

OUTREACH ISRAEL MINISTRIES

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS

SECOND STATEMENT

There are various theological and spiritual issues, which many would consider to be of a central or core nature (see the Outreach Israel Ministries/Messianic Apologetics Statement of Faith). There can be various other important matters, which can distinguish a ministry as being unique, forward thinking, or even controversial.

This Second Statement summarizes a number of significant matters which can, at times, divide people across the broad Messianic movement.

Our family comes from a conservative, evangelical Protestant background, having both Reformed and Wesleyan-holiness roots. We were called by the Lord into the Messianic movement in 1995, and have been involved in full-time Messianic ministry since 2002. Messianic Apologetics editor J.K. McKee possesses both academic credentials (secular and religious), and a formal ordination as a Messianic Teacher from the largest Messianic Jewish association in the world. We have been recognized by our peers, as a voice to be reckoned with, in the Messianic sphere of influence.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF YESHUA

The most important, central feature of our belief system, is the completed work of Yeshua on the tree of sacrifice, dying for our sins and being resurrected from the dead (Luke 24:46; Acts 2:23-24; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 5:6-11; 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3). The Messiah event is the most important event in human history (Romans 3:21). The “faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah” (Galatians 2:16; 3:21-22; Romans 3:21-22; Philippians 3:8-9; Ephesians 3:11-12), may be properly regarded as His willful obedience to the Father, unto death, for sinful humanity.

Jewish identity is something important, should be maintained by Messianic Jewish Believers, and should be valued by the Body of Messiah (John 4:22b; Acts 23:6; Romans 3:1-2; 9:4-5; 11:29), but it is not the most important matter of faith (Philippians 3:2-10). A Torah foundation for one’s theology is important (Deuteronomy 4:6; 11:1; 30:16; Psalm 119; Romans 3:31; 2 Timothy 3:16), but there is a such thing as Torah-olatry which can manifest, among many who strongly identify as “Torah observant” or as part of the “Torah movement” (John 5:39-40). Both a Messianic Jewish Believer’s heritage, and/or possessing a Torah foundation in one’s understanding of the Bible, are secondary—to the identity the redeemed are to have in the spiritual transformation provided by the work of Messiah Yeshua.

No man or woman claiming to have salvation in the Messiah of Israel, will easily make it into the future, to the days leading up to His return—without placing the Messiah event at the very center of who they are.

INFLUENCE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Compared to much of what is witnessed across the Judeo-Protestant spectrum, it is often apparent that the Messianic movement is behind the curve, or under-developed, in too many areas of theology. Many issues, which could be easily discussed at a local synagogue or church, are not too easily talked about in a Messianic congregation or fellowship. Far from today’s Messianic

community being widely known as the Ancient Bereans, who diligently searched the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), testing various matters—much of the present Messianic community can be witnessed as being rather rigid and close-minded. To be sure, though, as time moves forward and we get closer and closer to the Messiah’s return, a number of significant changes will need to be made.

The Holy Scriptures are explicit, on the requirement to honor one’s parents and elders (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:32; Deuteronomy 5:16). Those who have preceded us in the faith, be they Jewish or Christian, have left us with a legacy we are building upon. It is our job to make sure that the future we build is a better one, than what was left to us.

Today’s Messianic movement would not exist, without the hard work and sacrifice of the Messianic Jewish pioneers of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They made it possible for Messianic Jewish congregations and synagogues to be established, where Jewish Believers in Yeshua did not have to give up on their Jewish heritage, or assimilate into the masses of Christianity. Many of them also made it possible for non-Jewish Believers to participate along with them, in Messianic Jewish space, partaking of their faith heritage in Israel’s Scriptures and co-laboring in the salvation of the Jewish people. The Messianic pioneers faced down a huge amount of Jewish and Christian opposition, not to mention a great deal of family ostracism and anti-Semitism.

While there were many positive Jewish and Protestant influences upon the Messianic Jewish pioneers, mainly from the Baby Boomer generation, the palpable influence of fundamentalism on much of contemporary Messianic thought, has not been so positive. It is understandable, given what they were upon against, how various Messianic Jewish pioneers had to wrestle with degrees of insecurity and instability. Yet in the third decade of the Twenty-First Century, the Messianic movement (much less various sub-movement off shoots), is not in as strong a position as it should be, to see important matters of modernity, post-modernity, and our ever-complicated future, discussed. Because of the influence of fundamentalism on a great deal of early Messianic development, many have found themselves silenced, when contemporary controversies have needed to be discussed. If it is not curtailed and halted, fundamentalism will have a very negative influence on the future development of the Messianic community.

Apologetics is here to both defend the faith and sort through uncomfortable and inconvenient matters, resolving them where at all possible. Apologetics is here to be a stabilizing force, but not necessarily maintain the status quo. Apologetics is here to engage with the issues of the day, not see that people are unnecessarily silenced or censured, because some people, be they clergy or laity, might not like it when a particular matter or controversy is brought up.

We will be here, as respectful as we can be, to address and not avoid the contemporary controversies and issues, which many of those who preceded us in the Messianic movement were unable to easily talk about. The standard Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics holds itself to, is that of the late K. Kimball McKee’s Sunday school class at Christ United Methodist Church of Florence, KY (held between 1987-1992). Any topic or matter which could have been mentioned, discussed, or debated in his class—should surely now be able to be mentioned, discussed, or debated in the Messianic movement of the mid-2020s.

BIBLICAL CANON AND EXTRA-BIBLICAL LITERATURE

A mainstay of faith is the exclaim, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105, TLV). The Holy Scriptures are absolutely primary to determining our theology and praxis. Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics accept the standard, 66 book, Protestant canon, as being the inspired and inerrant Word of God. It is to be recognized that there is a different Tanach book order employed in Judaism, as well as in Messianic Judaism, but the texts

are the same as the Christian Old Testament. We accept the Apostolic Scriptures, commonly called the New Testament, as being absolutely inspired of the Holy One of Israel. We encourage a holistic approach to Holy Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. While there are many English translations we will employ (i.e., NASU, RSV/NRSV/ESV, NIV, CJSB, TLV), the final theological and doctrinal appeal must be made to the original Hebrew or Greek source texts.

Our ministry will be seen to generally adhere to the traditionally held authorship of the Biblical books, but not hopelessly so. Essential Mosaic authorship of the Torah or Pentateuch can mean that Moses employed scribes for writing things down, that Moses incorporated outward oral and tactile sources passed down among the elders of Ancient Israel, and can also allow for some degree of post-Mosaic addition and editing. The Historical Books of the Tanach are largely anonymous on authorship, although their composition is usually attributed to the court historians of the Southern Kingdom. The Prophets, while declaring words to Ancient Israel, largely did not write down their prophecies into some kind of narrative, instead most frequently being produced in written form by a prophetic school and/or various Prophets' followers. Various Apostolic letters, for certain, were the written products of an amanuensis or secretary, who had the content dictated to them orally, and/or who had direct Apostolic authority to compose something on their behalf.

One of the most significant pieces of material, which directly affects all Bible readers and examiners, is the role which the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Hebrew Tanach (OT) has. Its many direct quotations in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures (NT) afford it some level of great authority for all Bible Believers. In many places where the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) is unclear or uncertain, the Greek LXX likely can and should be consulted for a possible answer.

Extra-Biblical literature and material has a place in theology, widely as history, philosophy, and commentary, to be consulted and probed by those in Biblical Studies and theology. Various bodies of extra-Biblical literature range from Ancient Near Eastern mythology, classical Greek and Roman works, but most especially materials from Second Temple Judaism and the time thereafter. Various extra-Biblical Jewish materials widely employed, include: the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, the works of Philo and Josephus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, among others. Additional extra-Biblical Jewish materials widely employed in Biblical Studies, from the immediate post-Second Temple period, commonly include: the Mishnah, Tosefta, Midrashim, and the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Also to surely be considered, are the writings of the early Church Fathers of emerging Christianity, from the Second to Fourth Centuries.

Approaching various collections of extra-Biblical literature or material, with a degree of skepticism and criticism, can doubtlessly be necessary. Some of this material can be quoted or cited to confirm Biblical truth, and/or provide an examiner a better way of understanding a difficult Bible passage or saying, offering useful insight into historical and cultural background. Yet, some of this material may also be quoted or cited to highlight how the canonical Holy Scriptures are seen to actually be in opposition to something.

WORLDWIDE BODY OF MESSIAH

Today's Messianic community has an important end-time focus (cf. Romans chs. 9-11), which directly involves the salvation of the Jewish people (i.e., Ezekiel 37:1-14) and restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6). Non-Jewish Believers have always been involved in Messianic Judaism. This ranges from how many of the spouses of various Messianic Jewish leaders have been non-Jewish—to how many non-Jewish Believers, both individuals and families, have been Divinely called as direct participants and co-laborers, with Jewish Believers, into the Messianic mission. Their involvement may have started by first having an interest in matters such as Torah study, or understanding

Yeshua in the Biblical festivals. Yet, as these persons have more tangibly embraced their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures, legitimately growing in faith via the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27), it has transitioned into directly serving, side-by-side, with their Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters in matters of Jewish outreach, evangelism, Israel solidarity, and standing against anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic Judaism, are commonly approached as being like the sojourner Ruth (Ruth 1:16-17).

Yet, what is to be done with the many millions of Christian people, out there in the world, who may never be exposed to the Messianic movement and its unique place in salvation history?

To be certain, there are millions of non-Jewish, Christian people on Earth today, who have legitimately professed Jesus as their Savior, are born again, and who possess salvation. Yet, a great majority of these people know little to nothing about the existence of the Messianic movement, how Jewish Believers in Yeshua can retain their Jewish heritage, and they do not necessarily have a strong Torah foundation in their reading of Holy Scripture. Many contemporary Christians believe in the total abrogation of the Mosaic Law for the post-resurrection era, whereas other theological traditions believe in the ongoing relevance of its moral and ethical statutes. Christian people traditionally observe Sunday Church, and holidays such as Christmas and Easter, and may even hold to a doctrine of pre-tribulation rapture. Some of this may be in defiance to Old Testament institutions such as the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat* and appointed times—but for others this is done as a sincere means to honor the Heavenly Father, and commemorate the birth and resurrection of the Messiah.

Those of the various non-Jewish Torah movements or Hebrew Roots movement, may be especially seen to castigate many evangelical Believers as being “lawless” and in rebellion to God. Quite contrary to this, there are indeed millions of sincerely born again Christian people, who are actively participating in what Yeshua designated as the “weightier matters” (Matthew 23:23) of Moses’ Teaching. These are men and women who possess an ethical compass focused on His decisive interpretation of the Torah seen in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7). Evangelical Christian Believers, quite thankfully, tend to use the principles of God’s Torah to oppose the influence of abortion on demand, the weakening of heterosexual morals, the LGBTQ+ agenda, Wokeism, and radical deconstruction, among other things.

No human being on Earth today, ultimately knows the final, eternal condition of another human being. There are many sincere, born again, evangelical Christians, who will be in the Kingdom—even though they never participated in the Messianic experience, or perhaps even knew about it. *Like each and every one of us, they will be judged by our Eternal God, by the knowledge which they had; only God ultimately knows who enters into God's Kingdom.* And today, as the contemporary Messianic movement still grows and matures, it is reasonable and fair to say that non-Jewish Believers have to be specially called by the Lord into it. Perhaps in the future, as prophecies such as the nations streaming to Zion in the end-times, to be instructed from God’s Torah, take further shape (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3), many more evangelical Believers will participate in the Messianic Jewish experience on various levels, as allies and close friends. But this must also be joined with being vessels of God’s grace and mercy to the Jewish people, needing salvation (Romans 11:31).

In the future as we approach the Messiah’s return, it is to be unfortunately observed how there is going to be a great apostasy against the Creator God (Matthew 24:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). While something painful to admit, many in the contemporary Christian system may be seen to abandon their faith in Jesus, and will fail to acknowledge Him as the only way to salvation (John 14:6). The future apostasy will also probably involve casting aside the veracity of the Bible or Holy Scriptures as myths and fairy tales, and the recognition of how the One God of Israel is the only true Creator.

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY/SUPERSESSIONISM

There is a significant challenge presented today by the Christian world, with the severe rise in replacement theology or supersessionism. Supersessionism quantitatively denies the eternal promises given to the ethnic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Israel proper—and transfers them to a new “Church” entity. Tanach (OT) promises of a physical return and restoration of ethnic Israelites to the Holy Land, and a reestablishment of Jewish hegemony, are commonly allegorized as involving the spiritual bounty Believers experience in Christ. Supersessionism is adhered to by those who are both theologically liberal, as well as theologically conservative. Conservative supersessionists, while claiming that Western society needs to return to an ethical and moral foundation in the Holy Scriptures—do not see anything Biblically or prophetically significant about the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, or the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Many are seen to not only promote replacement theology, but even various forms of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

It has been entirely proper and right for the Messianic Jewish movement to stand against replacement theology or supersessionism, and with that emphasize how the God of Israel is not at all finished with the people of Israel! The significant mission of Jewish outreach and evangelism, is rooted within the Apostle Paul’s salvation-historical trajectory of Romans chs.9-11, and his steadfast word, “God has not rejected His people, has He?” (Romans 11:1, TLV). All of those who are involved within today’s Messianic movement, are seen to stress God’s ongoing, supernatural preservation of the Jewish people over the millennia, and their significant role to play in the Last Days culminating in the Messiah’s return.

Frequently, in various academic, Messianic Jewish sectors, the composition of the people of God has been predicated upon a model of **bilateral ecclesiology**. This posits that both Israel proper and the Christian Church, together, compose the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13). The Christian Church, composing Believers from the nations at large, are to appreciate their Jewish Roots and spiritual heritage in the Synagogue, but are largely to remain separate. Jewish distinction and uniqueness can only be maintained with two noticeable sub-groups composing such a Commonwealth. If non-Jewish Believers, for example, were to partake of various outward matters of Torah (i.e., the seventh-day Sabbath or appointed times), then they may not only be seen to inappropriately blur distinctions, but may even be adhering to some form of replacement theology.

Many Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, within the Messianic community, have not been supportive of a bilateral ecclesiology model. They consider a bilateral ecclesiology model to be entirely contrary to what is actually being witnessed, on the ground and among the people, in Messianic Jewish congregations and synagogues in the Diaspora—which are frequently mixed assemblies of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, united as one new man/humanity (Ephesians 2:15). Instead, many are seen to support what may be considered an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel ecclesiology model, based in James the Just’s expectation of the Tabernacle of David being restored (Acts 15:15-18; Amos 9:11-12, LXX). This would involve a restored Twelve Tribes of Israel at the center, and enlarged borders welcoming in the righteous from the nations. Yeshua the Messiah’s explicit claim to establish His *ekklēsia* (Matthew 16:18-19), is actually rooted within Tanach language detailing the restoration of Israel (Jeremiah 31:4; 33:7), not create a new, second sub-group of elect.

Non-Jewish Believers in Israel’s Messiah are to be regarded as grafted-in to the olive tree as wild branches (Romans 11:16-17), the metaphor of an olive tree itself being taken from descriptions of Israel (Jeremiah 11:16-17; Hosea 14:1-7). Believers from the nations, being grafted-in as wild

branches to the olive tree of Israel—should not at all mean a displacement of the natural Israelite or Jewish branches, and with it a disregard for legitimate Messianic Jewish concerns and the original Messianic Jewish mission. Non-Jewish Believers who have been supernaturally called by the Lord to directly participate in the Messianic movement, and have taken on various outward Torah observances as prompted by the Holy Spirit, should not at all be equated to some canceling out of the distinct identity, but most especially, salvation-historical destiny of the Jewish people (cf. Romans 11:26ff).

The best way for non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic movement, who consider themselves fellow citizens of the Commonwealth of Israel alongside of Jewish Believers (Ephesians 3:6), to dispel any claims which might be made of replacement theology/supersessionism—**is to play an active role as co-laborers in the Messianic Jewish mission, right alongside of their Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters.** While such a mission will involve Jewish evangelism, it will also involve directly standing against the demonic ideologies of anti-Semitism, anti-Judaism, and anti-Zionism.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

It cannot honestly be argued, by the persons involved with our ministry, that the dynamic gifts of the Holy Spirit totally ceased with the death of the Apostles and their immediate successors. Yet, while dynamic healings, prophecies, and speaking in other languages are witnessed in the Book of Acts—it also has to be emphasized how the main stress of Yeshua's and the Apostles' teaching, was on a transformed heart and mind, supernaturally imbued with God's love. Manifesting the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and love (1 Corinthians 13), are much, much more important than any of the dynamic gifts of the Spirit.

To what degree have the Pentecostal and charismatic movements affected the development of the modern Messianic movement? Some of the early Messianic Jewish pioneers were doubtlessly affected by the charismatic movement; this is an influence which continues. Others among the early Messianic Jewish pioneers were affected by dispensationalism, and may be regarded as cessationists, meaning in colloquial language that "the gifts are dead."

Our family has deep Wesleyan roots, and the old Methodist revivals were definitely marked by various supernatural gifts manifesting themselves. The Wesleyan theological tradition has always been continuationist, meaning that the gifts of the Spirit have continued in significance and effect since the time of the Apostles. Yet, this same tradition has always been tempered by an emphasis on social holiness, a transformation of one's heart (ethics, morality), and a transformation of mind. This means that some skepticism can and will be demonstrated toward various dynamic gifts, apparently being manifested.

It is seen how many, if not most, of the various Pentecostal and charismatic movements, have Wesleyan roots of some kind. Those who continue to remain affected by the formal theological tradition of Wesleyanism, such as the editor, can often be seen to approach charismatics as *wayward brethren*. While the dynamic spiritual gifts are surely in effect, and God has moved through the charismatic movement at times—the charismatic movement can, unfortunately, be notably marked by a strong lack of discernment, a lack of wisdom, not questioning whether something actually is of God or not, and often has poor internal discipline regarding its leaders. This especially becomes true when one weighs all of the significant religious scandals, dramas, abuses, false signs and wonders (i.e., gold dust, gemstones, or manna appearing), and financial schemes, which are witnessed across the broad charismatic movement.

While the gifts of the Spirit are real, **skepticism is justified**. A great deal of what is witnessed within the contemporary charismatic movement is of human flesh and unrestrained emotions at best, yet some of it may actually be seen to originate from the Adversary and be demonic.

MESSIANIC JUDAISM

The modern Messianic Jewish movement is a legitimate move of the Holy One of Israel, and has a mission directly rooted within the Apostle Paul's salvation-historical trajectory of "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26ff). Many in today's Messianic Judaism are actually seen to associate the modern Messianic Jewish revival with the dry bones of scattered Israel being brought back to life (Ezekiel 37:1-14), especially after the tragedy of the Second World War and Holocaust, also doubtlessly connected with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 (Isaiah 66:8). Some are seen to further connect the significant Messianic Jewish expansion, of the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the recapture of the Old City of Jerusalem during the 1967 Six Day War, and with that various conclusions about "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) ending may also be seen.

Messianic Judaism was birthed to primarily be a place where Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah did not have to profess faith in Yeshua and *then* assimilate into a wider non-Jewish Christianity, as was inappropriately and lamentably required for many centuries of religious history. Jewish people acknowledging Yeshua as Messiah, is one of the most Jewish things a Jewish person could do! By identifying as "Messianic Jews," Messianic Jewish congregations and synagogues were established to be places where Jewish Believers and intermarried couples could observe the traditions and customs of their ancestors, properly observing lifecycle rituals, remaining connected to the Jewish community, and being concerned with matters of both the State of Israel and Zionism. Unfortunately, many Messianic Jewish Believers, in professing faith in Yeshua, have also been ostracized from their families and the Jewish community. So, the Messianic Jewish movement has had to necessarily become the new "family" for a great number of Messianic Jewish Believers.

Messianic Judaism can often be seen, in North America at least, to be divided into two large groups: (1) those wanting Messianic Judaism to be a prophetic, Spirit-filled and end-time move, desiring to see revival come to the Jewish people via the salvation of Messiah Yeshua, and (2) those who are working ecumenically and academically to see Messianic Judaism be recognized as a formal branch of Judaism, alongside of the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements (among others). **While the Messianic Jewish mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity will doubtlessly continue until Yeshua returns**, significant questions are being raised in the mid-2020s about the future of formal Messianic Judaism. Will formal Messianic Judaism, mainly in the Diaspora, be able to survive all the way to the point of the Second Coming?

Other major matters regard the many scores of non-Jewish Believers, genuinely called by God into this movement. Many Messianic Jewish Believers are seen to fully welcome non-Jewish Believers into Messianic Jewish congregations and synagogues, as fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord, as being part of "one new man/humanity" (Ephesians 2:15). Others are seen to not be so welcome to non-Jewish Believers being a part of a Messianic congregation. *Each Messianic Jewish assembly, in the Diaspora, has to be evaluated on its own merits*. Non-Jewish Believers do make up the majority of people, in many Diaspora Messianic Jewish congregations and synagogues. And with that, many are integrated into the leadership structures of local assemblies as elders (*zakanim*) and deacons (*shammashim*). The following is a major definition of Messianic Judaism, reflecting what is commonly seen in the North American Diaspora:

“We are a biblically based community of Jewish and Gentile believers committed to faith in the Jewish Messiah-Yeshua (Jesus), of whom the Torah of Moses and the prophets spoke. We follow a Messianic Jewish lifestyle as taught by the Apostles, celebrate the feasts of Israel, and observe other Jewish traditions. We teach that Jewish people who believe in Yeshua remain Jewish, while Gentile believers may practice Jewish customs and holidays without the requirement to become Jewish.”*

As we get closer to the Second Coming, the center of the Messianic Jewish movement should necessarily shift away from the Diaspora and back toward the Land of Israel. Many are of the opinion that the modern Messianic Jewish movement has been placed, to see the Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:1-14) and 144,000 sealed servants (Revelation 7:4-8; 14:1-5) emerge onto the scene. With the formal Messianic Jewish movement having gone through various phases of development, since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the question of whether or not there will be a post-formal Messianic Jewish phase (sometime in the mid-to-late Twenty-First Century)—is directly tied to it being an end-time move of God, and both the effects and fulfillment of future prophecies. Such a phase, though, would see the Messianic movement likely become much more de-centralized and informal, concurrent with Yeshua’s end-time prophetic warning (cf. Mark 13:12; Matthew 24:10), and much more along the lines of the home fellowships witnessed in the Book of Acts and Apostolic epistles.

Our ministry and family are a part of the Diaspora Messianic Jewish movement. Yet at the same time, we are also fully aware that if this is to indeed be regarded as a prophetic, end-time move of the Holy Spirit, that we need to be prepared for new, possibly unforeseen factors and challenges to unfold, as we anticipate the return of the Messiah.

BIBLICAL CALENDAR

The issue of what religious calendar is to be followed, by those remembering the annual appointed times, is not a fiercely debated issue in Messianic Judaism. Yeshua the Messiah, His Jewish Apostles and first followers, as well as any non-Jewish Believers who had either been proselytes or God-fearers, would have all followed the mainline Jewish calendar of the First Century C.E. There is no indication in the Gospels or Book of Acts, that the early Messiah followers adhered to a sectarian calendar. Instead, per Yeshua’s word that the Pharisees had an authority to be respected (Matthew 23:1-3), and the Apostle Paul’s own testimony of being a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), then the mainstream Jewish norms, largely represented by the Pharisees, would have been observed. The Messianic Believers in the New Testament are all seen observing the appointed times, in conjunction with the main Jewish population.

The post-Second Temple successors of the Pharisees established the basis of what would become Orthodox Judaism. The pre-calculated Hillel II calendar, from the Fourth Century C.E., is what is used by the vast majority of the worldwide Jewish community, as employed by Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism, with some emendations made for those in the Diaspora. Messianic Judaism widely uses this same calendar, not only for continuity with the Jewish community, but also to best facilitate outreach and evangelism during seasons such as the Fall High Holidays and Passover.

The issue of what calendar to employ, is a fiercely debated topic in the Hebrew Roots movement, as well as in the non-Jewish Torah movements. Some groups are seen to observe a calendar in alignment with the Karaite movement in Israel and their sighting of the New Moon,

* Rabbi Eric Lakatos, Tikvat Yisrael Messianic Synagogue Cleveland, OH / IAMCS Steering Committee.

whereas others are seen to observe an alternative calendar, usually based on their specific group's sighting of the Moon or their own unique pre-calculations. A great number of the alternative calendars employed, have caused a high degree of division and infighting among those who are a part of Hebrew Roots.

From its very beginning, Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics have always followed the mainstream Jewish calendar.

Among Messianic people who do follow the mainstream Jewish calendar, there can be those who deviate slightly, choosing to count the *omer* from Passover to *Shavuot* according to the method of the Sadducees, and not the Pharisees. The Sadducees took the "day after the Sabbath" to be the weekly Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread, whereas the Pharisees took the "day after the Sabbath" to be the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (cf. Leviticus 23:11, 15; Deuteronomy 16:6). According to the Saddusaical method *Shavuot* is always observed on a Sunday, whereas according to the Pharisical method its date occurs on 06 Sivan, on any day of the week. Most years, the difference between the Saddusaical and Pharisical methods of counting the *omer* is nominal, being only a few days apart. There are Messianic congregations and synagogues where there are fellow brothers and sisters, who have learned to respectfully disagree over this issue, and honor the Lord according to whatever method the leadership has determined best. Our own family has been able to maintain unity over the years, as we have gone through seasons of internally disagreeing which method of counting the *omer* is correct.

Many of the so-called "restored Biblical calendars" produced by sectors of the Hebrew Roots movement, believe that they have also been able to restore the proper year since Creation. The 6,000-year doctrine, which was adhered to by many of the Jewish Sages (b.Sanhedrin 97a-97b), is quite popular throughout a great deal of the Messianic community. It widely adheres to the idea that there is a 7,000-year cosmic week, with each "day" being 1,000 years (cf. Psalm 90:4), with the final 1,000-year period being like a Sabbath, hence representative of the Messianic Age. Many calculations and predictions of the Second Coming and return of the Messiah, have been associated with determining when the "Biblical Year 6,000" is going to take place. Indeed, the plethora of alternative calendars available, is highly connected to various end-time prognostications.

The 6,000-year doctrine widely relies on adding up the genealogical lists of Genesis 5 and 11, and then from that assumes that human history has only lasted for approximately 6,000 years. Most conservative Old Testament theologians in the second half of the Twentieth Century (i.e., R.K. Harrison, K.A. Kitchen, Walter C. Kaiser, among others), were seen to be very pessimistic to a 6,000-year or so chronology for humankind. In addition to the different ages seen in the textual witnesses of the Hebrew Masoretic Text, Greek Septuagint, and Samaritan Pentateuch for Genesis 5, 11, and the probability of telescoping—extant anthropological data indisputably points to human civilization being older than 6,000 years. References to "a day is as a thousand years," are instead viewed as speaking of God's timelessness. The 6,000-year doctrine, while popular, falsely assumes that human beings can actually calculate the year of the Messiah's return. The Messiah Himself, in His Olivet Discourse, directly admonished His followers to look for political-religious-sociological signs.

It is seen how while the present year of the Jewish calendar is 5785 (2025), which has subtracted various years per opinions surrounding the Book of Daniel, most people in the Jewish community would concede that human history is much more ancient.

ONE LAW/ONE TORAH THEOLOGY

One Law/One Torah theology is considered to be a false teaching by the Messianic Jewish community. For certain, when it is exegetically evaluated, One Law/One Torah theology is a product of a fundamentalist hermeneutic. It is correct that there are statements, appearing within the jurisprudence of the Pentateuch, which detail “one law” or “one statute” applying to the native born and sojourner in some way (i.e., Exodus 12:48-49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16). Those of the One Law/One Torah sub-movement incorrectly conclude that statements, involving “one law” or “one statute,” concern a universal Torah observance. When reviewed in their proper and wider context, Pentateuchal statements involving “one law” or “one statute” concerned specific areas where a sojourner who had entered into Ancient Israel, could have been treated unfairly or taken advantage of, unlike a native. They did not speak of universal Torah, but instead concerned specific, targeted matters.

One Law/One Torah theology is frequently criticized, because it tends to conclude that there were virtually no differences of any kind, between the native and sojourner in Ancient Israel. When pointed out, various differences which did exist between native and sojourner in the Torah, are not handled too well, by most supporters of a One Law/One Torah theology. An obvious issue would involve how only the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have an ancestral claim to tribal territories in the Land of Israel. Sojourners who entered in, from the outside to the community of Israel, could not make such claims.

Over the years, our family and ministry have had very poor, and often very strained relations, with many persons stridently identifying as One Law/One Torah. In our experience, the One Law/One Torah sub-movement is marked by a great deal of legalism, inflexibility, and judgmentalism. It is widely devoid of the work of the Holy Spirit, and absent of a great deal of the required love and grace of true Messiah followers. Some proponents are known to hold to unsustainable ideas, such as the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; cf. Hebrews 8:7-13) actually having been operative in the pre-resurrection era, prior to Yeshua’s completed work on the tree of sacrifice (Luke 22:20). One Law/One Torah theology is widely seen to conclude that there have been no major changes, of any kind, naturally resultant from the Messiah event. This can most especially involve its sway toward theonomy, quite contrary to how the capital penalties of the Torah were absorbed in the death of Yeshua (Colossians 2:14), with capital punishment largely being a thing of the past.

Pronomian Christianity is a widely associated venue, or extension, of One Law/One Torah theology. There are some sincere people involved with Pronomian Christianity, who certainly desire to return to a theological foundation in Moses’ Teaching. But the emerging Pronomian movement, also has some voices who bear distinct tinges of replacement theology (i.e., “the Church is Israel”).

Today in the Body of Messiah, do Jewish and non-Jewish people have the exact same relationship to the Torah? **No.** The Torah of Moses composes the ethnic and cultural heritage of today’s Jewish people; it may only be considered part of the spiritual heritage of non-Jewish Believers in Israel’s Messiah, who themselves will have another ethnic background and history as part of their identity. The Jewish people have a unique, direct connection to the Torah; non-Jewish Believers only have an indirect, spiritual connection.

It needs to be recognized how being disfavorable to One Law/One Torah theology, its fundamentalism, and its legalism—**does not automatically mean that a person or ministry is seen to actively discourage non-Jewish Believers from partaking of God’s blessings in outward Torah practices such as the seventh-day Sabbath/Shabbat, festivals/moedim, or a**

kosher-style diet. The Torah itself emphasized a universal education of all, within the community of Ancient Israel (Deuteronomy 31:12). While there were various differences between native and sojourner in Ancient Israel, native and sojourner also had far more in common than not. Many thousands of non-Jewish Believers—by the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the power of the New Covenant uniquely writing commandments onto their heart and mind—have been called by the Lord into the Messianic movement, in this hour. They have partaken of their faith heritage in Israel’s Scriptures in tangible ways—but unlike many in the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, are also actively involved in the Messianic Jewish mission, especially Jewish outreach and evangelism.

It is to be fairly recognized, that while there were specific contexts in the Pentateuch, involving “one law” or “one statute”—that contrary to the conclusion of a number of persons in Messianic Judaism—such a “one law” or “one statute” adhered to, in specific areas, highlighted commonality and fairness, and not differences or distinctions, as being the most important focus of the Torah’s jurisprudence.

TWO-HOUSE THEOLOGY

Two-House theology is considered to be a false teaching by the Messianic Jewish community. It first arose from various non-Jewish people in Messianic Judaism, unfortunately feeling unwelcome or rejected by Messianic Jews. They then falsely thought that they needed to find a physical connection to Israel, in order to be fully accepted within the people of God. Without being able to find any distant Jewish relative or ancestry, they instead looked to the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. It was then quickly concluded that the reason the Lord must be leading so many non-Jewish people into the Messianic movement and toward things of Torah, was because they were actual, physical descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, “Ephraimites.” Sadly, what developed into the Two-House teaching—while based in some legitimate Biblical issues to be resolved—was influenced by a great deal of Ten Lost Tribes myths, fundamentalism and sensationalism, poor Biblical exegesis, and unbridled emotionalism.

All Bible readers have to intelligibly sort through the complications of the Divided Kingdom era of Ancient Israel, following the reign of King Solomon. Ancient Israel did legitimately separate into the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. While both participated in their own levels of idolatry and rebellion against the Lord, the Northern Kingdom was illegitimate from the very beginning, with the Southern Kingdom remaining true to the House of David. A sizeable enough group from the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, was taken into exile by the Assyrian Empire, who later assimilated into where they were dispersed. Yet, there were Northern Kingdom Israelites loyal to the God of Israel, who migrated to the Southern Kingdom, and whose descendants were integrated into the Jewish population through its dispersion to Babylon, and return. It is Scripturally accurate to say that corporately the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom were dispersed, while at the same time recognizing how there were persons from all Twelve Tribes of Israel who were a part of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and hence the Jewish community up until today.

There are various Tanach prophecies, which do concern a seemingly yet-to-be accomplished reunion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel (i.e., Isaiah 11:12-16; Jeremiah 31:6-10; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Zechariah 10:6-10). There are various pre-millennial interpreters who recognize that these prophecies are yet to be fulfilled, with resolution to the Divided Kingdom matter to occur in conjunction with, or subsequent to, the Second Coming of the Messiah. But, they do not subscribe to some of the exaggerations regarding who the actual descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom

are, as propagated by the Two-House teaching. Such persons to be reunited with those of the Southern Kingdom, are much more limited to small groups in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean, which possess oral customs and traditions stemming from Ancient Israel. A great number of the actual descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, actually live in the Middle East and its immediate environs, and are most probably Muslim today.

What makes the Two-House teaching false, is not a focus on various, unfulfilled future prophecies involving the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel as participants; what makes the Two-House teaching false, is the assumption of there being hundreds of millions, if not several billion, lost Israelites from the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim in the world today. This is not the impression one gets from a Torah word such as, “Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 28:26, NASU). The idea that there are hundreds of millions of lost Israelites from the Northern Kingdom on Planet Earth, but only 17-18 million Jews, is rightfully offensive to today’s Messianic Jewish Believers—especially in light of the 6 million who perished in the Holocaust.

Those of the Two-House sub-movement have been prone to promote a great number of Lost Tribes myths and fantasies, especially repackaging some of the claims of the Nineteenth Century British-Israel movement. This runs contrary to how conservative examiners are prone to look for descendants of the Northern Kingdom exiles, among people groups within the sphere of influence of the old Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires: mainly Eastward. The Talmud expresses the view that the Lost Tribes went to Persia (b.Yevamot 16b), with an ancient Christian leader expressing a similar view that they went to Persia and India (Sulpitus Severus *Sacred History* 11). There are Messianic Jewish ministries which have performed regular outreaches and medical missions in Africa and India, among small groups which have oral traditions and customs going back to Ancient Israel and the Northern Kingdom. They have been recognized as legitimate descendants of the Lost Tribes by Jewish authorities in Israel, and often have a desire to make *aliyah*.

HUMAN EQUALITY AND WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Every human being on Planet Earth bears the image of God, with both male and female being given a unique supernatural imprint from their Creator (Genesis 1:26-27). Every person is to be shown great respect and honor, regardless of whether or not they have professed faith in Israel’s Messiah. **A failure to demonstrate any level of decency to another human being, is to violate the greatest commandments: love of God and love of neighbor** (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

One of the most fiercely debated issues in evangelical Protestant theology, over the past half-century or more, concerns the equality of males and females in the Body of Messiah, and specifically the issue ordaining women to leadership positions. While there are some exceptions, the considerable majority of today’s Messianic community (and wider sphere of influence) does operate on a differences- or distinctions-first ideology, and not a common faith-first ideology. This can be frequently encountered in Messianic congregations in matters regarding human equality, Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, gender roles, and women in ministry. The Messianic community generally does not have a good handle on, or even mature approach toward, complementarian-egalitarian discussions, unlike those in evangelical Protestantism. A wide number of Messianic congregations and synagogues are led entirely by men.

Since our family's involvement in the Messianic movement in 1995, but most especially since the mid-to-late 2000s, our ministry has had some longstanding differences over the issue of gender equality and women in ministry. We do not at all adhere to the common complementarian (heavy-complementarian to patriarchal) perspective one is likely to encounter within the Messianic sphere of influence. Instead, our ministry and family adhere to evangelical egalitarian views of the people of God, which do stem from our Wesleyan theological heritage.

Man and woman were originally created by God as equals (Genesis 2:23), with the woman intended to be a significant ally to the man (Genesis 2:18), not a subordinate. Hierarchy came as a consequence of the Fall, and with it a conflict or battle of the sexes (Genesis 3:16). Marriage was originally intended to be monogamous, between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24). Polygamy, or a man having multiple wives (polygyny), is and has always been an aberration, and in Holy Scripture it never benefitted the men who practiced it. The Patriarchs, while surely given promises by God, were also human beings with (significant) flaws. Yet, the Creator has always been able to use the weakest of people to accomplish His plan (Deuteronomy 7:6-9), and worked through the tainted circumstances caused by various men who were polygamous. In Ancient Israel, polygamy practiced by various men, was often tolerated over against the more severe sins of idolatry and child sacrifice.

The Creator's design for marriage has always been one man, one woman (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:7-8; Mathew 19:5). Homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:25-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:10) and what has now developed into LGBTQ+, are considered abominations by Holy Scripture. Proper, Biblical sexuality is to be expressed in love by a heterosexual, monogamous married couple. The only Biblically acceptable alternative, to heterosexual monogamy, is celibate singleness, especially practiced by Yeshua Himself (Jeremiah 16:1-2; Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:7-9).

While homosexuality and LGBTQ+ tend to garner the post attention, it is to be noted how the vast majority of sexual sins committed in the Bible, and in society up until the present day, **are committed by those who are heterosexual**. All Believers have a Biblical responsibility to recognize the negative effects sin has had on human sexuality, and be tempered in their condemnation of sexual activity outside Biblical boundaries. Many have incorrectly searched for a love and acceptance which is only available in our Eternal God. One's completeness as a person is only to be found in the Lord, not in another human being.

Egalitarians assert that because of the sacrifice of Yeshua, and the post-resurrection era His work has inaugurated, that the equality of the genders lost at the Fall (Genesis 3:16) has been restored (Galatians 3:28; contra. t.Berachot 6:18). Males and females surely certainly maintain their anatomical and reproductive distinctions, but both men and women have the same amount of intellectual brain power and ability to lead, both in the home and in the assembly. Evangelical egalitarians are widely seen to dismiss the concept of "male headship," instead often concluding that the term *kephalē* should be approached as "source" or "origin" (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23)—especially highlighting how a husband should treat his wife the same as his own body (Ephesians 5:28). A proper, heterosexual marriage is found in a husband and wife working as a partnership team, in mutual submission to each other (cf. Ephesians 5:21ff), supporting and watching out for each other, as co-leaders of the family, with all major decisions to be made by joint agreement.

There are significant examples of females in leadership, in the Apostolic Writings. These include, but are not limited to, Lydia (Acts 16:14), Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2), the wife-husband teaching duo of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2), and most notably the female Apostle Junia (Romans 16:7). It was normative for the First Century *ekklēsia* to see both men and women occupy

positions of leadership. Various Pauline limitations on women in leadership are rightfully taken to be situational, not universal (i.e., 1 Timothy 2:11-15).[†] Likewise, what are commonly read as universal requirements for elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7) and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13), were principally situational, for the false teaching Timothy had to see sorted through in Ephesus, but actually did allow for female deacons (1 Timothy 3:11).

There is often a great fear from complementarians, that ordination of female leaders in the assembly, will lead to an eventual acceptance of LGBTQ+. Yet, many of those who often support this kind of reasoning, virtually fail in recognizing the plethora of heterosexual scandals in complementarian denominations. Almost all of the significant religious dramas of recent years, involving high profile leaders, have come from sectors which support a complementarian ideology of men first, women second—and were caused by men who quantitatively failed to treat women as their equals.

We do not support a faith community composed of strong men, but weak women. Nor do we support a faith community composed of strong women, but weak men. **We believe that the Body of Messiah is to be composed of both strong men and strong women, in Him.**

CREATIONISM AND EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE

For many years, Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics have advocated that an **open discussion** approach is imperative, for evaluating the matters of early Genesis and human origins. *This has not been too easy for today's Messianic movement, and often hard fought.* While technically, a person's approach toward Genesis 1-11—whether one adheres to a creation by fiat model, or some kind of theistic evolution model—is not a salvation issue, it is frequently treated as a salvation issue by a great number of today's Messianic people. One's approach or orientation toward early Genesis and human origins, should instead be correctly classified as a reliability of the Bible issue, and not at all conflated with one's salvation.

While our ministry does not adhere to the Darwinian theory of evolution, we have seen many supporters of Theistic Evolution unfairly harassed and unnecessarily demonized. It is unavoidable how a majority of people in today's Jewish community, who profess some belief in God, most probably also adhere to some form of God-directed evolution to bring about the human species. Not being able to easily have a non-judgmental, open discussion of views on Genesis 1-11, will not at all help or aid the Messianic movement in the future with matters of Jewish outreach.

Any modern Believer today can recognize how **Genesis 1-4 interpretation is perhaps the mother of all Biblical controversies.** How was the universe brought into being? How did humans appear on this planet? Many factors have surely been debated among those in evangelical Protestantism. Were the six *yamim* of Genesis 1 twenty-four hour days, or six long periods of time? Is the universe around 6,000 years old, or around 13.5-17 billion years old? While some evangelicals can be seen to debate these things with rigor, it is generally and correctly recognized to not constitute a salvation issue. Those adhering to a Young Earth Creation model (creation in six, 24-hour days, approximately 6,000 years ago), an Old Earth Creation model (creation over six long periods of time, going back to the Big Bang 13.5-17 billion years ago), or even Theistic Evolution (a God-directed evolution of the human species)—have been seen to embrace one another as fellow brothers and sisters, and engage in various positive levels of dialogue. When the issues of cosmic and human origins and early Genesis perspectives are discussed within the Messianic sphere of influence, such a mature level of theological exchange **is frequently absent.**

[†] Evangelical scholars such as Gordon D. Fee and Philip B. Payne have rightfully raised the issue of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 being a non-Pauline interpolation.

A Young Earth Creationist perspective, positing a young universe of approximately 6,000 years old, is entirely unsustainable based on extant astronomical, cosmological, and geological evidence. Extant anthropological evidence on Planet Earth can easily support human civilization being a minimum of 50,000-150,000 years old. For the past two decades (2007-present), Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics have supported the Old Earth Creation perspective (particularly as seen via a ministry like Reasons to Believe), which while affirming an ancient universe, also quantitatively denies Darwinian evolution. Adam and Eve were created by Divine fiat, and were placed in a real Garden of Eden, somewhere in what is today's Middle East and Persian Gulf. But, Adam and Eve's creation was far longer than 6,000 years ago, requiring the Genesis 5, 11 genealogies to be telescoped.

If one cannot easily demonstrate a mature approach to the various perspectives in contemporary theology regarding early Genesis, and both cosmic and human origins—then one of the major questions the Millennial generation, Generation-Z, and Generation Alpha will all have to contend with, will not at all be handled well. *Are we alone in the universe?* is actually an ancient question, having been asked by many world civilizations for millennia. Because of new scientific advancements, astronomical discoveries, space exploration, and even intended colonization—the issue of whether or not humankind is the only sentient species in the universe, is a live one, even for religious people and sincere Believers. A new area of theological studies, **astrotheology** or **exotheology**, has actually been formed to specifically consider the question of whether our Creator God has other “stories” playing out, concurrent to our own human story, in the universe. How might this affect the Incarnation of Yeshua, and especially His death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven?

Many, in both evangelical Christianity and today's Messianic sphere of influence, will quickly dismiss any suggestion that there is sentient life in the universe—other than God and His angels, Satan and his demons, and humanity. It is seen how over the past seventy to eighty years, with a greater frequency in UFO appearances, supposed UFO crashes, and extra-terrestrial abductions—that many Christians have concluded that these are new manifestations of the Genesis 6 Nephilim. This is associated with the Messiah saying that the period before His return will be like the Days of Noah. For many, anything involving extra-terrestrials or UFOs, is just demonic deception, with nothing more to be said, probed, or inquired. Many consider the Holy Scriptures to be entirely silent on any sentient biological life at all existing, outside that of human civilization.

Given the great antiquity and vastness of our universe, with over 200 billion galaxies, some find it difficult to believe that humankind is the only sentient species created by God. For certain, though, what has happened on Planet Earth via the Incarnation of Yeshua—and most especially His resurrection—means that He ascended into Heaven permanently in His human incarnation, albeit now glorified. God the Father “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:20-21, NASU). **All of us must be agreed that what is occurring right here on this planet, Earth, is wrapping up the cosmic conflict between good and evil.** The next major phase of salvation history is the resurrection of the dead, the return of the Messiah to Earth, and His reign from Jerusalem. **All of us should be agreed that when the Messiah returns, He will personally reveal things about the mysteries of the wider universe and cosmic history, which as of yet are largely unknown to human beings.**