

# **INTRODUCTION TO THINGS MESSIANIC**

**An Introduction for Newcomers  
to the Messianic Movement**

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**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**  
[messianicapologetics.net](http://messianicapologetics.net)

# Introduction to Things Messianic

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# Abbreviations and Special Terms

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

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*  
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*  
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)  
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament  
Ara: Aramaic  
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)  
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)  
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)  
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.  
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)  
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*  
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.  
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)  
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)  
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)  
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)  
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)  
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition  
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls  
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*  
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*  
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)  
Ger: German  
GNT: Greek New Testament  
Grk: Greek  
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)  
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)  
Heb: Hebrew  
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible  
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*  
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*  
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*  
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*  
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)  
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)  
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*  
KJV: King James Version  
Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)  
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)  
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)  
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)  
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)  
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)  
LXX: Septuagint  
m. Mishnah  
MT: Masoretic Text  
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)  
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)  
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*  
NEB: New English Bible (1970)  
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*  
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)  
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*

NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*

NIV: New International Version (1984)

NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)

NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)

NKJV: New King James Version (1982)

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)

NLT: New Living Translation (1996)

NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

REB: Revised English Bible (1989)

RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)

t. Tosefta

Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament

Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)

TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition

v(s). verse(s)

Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*

Vul: Latin Vulgate

YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

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# **Our Messianic Future: Something Similar, Something Different**

One of the scariest, and most ominous words, that many people make a sizeable effort to avoid or dismiss, is the word **future**.<sup>1</sup> When many people conjure up the word future, they quickly tend to associate it with other words, including, but not limited to: health, heart attack, stroke, disease, taxes, debt, separation, divorce, will, death, burial, environment, pollution, war, asteroid collision, apocalypse, extinction. Individually, most of us are inclined to not want to think about the future. Corporately as a human species, we also have a tendency to not think long term. *The future is depressing, and it is likely to be something worse than the present.* The issue of the future, and what is coming, has been especially on my mind the past few weeks, as we have just started Calendar Year 2022.

A few weeks ago, something very important took place: I was officially ordained as a Messianic Teacher by the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS). In 2018, as our ministry was surveying the various options available for my ongoing education, we saw that the IAMCS offered the position of Messianic Pastor or Messianic Teacher for non-Jewish leaders. Messianic Teacher was the most logical position for me to apply for (not to mention the fact that this was also quite economical). I submitted an application, I was interviewed and approved at the 2019 IAMCS Rabbis Conference, and throughout 2019 and 2020 I

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<sup>1</sup> This article originally appeared in the January 2022 issue of Outreach Israel News.

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took the necessary courses. Most of the classes I took were on topics that I could not have studied at seminary, as they related to Messianic congregational ministry, the Messianic Jewish mission, and the contemporary Jewish community. Everything was actually in place for me to be officially ordained at the end of 2020, but due to the ongoing world situation, the 2021 Rabbis Conference was canceled, and so this ordination had to be postponed a year.

Over the past five to seven years (2015-2022), I have been especially aware of the mixed reactions that those following Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics, have had to our involvement with Messianic Judaism. We did get our start in the Messianic movement at a Messianic Jewish congregation in 1995! But like many others, we were also, at one point, involved with some of the various non-Jewish offshoots. When we moved back to the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex in 2012, we reassociated with our old friends whom we had known, and this got us reengaged with the Messianic Jewish movement. Many people who had been following our ministry were very encouraged, and could see the hand of the Lord! They recognize the positive difference we could make in Messianic Jewish circles. Others, however, distanced themselves from us, being quite skeptical. For a wide number of non-Jewish Believers associated with things "Messianic" or "Hebrew Roots," the Messianic Jewish movement has a stereotype of it being unwelcoming of most non-Jewish Believers, discouraging of them embracing things of Torah, and often releasing poorly written and vindictive white papers. My experience by interacting with people on the ground, has been that the Messianic Jewish community is much more pluralistic and diverse, than those who simply read books or articles may realize.

So today in 2022, here we are, and I have been ordained as a Messianic Teacher by the largest, most well known Messianic Jewish organization in the world (IAMCS). What have I learned over the past several years, and what is **Our Messianic Future** going to involve? What will be similar, and what will be different? While I do not claim to have all of the answers, I do believe that in light of what has taken place in our world in 2020-2021, some things do need to be put on the table.

## The Messianic Jewish Revival

Everything that we are involved with today, can trace its modern origins back to the original Messianic Jewish revival, which started in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The modern Messianic Jewish movement itself,

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though, was preceded by the Hebrew Christian movement of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. The Hebrew Christian movement mainly involved associations of Jewish Believers, who had recognized Jesus as Messiah, but who were a part of Protestantism. Things of Torah were observed as a matter of Jewish tradition and culture, but not necessarily covenant fidelity. While very evangelistic in nature, in wanting to see Jewish people come to faith in the Messiah, the Hebrew Christian movement encouraged a wide amount of assimilation and intermarriage. A frequent accusation was that the Hebrew Christian movement used Jewish tradition and culture to deceptively convert Jews to Christianity, and see them engulfed by the Church. And indeed, while those in the Hebrew Christian movement may have observed things like the appointed times or *Shabbat* at home, they would have still gone to Church on Sunday, and also would have kept Christmas and Easter. Because of the wide amount of intermarriage practiced, there are people in Christianity today who may have a Jewish great-grandparent—and do not even realize it!

While Hebrew Christianity did help many Jewish people come to faith in the Messiah, by the 1960s there were various leaders who recognized that there was a huge need for the movement to change—and for it to be principally recognized as a part of Judaism, and not as some outpost or embassy of the Church. Spiritually, a sizeable shift took place in 1967 with the recapturing of the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six Day War. Many are of the position that this signaled the closing of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). While there were many Hebrew Christian leaders who opposed it, by the early 1970s, the transition of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America into the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) is widely recognized as a main event giving rise to the modern Messianic Jewish movement. Still rooted in the need to see Jewish people come to faith in Israel’s Messiah, this would be conducted more decisively on Jewish terms. Worship services would be held in a Jewish synagogue-style with Hebrew liturgy, on *Shabbat*, and matters of Torah would be remembered not just as a part of Jewish tradition or culture—but as part of a Jewish person’s fidelity to Moses *and* the New Covenant. Terms that would be more sensitive to Jewish needs—such as Yeshua, execution-stake or tree, and immerse—would be employed instead of Jesus, cross, or baptize. The Messianic Jewish movement would take an active interest in the affairs of the Jewish community, and be engaged in supporting the State of Israel.

The Messianic Jewish revival, of the late 1960s and early 1970s, saw a wide number of nascent Messianic congregations and synagogues planted,

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mainly in the United States, in areas with large Jewish populations. Early Messianic Judaism definitely had a prophetic vision, and impacted many thousands of Jewish people looking for answers. For, the Jewish community in North America had not only been affected by the counter-culture, sexual revolution, Civil Rights movement, and Vietnam War—but also was very much experiencing the affects of World War II and the Holocaust. Many of the Jewish Believers who came to faith in Yeshua in the late 1960s and early 1970s, having been influenced by various social movements—and in searching for truth and answers—came to faith in the Lord! To be sure, as more and more Jewish people came to faith in Yeshua, emerging Messianic Judaism was opposed by the Jewish establishment, and even the Christian establishment. The early Messianic Jewish pioneers had a great deal going against them, but when you read some of their stories and testimonies, you recognize that what they did was absolutely monumental! **The idea that Jewish people could believe in Israel's Messiah, and still remain Jewish, ran absolutely contrary to the theology of both the Synagogue and the Church.**

While the Lord was working through many different people and ministry venues, the epicenter of the emergence of formal Messianic Judaism in the 1970s can often be traced to the work of Martin and Yohanna Chernoff—first in Cincinnati, OH and later in Philadelphia, PA. As is recorded in the historical memoirs of *Born a Jew...Die a Jew: The Story of Martin Chernoff* (Hagerstown, MD: Ebed Publications, 1996), a wide number of the Messianic Jewish pioneers, who planted congregations and synagogues, were somehow influenced by the Messianic Jewish revival that the Chernoffs oversaw in Philadelphia via Beth Yeshua, and the work that they and others did through the MJAA.

One of the most influential books of emerging Messianic Judaism, which lays forth some of its early evangelistic vision, is *The Fig Tree Blossoms* by Paul Liberman (Kudu Publishing, 2012 Second Edition). This resource, among others, was to be read by both Messianic Jews and Christians, who wanted to know the role that the Messianic Jewish movement was to play in the future. Another vision of Messianic Judaism, which also found itself being circulated by the late 1970s, is presented in the book *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology* by Dan Juster (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1995). Juster and others formed the breakaway Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC). While the MJAA and UMJC have both been responsible for seeing Messianic Jewish congregations and communities founded, the former is more widely

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known for its emphasis on evangelism and the spiritual gifts, and the latter is more widely known for its emphasis on systematic theology.

None of us would be where we are today, discussing and debating the issues involving Israel, Torah, and Believers' identity—if it were not for the early work of formal Messianic Judaism in the 1960s and 1970s. The questions that they were asking were drastic—"Can a Jewish person believe in Jesus and still be Jewish?"—and the opposition they faced was immense. The main contribution of Messianic Judaism has always been trying to answer Paul's concern of Romans 10:1: "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation" (TLV). The corporate salvation of the Jewish people is vital for the continuance of salvation history, as humanity has been decisively set on an "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26) trajectory. Seeing Jewish people come to faith in Israel's Messiah, and then assimilated away into a non-Jewish Christianity will not facilitate this mission. Seeing Jewish people come to faith in Israel's Messiah, living as Jewish people faithful to the Hebrew Scriptures and their ethnic and cultural heritage, will facilitate this mission.

## Unanticipated Numbers of Non-Jewish Believers

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Messianic Jewish movement would witness significant expansion. As congregations and synagogues were planted, more and more Jewish people came to faith in Yeshua. Along with this, evangelical Christian support for Messianic Judaism fortunately increased as well. The Messianic Jewish movement was taking a lead in Jewish outreach and evangelism, and evangelical Protestants—who did not believe that God was finished with Israel, and believed in the centrality of Israel in end-time prophecy—became a major source of both spiritual and material support. Many of the early Messianic Jewish pioneers had non-Jewish spouses, after all, and did have connections to the Christian community. Within the 1980s to the 1990s, evangelical support for the Messianic Jewish movement increased. This not only included recognizing the important role that Messianic Judaism could play in seeing Jewish people brought to faith, but also how Messianic Jewish perspectives on the Scriptures could enrich many Christians.

Various Messianic Jewish leaders and teachers often found themselves interviewed on local Christian radio or television, with a few even having their own shows on major Christian networks. Television programs such as Zola Levitt Presents, for example, were geared toward Christians with a

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love of Israel, the Jewish people, and who had a sincere interest in studying the Jewish Roots of the New Testament. It was during the mid-1980s to early-1990s that evangelical Christian interest in the Biblical feasts, and how they depict the Messiah's First and Second Comings, really began to germinate. Messianic Jewish leaders would often find themselves conducting Passover *seder* presentations at local churches in the Spring, connecting the Passover meal to the Last Supper held between Yeshua and His Disciples. This frequently planted seeds in the hearts of many non-Jewish Believers, who would often find themselves visiting their local Messianic Jewish congregation for more teaching and enrichment.

The stated mission of the Messianic Jewish movement was to be a venue for Jewish outreach, evangelism, Israel solidarity, and to serve as a haven where Jewish Believers could believe in Yeshua as Israel's Messiah and not have to give up their Jewishness. For sure, just like the wider Jewish community, there would be some level of non-Jewish participation. Many Messianic Jews had non-Jewish spouses. It would be only natural that various non-Jewish Believers would feel a special or unique calling to participate as co-laborers in Messianic Jewish ministry. The Messianic Jewish movement needed allies in the Christian community, which would definitely mean that Messianic Jewish congregations could expect a wide number of Christian guests and visitors.

It was in the late 1980s, but certainly mid-to-late 1990s, that something shifted—and all of a sudden non-Jewish Believers started emerging as the majority in Messianic congregations and synagogues. *Why was this happening?* As we look back on things today in 2022, there was no uniform response. Some of the ways that various Messianic Jewish leaders handled the unanticipated numbers of non-Jewish Believers entering in were understandable. Others, however, handled this in a manner that was neither useful nor constructive. Certainly, by Messianic Jewish leaders seeking support among the Christian community, teaching on and emphasizing the importance of the Jewish Roots of the faith—it would indeed result in attracting many non-Jewish Believers to Messianic congregations, where they could experience something much closer to the worship customs and practices of Yeshua and His first Disciples than would be seen at a local church.

It has to be fairly noted that there were many Messianic Jewish congregations, where non-Jewish Believers entering in were indeed welcomed as fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord, and that the unity of Jew and Gentile was something to be celebrated as a manifestation of the Ephesians 2:15 “one new man.” The one frequent caveat, though, was that

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Messianic Jewish congregations which were welcoming of non-Jewish Believers—even recognizing how many started by wanting to be enriched by their faith heritage in Judaism—wanted to make sure that they were indeed *called to the Messianic movement*. A great number of non-Jewish Believers visiting Messianic congregations, after all, are only there to temporarily try things out—because they have already visited and participated in so many kinds of churches and faith expressions. It is only reasonable—especially combined with the fact that many Christians have betrayed Jews throughout religious history—to stress that non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement need to be genuinely called by God as co-laborers and contributors to the Messianic Jewish mission. And, it would indeed be discovered that many non-Jews visiting Messianic congregations, would later move on after a few months or a year.

The 1990s witnessed a large number of non-Jewish Believers entering into the Messianic movement. These people were seen to not only be enriched by their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures—but were seemingly also being convicted by the Lord to begin keeping the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*, remember the Biblical festivals, and eat a kosher style of diet. Some Messianic Jewish people saw these as good things, and other Messianic Jewish people saw these as infringing upon their Jewish identity. A number of sub-movements consequently saw their beginnings in the 1990s. The Two-House sub-movement, in particular, proposed that the reason why so many non-Jewish Believers were coming into the Messianic movement, was because the significant majority of them were descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes, and that a prophecy like Ezekiel 37:15-28 was taking place. Others, not being so provocative, suggested that non-Jewish Believers within today's Messianic movement, were to be treated like the *gerim* or sojourners within Ancient Israel, and were to keep the same basic Torah law as the native—quickly being noted as the One Law/One Torah sub-movement. By the 2010s, the various non-Jewish Torah movements often found themselves quickly being designated by the more general term: "Hebrew Roots."

I suspect that just as the spread of the good news among Greeks and Romans in the First Century C.E. was not widely anticipated or foreseen by the ancient Messianic Jewish Believers—a wide number of the Messianic Jewish pioneers could not have foreseen how the modern Messianic Jewish movement would start attracting many non-Jewish Believers into its ranks.

Looking back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, we see that for a sizeable part of Messianic Judaism, the way that these offshoot movements

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were going to be handled, was by Messianic Jewish organizations composing and circulating various white papers. Among these include, but are not limited to, the 1999 “Ephraimite Error” white paper which condemned the Two-House sub-movement, and the 2014 “One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement” which condemned the Hebrew Roots movement. More recently, the 2021 “One New Man, Hebrew Roots, Replacement Theology” (David Rudolph) and the “Messianic Jewish Movement Compared to Gentile Jewish Roots One Law Movement” (Dan Juster) articles, issue complaints as to why the Hebrew Roots movement is now dozens of times larger than the Messianic Jewish movement.

Anybody who reads through these sorts of papers will not see any real detailed theological analysis or resolution to the questions that have been raised by Two-House, One Law/One Torah, or Hebrew Roots. They appropriately condemn legalism and abuses, to be sure, and issue justifiable rebukes to bad behavior. But, these papers do not really offer an alternative interpretation of two-stick prophecy of Ezekiel 37:15-28. These papers do not address the reality that prophecies like Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4, the nations streaming to Zion in the Last Days to be taught Moses’ Teaching, are very much occurring in our midst—every bit as much as Paul’s expectations of Jewish salvation in Romans chs. 9-11. And while passages like Galatians 5:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 frequently get thrown around, that there are issues from the Greek source text and viable alternative interpretations, often do not get recognized. While it cannot be Biblically argued that Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are *exactly* the same, it can be Biblically argued that Jewish and non-Jewish Believers have far more in common than not. And, emphasizing a common faith first ideology, is not something that these white papers and articles have tended to do.

I understand and I agree, that the Messianic movement should stress that non-Jewish Believers need to be specially called by God into the Messianic movement. The Messianic movement is principally here to be a venue for Jewish outreach and evangelism. While the nations are anticipated in the Last Days to embrace the truths of Torah, non-Jewish Believers coming into the Messianic movement do need to come to a point where they recognize that their participation in Messianic things is a participation in the salvation of the Jewish people and restoration of Israel’s Kingdom (cf. Acts 1:6). There are non-Jewish people who have come into Messianic congregations with an agenda, and who have needed to be turned away. But then again, there are non-Jewish Believers

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embracing a life of Torah, as a genuine work of the Holy Spirit and New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27), who have found themselves unwelcomed in some Messianic Jewish congregations, but welcomed in Two-House, One Law, or Hebrew Roots fellowships. There are a few Messianic Jewish leaders and teachers, who have, perhaps unknowingly, turned away many potential allies and friends of Messianic Judaism—and with it their economic resources.

Today in 2022, if the social media numbers hold true, the Hebrew Roots movement is conservatively fifty times larger than Messianic Judaism. While some might cower and say that this is all the result of demonic influence or Satan—the fact is that by writing white papers that have condemned the Hebrew Roots movement, the Hebrew Roots movement is only getting larger and larger. And today in 2022, the sad reality on the ground, is that the formal Messianic Jewish movement, is getting more geriatric, is contracting in size, and we hear far too many stories of how the children of many of the Messianic Jewish pioneers are living lives of sin and debauchery. That some new perspectives and alternative options are needed to remedy our circumstances, could not be stressed enough! *The Enemy is active everywhere.*

## Recapturing Our Ability to Attract More Jews

Most Messianic Jewish congregations or synagogues, while affiliated with some larger organization, largely operate as an independent entity. Perhaps the local Messianic congregation you attend or visit recognizes some of the same challenges that have presented themselves since the 1990s, and is rather innovative when it comes to the Messianic Jewish vision, and in welcoming in non-Jewish Believers who are genuinely called by God into the Messianic movement. Your leaders know that the white papers have not always done the best job. Your leaders know that non-Jewish Believers embracing things of Torah, as a genuine work of the Spirit, is a good thing and that it does not infringe on a Jewish Believer's identity. But still, if the Messianic movement is principally here to serve as a venue for Jewish outreach and evangelism: **How do we attract more Jews?**

As I have attended various Messianic conferences over the past six to eight years, very, very few want to address the question of how the Messianic movement can really attract more Jewish people. *We are attracting more non-Jewish people than Jewish people.* To be sure, there are some reasons which have been proposed. These include: "Once we have

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our new building, and stop meeting in a church, we are sure we will attract more Jews"; "We need to see a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as new signs and wonders will attract more Jews"; "We have been sending groups out into the Jewish community, but they only visit our congregation once or twice and don't come back." Obviously, each Messianic congregation or assembly has unique factors determined by geographical location and the makeup of the local Jewish community—but the most frequent answers I have encountered, at least, are not too substantial, and are avoiding the most obvious factor as to why the Messianic movement is not attracting as many Jewish people as it should.

*"Once we have our new building, and stop meeting in a church, we are sure we will attract more Jews"* is something that I have heard many congregational leaders state. For sure, there are various Jewish people who will not visit a Messianic congregation that meets in a Christian church facility. Then again, there are many Jewish people who have little to no difficulty visiting a Messianic congregation which meets at a church, an elementary school, a community center, a storefront, or even in someone's living room. In my local area, the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex, I know of a non-Messianic synagogue that meets in a Christian church. I have relatives whose Christian church actually met at a non-Messianic synagogue. Those who are searching for truth, will meet where the truth is to be found. Messianic congregations do not have to indefinitely wait for their building dreams to be realized, in order to attract more Jewish people to their *Shabbat* services or festival gatherings.

*"We need to see a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as new signs and wonders will attract more Jews"* is often based on Paul's observation of 1 Corinthians 1:22: "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom" (NASU). Since the Scriptures state that Jews ask for signs, more Jewish people will apparently come to today's Messianic congregations if we seek some new, fresh anointing or move of the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit and dramatic gifts do need to be present in Messianic congregations to be sure—such a view does not account for two millennia of Jewish history, and reads statements such as 1 Corinthians 1:22 as being universal for all times and places. When looking at the modern Jewish community, *wisdom and knowledge* are just as significant to be considered, as dynamic signs of the Holy Spirit are. Our congregational teaching has to take into consideration how a highly educated and socially engaged Jewish community, is going to expect a certain level of intellectual discussion about the Holy Scriptures, Israel and the contemporary Jewish situation, and the figure of Yeshua of Nazareth, among other things.

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*"We have been sending groups out into the Jewish community, but they only visit our congregation once or twice and don't come back."* For sure, every Messianic congregation or synagogue is different, and anybody who comes in to check things out, has a chance of never coming back. But in the case of Messianic Jewish congregations that have an expressed mission of reaching out to the Jewish community—why do some Jewish people visit, and not come back? It is possible that some Jewish people do not come back, because they feel outnumbered by various non-Jewish Believers in attendance. At the same time, this might not be the case at all, as there are many non-Jewish people attending non-Messianic, Conservative and Reform Jewish synagogues, and the intermarriage rate in the Jewish community is around fifty percent. More likely, even with a large number of Messianic Jewish people in a Messianic Jewish congregation, Jewish people who do not come back, might be of the mindset that culturally a particular Messianic Jewish congregation acts more like a Christian church, and not as much like a Jewish synagogue. While there might be Hebrew liturgy and music, the operational structure might be more like a church—and indeed, many of the non-Jewish members might still be, in error, calling their Messianic congregation a “church.”

While many people in today's Messianic movement have been unwilling to publicly acknowledge it, a great deal of our missiology in reaching out to Jewish people with the good news of Yeshua—is largely predicated on today's Messianic congregations reaching out to the Orthodox Jewish community. This is why a great number of the classes that today's Messianic congregations, or Messianic conference level events, are likely to hold on declaring the good news to the non-Messianic Jewish community—involve understanding a history of the Tanach and Messianic prophecy. Most of you, and even myself, have been trained to develop relationships with Jewish people, who are knowledgeable enough of the Tanach Scriptures, to be able to discuss prophecies that we believe speak of Yeshua of Nazareth. To be sure, this is all good and very important.

The challenge, though, is that the significant majority of the Jewish community, *your local Jewish community*, is not too likely to be Orthodox. Most of the local Jewish community is Jewish in culture only. The significant majority of the Jewish community of North America is Reform, meaning that Judaism is a culture or philosophy with good morals, good stories, important holidays, and great recipes. God does exist, and Jewish people believe that Judaism is the best way to God. Judaism has a

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responsibility to proclaim the “messiah,” as it were, by being socially involved in progressive causes.

*When was the last time any of us attended a Messianic congregation, or conference level event, where it was stressed that today’s Messianic people need to take the needs of progressive, Reform Jews into consideration when reaching out with the good news?* I suspect that you likely have not heard a Messianic congregational leader or rabbi say that we need to be more aware and conscious of the views and values of the Reform Jewish community. Yet, that is where the considerable bulk of today’s Messianic community has a mission field it has too frequently avoided.

As obvious as it may be, the way that today’s Messianic Jewish community is going to attract more Jews, **is that we have to be willing to discuss the issues that matter to Jews.** A deep seated ideology throughout not only much of the Jewish community—but even throughout a great deal of the Protestant community—is that the people of God should have *an open discussion*, on all sorts of matters. God gave us a brain and reason with which to consider things. Whether it is asking uncomfortable or inconvenient questions from a particular passage of Scripture, or seeking dialogue on various contemporary issues—if the Messianic movement has inherited any sort of Jewish theological heritage, then we should not fear an open discussion about various topics.

Unfortunately as has been demonstrated by the track record of releasing various white papers, much of the culture of today’s Messianic movement is not amenable to having an open discussion. If we cannot come to a resolution on the prophecy of Ezekiel 37:15-28, then how are we ever going to address some of the questions that not only progressive Jews, but even a few evangelical Protestants, might ask when visiting our congregational Torah studies? Some of the reasons why various Jewish people who attend today’s Messianic Jewish congregations once or twice, and then never come back, is that they encountered a fundamentalist Christian ideology controlling far too much of how things were done.

Consider how today’s Messianic movement has handled perspectives on Genesis 1-11. Has your local congregation or fellowship ever encouraged an open discussion, on all the different perspectives regarding cosmic and human origins? Probably not. If anything, there have probably been a few outspoken people who have conflated a hyper-literal reading of Genesis 1-11 with a person’s salvation status, who have guided too much of the discussion. *Anyone who might believe that the universe is billions of years old was told that they might not be saved. Those who think that human history is longer than 6,000 years were told that they don’t believe in the Bible.* Yet, most

## Our Messianic Future: Something Similar, Something Different

Jewish people who visit a Messianic congregation are going to believe that God used some form of evolution to bring about human beings. While no one is suggesting that today's Messianic movement has to affirm evolution, **if Messianic people make this into a salvation issue, much of our Jewish outreach has automatically evaporated.** One's perspective on Genesis 1-11 is a reliability of the Bible issue, not a salvation issue, and can be discussed and reviewed as a matter of discipleship, not made as a prerequisite for being redeemed. If we are unwilling to have to have an open discussion on Genesis 1-11 issues—and many others—where we learn about people's choices and evaluation of various data, and dialogue with them in a constructive and uplifting way, *then one's Messianic congregation will not be that able to attract that many Jews.*

Being able to be more relevant and responsive to the needs of the Jewish community, is not something impossible for today's Messianic movement—but it will be difficult the more fundamentalist and rigid a congregational environment is, when discussing contemporary matters. Some Messianic congregations and synagogues will be able to do this, but others will not be able to do this. How much of our current Messianic religious culture, is going to have to actually become *more Jewish*, in order to attract more Jews? I personally think that the fundamentalist Christian perspective that we too often encounter, needs to be jettisoned.

## Something Similar, Something Different

The biggest lesson that all of us should have learned from the past two years (2020-2021), is that **nothing ever stays the same.** *Change is inevitable.* The Messianic movement of the future will be different than the Messianic movement of today. Yet, this does not mean that there will not be continuity between the present Messianic movement and the Messianic movement of the future. There will be more similarities than differences.

By being prayed over by the leaders of the IAMCS, and formally ordained as a Messianic Teacher, I have had the blessing of some of the significant Messianic Jewish pioneers imparted to me. If, in the future, its formal apparatus were to disappear, it would be my job as an ordained teacher, to carry on the continuity of its legacy and mission. **The Messianic Jewish mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity is one in which I fully believe.** To be sure, this mission has to be robust enough to adapt and be relevant to the circumstances present in the Jewish community, and the world at large. This mission is something firmly based within the Scriptures, especially Romans chs. 9-11. I was recently granted

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the formal authority to be a representative of this mission, and I intend to see that my work as editor of Messianic Apologetics reflects this.

Many of the things that we already experience as a part of the Messianic movement will continue long into the future. Some congregations and assemblies will get that building that they have been saving up for. Others might find themselves compressed into small, even informal, home fellowships. The biggest change that I envision happening, is that many of the issues from modernity and post-modernity, that a great number of the Messianic Jewish pioneers put aside for another day, will no longer be able to be avoided. Issues involving the historicity of the Scriptures, the universe, men and women, etc., will have to be discussed. *They get discussed in most synagogues and churches, after all.* Honestly, the larger the Messianic group the more difficult it may be to see such matters talked about. In the future, I see more of the the Messianic experience being based around small groups and home fellowships. But I also see a major crash in religious faith also taking place, in conjunction with the emergence of more and more end-time events.

*For far too many people, the future is something ominous.* Many people do not like to mention it, much less talk about it. But as I have seen and experienced, not enough of today's Messianic leaders are considering the future. Will a majority of today's Messianic congregations and synagogues even exist in twenty years? I am only one of a few of the younger leaders out there, and I am not Jewish—an indication in itself that conventional ways of doing things are quickly going to be a luxury. I have my concerns, for sure. But I also want us to get through this current period of uncertainty, so we can at least return to the original Messianic mission. **I am going to make every effort I can to see that the Messianic mission survives.** It might have to adapt to new circumstances, for sure—but I am going to do everything I can to see that it survives...