

OIM UPDATE

September 2016

Our family's two-decade involvement with the Messianic community of faith has given us a unique perspective concerning the promise of the Holy One of Israel to "restore all things" (Acts 3:19-21), as the world prepares for the eventual return of Yeshua the Messiah to rule and reign over the world from Jerusalem, the Creator's chosen place where He has placed His name (Deuteronomy 12:5). Since Margaret, John, and I have been called to be part of a cross-examination teaching ministry—with three distinctive sets of spiritual gifts and experiential knowledge—we have the particular blessing of "triangulating" various teachings and issues when they arise in this emergent, end-time move of the Spirit. Providentially, the Lord has given us a broad array of interactions with many people, from many backgrounds, during our time in ministry—people who have been drawn worldwide into the Messianic movement in a similar manner as we were. However, as we witnessed that there was a sizable vacuum of teaching materials available, to aid in helping new people enter into the Messianic perspective and acclimate positively—we have dedicated our lives to research and produce materials on different Biblical topics that affect people in this unique sector of our common faith.

As the heat of August now relaxes, and the Fall fast approaches, a confluence of events—including our July attendance at the MJAA national conference, coupled this past month with a recently produced video now circulating via social media—have prompted me to write this month's lead article, "A Messianic Challenge." In my meditations on this latest input, an ancient prophecy attributed to Moses kept coming to my mind, as I reconsidered the incredible reality of *when*, in the Father's time, He will bring all of His people together—despite a number of the different relational challenges which currently exist between today's Jewish and non-Jewish followers of the Messiah:

"So it shall be **when** all of these things have come upon you, **the blessing and the curse** which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all

your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons” (Deuteronomy 30:1-2).

Of course, in this concluding prophecy from Moses, he was primarily addressing the post-Exodus generation, which had been raised during the desert journey of Ancient Israel, and was now overlooking the Jordan River in anticipation of its incursion into the Promised Land. This prophecy is notably preceded by an incredible truth, which Moses communicated to those gathered:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

When one discerns what the Father’s will is, for His followers and their children, *forever*—His revelation found in the Holy Scriptures should provide all the faithful with great comfort and confidence that the inevitable challenges of life can be overcome, because of His secrets revealed. However, implementing solutions can itself become a problem, because of basic human nature, and the adversaries of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Hopefully by casting some light on areas of disagreement, inextricably exploited by the unseen forces above, we can each mature in our understanding. We have certainly done our part to encourage those who have been presently called into the Messianic movement, to grow together in Him with mutual respect and love.

We certainly want to thank those of you who have provided to our ongoing **Technology Fund**. This past month, we were able to make some nominal purchases for a number of improvements to our office computer setup. These included some portable hard drives for backing up audio and video teachings, and making some behind the scenes improvements to our new Wordpress based websites. We still have some computer needs and wants that we need to see taken care of between now and the end of the year, including the purchase of at least one new desktop and one new notebook computer. Those of you who follow us on social media—but most especially who check our websites every day—will definitely see how these tools are being readily employed!

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

A MESSIANIC CHALLENGE

by Mark Huey

One of the most fascinating aspects of studying the Holy Bible happens to be the curious challenge to determine God's timeline for the ages. This is a conundrum which has befuddled many prophecy teachers, who often make efforts to concoct a plethora of errant, calculated guesses, with various apocalyptic hypotheses. Nevertheless, concealed hints or secret things (cf. Deuteronomy 29:29) on this great mystery are indeed hidden in the warp and woof of the ancient Scriptures. The great Prophet Isaiah issued some rather categorical words on the intents and plans of the Almighty, as one who received considerable revelation during his lifelong walk with the Holy One of Israel:

“Remember this, and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it. Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, who are far from righteousness. I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; and My salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion, and My glory for Israel” (Isaiah 46:8-13).

We see in Isaiah's exhortation how our Creator God knows “the end from the beginning, and from the start, things that had not occurred,” especially in how He says, “My plan shall be fulfilled; I will do all I have purposed” (Isaiah 46:10, NJPS). In other words, because the Holy One of Israel cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), He must fulfill all of His promises—but He will only do this on His terms and according to His judicious will for the created order. *And so, humanity in all its natural brilliance and worldly wisdom, continues to be bewildered.* People are finitely limited to fully comprehend much of what God allows to occur, but they cannot know everything, perceiving multiple dimensions of time and space. God's ways and thoughts are so beyond human comprehension, that even moment by moment events are misconstrued or misunderstood by human logic and worldly wisdom:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. **“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.** For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:8-11).

Despite human misinterpretations, Isaiah's words remind the Bible student that the decrees of the Holy One will absolutely accomplish what He desires, according to His purposes and will (Romans 8:28), and will not return void or empty to Him. Before addressing some of the current Messianic challenges, further insight presented to us in the Apostolic Scriptures should help clarify distinctions about the sources of wisdom we can access, and most especially why followers of the Messiah

must always seek Divine wisdom from above. In addition, appeals to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, who reveals and teaches faithful seekers all things (John 14:26), just might lead one to discern aspects of God's prophesied will to "restore all things" before the return of the Messiah to the Earth. As the Apostle Peter declared, following *Shavuot*/Pentecost,

"But the things which God **announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets**, that His Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Yeshua, the Messiah appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until **the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time**" (Acts 3:18-21).

First, let's turn to Yeshua's half-brother, James the Just, who in his epistle, issued encouragement to those facing various trials that tested their faith. James directs that one must ask God for wisdom, with the great expectation that He will generously and without reproach provide such wisdom, when one asks for it in faith without any doubting:

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that **the testing of your faith produces endurance**. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting**, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:2-8).

In James' words, he makes it abundantly clear that **genuine faith** in the Holy One of Israel is the critical component for endurance, and absolutely necessary to ask and receive God's wisdom. Further along in his letter, James returns to the subject of wisdom, with a broad comparison between wisdom from above, versus natural, demonic wisdom. Note the evidence of the two types of wisdom by how people behave and/or interact with one another:

"Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in **the gentleness of wisdom**. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. **This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic**. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:13-18).

Here in specific terms are those with godly wisdom, who display good, gentle behavior and make righteous peace among others. On the other hand, those with Earthly, natural, and demonic wisdom are characterized by their bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. The contrast between the diametrically opposed "wisdoms" is evident to anyone paying attention! Hence, when it comes to resolving issues or valuing other opinions which typically arise among Believers—who are **all** "looking through a mirror dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12)—it is imperative to recognize when mutual respect and love are the motivating forces in discussions and relations. But, when arrogance, distrust, strife, and divisiveness are perceptibly noticeable in peo-

ple—and there is a lack of inherent peace or *shalom* during interactions—there is every reason to conclude that certain individuals are relying upon human wisdom, or worse, wisdom from below. If turmoil or confusion is evident during various dealings, caution is advised until everyone involved is instead, as Ephesians 4:2-3 directs, demonstrating “all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

The Apostle Paul has also given Messiah followers some informative advice, comparing wisdom with foolishness. In Paul’s Corinthian correspondence—in dealing with an audience that was bereft with problems, and was not focused on the ways of the Lord as it should have been—he summarizes some of the distinctions of godly versus worldly wisdom. In his writing, Paul makes a distinct appeal to Isaiah 29:14, “Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed,” before declaring the futility of human wisdom and cleverness:

“For it is written, ‘I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE’ [Isaiah 29:14]. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. **For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;** but we preach Messiah crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Messiah the power of God and the wisdom of God. **Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.** For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. **But by His doing you are in Messiah Yeshua, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, ‘LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD’ [Jeremiah 9:24].”** (1 Corinthians 1:19-31).

Paul describes the futility of human wisdom to be able to fully know or understand God. God is witnessed to confound humanity, via the irrational execution of the Messiah—because the Messiah who was supposed to triumph over mortal enemies, is instead brutally murdered, to atone for sin. From a logical human perspective, this made absolutely no sense to either Paul’s Jewish contemporaries or philosophically-minded Greeks. These two distinct, First Century people groups, were both challenged by the “stumbling block” represented in Yeshua’s sacrifice. But through it all, just like Isaiah was trying to impact his generation by pointing out the hypocrisy of lips flapping about God, when their hardened hearts were far from Him (Isaiah 29:13), Paul makes it crystal clear how one may boast before God because of self-perceived wisdom and cleverness. Thus, humility and mutual respect for others must be a hallmark of those who are seeking to work through Messianic challenges, as all things are in the process of being restored at this point in time.

There is another critical component witnessed in Paul's words to the Corinthians, which must be considered when people from different spiritual perspectives, family and cultural environments, and life experiences, come together to address inevitable challenges which are to be expected in the emerging Messianic community of faith. The distinction between what is taught by human wisdom, versus what is taught by the Holy Spirit, is like night and day. But in order to understand what the Spirit is teaching or revealing, a person must be born from above and be spiritually appraised. Contrarily, the natural self, or the human being in an unregenerated spiritual condition, cannot even comprehend what the Spirit is communicating:

"For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM [Isaiah 40:13, LXX]? But we have the mind of Messiah" (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

If two people are attempting to communicate—and one is speaking spiritual truths that the Spirit affirms, and the other person does not have the indwelling interpretive assistance of the Holy Spirit—they are literally communicating on different wavelengths. Even though these people might both be speaking or listening with the same theological terms, concepts, and language—if one is a "natural" person, then without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the ability to fully comprehend one another is impeded, if not impossible. This is why it is imperative that those involved in challenge resolution be mature Believers in the Messiah, especially so that the mind of the Messiah has had sufficient time to become the predominant thought and reasoning process utilized.

Finally, there is one more lamentable reality that must be recognized by all who seek to overcome Messianic challenges in the here and now. Every person is a descendant of various progenitors, from whom good (blessings) and bad (curses) generational influences are received. When one simply reviews the Ten Commandments, it is notable from the onset, that because our Creator God is a jealous God, that the iniquities of one's ancestors, who hated God, negatively impact their descendants. The opposite is also true, as those who love God and keep His commandments, will impart generational blessings to their descendants:

"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:5-6).

If each of us considers the actions of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents—there are perhaps some residual curses and/or blessings, that we may have inherited from our physical predecessors. While we may not have any idea who they may or may not be, it is crucial by faith to confess our own sin, and recog-

nize some of the (significant) errors made by those who preceded us, so that they not affect us any longer (Leviticus 26:40). In so doing, I believe one can literally clean the slate before a holy and just Heavenly Father, knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt, that “**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**” (1 John 1:9). If, when confronted with some of the sinful actions of our ancestors—we do nothing about it—then will the Accuser have “legal grounds” to condemn us before the Holy One? I would submit that when confessing our own sin and the sin of our ancestors, we are then free to not just receive God’s lovingkindness, grace, mercy, and love, **but fully experience them**. And when experiencing God’s grace, we are to truly treat others differently, employing the mind of Messiah with a sensitive circumcised heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

When contemplating the state of today’s Messianic community of faith, it is important that we consider the ramifications of Moses’ prophecy. The following word outlines the restoration of Israel (Deuteronomy 30:1-9), and details the spiritual reality of how there will be a conscious recognition of different blessings and curses incurred from past activities:

“So it shall be **when** all of these things have come upon you, **the blessing and the curse** which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons” (Deuteronomy 30:1-2).

Are we living in a time *when* today’s followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—people who have faith in the shed blood of Yeshua the Messiah—should be in confession and repentance for personal and generational curses? Certainly, the blessings to know and serve the Holy One of Israel are wonderful. But I would submit that each of us should conduct some serious self-examination (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:28-32) regarding personal faith (2 Corinthian 13:5), and a more scrupulous testing of the spirits (1 John 4:1-3), if we each seek an intimate walk with the Messiah. Perhaps if we were admonished more frequently to test ourselves, and evaluate where we stand before the Holy One of Israel, many of the divisive challenges we face would be mitigated, if not eliminated?

When people are called today, especially in ministry, to deal with the inevitable challenges of restoring God’s people to unity in the Messiah, they should have the following criteria as an integral part of who they truly are in Yeshua. This includes: Scriptural and historical knowledge, spiritual perception from a true born again experience, wisdom from above, the mind of Messiah, and a righteousness derived from acknowledgement, confession, and repentance of personal and/or inherited familial iniquities. If a person does not possess these basic attributes derived from maturation in their respective walk with the Messiah, do they have the potential to do more harm than benefit, as the Holy One exercises His will to restore all things?

A principal Messianic challenge, which in many regards is repeated across the Messianic movement today, involves evaluating the ancient circumstances debated and substantially resolved by the Jerusalem leaders who convened the Apostolic conference recorded in Acts 15. The Jewish Apostles and leaders of the *ekklēsia* came together to answer the question of whether or not the new, non-Jewish Believers, coming to faith, had to be circumcised as proselytes and to be ordered to

keep the Torah to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). It was recognized that the various Greek and Roman Believers were coming to faith and receiving the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, being transformed and born from above the same as the Jewish Believers (Acts 15:11). After some considerable discussion and debate, the main leader of the Jewish Believers in Jerusalem, James the Just, recognized that the salvation of the nations was taking place in conjunction with Tanach prophecy. The Apostolic decree mandated immediate change in four vital areas, which if not rectified would have caused the non-Jewish Believers to come into considerable conflict with the Jewish Believers:

“After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, ‘Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, “AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,” SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO [Amos 9:11-12, LXX]. Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:13-21).

The salvation, of people from the nations, was taking place in conjunction with the restoration of the Tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11-12) and other Tanach prophecies. When observed, the stipulations of the Apostolic decree, for certain, would allow for fellowship between the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers to be less stressful and strained—as only the four requirements were to be perceived as any kind of “burden” (Acts 15:28) placed upon the new disciples. It can be fairly observed that *when the four stipulations were required* (and there is no evidence from the Apostolic Writings that they were always followed), that the new, non-Jewish Believers would be cut off from their old spheres of religious and social influence. This would make their new sphere of religious and social influence one where the One True God of Israel was recognized, and Moses’ Teaching was being declared every week (Acts 15:21).

In due time, it is seen in the Apostolic Writings that various assemblies and fellowships would emerge throughout the Mediterranean basin, which were composed of Jewish, Greek and Roman Believers who confessed Yeshua to be the Messiah of Israel. In his writing to Believers in Asia Minor, the Apostle Paul decreed that non-Jewish Believers had not only come near as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, but that a wall of separation between the Jewish people and the nations had been brought down by the Messiah’s work:

“Therefore remember, that once you, the nations in the flesh—who are called ‘Foreskin’ by the ones called ‘Circumcision,’ *which is* in the flesh, made by hands—**remember that you were at that time separate from Messiah, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who were once far off, have been brought near in the blood of Messiah. For He is our peace, who made both groups one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having**

abolished in His flesh the enmity, the *religious* Law of commandments in dogmas, that He might create in Himself the two into one new humanity, so making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the enmity by it" (Ephesians 2:11-16, PME).

Despite this spiritual reality, that Jewish people and those from the nations could fellowship in harmony and mutual respect, because of the peace established by the Messiah—it seems most probable that some residual animosity remained in the assemblies, primarily because the iniquities of the forefathers were not being confessed. Couple this with unsaved false teachers, possessing great jealousy and selfish ambition in their hearts, sowing seeds of discord in the various camps. The Accuser of the brethren would then be able to utilize many spiritual recourses against the First Century Believers—to bring envy, division, and strife, in order to stall or stymie the advance of the good news among the Jewish people and the nations. Various ethnic and cultural differences between Jews, Greeks, and Romans definitely inflamed the intensity of various issues faced by the First Century Believers. Memory of the abuses inflicted upon the Jewish people by the Seleucid Greeks, during the Maccabean crisis of the Second Century B.C.E., was something which definitely affected many of the Jewish people of the First Century C.E., and whether or not they could trust those of the nations. The polytheism and sexual immorality, doubtlessly once practiced by many of the First Century Greek and Roman Believers, certainly affected their judgment on many life issues, when confronted with the morality of Israel's Scriptures! Some of them could just never fully leave the pagan temple or brothel (cf. 1 Corinthians 8, 10).

As one peers back upon the early centuries of the nascent struggles experienced by those who first recognized Israel's Messiah (First-Fourth Centuries C.E.), there are various parallels witnessed as the restoration of all things proceeds today in the Twenty-First Century. With the expanding growth of the Messianic Jewish movement over the past century, and in particular, since the 1960s and 1970s—many questions have abounded from Messianic Jewish leaders about what to do with the non-Jewish Believers, who have been drawn into their assemblies. The challenges presented today are not ancient hatred of the Jewish people, one issued from different Greek and Roman oppressors. The challenges present today tend to involve many non-Jewish Believers possessing very little, if any understanding, of Jewish history and the Jewish struggle over the past two millennia—and especially of the abuse, discrimination, persecution, and near-annihilation of the Jews, as inflicted by various "Christian" European powers.

Those who are particularly unaware of some of the recent Jewish struggle in history, are Christian people not just from North America, but many of whose ancestors migrated to North America centuries ago, especially before the American Revolution. Many of us, reared in evangelical Protestantism, do not have extensive knowledge of the European anti-Semitism of the past few centuries, manifesting itself significantly in the pogroms of the Russian Empire, and then the rise of Nazism and abomination of the Holocaust. *Many of us, with long family histories in the Western Hemisphere, are far removed from these realities.* Certainly, people can and do read and study about crimes committed against the Jewish people. But, witnessing the direct impact upon people is something different. There is a real disconnect by most North American, non-Jewish Christians, whose empathy for the Jewish trials and tribulations in recent years is minimal. At best, many only tend to have a

cursory knowledge gleaned from movies, documentaries, or books. Those who have good Jewish friends, who share their families' past experiences with others, will have a better handle on being able to empathize with the Jewish struggle in history.

Today, many of the Jewish Believers instrumental in the emergence of the modern Messianic Jewish movement over the past century, particularly in North America, are only second or third generation Americans. Unlike a wide number of evangelical Protestants, whose ancestors expressed a belief in Israel's Messiah, possibly including various Christian ministers who accomplished specific work for the good news during their lifetimes—a considerable number of today's Messianic Jews and Messianic Jewish leaders are **the first Believers ever** in their family's history. Many of them have understandable difficulties, when looking at much of recent Christian history, and being able to appreciate some of the work of the Lord performed through non-Jewish Believers—precisely because their family's experience with European Christianity, mainly Roman Catholicism, has not been too positive. Certainly, if the history of your people has been marked by periods of persecution and oppression, involving but not limited to, the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Russians, Germans, and others, **then you would understandably be not too trusting of non-Jews.** While our own family of Hueys, Jeffries, and McKees has been in America for a minimum of two-and-a-half centuries—and we were not perpetrators of the pogroms in Russia or Hitler's Holocaust—we have to recognize that it takes time for our Jewish friends, and even Messianic Jewish friends, to get to know and trust us. However, while we as a family have expended the efforts of trying to put ourselves into the mindset of the Jewish friends and acquaintances the Lord has placed across our path—knowing about their history and experiences—not every non-Jewish person in today's Messianic movement makes the point of doing this, and problems do result from it.

Although many challenges exist for the Messianic movement, every person drawn into this community of faith should first come to the realization that the Holy One of Israel is the active Agent, working through various Jewish and non-Jewish people, to accomplish the eventual **“restoration of all things.”** Once this reality is more fully embraced, and people submit their personal wills and agendas to the work of the Holy Spirit, then the process *will continue and accelerate.* No matter where on the spectrum today's Jewish Believers and non-Jewish Believers come from, or what their family history might be, each of us does need to confess various sins from our individual and familial past. There should be a concerted effort to understand that there have been past offenses committed, which need to be rectified in the present, if we intend to make progress for the Kingdom of God in the future. Sensitivity to the influences, whether good or evil, from education, religion, tradition, various social and cultural values, and any number of other life events, can help immeasurably when it comes to facilitating mutual respect, love, and acceptance among brothers and sisters. It will benefit every Believer in Israel's Messiah to better understand where his or her fellow brother or sister has come from, as we anticipate His return and the consummation of His Kingdom. No better approach to achieve unity is perhaps seen, when we can take direction from the ultimate example of Yeshua Himself:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty deceit, but in humility of mind consider one another better than himself, each of you not *only* looking out for his own interests, but each of you also for the interests of others. Have this mind

among yourselves, which was also in Messiah Yeshua, who, existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, He **humbled Himself**, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW [Isaiah 45:23], in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth, and every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is working in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring or disputing**" (Philippians 2:3-14, PME).

Now since every follower of the Messiah is ostensibly being conformed into His image (Romans 8:29), should we not follow Yeshua's example, and do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important, as we look out for their interests rather than our own? *Should we not be working out our personal salvation with fear and trembling?* So, why does there persist so much grumbling and disputing among many of those being drawn into the Messianic movement? Why are there various Messianic Jewish leaders, who have challenges when God draws various non-Jewish Believers to their assemblies? Why are there various non-Jewish Believers who, in their quest to live more like the Messiah in obedience to the Torah, do not demonstrate a fair degree of respect to mainline Jewish traditions and customs—and rather than seeking education about such things, criticize them out of ignorance? In our family's and ministry's experience, we have witnessed a tremendous amount of grumbling and complaining. Is it not finally time to stop this childishness, grow up, and face the challenges of restoration like mature Believers in the Messiah (1 Corinthians 13:11)?

As I have suggested, there are historical and generational issues which need to be recognized and addressed, in order for meaningful and substantial progress to take place in the future. From our family's over twenty years of participation in the Messianic movement, we have seen substantial improvement made among many these past few years. *We are encouraged*, even though there is much work still awaiting us. I would suggest that there is a precedent that wiser, more mature followers of the Messiah, to consider, as noted in this passage found in the Book of Acts, when the Sanhedrin was challenging the Peter's claims about Yeshua being the Messiah of Israel:

"When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men. **The God of our fathers raised up Yeshua, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.**' But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. **But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders**

to put the men outside for a short time. And he said to them, 'Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away *some* people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.' They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Yeshua, and *then* released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Yeshua as the Messiah" (Acts 5:27-42).

Here, one sees the highly respected Torah teacher and Pharisee, Gamaliel, concluding that despite some previous attempts by various instigators to seek a following, that if Yeshua was the Messiah Peter was claiming Him to be, then any effort to stop His disciples would be like fighting against God. Thankfully, after a flogging and some continued persecution, the faith of these first followers in Yeshua was so strong, that God's promise to take the good news to the nations was fulfilled. After all, Gamaliel and his peers on the Council were ardent students of the Torah and the Prophets. If nothing else, they each had, at the very least, a working knowledge of what Isaiah summarized when he stated that Israel was God's vessel to be a light to the nations, in order that His salvation would reach the end of the Earth. They did not understand exactly how that was going to be accomplished, but with some additional caveats, it was definitely connected to the "restoration of all things" which ultimately must also be fulfilled:

"And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and My God is My strength), He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.' Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel *and* its Holy One, to the despised One, to the One abhorred by the nation, to the Servant of rulers, 'Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down, because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.' Thus says the LORD, 'In a favorable time I have answered You, and in a day of salvation I have helped You; and I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make *them* inherit the desolate heritages'" (Isaiah 49:5-8).

This prophecy has surely been in-process since the First Century, with the spread of the good news of Israel's God and Messiah among the nations, and even with the restoration of the State of Israel since 1948. We believe that the Messianic community is a definite facilitator of this prophecy, via its concentrated efforts of Jewish evangelism. For nearly two thousand years, this plan of the ages has been moving along at the Father's will and His timing. Now for those with the eyes to see and the ears to hear what the Spirit of the Most High is doing in the Messianic movement in the present hour, the challenges are evident. Questions abound as to

whether this present generation *or* another generation, will be able to overcome jealousy, selfish ambition, and envy. Will we be a part of the solution, rather than further complicate the challenge? Considering what we can achieve in the future before us will require a great deal of humility, the ability to consider others' interests, and to make a great deal of self-sacrifice of labor for the Kingdom.

Unfortunately, sorting through much of possible end-time fulfillment, of what has been recorded in the Holy Scriptures, has almost become a parlor game, with ear-tickling speculations (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 3:9)—which tend to do nothing more than promote hype, and sell many CDs, DVDs, and books. But if the world is indeed steadily approaching the time known as Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), then it is possible that the generation of people, who will have a testimony of Yeshua and obey His commandments (Revelation 12:17; 14:12), are beginning to coalesce around the globe in a variety of Messianic assemblies and fellowships. However, because of some of the challenges which can persist among limited mortals, the unity of Spirit (Ephesians 4:3) desired by the Holy One of Israel has not yet fully materialized. Hopefully, our Messianic faith community will not have to wait until the crises of the future Tribulation period, to learn how to work together to advance the work of God's Kingdom.

Regardless of where we presently find ourselves on God's timeline for the ages, and the Messianic challenges that exist—we each have a **personal challenge** because the number of our days is known only by our Creator. Each one of us must work out his or her personal salvation with fear and trembling—daily—with a heartfelt desire to be and help others be a part of the solution to the Messianic restoration challenge. In so doing, the closing words attributed to Moses in Psalm 90 make perfect sense:

“So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. Do return, O LORD; how long *will it be?* And be sorry for Your servants. O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, *and* the years we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:12-17).

May we all have a heart of wisdom to number our days, and use each day to serve the Holy One of Israel with the great expectation! At the end of our days, may He affirm the work of our hands!

Today, let each of us diligently seek to advance God's Kingdom, by overcoming the Messianic challenges, until the Messianic restoration of all things...

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor” (Romans 12:9-10).

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS UPDATE

September 2016

Dear Friends:

The bulk of my attention this past month has been in processing how I wish to proceed forward in our ministry's new social media strategy. Our new Wordpress based websites give us a huge amount of



technical capability that we did not previously possess. The importance of online outreach via tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube must be taken advantage of, for as much and as long as such tools can be readily employed!

Few realize this, but I have written so much in the past twelve years—articles, FAQ entries, books, commentaries—that if all of this were to be recorded into an audio and/or video format, that it would indeed take multiple years. Yet, employing audio and visual media has not been something that I have done too much, until the past year. As I have gotten more and more comfortable with using YouTube—especially in terms of the video quality and in editing my broadcasts—I have posted all of my audio Bible studies to YouTube. Now, there is seldom a weekday which goes by, when something is not posted to the Messianic Apologetics YouTube channel—be it video or audio! In time, a long term goal of mine is that just about every written teaching I have on my website, will have an equivalent video or audio podcast to go along with it—*all free at the point of need!* This month, I am retooling a number of things behind the scenes, and will likely not resume the Wednesday Night Bible Study on 2 Corinthians until October.

Why do I believe it is important to always be producing like this? ***We do not know when we are in history.*** We know that we are getting closer to the return of the Messiah, and that today's emerging and still-maturing Messianic movement is about to explode in directions that its original Messianic Jewish founders could not have conceived of in the 1960s and 1970s. We also instinctively know that there are too many issues that we have avoided addressing for far to long.

Already on social media, the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement bears the signs of it being ten to fifteen times the size of Messianic Judaism. While God is surely moving on many people to connect to their Hebraic Roots in the Tanach, and to identify with Israel in various ways—how we counter some of the sensationalism and hype, is not easy. I am going to do my best to make my contribution, with the tools and resources at my disposal.

Until next month...

J.K. McKee