female leaders in the Body of Messiah.**

In his essay “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” appearing in the 2001 *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, Nadler recognizes that there are females in the Bible, serving in important ministry positions.⁵⁰ But, he considers such positions to be widely supportive and not primary. Among the different females referenced, include:

- the Prophetess Miriam: “Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing” (Exodus 15:20).
- the Judge Deborah: “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time” (Judges 4:4).

⁴⁸ Susan Ackerman, “Isaiah,” in *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, 963.

⁴⁹ *The NET Bible, New English Translation* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 1268.

⁵⁰ Nadler, “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, pp 160-162.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

- the Prophetess Huldah: “So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her” (2 Chronicles 34:22).
- Queen Esther: “The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti” (Esther 2:17).
- the Prophetess Anna: “And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage” (Luke 2:36).
- Mary Magdalene and various others: “and *also* some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means” (Luke 8:2-3).
- the businesswoman Lydia: “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 16:14).
- the businesswoman Priscilla: “But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).
- the daughters of Philip: “Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses” (Acts 21:9).
- the deaconess Phoebe: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the [assembly] at Cenchreae” (Romans 16:1, NRSV).

Conservative egalitarian examiners, do have to recognize that a number of the females serving in positions of leadership or spiritual authority, are doing so in a secondary or ancillary capacity. But among the examples listed above, it cannot go unnoticed that as one gets to the period of the Messiah’s ministry, and the post-resurrection era, that the number of females serving increases. Egalitarians take this as a sign that with the Messiah’s death, burial, and resurrection, the equality of men

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

and women that was lost at the Fall (Genesis 3:16) has been restored (Galatians 3:28), and had begun to assert itself.

Of the examples listed above, Nadler makes a number of comments which need to be acknowledged. Regarding the Judge Deborah (Judges 4:4), he draws the conclusion, “women were not restricted from the role of judge, as in the case of Deborah...Although one might be otherwise disqualified from assembly leadership, this does not mean that they could not serve adequately in some other place of leadership. Therefore, a woman could serve as judge although she could not serve as an assembly leader.”⁵¹ Per Deborah leading Ancient Israel through difficult times—and hardly being rebuked for it as a female—Nadler deduces that while principal leadership in a congregation or assembly should be reserved for males, there might be various other places for females to serve in leadership. One would legitimately wonder, though, what place in the assembly he would envision females taking on some leadership capacity, honoring of the spirit of Deborah as a judge of Israel.

One possible place of leadership where Messianic Judaism might see fit to see more women serve, is in the role of a deacon. Nadler labels Phoebe from Romans 16:1 as “shamashah (deaconess/diakonon).”⁵² A Messianic Jewish Bible like the CJB/CJSB, is seen to employ Hebrew terminology for Romans 16:1, having “our sister Phoebe, *shammash* of the congregation at Cenchrea.” The TLV has, “our sister Phoebe—who is a servant-leader of Messiah’s community at Cenchrea,” something reflective of a complementarian ideology. The source text, however, unambiguously labels the female Phoebe *diakonon tēs ekklēsias* (διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας), “a deacon of the assembly” (PME). Phoebe was not just a mere deacon, either, as she was commended by Paul to be helped by the Romans (Romans 16:2), having been given the authorization by him to carry his epistle, and as such was doubtlessly given various explanations about what Paul intended by the contents of the letter to the Romans.⁵³

Various complementarian Christians today, do actually recognize the legitimacy of females serving as deacons in the *ekklēsia*, albeit with males alone serving as elders. However, given the complementarianism of the majority of today’s Messianic movement, how many females might be seen to occupy secondary capacities of leadership—such as

⁵¹ Nadler, “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 161.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁵³ If necessary, consult the author’s commentary *Romans for the Practical Messianic*.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

that of deacon(ness)—given the presence of a female deacon in Phoebe? How many of the examples of significant female service in the Bible, are not emphasized, taught about, or even mentioned by today's male, Messianic congregational leaders? If they were mentioned, then the greater frequency of them, as seen in the Apostolic Writings and post-resurrection era, might actually get a number of people to wonder why females are often under-utilized in the Body of Messiah, after all. Not adequately employing all of the gifts and talents and skills of God's people, is what certainly causes many to reevaluate many of the tenets of complementarianism.

A figure like Nader, in "Male Leadership and the Role of Women," does think that "Women could teach and were encouraged to teach in women's ministries...Priscilla, at least, assisted in the teaching [of] Apollos, a man, though this was done in conjunction with her husband."⁵⁴ For most of today's Messianic Jewish male leaders and teachers, females can occupy very limited teaching roles, such as teaching other females. On occasion, a gifted woman may theoretically arise who can help mentor a male, in private, with her husband present (per one interpretation of Priscilla's activities).

For many egalitarians, however, it is the presence of the female Apostle Junia in Romans 16:7, which indicates that females should not at all be barred from high positions of leadership, on a level playing field with males: "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kindred, and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Messiah before me" (PME). The presence of a female, *Iouinia* (Ἰουνία), is fraught with controversy—so much so that throughout much of Christian history, at least, textual sources were changed to read with the masculine *Iounias* (Ἰουνιάς) or Junias, even though such a name did not exist in antiquity. If the figure of Junia were indeed an apostle, then an apostle is notably a higher office than that of teacher, pastor, or evangelist—and it would mean that restrictive instructions (i.e., 1 Timothy 2:12-15) are entirely situational to the First Century C.E., and it is more normative in the post-resurrection era to see females occupying high level positions of leadership in the Body of Messiah.

⁵⁴ Nadler, "Male Leadership and the Role of Women," in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 161.

“The writings of the Apostles make it clear that wives are to submit to their husbands.”

In the 1987 Danvers Statement, the emergent Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood decreed, “In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands’ authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands’ leadership.”⁵⁵ It is safe to say that the significant majority of today’s Messianic leaders and teachers would promote some form of this: mainly that wives are to be in one-way submission to their husbands. In all of my experience in the Messianic movement—but most especially since my seminary studies (2005-2009) and composition of commentaries on Ephesians (2008), Colossians (2009), and the Pastoral Epistles (2010-2011)—I have yet to really see that many in today’s Messianic community ever *reevaluate* the concept of one-way wifely submission to a husband.

The context of a passage like 1 Peter 3:1-7 is correctly recognized as not being universal for all places and all circumstances. In a patriarchal Greco-Roman Mediterranean world, the Apostle Peter was mainly addressing how wives who were Believers were to relate to their husbands who were non-Believers: “you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives” (1 Peter 3:1). The *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, which is broadly complementarian, notably does point out, “wives should submit even to unbelieving husbands unless doing so would violate obedience to Christ...In Greco-Roman society, wives were expected to follow the religion of their husbands. But Peter subverts that expectation by instructing wives on how their unbelieving husbands ‘may be won over without words.’”⁵⁶

There are indeed some contextual and historical considerations for the wifely submission depicted in 1 Peter 3:1-7, which necessarily begs the question of how a wife should relate to a husband who is a non-Believer in a more modern setting, and in a culture and society where freedom of religion is greatly valued. Likewise, while the believing wife in 1 Peter 3:1-7 was to relate to her non-believing husband, as Sarah related to Abraham in the **highly patriarchal** Ancient Near East (1 Peter 3:5-6), influencing her husband by a quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:2-4)—it is a

⁵⁵ Piper and Grudem, 85.

⁵⁶ Karen H. Jobes, “1 Peter,” in D.A. Carson, gen. ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, 2011 NIV (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 2544.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

mistake to think that for couples in the post-resurrection era, where both husband and wife are Believers, that the wife should be entirely passive, to the point of never speaking to her husband about decisions or choices he might make. Yet, in today's Messianic movement, I have definitely encountered marriage relationships where the wife never speaks to her husband about his choices, precisely because of a misapplication of 1 Peter 3:1-7.

From the Apostle Paul's writings, it is witnessed that he says, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18, ESV). Yet when one reads Paul's words about household codes in Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:21-6:9, they are all controlled by the overriding principle: "submit yourselves to one another out of reverence for Messiah" (Ephesians 5:21, TLV). While there are instructions given as they involve submission of a wife to a husband (Ephesians 5:21-24, 33b; Colossians 3:18)—given the requirement of all to be submitted mutually—it cannot go overlooked how there is more instruction issued regarding the submission of a husband to his wife (Ephesians 5:25-29, 33a; Colossians 3:19).⁵⁷ In today's Messianic community, though, while one is certainly going to hear about the necessity of a wife submitting to her husband, the reciprocal submission of a husband to his wife—per the Ephesians 5:21 emphasis of mutual submission and how "we are members of His body" (Ephesians 5:30)—will almost never be heard. In fact, in the view of Resnik, in his article "The Two Shall Become One Flesh," it is necessary that one party in the marriage be a subordinate to the other party:

"[O]ne purpose of marriage may be to display the quality of ordered relationship free of the dynamics of power and status that seem inherent in every human society. The dominant party is to sacrifice self on behalf of the subordinate party. The subordinate submits, not out of coercion or inferiority, but as a free act of service that reflects the service of Messiah himself."⁵⁸

Ephesians 5:21-24, and the position of the wife in relation to her husband, is read by Resnik as representing "mutuality within the hierarchy."⁵⁹ Egalitarians are not appreciative of these sorts of conclusions, as they would think that one purpose of marriage, is that husband and wife are to demonstrate a partnership of equals, as was

⁵⁷ If necessary, consult the relevant sections of the author's commentaries *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic* and *Colossians and Philemon for the Practical Messianic*.

⁵⁸ Resnik, "The Two Shall Become One Flesh," 28.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

originally intended by the creation of humanity in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:26-27).

While the service of the Messiah to the *ekklēsia* is invoked in Ephesians 5:25-27, 29b, in order for husbands to properly love and care for their wives—it cannot be dismissed that this actually portrays the Messiah’s submission to the *ekklēsia*. As egalitarians frequently note, regarding the usage of *kephalē* (κεφαλή) as “source” or “origin” in Ephesians 5:23—woman originated from man, and consequently husbands should treat their wives the same as their own bodies (Ephesians 5:28). This ran contrary to most Greco-Roman, and even a few Jewish, stereotypes of women, as being inferior to men. When husbands would look at their wives the same as themselves, it should cause them not to be domineering or dictatorial, but instead caring and compassionate (Ephesians 5:29a). On a human level, it composes some of the significant elements of a submission of a husband to his wife, because a husband looking at his wife the same as he looks at his own body, **means that a husband will approach his wife as his equal.**

Today’s Messianic community has a very long way to go, as you are likely to never hear the concept of **mutual submission** ever talked about in your congregation, or at popular conference events, any time soon. In her 2001 essay, “Women Can Be in Leadership,” Fleischer believes that there is to be mutual submission of brothers and sisters to one another in the faith community, but only wifely submission in the home.⁶⁰ There has been no quantitative Messianic discussion present, by today in 2018, on mutual submission of wife to husband *and* husband to wife, as to my knowledge, in any Messianic venue. (There has certainly been no discussion on *kephalē* meaning “source” or “origin”!) As we move into the future, things are going to have to seriously change in this regard.

“Paul had a high regard for women, but his writings do not permit females serving in high positions of leadership in the Body of Messiah.”

Those who are egalitarian, and who believe not only in the full equality of males and females, but that females in the post-resurrection era can occupy positions of high leadership in the Body of Messiah, necessarily place a high emphasis on a verse like Galatians 3:28: “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).

⁶⁰ Fleischer, “Women Can Be in Leadership,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 151.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

Obviously, males and females have different reproductive anatomy, and females hardly start *becoming* males. Yet, it has been long recognized among examiners, how Galatians 3:28 is subversive to an ancient Jewish prayer: "A man must recite these 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 be a boor'; 'Praised [be Thou, O Lord...] who did not make me a woman'" (t.*Berachot* 6:18).⁶¹ Far from Galatians 3:28 only affirming the essential dignity of all persons in Messiah, egalitarians conclude that the thrust of Galatians 3:28 was to represent a new status for human beings in the post-resurrection era. This affects how females can serve in positions of leadership in the Body of Messiah.⁶²

Within the independent sectors of the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, a statement such as "let women keep silent in the communities, for it is not permitted for them to speak out. Rather let them be in order, as the Torah also says" (1 Corinthians 14:34, TLV), could very well be interpreted as a universal requirement for all times and settings. Not only are females permanently barred from serving in positions of leadership, but they should not even be found speaking in the assembly. Today's Messianic Judaism, however, is most probably going to be found supporting some kind of Corinthian-specific reason, for the statement of 1 Corinthians 14:34. Nadler, in "Male Leadership and the Role of Women," thinks "that the issue was actually women asking questions of their husbands in a service where women did not sit with men."⁶³ Females in today's Messianic Jewish congregations, should not at all think that they have to be "silent," especially in a Torah study, Bible study, or some other group discussion. Yet, 1 Corinthians 14:34 might still be invoked to limit the participation of women in leadership roles. It is witnessed, however, that there are a small number of voices who do not consider 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to be a non-Pauline interpolation, thus inauthentic to Paul's letter.⁶⁴ Various evangelical scholars have proposed this as well, based on textual and theological

⁶¹ Tzvee Zahavy, trans., in Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew With a New Introduction*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1:42.

⁶² For a more detailed analysis, consult the author's exegesis paper on Galatians 3:28, "Biblical Equality and Today's Messianic Movement."

⁶³ Nadler, "Male Leadership and the Role of Women," in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 163.

⁶⁴ Joshua Brumbach. (2007). *Women Rabbis and Messianic Judaism*. Retrieved 12 February, 2014, from <<http://messianicjudaism.me/yinon/>>.

criteria,⁶⁵ and I myself have been very inclined to agree with their conclusions. There is no specific prohibition witnessed in the Torah or Pentateuch, silencing females in the general assembly.

The Pastoral Epistles of 1&2 Timothy and Titus, and their various instructions regarding females (1 Timothy 2:11-15), and the requirements for elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13), are almost always read by today's Messianic people as being universal instructions for all times and places, rather than being situationally conditioned to some extent, due to the false teaching that had erupted in Ephesus and on Crete. But, the absence of deacons in Titus, for instance, will cause various complementarians to note situational circumstances present—yet in almost every ordination I have witnessed, of a man being appointed as a new elder or deacon in a Messianic congregation, 1 Timothy 3 and/or Titus 1 has been read.

Not recognizing the place of the Ephesian false teaching, which advocated that the resurrection had taken place (2 Timothy 2:18), and an apparently pre-Fall condition of abstaining from meat and sexual intercourse (1 Timothy 4:1-5), will lead to some misinterpretations and misapplications of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Did Paul prohibit all women for all time from occupying positions of authority? It is doubtful that many of today's Messianic congregational leaders or teachers have even looked into the verb *authentēō* (ἀυθεντέω) as regarding not authority in general (*exousia*, ἐξουσία), but instead usurping authority: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to **usurp authority** over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Timothy 2:12, KJV). The Ephesian women were to learn or be educated (1 Timothy 2:11), but not to be found usurping the position of the educated males who were already recognized leaders in the assembly. Egalitarians hardly think that 1 Timothy 2:12 is universal, if females *and* males are properly educated in the Scriptures, and have the genuine spiritual gifts and calling necessary to lead.

Noting the verb *plassō* (πλάσσω), “generally, to mould and form by education, training” (LS),⁶⁶ egalitarians will often conclude that “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:13, RSV/ESV), involves the educational forming of Adam before Eve. Eve did not have the

⁶⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp 699-708; “1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Did Paul Forbid Women to Speak in Church?”, in Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), pp 217-267. Against: Adam D. Hensley. “συνιτω, λαλειω, and υποτασσω in 1 Corinthians 14:34 in Their Literary and Rhetorical Context” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Vol. 55 No. 2 (2012): 363-364.

⁶⁶ LS, 643.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

sufficient knowledge or understanding of the Creation, that she should have had, and that is why she was deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). The figure of Eve, was likely important to female adherents of the Ephesian false teaching (cf. 1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 3:6). Paul's difficult statement of 1 Timothy 2:15, is best viewed with a literal translation of *dia tēs teknogonias* (διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας) with, "she will be saved **by the Child-bearing**; (so will they all), if they live in faith and love and holiness, with self-restraint" (Montgomery New Testament), a reference to the Genesis 3:15 promise, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." Far from women finding their "salvation" in child-rearing, the Ephesian women were to look to the Child-Bearing or Seed promised to Eve, the Incarnate Yeshua (discussed further).

An egalitarian perspective of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 will not be present in today's Messianic movement, except perhaps in detailed studies of the Pastoral Epistles.⁶⁷ Complementarian perspectives are instead going to be witnessed, which conclude that 1 Timothy 2:12-15 reflect a broad Creation order of men leading and women following. In "The Two Shall Become One Flesh," Resnik thinks that there is a Creation order of men leading and females following present in this passage:

"First Timothy...draw[s] out the implications not only of an ordered creation but also of the cataclysmic sin of the garden, which continues to affect husband-wife relationships, even in Messiah. The faithful woman, however, will be brought safely through the harsh conditions of childbirth imposed after the transgression in Eden."⁶⁸

Egalitarians would be seen to disagree with any conclusion by complementarians, that the sin of Garden, which affected the genders (Genesis 3:16), is not to somehow be reversed by the work of the Messiah (Galatians 3:28). Unfortunately, some of today's Messianic Jewish leaders think "the cataclysmic sin of the garden" still "affect[s] husband-wife relationships...in Messiah." Is there truly to be no significant effort to overcome post-Fall dynamics?

In his 2001 essay, "Male Leadership and the Role of Women," Nadler appreciably recognizes how there are interpreters who conclude that the instruction of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is situation-specific to Ephesus. But, as a complementarian, it is clear that he cannot break out of any

⁶⁷ If necessary, do consult the relevant sections of the author's commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic*.

⁶⁸ Resnik, "The Two Shall Become One Flesh," 28.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

view of 1 Timothy 2:13 that does not portray some kind of “Creation order” of men leading and women following:

“There are those who believe that this is an instruction that applies specifically to the first century congregation at Ephesus and not to the present day congregation in American culture. This could be a plausible understanding were it not for Paul’s mention of Adam and Eve and a creative order.”⁶⁹

Egalitarian perspectives or approaches of 1 Timothy chs. 2-3, Titus 1, or other passages, have not too widely been considered by today’s Messianic leaders, teachers, and scholars. In her 2001 essay, “Women Can Be in Leadership,” Fleischer observed, “As a movement, Messianic Judaism has not yet seen fit to ordain women as rabbis...Leaders within the movement have various reasons for excluding women from ordination. Some continue to believe that Rabbi *Sha’ul*’s teaching about women was for eternity, and not for his own time and place.”⁷⁰ My personal view is that for most of the male leaders and teachers in the Messianic movement, they simply have not looked into the issue as thoroughly as they ought. Perhaps this is due to their theological training, which did not focus on issues of males and females to the

⁶⁹ Nadler, “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 165.

Ibid., at least partially, bases his conclusion on males/husbands being supreme to wives/women, on how the relationship between males and females is apparently reflective of the relationship between the Father and Son:

“In the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there are three distinct personalities, all God and all equally God. Yet there is a recognized authority—the Father, to whom the others willingly submit. In marriage where husband and wife are equal spiritually before God, God establishes authority and places it in the man.”

There is a long standing debate over the subordination of the Son to the Father (cf. John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 15:28), and whether such a subordination is limited to the Son’s Incarnation, or is an eternal subordination. For some, this is a debate which affects the role of males and females in the Body of Messiah. There is a large selection of literature produced in the past decade or so, which has addressed this:

Kevin Giles, *The Trinity & Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God & the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); Millard J. Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009); Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House, eds., *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012); Bruce A. Ware & John Starke, eds., *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

Also consult the relevant sections of the author’s books *Salvation on the Line, Volumes I & II: The Nature of Yeshua and His Divinity*.

⁷⁰ Fleischer, “Women Can Be in Leadership,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 155.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

degree and detail that it should have. Or, perhaps such male leaders and teachers indeed do represent *a previous phase of development*.

Fleischer's "Women Can Be in Leadership" did briefly mention how women have steadily been occupying positions of rabbinical leadership in Conservative and Reform Judaism, as well as positions of ordained ministry in various Protestant denominations.⁷¹ For myself, I was not only raised in a United Methodist tradition (1980-1994) which ordained females as clergy, but I was forced to reevaluate various complementarian presuppositions that I picked up in my first years of being a part of the Messianic movement (1995-2004), when I attended an egalitarian institution in Asbury Theological Seminary (2005-2009). Many of today's Messianic leaders and teachers were not reared in an egalitarian tradition, nor did they have to reevaluate their complementarianism as a result of receiving some more formal theological training. While I personally do believe that the Messianic movement has a long way to go in this area, I was pleasantly surprised to see that Nadler, at least, does permit females to occupy the office of deacon in his congregation:

"The *z'keynim* [זְכֵינִים] fulfill only part of the needs for leadership in the congregation. In light of this, apart from holding the office of and serving as elders, women are needed and encouraged to lead in the various ministries of our congregation. The *shammashim* (deacons and deaconesses—both Hebrew and Greek transliterated terms mean 'servants') assist the *z'keynim* in ministry and in administration of the congregation."⁷²

Here, Nadler is to be commended for recognizing the place of female deacons in the assembly (cf. 1 Timothy 3:11); many Messianic congregations do not recognize the place of female deacons, in spite of unambiguous Biblical evidence to it (Romans 16:1-2).

More recently, in the 2013 publication *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, Wolf details how "many Messianic synagogues have an egalitarian policy when it comes to liturgical prayer and worship, so many women serve as cantors, Torah readers, and in other traditionally male roles."⁷³ I myself have been a part of Messianic congregational environments, where females have canted from the Torah, they have publicly read from the Scriptures, and they have even issued public prayers during the *Shabbat* service. In the Messianic Jewish movement

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp 154-155.

⁷² Nadler, "Male Leadership and the Role of Women," in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 165.

⁷³ Wolf, "Messianic Judaism and Women," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 100.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

of the present, Wolf summarizes the various opportunities open for women to serve:

“Based on my discussions with Messianic Jewish rabbis’ wives, these women are involved in the following activities: Most lead local prayer groups, retreats, Bible studies, and other women’s events on a regular basis. Some co-founded and co-lead their congregation with their husbands, though nearly all would agree that the rabbi (husband) holds the head leadership role. Many women work as congregational administrators or sit on the board of the congregation; some serve as president of their synagogue. Women sit on the boards of national organizations...”⁷⁴

There are complementarians in the Messianic community who would think that there are already too many opportunities open for women to serve, and that more men need to take up the sorts of leadership responsibilities listed above. Egalitarians, quite contrary to this, would say that as time moves forward, and traditional interpretations of various Pauline passages such as 1 Timothy chs. 2-3 are reevaluated, that many more opportunities should be afforded to Messianic women. The challenge is, these opportunities will need the support of Messianic men who hold to an egalitarian ideology, who at present are not too frequently encountered.

“Paul wanted women to occupy the place of homemaker, not home leader.”

It is not difficult to detect, from a variety of complementarian sources, that complementarians are upset when historically traditional roles for females are altered by women entering into the workplace, and certainly by women taking on home responsibilities beyond duties such as cooking, cleaning, and raising small children. Today’s Messianic movement is not widely known for encouraging females to pursue opportunities beyond that of homemaker, although it might be tolerant of unmarried women having a career in the workplace prior to marriage. Yet, once a woman is married, it is easily witnessed how today’s Messianic community would expect her to widely stay at home.

The 1987 Danvers Statement expressed some intense concern at “the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood [and] vocational homemaking.”⁷⁵ It is frequently concluded that an egalitarian

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Piper and Grudem, 84.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

ideology of husbands and wives serving as co-leaders of the home, either means that both husband and wife are working, *or* that the husband is the one who is the homemaker, while the wife works. Complementarians in the early Twenty-First Century, however, do have to concede that their preference for husbands to work, and wives to keep house, is not always possible given various economic complexities. Egalitarians, more consciously aware of economic complexities, stress that within the framework of mutual submission (cf. Ephesians 5:21), where a husband and wife jointly agree as co-leaders of the home, that there may be times when the husband may have to stay at home and spend more time raising small children, while the wife is away at a job. Yet at the same time, many people in today's economy work out of the home, so a husband who stays home and looks after the family's small children, may very well be working at the same time.

While egalitarians are witnessed emphasizing that females in the Body of Messiah—who are the equals of males—should never be discouraged from achieving great things in terms of their education and career, **it is a travesty that many mothers put their careers first.** But there are many fathers who put their careers first as well. A family which is led by a husband and wife, who adhere to an egalitarian ideology of male and female equality, **needs to make sure that father and mother are there to adequately care for, train, and discipline children.** Given the complexities of our modern economy, and the attention and money it takes to properly raise a son or daughter, this may require that couples have fewer children than previous generations. It does no good for one to have more children than parents can adequately provide for, care for, invest time and energy into, and most of all spiritually train and nurture.

Egalitarians recognize that if a husband and wife co-jointly decide that it is best for the husband to work in the marketplace, and provide the major source of income for the family, with the wife mainly being a homemaker and raising children—that there is absolutely nothing wrong with this. Complementarians are more prone to emphasize that the husband should be the main provider for the family, and the wife should be a homemaker, unless economic circumstances require otherwise. Those who are more patriarchal than not, would stress that being a homemaker is the God-given vocation for females, and where they will find their greatest degree of spiritual satisfaction. A statement such as that of 1 Timothy 2:15 may be invoked to support this conclusion: “But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint” (NASU).

Many complementarian readers of 1 Timothy 2:15 do not know how to approach this passage. They think that it is obvious enough that child-rearing is emphasized as a high vocation by this passage, but are not entirely sure what it means, “she will be saved” (ESV). Very few would think that a female’s personal salvation is tied to having children, and so the default view of 1 Timothy 2:15 is to regard motherhood as the “sphere” of a woman’s salvation.

There are actually some significant perspective and translation issues which need to be considered for 1 Timothy 2:15. The following analysis is adapted from the 2012 commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic*:

2:15 With Paul having just emphasized the deception of Eve, and the fact that she did play a transgressing role in the Fall, he then says, “But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety” (NIV). There is no clear position as to what this means, as agreed upon by complementarians and egalitarians. For our purposes, what is most important is how 1 Timothy 2:15 serves as a definite antithesis to what has been stated in regard to the deception of Eve and the Fall (1 Timothy 2:14). Human beings are not living in the eschaton or the resurrection age, the Ephesian women are still affected by the sin of Eve contrary to what the false teaching might have said, *but* there is a way for woman to be saved.

While it is lexically possible to render the verb *sōzō* (σῴζω) as “preserved” (NASU) or “delivered” (CJB), only Philippians 1:19⁷⁶ is often agreed to be the only use of “salvation” (Grk. noun *sōtēria*, σωτηρία) regarding anything but redemption from sin, and nowhere in 1 Timothy does salvation regard anything but eternal redemption (1 Timothy 1:15-16; 2:4). Based on what many people read in English Bibles, does it at all make any sense that women will actually “get saved” by having children? What about all of the women who cannot have children and are barren, much less those who never marry? William D. Mounce is right to point out, “Salvation is through God’s grace and mercy, appropriated by believers through faith...it is not salvation by works, much less salvation by procreation.”⁷⁷ But even some kind of “deliverance” or “preservation” by having children does not work either; many women in ancient times (and even up until

⁷⁶ “[F]or I know that this will turn out for my deliverance [*sōtēria*] through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Yeshua the Messiah” (Philippians 1:19).

⁷⁷ Mounce, 144.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

today) actually die when giving birth. Nowhere can the salvation described here regard a kind of “safety;” as the verb *hruomai* (ῥύομαι) is used in the Pauline Epistles to describe this.⁷⁸

A common interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15 views Paul as saying that quite in contrast to being teachers, women should instead just be good mothers, staying at home, and taking care of their children. Very few laypersons are at all informed as to how easily such a view of 1 Timothy 2:15 can be challenged. An accessible resource like the *Oxford Annotated Bible* actually lays out, for example, different translations of 1 Timothy 2:15, describing, “This much debated verse has also been translated (a) ‘she will be saved through the birth of the Child’ [referring to Jesus Christ], or (b) ‘she will be brought safely through childbirth.’”⁷⁹ Christian expositors on 1 Timothy 2:15 have to engage with what “childbirth” is all about; unfortunately most Messianic congregational leaders and teachers today are not even aware of the issue.

What is the salvation communicated by Paul to actually be? There are both complementarians and egalitarians who view the verb *sōzō* in regard to not be personal salvation, but rather in regard to some kind of ethical or moral safety. A.M. Stibbs suggests, “The concluding sentence indicates what each particular woman must actively do in order to experience the blessings of salvation in relation to the discharge of her function as motherhood.”⁸⁰ In Ralph Earle’s thought, “The wife may find both physical health and a higher spiritual state through the experience of bearing and rearing children.”⁸¹ Gordon D. Fee, an egalitarian, also concludes, “what Paul intends is that woman’s salvation, from the transgressions brought about by similar deception and ultimately for eternal life, is to be found in her being a model, godly woman, known for her good works.”⁸² In manifesting good works, women were to be faithful wives, mothers, managers of the home, and various interpreters also think it would include a degree of teaching small children.

One line of interpretation for 1 Timothy 2:15 is often connected to views of the Genesis 3:16 curse, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children...” Here, the woman is said that giving birth to children will be a very painful experience, yet it may be a very good experience for female Messiah followers. If the “new woman” of the First Century Roman Empire, one who is sexually promiscuous and more likely to abort or expose her child is a major

⁷⁸ Romans 15:30-31; 2 Corinthians 1:10-11; 2 Timothy 3:11; 4:18.

⁷⁹ Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible With the Apocrypha*, RSV (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp 1441-1442; see also *NIV Study Bible*, 1875.

⁸⁰ Stibbs, in *NBCR*, 1171.

⁸¹ Earle, in *EXP*, 11:362.

⁸² Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 75.

factor—then it is surely possible that Paul wants such a woman to return to a more wholesome life of raising children and being a good mother. Philip H. Towner observes, “By adopting and popularizing [a] radical departure from the traditional value of childbearing, wealthy wives in Ephesus...endorsed one element of the heresy.”⁸³ As I. Howard Marshall & Philip H. Towner both indicate, per some Ephesian problem at work, “The point is probably directed against a belief that women should abstain from childbirth...women will...be saved by fulfilling their Christian duty in motherhood.”⁸⁴

Rather than salvation for all women in general being the issue in 1 Timothy 2:15, returning the influenced women to a more traditional role of being mothers and caring for children, is thought to be Paul’s way of them “working out” (cf. Philippians 2:12) their salvation.⁸⁵ Mounce’s thought it is that the salvation to which Paul refers is “spiritual salvation and most likely is the proclaiming of the possibility of salvation for women who do not follow the opponents’ teaching and decide to accept domestic values such as having children.”⁸⁶ The women would not be saved by motherhood, but rather be put on a salvation path and within a salvation environment, as it were, away from the false teaching. This is an appreciable view, as it does recognize how 1 Timothy 2:15 was delivered to counter the Ephesian false teaching—and many women who had been deceived by it probably would go back in part to their normal way of life, albeit more educated. (This, I feel, is actually more the thrust of what Paul says later in 1 Timothy 5:14.) But does it really hold up grammatically?

While there are some fair-minded, traditional views of v. 15 which do not want to pigeonhole women into endless motherhood today—we still have to consider how a woman’s *salvation* is described here. Females can hardly be eternally redeemed of their sins by giving birth and raising children, no matter how honorable and upstanding this estate may be! The first human sin caused by the woman Eve is in view. The false teaching could very well have advocated that people were no longer affected by Eve’s transgression, which in turn only fueled the spirit of some women wanting to usurp male leaders in the Ephesian congregation. How is this to all be rectified? In my examination of 1 Timothy 2:15, I found it quite amazing how various commentaries have had to be honest in presenting the multiple ways that 1 Timothy 2:15 can be interpreted.⁸⁷

The Apostle Paul does not say that women are to be saved through having children, and neither does he say that motherhood is

⁸³ Towner, 234.

⁸⁴ Marshall & Towner, 470.

⁸⁵ Moo, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 192; Towner, 235.

⁸⁶ Mounce, 146.

⁸⁷ Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, pp 88-90; Earle, in *EXP*, 11:362; Mounce, pp 144-147.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

somehow akin to women working out their salvation. This is quite apparent when one looks at the Greek clause commonly rendered as “through childbearing” (CJB), *dia tēs teknogonias* (διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας). Of notable significance to us is the presence of the definite article *tēs* (τῆς), attached to the noun *teknogonias* (τεκνογονίας). A literal translation of *dia tēs teknogonias* can legitimately be “through the child-bearing” (YLT). A version like the NEB does include the alternate rendering, “through the Birth of the Child” in a footnote.⁸⁸

Some versions render *teknogonia* (τεκνογονία) in a verbal form like “bearing [of] children” (RSV, NASU), which has then given the impression to some that women must always be about having children, or at least taking care of the house.⁸⁹ But, *teknogonia* is a noun and not a verb. The noun *teknogonia* (τεκνογονία) means “child-bearing” (LS),⁹⁰ describing what has been birthed. The related term *teknogonos* (τεκνογόνος), relates to “begetting or bearing children” (LS),⁹¹ perhaps akin to motherhood. There is strong support for the salvation referred to not coming via the process of raising children, but rather with this being a statement about the Incarnation and birth of Yeshua the Messiah. A commentator like Mounce has to be honest in how “through the Childbearing/Childbirth” is a rendering that “would recognize the presence of the definite article τῆς, ‘the,’ before τεκνογονίας.”⁹² If you have an English Bible that does not have a footnote which identifies this possibility: **take a post-it, write yourself a reminder, and place it on top of 1 Timothy 2:15.**

There are some linguistic connections to be noted between 1 Timothy 2:15 and Genesis 3:16 in the Septuagint, as part of the curse on women was to be “in pain thou shalt bring forth children” (LXE), *texē tekna* (τέξη τέκνα).⁹³ Prior to this, though, is the promise of redemption via the agency of women, as the Lord told Eve, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15), often called the *protoevangelium* or the first promise of salvation. While there are those like Gary W. Demarest who think, “If Paul wanted to say that the salvation of women would come by the birth of Jesus, this was an awkward and obscure way of saying it”⁹⁴—it is yet quite easy to see when one understands how the only thing that

⁸⁸ *New English Bible* (Oxford and Cambridge: Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1970), NT 267.

⁸⁹ Cf. Payne, pp 431-433, for a summary of classical uses of the term.

⁹⁰ LS, 797.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Mounce, 145.

⁹³ Heb. *teildi banim* (תֵּלְדִי בָנִים).

⁹⁴ Gary W. Demarest, *The Preacher's Commentary: 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus*, Vol 32 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 185.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

can nullify the sin which led to the curse, is the entry of Yeshua into the world.

There are complementarians who favor “through the Childbearing/Childbirth” as being the best approach for the salvation of women in 1 Timothy 2:15. Donald Guthrie states, “it is possible that there is here an allusion to the promise of Genesis 3:15...If this were so, it would explain the reference to the salvation in this verse. This suggestion is attractive in spite of the obscurity involved.”⁹⁵ He noticeably thinks that this “suggestion is perhaps faced with less difficulties than the others.”⁹⁶ George W. Knight III similarly concludes, “The most likely understanding of this verse is that it refers to spiritual salvation through the birth of the Messiah.”⁹⁷ So to this, all an egalitarian like Ben Witherington III can add is a thought that it will not only be the Incarnation which solves the sin of the woman Eve, but how it could probably also involve the Messiah’s return.⁹⁸

The view that “through the Childbearing/Childbirth” is a reference to the seed of the woman manifesting itself in the Messiah’s Incarnation, does the best amount of justice to the woman being “saved.” Upon His entry into the world in human form, the promise of Genesis 3:15 could be fulfilled, realized in a verse like Romans 16:20: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Yeshua be with you.” In responding to whatever the false teaching in Ephesus had done, which caused various women to adopt a domineering attitude, 1 Timothy 2:15 serves to remind them that salvation would be found in the Seed promised to come through the woman Eve. This was to surely give the Ephesian women a sense of self-respect, but also one where they could be focused on the key thrust of Scripture: salvation by the Messiah’s entry into the world. In Philip B. Payne’s estimation,

“...Paul’s explanation of his prohibition of women teaching with self-assumed authority over men does not entail degradation of women but rather elevates woman to a privileged position that is far higher than anything offered by the false teachers: the promised seed of the woman came through Mary in the childbirth of the Savior. As Paul so often does, he brings the focus back to salvation through Christ, and he does so in a distinctive way that gives dignity to women.”⁹⁹

Because the Messiah had to be born of the woman, it is most obvious then that His sacrifice for us saves far more than just “men.” If women were to be saved “through the Childbearing/Childbirth,”

⁹⁵ Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 89.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁷ Knight, 146.

⁹⁸ Witherington, *Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John*, 230.

⁹⁹ Payne, 422.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

Yeshua the Messiah—with the condition, “provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (NRSV)—then it is a likely observation that many of the Ephesian women who had tried to be teachers were not saved. In being properly instructed (1 Timothy 2:11), they could learn about Adam and Eve and the promised Redeemer from the Scriptures, in appropriate contrast to the myths they had been hearing about (1 Timothy 1:4). Through such proper teaching, the deceived women could come to their senses and repent of past domineering mistakes, making sure that the small baby born in Bethlehem—who grew up to be the Lamb slain for our sins—had truly saved them from eternal punishment.

No Messianic teacher I know of at present has ever probed the significance of the clause *dia tēs teknogonias*, and how salvation by “the Childbirth” of Yeshua is the issue. On the contrary, in some distinct parts of today’s Messianic movement, the most overly-conservative application of the more standard view of 1 Timothy 2:15 is what is the norm. This does far more than just relegate women to children’s church and housewives as is typical among evangelical complementarians. It is thought that not only is a woman’s job to exclusively be a mother and take care of the home, but also that she is to be responsible for giving birth to *large numbers* of children. I have seen many Messianic families where the wife is giving birth to a new child on the average of every nineteen to twenty-four months!¹⁰⁰ Frequently never considered in these settings are the physical strain it puts on the mother *and* the **financial strain** it puts on the family. While husbands and wives are surely free to have as many children as they can legitimately support—and the Bible encourages married couples to raise godly sons and daughters—no support for a kind of “perpetual motherhood” can be found in 1 Timothy 2:15. Eternal salvation is simply not to be found in raising children.

“In spite of some of Paul’s own personal opinions, celibate singleness is not at all to be encouraged in the Body of Messiah.”

In a great deal of complementarian Protestant teaching, the disposition of single people tends to be greatly overlooked or downplayed. Does not every man or woman have a pre-destined “soul mate”? Complementarian Christian voices have to reluctantly admit, from time to time, that there are many young men and young women who are unmarried not due to selfishness—but rather due to circumstances beyond their control. These circumstances often involve

¹⁰⁰ In some cases, it can also be added that a “natural” birth without any kind of anesthesia is to be vastly preferred over a hospital birth.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

education, economics, and not a fear of commitment but a genuine concern about the possibility of divorce. Marriage in the Twenty-First Century is something that comes with a high degree of risk, and many young men and young women in the faith, who have remained sexually pure, are hardly just going to give themselves to another person without some certainties that a possible marriage is going to last.

While evangelical complementarians are forced, at times, to recognize that there will be many young people in contemporary Christianity who will remain unmarried—and that pastors and spiritual leaders need to be sensitive to their needs—the same sensitivity is not frequently witnessed in today’s broad Messianic community. Even though there are many single people in today’s Messianic movement, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, one is not too likely to hear a teaching from one’s congregational leader upholding the value of celibate singleness for an unmarried man or unmarried woman—even though Biblically there is no other disposition available to the unmarried man or unmarried woman who wishes to be in obedience to God. Instead, much of the spiritual culture of the Messianic movement is geared toward lauding the value of marriage, while indirectly, at least, discriminating against the sexually chaste unmarried person. *That married people are believed to be more spiritually fulfilled and mature than unmarried people, is a value firmly embedded in the minds of many of today’s Messianics.* This has to change as we enter into an uncertain global future, with rising anti-Semitism for sure, and an evaluation of what our faith community is to genuinely achieve as we face the final stretch of salvation history.

When the discussion of the disposition of the unmarried arises in the Messianic community—rather than address legitimate Twenty-First Century issues as to why various young men and young women should consider being celibate, at least for an elongated season—the statement of Genesis 2:18a instead is invoked: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (TLV). None of us like being lonely, and most single people in today’s Messianic community are not single by choice; they are single because of circumstance. But unlike what some interpreters might conclude, Genesis 2:18a is not a statement made to all human beings at all times in all places that they must be married; Genesis 2:18a specifically concerns *ha’adam* (הָאָדָם) or Adam as the first human being. Unlike all of the animals of God’s Creation, Adam had no female counterpart, and he was necessarily lonely. Today in the Twenty-First Century, on a planet of over seven billion human beings, there is no reason for any man or woman to feel lonely. Too many of today’s

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

teachers and leaders can be seen quoting Genesis 2:18a to unmarried men and women in their midst, with not enough sensitivity to their life circumstances. Rather than emphasizing how, given the difficulties of marriage and high possibility of divorce, that congregations and assemblies should make a greater effort to make singles in their midst feel welcomed and valued—Genesis 2:18a is more likely to make single people feel guilty and unwelcome because of their disposition.

Evangelical egalitarians, because of holding to an ideology where men and women are equals in the Messiah, absolutely believe that married couples and celibate singles are equal in the Messiah. While heterosexual marriage and celibate singleness both have their advantages and disadvantages, it is not as though married persons are more spiritually mature and thus more “complete” than unmarried persons. Yeshua Himself upholds the equality of married and unmarried, when answering the Disciples’ question, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10):

“Not all can accept this saying, but those to whom it is given. For there are sexless men who have been so from their mother’s womb, and there are sexless men who have been made sexless by other men, and there are sexless men who have made themselves sexless for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let him who can accept, accept” (Matthew 19:11-12, *Lattimore*).

Yeshua, employing the term “eunuch” (Grk. *eunouchos*, εὐνοῦχος) a bit metaphorically, affirms how there are people who have been destined for a life without sexual intercourse, often by a difficult choice they have had to make for the purposes of God’s Kingdom. In 1 Corinthians 7:7-8, in addressing various questions that the Corinthians posed to him about marriage, the Apostle Paul affirmed that celibate singleness has a valued place in the Body of Messiah: “Yet I would that all people were even as I myself am. However, each has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they abide even as I” (PME). Paul considers celibate singleness to be a gift from God, and recognized for the present First Century circumstances, that those who were married could perform less Kingdom work than those who were unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:26, 29). But Paul nowhere discounts the value of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:28), because Paul does not approach celibate singleness from the perspective of later Roman Catholicism, which requires its clergy to make vows of celibacy. The celibate singleness that Paul envisions is one where the time and energies that

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

one would necessarily have to invest in a marriage and child-rearing, instead get recycled into the tasks and goals of the Kingdom.

It is witnessed that today's Messianic movement does not have the perspective of either Yeshua or Paul when it comes to the value of celibate singleness—especially for Messianic men and women who would like to be married, but circumstantially have been unable to find a suitable spouse. In his article “The Two Shall Become One Flesh,” Resnik properly recognizes how the statistical probability of divorce, definitely affects people considering marriage. And he also reasonably indicates,

“[Y]oung people are encouraged to focus on education and career before considering marriage, and postponement can decrease the likelihood of getting married at all. The Apostolic Writings affirm singleness as a choice, but we should also support those who find themselves single without choosing it. Our community needs to be careful to view and speak of singleness without stigma and affirm the benefits of singleness clearly articulated in 1 Corinthians 7:24-40 without minimizing its difficulties and challenges.”¹⁰¹

Resnik has just described the state of most Messianic single men and women: **“those who find themselves single without choosing it.”** He is to be commended for acknowledging, “Our community needs to be careful to view and speak of singleness without stigma and affirm the benefits of singleness.” Unfortunately, even though he has recognized some of the issues present among single men and women in the contemporary Messianic movement, many other teachers and leaders do not.

Noting Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:25, “Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy,” Boaz Michael concludes, in his article, “The Intimate Union of Messiah and His People,” “With these words, the apostle invites us to question his authority on the subject.”¹⁰² There is no doubting the fact that within the Pauline Epistles, or any part of the Bible, there are anecdotes of human wisdom, which are conditioned by various circumstances. However, in the case of celibate singleness for many of today's Messianic young men and young women, it is unfortunately witnessed how some of today's Messianic writers—who are usually married males, and thus have no

¹⁰¹ Resnik, “The Two Shall Become One Flesh,” pp 28-29.

¹⁰² Boaz Michael. “The Intimate Union of Messiah and His People” Messiah Journal Issue 128, Spring 2017/5778:45.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

anxieties about ever getting married—can just easily dismiss Paul’s statements on such a matter. Paul made the observation in 1 Corinthians 7:32-33 of the necessary attention a husband must pay to his wife, in order for there to be a happy marriage, and how celibate singles have no such anxiety:

“But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.”

Michael draws a conclusion, contrary to the tenor of what Paul says:

“I have met many single people in our communities who, because they hold high Messianic Jewish values, struggle with a sense of hopelessness over their singleness. We can encourage them all day long with a higher or more holy ideal—but in today’s world I would say that those who are single suffer more worldly anxiety than those who are married.”¹⁰³

Single men and women in today’s Messianic movement can have anxiety for the same reasons that married men and women have anxiety. *The ultimate source for many people being anxious is because they consider human approval and acceptance to be more important than God’s approval and acceptance.* Yet, today’s broad Messianic movement—in no small part due to its avid complementarianism—is guilty of making too many single men and single women feel out of place, at best, or unwelcome, at worst. In today’s Messianic movement, are single men and single women, treated as the equals of married men and married women? Or, are single men and single women more likely to find themselves dismissed, excluded, and even discriminated against—at least in various indirect ways—because of their disposition? How many single men and single women find themselves excluded from various social activities and functions at today’s Messianic congregations, precisely because of their single status—when “the couples” get preferential treatment?

Certainly, there are various young men and young women in contemporary Protestantism, who are not willing to commit themselves to the responsibilities of marriage and child-rearing—and would instead like to focus on their careers, making money, or some other self-pleasing pursuit. But in today’s Messianic movement, a majority of the unmarried men and unmarried women you will encounter, are unmarried because of circumstances—and what they see as the

¹⁰³ Ibid.

impossibility of finding a suitable spouse in a rather small faith community and limited pool of options. Rather than their disposition being understood by teachers and leaders—including their own local congregational leadership—they feel like they compose a niche demographic, that too many want to conveniently avoid. Never in my Messianic experience since 1995, at least, have I ever seen celibate singleness promoted as a vocation blessed by God, which can be embraced as a means to combat sexual promiscuity. Instead, it is only marriage that is promoted as a vocation blessed by God.

For a writer like Michael, Paul's conclusions about celibate singleness were based entirely in his personal eschatology (1 Corinthians 7:29-31), and should not be taken too seriously today. He asserts, "except in special cases, in my opinion, singleness should never be encouraged under the perception that we are in the latter days."¹⁰⁴ However, most Messianic single men and single women are not single because they think the end-times might be approaching; they are more likely to be single because they do not make enough money to contribute to a household. Michael's opinion for action is, "I think we need to...help [singles] find spouses....This is an urgent matter. We must prioritize our efforts on behalf of our singles, find qualified spouses for them, and give them solid communities in which to raise godly families."¹⁰⁵ It is certainly appreciated that he wants single men and single women in the Messianic movement to be married, but there are still inevitably going to be unmarried men and women in the Messianic movement who will feel left out—because the complementarianism of today's Messianic movement is too strong to see the unmarried treated as the equals of the married.

For my own self as a Bible researcher and teacher, who at the time of this writing has been unmarried for his entire life (1980-2018), I cannot deny how the common complementarian approach to single men and single women has been a major factor in me crossing the aisle to an egalitarian ideology. *Egalitarians make sure that single men and single women in the ekklesia do not feel left out.* I have also witnessed that my own family's marital expectations, can at times be very different than the marital expectations that you might see present in today's Messianic world. In a complicated Twenty-First Century world, is marriage an entitlement for all in the Body of Messiah, or is it rather a privilege and

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

a luxury, not to be taken for granted? Factors that I consider absolutely imperative for a proper marriage, include:

- common values and worldview must be held between a possible husband and wife
- a possible husband and wife are to join together in a life partnership of equals, in mutual submission and support of one another
- a possible husband and wife should have something to be genuinely edified by, as they give up their individuality, joining forces for the challenges of life
- a possible husband and wife are not to get married for outsiders' expectations, which might very well see them settle for an incompatible spouse from the wrong background, resulting in a later separation and divorce

While it is hardly the case with all who encounter Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics, I do have to say that I do know that there are various people who have not taken our ministry as seriously as they ought, because its main teacher, myself, is single (2018). It does not matter that I have a huge body of writing to my name, *and* the fact that I have an M.A. in Biblical Studies from one of America's top evangelical seminaries. Aside from the fact that I am celibate as is Biblically required of the unmarried, I have maintained my sexual purity and virginity into my late thirties, I have never been to jail, I have never taken illegal drugs, *and* I treat those of the female gender with the utmost respect—I have at times been passed over and ignored, in various Messianic settings, due to being single. *And, I have actually been passed over for married males in my own age bracket who did not remain sexually chaste for marriage, have been to jail, have not only taken but sold drugs, and who treat their wives with disrespect and dishonor.*

I summarized a number of my thoughts in the Excursus, "Celibate Singleness Among Contemporary Messianic People," appearing adjacent to the commentary on 1 Corinthians 7:7-9 in the 2015 resource *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*:

Celibate Singleness Among Contemporary Messianic People

On the whole, today's Messianic people—with various roots in both Judaism and evangelical Protestant Christianity—do not know what to do with the wide number of young men and women in their twenties, thirties, and forties who are unmarried **often for legitimate reasons beyond their control**. Many, for whatever reason, will either subconsciously or even consciously, conflate spiritual maturity and

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

marital status—meaning that the ideal spiritual setting for someone is being married with several children. When a young man or woman approaches his or her late twenties unmarried, then it is often thought that such an individual is probably spiritually deficient, and likely also selfish and self-serving.

In a relatively new and small faith community such as the Messianic movement, we should recognize that with our size being what it is, that it will be difficult for many young men and women to find a suitable spouse—at least for an elongated season. Rather than eschewing such people as being spiritually immature or unfit for service within the Kingdom of God, a review of the legitimate and blessed Biblical option of **celibacy**, should be in order.

When reviewing a selection of theological resources, it is true that many of the Bible examiners of the past half-century have not known what to do with celibate singleness. The short *IDB* entry only says, “Celibacy is unknown in the Bible, with the possible exception of Paul” (I Cor. 7:8).¹⁰⁶ *ABD* is somewhat better, as it has the more neutral, “Votive abstention from marriage and sexual relations—unknown unless alluded to in Matt 19:12.”¹⁰⁷

Within the Jewish theological tradition, it can be easily seen how celibate singleness has been something greatly frowned upon. A dictum in the Talmud records, “Said R. Hanilai, ‘Any man who has no wife lives without joy, blessing, goodness.’ Joy: ‘and you shall rejoice, you and your house’ (Deu. 14:26). Blessing: ‘to cause a blessing to rest on your house’ (Eze. 44:30). Goodness: ‘it is not good that man should be alone’ (Gen. 2:18)” (b.*Yevamot* 62b).¹⁰⁸ Obviously, these statements reflect certain interpretations of Tanach passages, which imply that a person (particularly a male) who lives without a spouse is probably unhappy and likely personally incomplete. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* notably has an entry on “Celibacy,” recording the historical Jewish view of not only the married state being ideal for all people, but also the views of how unmarried persons were not permitted to serve in various leadership capacities within the community:

“The idea that a person ought not to marry is entirely foreign to Judaism. The opening phrase in the major code of matrimonial law leaves no doubt as to the obligation to marry and raise children: ‘Every man is obliged to marry in order to fulfill the duty of procreation, and whoever is not engaged in propagating the race is accounted as if he shed blood, diminishing the divine image and causing his presence to

¹⁰⁶ “Celibacy,” in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:546.

¹⁰⁷ “Celibacy,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:879.

¹⁰⁸ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

depart from Israel' (*Shulhan 'Arukh, Even ha-'Ezer* 1.1). Only one exception to this rule is recognized by the Talmud, and that is the case of an individual such as Ben 'Azzai whose 'soul was bound up with the Torah and is constantly occupied with it' (Maimonides, *Laws of Marriage* 15.3). Not only is matrimony regarded as the ideal state of existence, but an unmarried person is debarred from high religious and judicial office. Both high priests and judges in capital cases must be married, and single men are, in principle, unfit to act as synagogue readers (*Yoma'* 1.1; *San.* 36b; *Shulhan 'Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 53.9). No Jewish moralist has ever encouraged celibacy, and in this respect, there is a marked difference between Jewish values and those of Christianity."¹⁰⁹

It is safe to say that many of the sentiments recorded above, match much of the thinking of a wide number of people within today's broad Messianic movement: unmarried people are deficient when compared to married people.

The Tanach or Old Testament includes a number of examples of those who were celibate their whole lives, such as Nazirite vows taken for life (Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17). The Prophet Jeremiah was specifically called by God to be unmarried and childless (Jeremiah 16:1-2).¹¹⁰ The Jewish philosopher Philo expressed the opinion that upon being made leader of Israel, that Moses did not have sexual relations with his wife, in order to be fully committed to service:

"But, in the first place, before assuming that office, it was necessary for him to purify not only his soul but also his body, so that it should be connected with and defiled by no passion, but should be pure from everything which is of a mortal nature, from all meat and drink, and from all connection with women. And this last thing, indeed, he had despised for a long time, and almost from the first moment that he began to prophesy and to feel a divine inspiration, thinking that it was proper that he should at all times be ready to give his whole attention to the commands of God" (*Life of Moses* 2.68-69).¹¹¹

It probably goes too far to suggest that Adam and Eve were celibate only until their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and that they only had sexual relations to produce children. This is a view stated in the Pseudepigrapha: "And Adam named his wife Eve. They had no son until the first jubilee but after this he knew her" (*Jubilees* 3:34-35).¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Sinclair, "Celibacy," in R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Widoger, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 151.

¹¹⁰ "The word of the LORD also came to me saying, 'You shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters in this place'" (Jeremiah 16:1-2).

¹¹¹ *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 497.

¹¹² O.S. Wintermute, trans., "Jubilees," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), pp 60-61.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

Christianity has been more favorable than not, to heterosexual men and women choosing—or as may be required by life circumstances—to be celibate. Varied views in the emerging Christianity of the Second-Fourth Centuries C.E. were quite favorable to celibacy,¹¹³ often as a means for men and women to live a life almost completely dedicated to God's service. Historically, this has manifested in Roman Catholic priests and nuns making vows of celibacy before being consecrated to their respective offices, but also with the idea predominating much Christian thought that sexual intercourse is only intended for procreation and not for the legitimate pleasure of a husband and wife. The Protestant Christian tradition has rightfully made corrections to much of this, as Protestant ministers today are indeed permitted to marry, and sexual intercourse is rightly viewed as involving more than just procreation. "The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century vigorously rejected enforced celibacy of the clergy in favor of a return to apostolic freedom" (*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*).¹¹⁴ Yet, while appropriate corrections have been made by Protestantism to Catholic error, the issue of celibate singleness for individuals at large—and most especially clergy—is not one often approached with a great deal of fairness or maturity, with single people not tending to be treated with full acceptance and equity by their married peers.

There are certainly perspective issues to be weighed from verses like Genesis 1:28 and 2:18. The first commands, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). With God having made man and woman (Genesis 1:26-27), this is properly interpreted as being a general direction to humankind, that they might reproduce via children, and subdue Planet Earth. This is not a specific direction to *all* men and women to have children, especially as there are men who are impotent and women who are barren. The second statement, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18), indeed involves how Adam, the first man, needed a mate in Eve, the first woman. The statement "It is not good for the man to be alone" can be commonly interpreted as a general statement regarding all people, although contextually it involves the loneliness of Adam as the sole human being on Planet Earth requiring another human for companionship. It should go without saying that in the Twenty-First Century, on a planet of over seven billion people, that no man or woman has any reason to feel "alone."

¹¹³ David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), pp 88-90.

¹¹⁴ Donald G. Davis, "Celibacy," in Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), pp 112-113.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

Within the Torah, it is witnessed that Levitical priests could not have crushed testicles (Leviticus 21:20-21), and that those males who were castrated could not enter into the Tabernacle (Deuteronomy 23:1). While sometimes approached from the perspective of God frowning on the unmarried and childless, castration was something commonly practiced by various Ancient Near Eastern cults, hence possibly making eunuchs entering into God's Tabernacle a way of introducing paganism. Castration of a male's sexual organs is quantitatively different than a man or woman choosing to be unmarried or living a single and celibate life because of circumstances. It cannot go overlooked, though, how in the future eschaton eunuchs are among the formerly disenfranchised persons who are welcome into God's House (Isaiah 56:3-5).¹¹⁵ Surely if those who had their sexual organs removed can be welcome, then single men and women who are committed to a life of abstinence should be even more welcome.

Generally speaking, evangelical theologians have approached the issue of celibate singleness as being something widely or greatly frowned upon in the period of the Tanach or Old Testament, but something more permitted and allowable in the period of the Apostolic Writings or New Testament. As the entry for "Celibacy" in *ISBE* records,

"It OT times marriage was almost universal and celibacy was considered abnormal. For the Israelites as well as other ancient peoples the propagation of the family name was of supreme importance, and thus the desire for sons was the dominant factor...In the NT we find a somewhat different attitude toward marriage from the general stance of the OT...Here we find notable examples of celibacy: John the Baptist, the apostle Paul, and Jesus Himself."¹¹⁶

One of the most perplexing words of Yeshua the Messiah, expounding upon all of the possible avenues of what it could mean to be a "eunuch,"¹¹⁷ is seen in Matthew 19:12: "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it*." Many of those who would be regarded as eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven, are not those who actually had their sexual organs altered or removed, but instead those who would be committed to a life of celibate singleness. As such, *Lattimore* offers a unique and appreciable rendering of Matthew 19:12:

¹¹⁵ Consult the entry for Isaiah 56:1-8 in the *Messianic Sabbath Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

¹¹⁶ Celibacy," in *ISBE*, 1:627.

¹¹⁷ Grk. noun *eunouchos* (εὐνοῦχος); "a castrated male person, *eunuch*," "a human male who, without a physical operation, is by nature incapable of begetting children, *impotent male*," and "a human male who abstains fr. marriage, without being impotent, *a celibate*" (*BDAG*, 409).

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

“For there are sexless men who have been so from their mother’s womb, and there are sexless men who have been made sexless by other men, and there are sexless men who have made themselves sexless for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let him who can accept, accept.”

The most significant instruction, regarding celibate singleness, surrounds the Apostle Paul’s words in **1 Corinthians 7:7-9**. For sure, a figure like Paul considered heterosexual marriage between one man and one woman to be a God-ordained and God-blessed state (1 Corinthians 9:5), and hardly some sort of sin (1 Corinthians 7:28). What is confronted in 1 Timothy 4:1-4 about a prohibition to marry, was rooted within an inappropriate asceticism, where eating meat and having sexual relations were connected to a false teaching which advocated that the resurrection had taken place (2 Timothy 2:18).¹¹⁸ Contrary to this, the celibacy spoken of by the Apostle Paul, per his own ministry, was something very different for the sake “of the present distress” (1 Corinthians 7:26)—an indication that while celibate singleness is a “gift” (1 Corinthians 7:7), it is often forced upon men and women because of life circumstances:

“Yet I would that all people were even as I myself am. However, each has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Corinthians 7:7-9, PME).

A most pronounced example of what many consider to be celibacy, involves the 144,000 sealed servants from the Twelve Tribes of Israel, as Revelation 14:4 states, “These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These *are* the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” The clause *parthenoi gar eisin* (παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν) is more specifically, “for they are virgins” (ESV), taken by Brown and Comfort to indeed be, “celibates for they are.”¹¹⁹ Of course, there is some possible maneuvering regarding the males among the 144,000¹²⁰ and the requirement that they not be defiled with females—as an indication that such individuals never fell prey to sexual sin, and per the chance that they might be married, they were virgins at the time. The operative statement is being “defiled with women,” whereas proper sexuality between a man and a woman within the context of marriage is not something defiling per Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage* bed *is to be* undefiled; for fornicators

¹¹⁸ Consult the author’s commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic*.

¹¹⁹ Brown and Comfort, 886.

¹²⁰ While controversial for certain, the author is of the personal opinion that there will be various females among the 144,000 sealed from the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

and adulterers God will judge.” Still, there is a high probability that the considerable majority of the 144,000 will be celibate and single—a likely consequence of avoiding the perversions present in the years leading up to the Messiah’s return.

Even with celibate singleness a state which is held in Holy Scripture to be one of high regard, alongside of heterosexual monogamy, many of today’s evangelical Christian *complementarian* theologians greatly frown on it. Noting some of the views on 1 Timothy 3:2 (which this writer believes is situation-specific to Timothy in Ephesus, and not universal for all times and places) in their book *God’s Design for Man and Woman*, and how the overseer was to be “the husband of one wife,” Andreas J. Köstenberger and Margaret E. Köstenberger have to concede, although certainly begrudgingly,

“...Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 acknowledges the gift of celibacy and notes that it enables a believer who chooses to remain unmarried to serve in a more unencumbered manner than those who must fulfill their marital and familial obligations. For this and other reasons, it’s highly unlikely that Paul, by stipulating that candidates for the office of elder be *mias gynaikos andra* [μίας γυναίκος ἄνδρα], seeks to exclude unmarried men from serving in this capacity. It’s an indication of the implausibility of this interpretation that very few interpreters actually take this view today. Single men are therefore potentially to serve as church leaders.”¹²¹

While complementarians are well known for their discrimination (in spite of Biblical examples) against women for serving as leaders and teachers within the Body of Messiah—in the Köstenbergers saying that “Single men are therefore **potentially** to serve as church leaders” (emphasis mine), complementarians tend to likewise be discriminatory (in spite of Biblical examples—including Yeshua the Messiah) against single men serving as teachers and leaders in the Body of Messiah.

In much of contemporary evangelical Christianity, real problems erupt in church settings, when it is believed *not so subtly* how the young family of a husband and wife in their mid-to-late thirties, with their two or three small children **is more godly and spiritual** than the celibate single man or woman in his or her mid-to-late thirties—when it is known that the husband and/or wife was once involved in promiscuity and other high sins prior to marriage. Such a single man or single woman, in contrast, may indeed be a person who has been committed to sexual purity since being a teenager. Such persons who are unmarried are often unmarried because of life circumstances, beyond those of the economics of marriage, their education, or their jobs. Such persons who are unmarried are often unmarried because a

¹²¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Margaret E. Köstenberger, *God’s Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 220.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

potential husband or wife has not entered into their lives, **and they have no other Biblical option but to be celibate.**

There are various leaders and teachers within today's Messianic movement, who will admit to having had many sexual liaisons prior to marriage (as well as other sins, such as drug addiction). And, for whatever reason or reasons, because they are married now, they are perceived as somehow being more spiritual and mature than the unmarried man or woman striving to maintain sexual purity, often in a celibacy forced upon them by life circumstances. Sadly, our faith community can very much fall into the complementarian error of believing that the married state is superior, rather than co-equal, to celibate singleness.

The marriage option is not always available for young people in the Body of Messiah, in the early Twenty-First Century. This especially involves young men or young women who are a part of the Messianic movement, who if going to be married, should indeed have a husband or wife with compatible beliefs and values. While some might say that such young men and young women need to "pray harder" for a spouse to arrive into their lives—what if God has other plans for these people, and at the very least, that an elongated season of celibate singleness awaits them? What legitimate service can such young men and young women offer to the Body of Messiah—specifically for contributing to aspects of our theology and spirituality that those who have immediately preceded us were unable to do, because of marital responsibilities?

There is little doubting that as the return of Israel's Messiah draws nearer, that there are going to be *more* and not less, young men and young women in today's Messianic movement, who will need to be committed to a life of celibate singleness. **Much of this is lamentably because of the sexual sins and perversions which are on the increase in society.** And, as obvious as it may be: celibate singleness is *the only legitimate alternative* to heterosexual monogamy. (Homosexual marriage is no option!) What surely does need to be changed—especially as there is a slowly emergent Messianic *egalitarianism* on the rise—is for people in our faith community to begin to see heterosexual monogamy and celibate singleness as co-equal and mutually blessed by God. *Single people can serve and lead God's people the same as married people.* Darlene Fozard Weaver correctly directs in the *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, "Celibacy challenges social hierarchies grounded on marriage and kinship. It permits more egalitarian and inclusive access to religious distinction and leadership. Celibacy points to the transformation of human relations in the kingdom of God (Matt 23:30 pars)."¹²² Yeshua Himself did issue the difficult word,

¹²² Darlene Fozard Weaver, "Celibacy," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, 126.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

“The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:34-36, TNIV).

There will be those, as the age to come draws near, who will not marry, and be similar to those who participate in the resurrection of the dead. The needs of the Body of Messiah, as the Lord’s return draws closer, are going to be very stressful and significant. With more Messianic young men and young women going to probably be single and celibate, our faith community at large has the responsibility not to dismiss them as being an inconvenience we do not quite know what to do with, **but rather to embrace them as being faithful to the Biblical ethos of maintaining sexual purity and holiness.** They need to be encouraged to rechannel the energies that others have used to be a spouse and parent, into the interests of the Kingdom of God and salvation history.

What will the legacy of Messianic complementarianism be?

This analysis, “Men and Women in the Body of Messiah: Answering Messianic Questions,” has hardly been comprehensive in covering the varied and diverse aspects of males and females present among today’s Believers. There are many more things which could have been addressed, which will doubtlessly be the subject of future articles, FAQ entries, and podcasts. We have discussed some of the major components of males and females, which one is likely to encounter in Messianic congregations and venues, when the subject matter of gender roles comes up.

With a handful of exceptions—and mostly among individual people attending Messianic congregations and fellowships, who are most probably going to keep their views private at the present—the **Messianic movement of today is overwhelmingly complementarian.** The majority of marriage relationships in today’s Messianic movement are centered around some complementarian model of the husband having the final authority or final say, at least on a selection of issues. The majority of today’s Messianic congregations are led by not only males, but married males. Are there any marriage relationships in today’s Messianic movement, where the husband and wife are co-leaders of the family, and a mutual submission ideology is practiced with decisions made by the consensus of both spouses? Are there any

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

Messianic congregations today which incorporate females into the leadership structure, and where females at least serve as deacons?

For myself in 2018, I have found myself going through periods of frustration, when I see the present complementarian condition of much of the Messianic movement. **I do not believe**, both as a Bible teacher and especially as a private individual, that maintaining a complementarian ideology of marriage or of congregational leadership, **will serve the best interests of our faith community**. I have been not only astounded, but also horrified, at the sheer unwillingness of many of today's Messianic, married-male leaders and teachers, to reevaluate some of their positions on men and women in the Body of Messiah. Discrimination and injustice have been tolerated at times, and people who hold to some alternative views have been censored. *This is not a salvation issue, but can be an issue of effectiveness*. Are today's Messianic leaders, most of whom are married males, that threatened by single males such as myself (2018), and various females—who only desire a level playing field for opportunities to serve and lead?

Fortunately for a complementarian like Nadler, he concludes how “The issue of whether women should be in senior congregational ministry is not an issue of orthodoxy regarding a major doctrine of Scripture. Therefore, it should be considered (by those who differ on the matter) a discussion point among brothers and sisters in Messiah and not an opportunity to ‘refute heretics.’”¹²³ He further states, “Differences between our congregation and others in this matter will not prevent us from remaining in fellowship with those [other] congregations [which disagree].”¹²⁴ However, it cannot be overlooked how Nadler's orientation to the debate over men and women in the Body of Messiah, is not always the position one sees. Messianic people who are sympathetic to an egalitarian ideology may be pejoratively referred to as being “feminists” at best, and indeed have been called heretics.

The present generation of Messianic congregational leaders and teachers, who for the most part are married males, is largely unprepared to account for some of the differing views of the next generation, *which is quite open to seeing females occupy more positions of leadership and authority*. Many of the next generation are not as egalitarian as myself, but would be regarded as minimalist complementarian or complementarian-lite. This would see females

¹²³ Nadler, “Male Leadership and the Role of Women,” in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, 159.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

occupy almost every position of leadership in the assembly, with the possible exception being the main congregational leader or rabbi. Wolf summarized this as much in her essay “Messianic Judaism and Women,” from the 2013 *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*:

“The majority of women today would...lean toward what may be termed a ‘progressive conservative’ position. Most want to see a man leading a congregation in the rabbi’s position, but would like to see women represented more evenly in other roles of teaching and decision making. Younger women tend in greater numbers to advocate for the egalitarian model they see in more liberal forms of Judaism, including ordaining female rabbis.”¹²⁵

While as an egalitarian I would have no difficulty, in principle, seeing a female ordained as the main leader of a Messianic congregation or fellowship—I recognize that in reality, there are huge obstacles to be overcome in seeing a minimalist complementarian ideology implemented across the Messianic movement. Our faith community is not functioning well, when females are excluded from the decision making process of the elder and deacon board of an assembly, females cannot teach the general congregation during a *Shabbat* service, and females are relegated to various helps functions such as kitchen duty. Things have got to change, and I suspect that they will take quite a while, particularly with the shifting of the generations.

In the meantime, there is only **one Messianic movement**, and our unity as Jewish and non-Jewish followers of the Messiah of Israel as part of the “one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15, NRSV/CJB/PME), is predicated on His sacrifice for sinful humanity—and not on the issue of women in ministry.¹²⁶ Today’s Messianic movement, much to my personal dislike and disapproval, *is* complementarian. I have not only seen females—but my own mother and my sisters—disrespected and treated in some ways that are greatly distressing, by congregational leaders and teachers, because of their gender. I myself, even though male, because of my singleness (2018), have not always been treated with the greatest amount of regard at times. Knowing how not enough of today’s Messianic congregational leaders and teachers are as open-minded, forward thinking, and text conscious as I am when reading the Scriptures, I have had to be cautious in addressing issues involving men and women in the Body of Messiah. For the foreseeable future, much of

¹²⁵ Rachel Wolf, “Messianic Judaism and Women,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp 102-103.

¹²⁶ Consult the author’s article, “The Faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah,” appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

Men and Women: Answering Messianic Questions

what this article has addressed, will only be discussed in my own ministry forum—and not at my local congregation or at conference events.

As a Messianic Believer who is egalitarian, I have to work for change and reform over the long term. A significant part of the end-times is how “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Joel 2:28, RSV). Not only are all human beings, Jewish and non-Jewish, male and female, to be regarded as equals (Galatians 3:28), **but the Holy Spirit is universally available to all human beings.** As the Holy Spirit-endowed gifts of service are blind to gender, it is necessary for Messianic people who hold to an egalitarian ideology to be tempered by patience (Galatians 5:22) and fortitude. We should not try to foment an egalitarian rebellion or insurrection in the midst of complementarian dominance. Instead, we must facilitate change and reevaluation of what many have accepted, one person at a time, when some of the negative fruits of a complementarian ideology manifest themselves, *and then people are genuinely open to considering another point of view...*