

A photograph of an olive grove with a stone path leading through the trees. The trees are lush green, and the ground is dry and rocky.

OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



MARCH 2023

A SPIRITUAL and
THEOLOGICAL REFITTING

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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts

All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the Believers after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

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OLM UPDATE

March 2023

J.K. McKee

This past February 2023, I saw that the Royal Caribbean cruise liner *Mariner of the Seas*, had left her home of Port Canaveral, FL, to spend several months in drydock in Cadiz, Spain for a refitting. What made this important for me, is that when our

ministry attended the Messianic Leadership Roundtable in October 2019, the conference was held on *Mariner of the Seas*. 2019 was not an easy year for our family or ministry, as it involved: our unexpected move from North Dallas to McKinney, TX, the death of my grandmother Mary Ruth Jeffries (and the end of a family era), and most especially significant spiritual remodeling and a ministry reboot. I do not tend to talk about some of the difficulties which I personally went through in 2019, but suffice it to say, and as I have gotten older, I have considered leaving the Messianic community a few distinct times. *Thankfully, I did emerge from 2019 a much stronger Believer, and more committed to my ministry calling and vocation.*

It is hard for me to believe it, but it was ten years ago that our family had relocated from Central Florida to North Texas, and we had begun to scout out the landscape of the Messianic Jewish community here. Certainly as I have testified in various teachings and podcasts, opportunities and doors have been opened to us from 2013-2023, which only God Himself could have done! Yet at the same time, as I am looking back on what I have been involved with and what has transpired—I also have to look at the wider Messianic sphere of influence, and what has changed. How have we developed spiritually? Have we matured theologically? How ready are we to go deeper with the Lord, and to dig into the details of His Word?

One of the main reasons why our family and ministry relocated to North Texas, over ten years ago, was precisely so that we could be within a larger community of Messianic options. With this, was our family's sincere hope that we would be able to interact with more Messianic leaders, who would not be as influenced by some of the fundamentalism which we had been more likely to encounter during our time in Central Florida (2000-2012). This became especially piqued in the years after I finished my studies at Asbury

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Theological Seminary (2005-2009)—as I concluded that *the significant challenge* Messianic people would need to overcome, would be our (over-) simplistic thinking and our disengaged approach to the issues of the day. Now that I have been out here in Texas for a full decade, and have been fully reengaged with the Messianic Jewish community, what is my diagnosis? To be perfectly candid with you: I believe that the Messianic movement is still *insufficiently behind* in too many areas.

And to also be perfectly candid with you: in the past decade, our ministry could have done more. When certain topics of significance arose, I did not always speak up, out of a fear of being misunderstood. When certain discussions turned into debates, rather than differentiating myself from this teacher or that voice, I instead simply hoped that people would be able to note that our perspective as a ministry was different. But as I have learned sufficiently over the past two to three years, especially given the different worldwide issues which have beset all of us, **we do not have the luxury to put difficult discussions off to the side any more.** We have to, as best as we can, be able to fairly talk through things and make adjustments where appropriate.

But, as I have gone through a few things which I have had to modify or recalibrate—I have hardly gone through some kind of a massive theological overhaul. **I have most certainly not gone through any kind of “deconstruction,” as the progressives are calling it.** What I have been going through is my own *spiritual and theological refitting*. When *Mariner of the Seas* spends the next few months in Cadiz, she will not only be subject to various repairs, but she will also be upgraded with new systems and conveniences for her passengers. In a similar way, I am going to be spending the coming months and years, making a few modifications here and there to a few theological matters—and in the process I hope to also prepare all of us to better handle some of the new controversies which will be facing the Body of Messiah. These are controversies which too many of us, ourselves included, have been fearful of talking about, far too often.

How can new experiences change our perspective?

Is it at all possible for someone to have some new experiences, which may change their perspective or approach to a theological issue? *Any one of us who answers no to this, would be lying to ourselves.* Frequently, the experiences we have of encountering a passage of Scripture, an impression we receive during prayer, hearing a message preached, meeting a new person, or even reading a book or article—will be used to change our perspective on a matter. Also not to be overlooked, is witnessing the negative fruit of a particular perspective or issue, and fail to be sufficiently resolved.

Many of us in our reading of the Bible tend to be impressed by the example of the Bereans. They were Jewish people who investigated Paul's claims of Yeshua as Messiah from the Tanach Scriptures. They are upheld as examples all of us should emulate, when we encounter various matters of importance:

"As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. Upon arrival, they made their way to the Jewish synagogue. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, because they received the message with goodwill, searching the Scriptures each day to see whether these things were true. Therefore many of them believed, as well as quite a few prominent Greek women and men" (Acts 17:10-12, TLV).

There should be little doubt in our minds that for the Berean Believers, the one experience which changed their lives for eternity, was encountering Paul and Silas. They were given information about Yeshua of Nazareth, which they had to then confirm from the Tanach. Their lives were forever altered.

In the past decade (2013-2023), as I have become reintegrated into the Messianic Jewish movement, I have had a number of experiences which I did not have during my first decade of Messianic ministry (2003-2012). This mainly includes getting to know some of the major Messianic Jewish pioneers and leaders not just on a professional basis, but also as friends. I have learned a great deal firsthand about the challenges in seeing the modern Messianic Jewish movement birthed in the late 1960s and 1970s, the obstacles which needed to be overcome, and some of the vision which these pioneers had regarding the future. Being accepted within the Messianic Jewish community, personally and professionally, and being ordained as a Messianic Teacher last year, has only been something which the Lord Himself could orchestrate.

More significantly for sure, over the past ten years, have been the local congregational experiences we have had at Eitz Chaim. My stepfather Mark Huey has served as an elder since 2015, and I have taught the New Member's Class since 2016. This gives our family a perspective of how a Messianic Jewish congregation is often run, not just in terms of the Messianic mission of Jewish outreach and evangelism—but also seeing non-Jewish Believers, whom God has called, be welcome and active participants in the assembly as well. For my own self, my closest friends at the congregation are all Messianic Jewish Believers. I have expelled significant efforts to make sure that various questions and concerns which I have, particularly involving non-Jewish Believers partaking of things of Torah, can be worked through. I have not encountered any of my Messianic Jewish friends, locally, at all of-

fended or threatened by my family remembering *Shabbat*, the appointed times, or eating a kosher-style of diet. **What they are most concerned about is the salvation of their extended family.** How can we, as non-Jewish Believers, co-labor with them to see their non-believing Jewish family come to faith in Israel's Messiah?

Unlike some of the rhetoric and posturing which many of you may encounter on the Internet and social media, a significant number of today's Messianic Jewish people are not opposed to non-Jewish Believers partaking of their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures. This includes them participating in *Shabbat*, the appointed times, and eating a kosher-style of diet. Many I know are actually mature enough as human beings, to know that their Jewish identity is not being threatened or erased. (If that were the case, then a denomination like the Sabbatarian Seventh-Day Adventist Church would be a mortal danger to the Jewish community, as there are more SDAs on Planet Earth today than there are Jews—21 million compared to 18 million.) But, as I have stated many times in numerous teachings, **how does participation in outward matters of Torah translate into participation in the Messianic mission?** For my own self, I have had to ask the Lord over the past several years, what modifications or alterations might I need to make, in order to be better equipped to facilitate the future which is coming?

What (nominal) changes have I had to make?

Many of you who have followed our ministry over the past few years—and certainly those of you who have followed me daily on social media and my podcasts—are aware that I have had to recently be more public about a few tweaks here and there to my theology. Each of us, over the past decade or so, has had to not only factor in new theological data and perspectives, but also new experiences. We have also seen other people and ministries, within the Messianic sphere of influence, go through their own changes: some positive and others negative. Believe it or not, as I have catalogued these four changes, they are actually not as big or significant as I thought they would be. Yet, I do know that if I did not make the point of listing them, a number of you would not be aware of how these modifications are being integrated into our teachings. *I have always followed an ideology of focusing on common faith and what we agree on first*, hoping that people would just pick up on any differences of approach we might have with others.

So what are some of the (nominal) changes I have had to make?

1. A clarification on circumcision

Circumcision is the memorial sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:9-13), and specified to be practiced by infant male descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on the eighth day after birth (Leviticus 12:2-3).

Circumcision in much of Second Temple Judaism was a practice which had been prohibited during the Maccabean crisis on threat of death (1 Maccabees 1:48-49, 60-61; 2 Maccabees 6:10), and which was employed as the main rite of a non-Jew becoming a formal convert or proselyte to Judaism (b.*Keritot* 9a). Various hyper-conservative Jewish Believers of the First Century were seen to require circumcision, i.e., the formal ritual of a proselyte, for the new Greek and Roman Believers to be truly included in the people of God and/or granted salvation (cf. Acts 15:1, 5). This is something which the Apostles decreed was not necessary, as salvation and inclusion among God's people comes by faith in God, and His Messiah.

Circumcision in modern times is a widespread medical practice, particularly seen throughout North America, and is often believed to have significant health benefits. Past controversies witnessed in the Apostolic Scriptures, such as circumcision being necessary for true inclusion in the people of God and/or salvation, are not witnessed in today's Messianic community.

Non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic movement, who are not ethnic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, do not have an expectation from the Torah to circumcise their infant males on the eighth day (Genesis 17:9-13; Leviticus 12:3) as *b'rit milah*. Yet, such non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic movement, particularly in a place such as North America, should hardly be discouraged to circumcise their infant males as a worthwhile medical practice with hygienic benefits. Such a hospital or clinical circumcision may, but frequently may not, be scheduled on the eighth day after birth. Non-Jewish couples who have a male infant child medically circumcised, may be seen to honor the spirit of the Torah commandment, even though it has not been specifically enjoined upon them in the Torah.

(For a further discussion, consult the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, "[Circumcision.](#)")

2. Acts 15:21 to 15:15 significance

Looking back on many of the theological discussions and debates that I have witnessed in all of my time in the Messianic movement, it is fair to say that a verse like Acts 15:21 has been quoted and (over-)analyzed, at the expense of some other statements which bear much greater importance. It is legitimately recognized that the new, non-Jewish Believers coming to faith in the First Century, did not need to be ordered to be circumcised as Jewish proselytes, and keep the Torah, to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). The Apostle Peter

made it clear that Jewish and non-Jewish Believers were saved equally by the grace of the Lord Yeshua (Acts 15:11), and that no yoke of legalism was to be placed onto anyone (Acts 15:10). Continuing, James the Just, half-brother of Yeshua and leader of the Jerusalem assembly, issued “no greater burden than the following essentials” (Acts 15:28, NASU), those prohibitions being “things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood” (Acts 15:20, NASU).

An organic reading of Acts 15:19-21 recognizes that when the four prohibitions were actually followed, that the new Greek and Roman Believers would be effectively cut off from their spheres of social and religious influence: the temple/shrine, the brothel, and the butcher shop. This would practically result in their new sphere of social and religious influence being a community where the One God of Israel was acknowledged, and Moses’ Teaching was read every *Shabbat*. There is no evidence from the Book of Acts or Pauline letters, however, that the four prohibitions of the Apostolic Decree were always followed (simply consider the complicated circumstances in 1 Corinthians). And it is also true that in many cases, when the good news hit a Jewish synagogue (such as in a place like Corinth), that rather than changing into a Messianic synagogue, that the new Jewish Believers *and* non-Jewish Believers would find themselves ejected from it.

Far too many of us have failed to more consciously grasp hold of how Acts 15:21 is a temporal verse to the 40s-50s C.E. Far too many of us also need to recognize how we may have been caught up in some underdeveloped theological discussions, caused by the dogmatism of others, which placed more significance on Acts 15:21 than was appropriate.

It is astounding to me, how frequently the most important verse of the entire Jerusalem Council is just glossed over—and perhaps it has taken a decade of Acts 15:21 being overly quoted over and over again, particularly in Internet memes—for me to finally realize how important it is that we all shift the Acts 15 debate. **The most important verse of Acts 15 is Acts 15:15:** “The words of the Prophets agree.” The specific prophecy referenced in Acts 15:15-18 is Amos 9:11-12, but with “words” and “Prophets” in the plural, it hardly means that this was the only Tanach prophecy which could have been in the mind of James. Indeed, many commentators on the Book of Acts have proposed various other Tanach prophecies, not specifically quoted by James in Acts 15:15-18, as being among “the words of the Prophets” (Acts 15:15). These may include: Isaiah 2:2; 45:20-23; Jeremiah 12:15-16; Zechariah 8:22.

We have not given enough collective attention to Acts 15:15 and its reference to “the words of the Prophets” in many of our delibera-

tions over the Jerusalem Council and Acts 15. Acts 15:15 has long term significance, whereas anything one may conclude from Acts 15:21, had a short term effect on the Believers in the 40s-50s C.E. Rather than see the new non-Jewish Believers ordered to keep the Torah to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5), James instead stressed that the organic fulfillment of Tanach prophecy should be allowed to take place. There were four matters where there could be no forbearance or tolerance on the part of the Jewish Believers (Acts 15:20, 29), but everything else could be left open-ended, as they participated in God's sovereign, prophetic plan for Israel and the nations.

What Acts 15:15 means, with its stress on "the words of the Prophets," should be where all of us refocus our attention on the deliberations of the Jerusalem Council, and the participation of non-Jewish Believers in the restoration of Israel.

(A further discussion should soon be available, with the upcoming Messianic Apologetics FAQ, "**Acts 15:21, Ongoing Controversies.**")

3. A formal breaking with One Law

Much of the One Law/One Torah sub-movement's ideology is focused around a number of Torah passages which stress either "one law" or "one statute" to be followed by those within the community of Ancient Israel (i.e., Exodus 12:48-49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16). A statement such as "There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 24:22, NASU), would be applied by proponents of a One Law/One Torah theology as a universal statement for all in the community of Ancient Israel following the same basic Torah law. As passages which use terminology such as "one law" or "one statute" are examined for what they mean within Torah jurisprudence—are such remarks involving "one law" or "one statute" statements of universal Torah adherence, or principally statements regarding the legislation immediately detailed? This kind of attention to detail has not been frequently demonstrated by supporters of a One Law/One Torah theology.

Leviticus 24:22, for example, is immediately preceded by how natives and sojourners, equally within Ancient Israel, were to be stoned to death for blasphemy: "Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death" (Leviticus 24:16, NASU). When an act of blasphemy was committed within Ancient Israel, by either a native or a sojourner, the uniform penalty of capital punishment was to be enacted ("one standard"). It was not as though a native born could be issued a corporal punishment such as a flog-

ging, or have to pay a heavy fine—with the sojourner only subject to capital punishment. In high legal matters where the native born of Israel might have been shown preferential treatment or special favors, there was to be a uniform standard.

The Torah's instruction includes a number of significant areas detailing both the native born Israelite's, as well as the sojourner's, obedience and standing (Exodus 12:19; Leviticus 16:29; 17:15; 18:26; Numbers 35:15; Deuteronomy 1:16). But, while sojourners were a part of the broad community or population of Ancient Israel—it was hardly as though there were no differences of any kind between native Israelites and sojourners. Sojourners, unless being circumcised and intermarrying into one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, did not have any sort of ancestral claim on the Promised Land. Likewise, due to their frequently low economic status, sojourners in Ancient Israel were often recipients of welfare (Leviticus 19:10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:21). While sojourners and natives in the community of Ancient Israel had a great deal in common, there were also differences as well. Advocates of a One Law/One Torah theology, do not tend to be willing to acknowledge those differences. **A significant problem many have had with advocates of a One Law/One Torah theology, has been how many of its strident proponents may insist that native and sojourner in Ancient Israel had virtually no differences of any kind, and were nearly one-hundred percent identical.**

While there are well-meaning and sincere advocates of a One Law/One Torah theology, who have made useful theological contributions in the past, there is a deep ideological problem with emphasizing Bible passages which use the terminology "one law" or "one statute" as a credo. Each one of these passages (i.e., Exodus 12:48-49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16) involves an original setting in Ancient Israel which has been *directly affected* by the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah—and the post-resurrection era in which we now live. A frequent criticism of those who identify as One Law/One Torah, is that they are very legalistic and rigid in their approach to Moses' Teaching. This is hardly a surprise if "one law" originally involved settings such as uniform capital punishment for those in Ancient Israel! Yeshua the Messiah, via His sacrifice on the tree, absorbed the capital penalties of the Torah onto Himself (Colossians 2:14).

Rather than emphasize passages which employ "one law" terminology, it is far better for teachers and leaders to stress education and training in Moses' Teaching, for the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers who make up today's Messianic movement. As it was witnessed for the broad community of Ancient Israel, "Assemble the people, the men and the women and chil-

dren and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 31:12, NASU). An educational model, of receiving Torah instruction, will facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit via the power of the New Covenant, which is to supernaturally transcribe God's commandments onto a redeemed heart and mind (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27).

What might our relationship be to the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, now in the 2020s? In 2013, our ministry made the following observations:

"The **One Law/One Torah sub-movement**, while rightly emphasizing that God's Torah should be heeded by all of His people, is going to have to decisively recognize some post-resurrection era realities and changes, which have been directly affected by Yeshua's sacrificial work, and recognize much of the judgmental legalism it has been responsible for promoting" (J.K. McKee, *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?* [Richardson, TX: Messianic Apologetics, 2013/2016], 188 fn#290.)

Because our preference has always been to focus on commonality first and not differences, our ministry has not readily discussed or emphasized a number of our problems with a One Law/One Torah theology. Many of the people who follow Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics, also follow various teachers who strongly identify as One Law/One Torah. It would have been our hope that many would simply have been able to pick up on some of the noticeable differences, without us having to really say anything, as we do recognize how there is far too much unnecessary division and rivalry in the Body of Messiah.

Our ministry has actually had very uneasy, strained, and difficult relations with One Law/One Torah, for over a decade (2010-present). This is in no small part due to what we would consider some of the fundamentalist theological tendencies of One Law/One Torah. On a number of theological issues, it is not difficult to detect how Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics have actually sat to the hard Left of various One Law/One Torah advocates. Much of this is due to what we consider to be some of their inflexible and rigid approaches to Torah application, in the modern world, which we have witnessed over many years. One Law/One Torah, rather than being seen to properly confront and troubleshoot legalism, instead may be seen to, at least indirectly, encourage legalism and a judgmental spirit.

While the stress of One Law/One Torah has been to approach the presence of non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic community as though

they were *gerim* or sojourners, one inconvenient reality has to be recognized: **non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic movement are not the *gerim* present in the community of Ancient Israel.** For that same matter, today's Jewish Believers in Yeshua, while the descendants of the native Israelites at Mount Sinai, are not the people who stood at Mount Sinai. *None of us living today are the direct recipients of the Torah's commandments.* How much theological navigating and negotiation needs to take place, in future studies and examinations, regarding reading the Torah for its original audience first, and then deducing principles and application for today (as well as considering factors like the work of the Messiah on the tree, etc.)? Many of the Torah studies witnessed in the Messianic movement *just assume* that the Torah was written directly to Twenty-First Century people, when it was not. While the Torah is relevant as God's Word and its commandments are holy (cf. Romans 7:12), understanding its Instruction much better for the community of Ancient Israel within the Ancient Near East *first*, is something all Messianic people will need to be committed to doing better.

Throughout most of our ministry history, Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics have stressed that matters of Torah are to be steadfastly focused on the prompting of the Holy Spirit via the sanctification of the individual, via the supernatural compulsion promised in the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12). It will first manifest itself in a much better and more concentrated manifestation of love for God and 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). Unfortunately, many who stridently identify as One Law/One Torah, do not often demonstrate a great demeanor of love or compassion, but instead they do demonstrate a great deal of religious pride and judgmentalism.

(For a further discussion, consult the article, "**Approaching One Law Controversies: Sorting Through the Legalism,**" and the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, "**One Law/One Torah, Status of Movement.**")

4. A more conscious recognition of the Messianic mission

It might be surprising for some of you to know this, but matters of Torah are not the most important thing on the hearts and minds of the significant majority of today's Messianic Jewish people. *The Messianic movement was not originally set up as a "Torah movement."* The most important thing on the hearts and minds of the significant majority of today's Messianic Jews is **the salvation of one's fellow Jewish people.** The Messianic Jew-

ish movement was principally established to serve as a venue for Jewish outreach and evangelism, and its congregations are to serve as places where Jewish Believers do not have to give up on their ancestral heritage and traditions, fully assimilating into Christianity. Because Yeshua and His completed work is the most important thing to me, how can I have any problems with Messianic Jewish Believers being concerned about their loved ones coming to a knowledge of Him? If anything, in some of the early years back in North Texas, I was a little embarrassed that a ministry with a name like "Outreach Israel," that we were not doing more to contribute to seeing Jewish people come to a knowledge of Messiah.

The main question which is asked of non-Jewish Believers attending most Messianic Jewish congregations, on the ground, is one which does not get highlighted enough: **Are you called?** Holding to a Supernatural Compulsion, Holy Spirit model of God's Torah via the New Covenant—I found throughout 2013-2017 that non-Jewish Believers being specially called by the Lord into the Messianic movement, was the other side of the coin. Most frequently, non-Jewish Believers being enriched by something like "Jesus in the feasts," will lead to them being further prompted to engage in study of the weekly Torah portions, and eventually to attend and possibly even join a Messianic congregation or synagogue. These are people who will often then spend a few years tangibly reconnecting to their faith heritage in the Tanach Scriptures. But then after a few years, some of these people will leave a Messianic congregation. Many will return to evangelicalism. Yet, many will continue, and their ongoing presence is a likely indicator that they have indeed been called by the Lord to participate in the Messianic movement. Such persons will then frequently find themselves to be ready **to serve as co-laborers with their fellow Jewish Believers in the salvation of Israel.**

Non-Jewish Believers being Divinely summoned by the Lord into the Messianic community, are often likened unto how Ruth joined to Naomi, telling her, "For where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, TLV). But the severity of non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic movement being likened unto proverbial Ruths, is intensified by her following word, "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May *ADONAI* deal with me, and worse, if anything but death comes between me and you!" (Ruth 1:17, TLV). Non-Jewish Believers, who are truly called into the Messianic movement, have to be involved for far more reasons than being prompted by the Lord to keep *Shabbat* or the festivals! **They have to be willing to die right alongside of their fellow Jewish Believers,** as they are actively participat-

ing in something quite significant to salvation history: “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26).

I had to learn how to more consciously incorporate this into our ministry teachings, throughout the 2010s. I think many who have followed the progress of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics can acknowledge how we have definitely talked more and more about Jewish issues! It is entirely Scriptural to recognize the deep concerns which Yeshua and the Apostles had for the redemption of the Jewish people.

A Spiritual and Theological Refitting

Going through a season of a spiritual and theological refitting, absorbing and accounting for all of the different experiences and information from the past decade—is a major exercise. In the past several months, as I have been working through issues here and matters there, I have also been staging our various ministry books and publications to be put on an ongoing editing rotation. *Given the fact that today we have fifty live titles, it will take a while for some books to be visited for an update.* But it is necessary, because some titles are over sixteen or seventeen years old. New chapters and appendices have to be written. And, along with this, the Lord has even prompted me to consider writing some new books and commentaries.

A spiritual and theological refitting, acknowledging not only the modifications and updates—but also the new issues and subjects to be addressed—**is an important matter because of the future which is rapidly being forced upon us.** How much have our abilities, as Messianic men and women, really improved over the past decade? I have repeated it many times, the simple yet complicated rule of responsible Bible interpretation is: *interpret a text for its original audience first, and then deduce applications for today.* I do believe that many of today’s Messianic people expel some effort to do this in reading the Apostolic Scriptures, particularly the Epistles. They are astute enough to know that letters like Romans or Galatians have to be understood with original audience first issues taken into consideration. But the degree which this has been applied to other parts of the Bible—even the Torah itself—is in need of great improvement.

While the landscape of the Messianic movement and sphere of influence has doubtlessly changed in the past decade, the biggest changes which have, and will, affect us all—specifically involve the forces of Wokeism, deconstruction, and ex-vangelicalism. There is a liberal and progressive wave sweeping across the world of theology, one which many of our Baby Boomer leaders and teachers have remained (purposefully?) uninformed about. Many prefer to act as though it will just all “blow over.”

How difficult is it going to be for many of the people in the Messianic community to make adjustments to reading books of the Bible from an original audience first perspective? While as a teacher, I obviously believe in the post-resurrection era validity of the Torah—I have never advocated that the relationship, of Twenty-First Century Believers to the Torah, is the same as its original recipients in Ancient Israel. There are commandments given in the Torah which concerned an Ancient Near Eastern level of technology, economy, and agriculture. Certainly the Torah will tell us many things about God’s character and His dealings in history, but in reviewing the 613 commandments, we are going to have to (painfully) improve making sure that we ask: What did this mean to the Israelites?

If we are unable to make the necessary shift, then do not be surprised if other people will do it for us. Peter Enns, a former evangelical scholar, is making a life for himself on social media with his “Bible for Normal People” channel. More problematic are the social media shorts from Dan McClellan, also a liberal scholar. In no uncertain terms, progressive scholars such as these, will tell your average layperson, that they have misunderstood much of the Bible because they have incorrectly concluded that the Bible was written directly to them in modern times. Aside from treating a great deal of Scripture as unreliable human literature, their points about taking ancient context and setting into better consideration are entirely warranted.

If we are not—as individuals, families, congregations, and even larger associations—able to go through a proper spiritual and theological refitting, how unprepared are we going to be **for the really big controversies?** The different matters I listed as me having to modify, are actually not that huge; they represent some fine-tuning here, clarification there, and some recalibration. Some, of the really big controversies, involve matters which I will begin talking more and more about, in future writings and broadcasts. These include, but are not limited to: the ongoing effects of post-modernity, having an open discussion on Genesis 1-11 perspectives, gender roles and women in ministry, and new questions regarding astrotheology and extra-terrestrial intelligence matters. All of these issues are being asked in increasing frequency by younger people, particularly Millennials and Generation-Z.

I recall how a number of years ago, the Lord had to use some family drama, in order to get my attention to press into Him and ask Him about the future He had for me. *Now here we are today, in a season where each of you needs to consider looking at your own ship of faith, and ask God where you need an upgrade or two.* Hopefully, the different modifications you will need to go through, will not be too drastic—but will indeed increase your long term effectiveness for the purposes of His Kingdom and the good news.

