

INTRODUCTION TO THINGS MESSIANIC

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

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Introduction to Things Messianic

© 2005, 2009, 2012, 2022 John Kimball McKee

All rights reserved. With the exception of quotations for academic purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: JMWScout via Istockphoto

ISBN 979-8316753604 (paperback)

ASIN B00685T1FG (eBook)

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

P.O. Box 516

McKinney, Texas 75070

(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog

messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Apocrypha are from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), © 1952, Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Fair Use Notice: This publication contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make use of this material as a matter of teaching, scholarship, research, and commentary. We believe in good faith that this constitutes a “fair use” of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law, and is in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. For more information go to: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>

Outreach Israel Ministries is a non-profit 501(c)3. All prices listed on the publications of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are suggested donations.

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)

-15-

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

Where we are today in our relationship with the Lord, our comprehension of His Word, and our understanding of His plans for history—needs to be substantially different than when we first came to salvation and were initially growing in faith. When this resource, *Introduction to Things Messianic*, was initially released in 2005 as a spiral-combed volume, I had spent less than two years in full-time ministry, and had just started classes at Asbury Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL. When this resource was released into paperback in 2009, I had just graduated from seminary, and so I logically made some updates to the material, reflective of some of my new skills, and what I had learned in my studies. Now (2022), it has been over seventeen years since *Introduction to Things Messianic* was first released. Much has changed for me, both professionally and personally—and much has changed for the Messianic faith community which I am still definitely a part of.

Many of you have just reviewed a series of chapters which discuss various aspects of Messianic theology and the Messianic lifestyle. It is very easy to recognize that a great deal has happened within the Messianic sphere of influence, when these materials were first written, and even later updated. How are we to best consider what has taken place within the Messianic movement over the past quarter century or so, in order to properly consider where we are moving, and what we think the Lord intends to do with us? As I have seriously thought and prayed about the best way to discuss **the Messianic condition**, and what some of you might encounter—as you might just be entering into things Messianic—it is best that I simply take you through some of the journey that I have been on.

Introduction to Things Messianic

What you are about to review is my personal experience, not just as an individual, but also as a Messianic teacher and leader. Do I believe, as I am frequently asked, that the Messianic movement is something that every single non-Jewish Believer from an evangelical Protestant background needs to be a part of? Likely not. I believe that at this point in the development of the Messianic movement, its mission, and its future—that if you are a non-Jewish Believer you have to be specially called, summoned, and possibly even assigned by our Heavenly Father to be a part of this special, unique, but also challenging faith community. There is an idealism that many have when reconnecting to their faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel, and in being genuinely blessed and enriched by the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed times or *moedim*, a kosher style of diet, and the discipline of regular Torah study. Within several years, though, this idealism can quickly dissipate, as the realities of the Messianic movement being a still-maturing and developing move of God will set in.

Please allow me to do my best, in guiding you through our family's Messianic experience from 1995-2022. Revelation 12:11a states of the future end-time Believers, "they overcame...because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony" (NASU). With this noted, perhaps by reviewing my testimony of persevering in things Messianic—something which has not always been easy for us the past twenty-seven years—you will know more about the faith community you are either already a part of on some level, or the Lord is prompting you to considering joining in a significant way. **What you are about to read is, in no uncertain terms, my own experience and "take" on things Messianic.** The experiences, feelings, and thoughts of others you may read or encounter in today's Messianic community, might be a little different. However, this is probably the most practical and reasonable way that I can guide you through some of the blessings, hopes, but also anxieties and fears that many people, who enter into the Messianic community from an evangelical background, tend to go through.¹

1994-1995: Pre-Messianic Days

It is commonly stressed throughout today's Messianic Jewish community, that if you are a non-Jewish Believer, you need to be specially called by God into this movement. *This would mean that there were some unique series of circumstances, which are responsible for seeing you directed by*

¹ After reading this, you may also wish to consult "A Spiritual Scavenger Hunt," appearing in the author's workbook *The Messianic Walk: The End-Time Move of God*.

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

the Lord into things Messianic. When I look back on the events of my life, it is easy to say that some out of the ordinary factors have played a role in my family not only leaving a more familiar and established evangelical Protestantism, but also entering full time Messianic ministry.

I was originally raised in the Greater Cincinnati area, in Northern Kentucky. My parents, Kimball and Margaret McKee, dramatically came to faith in Jesus in 1984, as a direct result of the family business being liquidated, consequent of the recession of 1983. They could have lost absolutely everything—and so they both dramatically turned to God as the only One who could see them through! Thankfully our family did not lose everything, but with my parents both becoming dynamically born again, they became very serious about their faith in Christ. My mother was the granddaughter of Methodist Bishop Marvin A. Franklin (1894-1972), and so my parents naturally became very active in the Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church, which in the 1980s was broadly conservative and evangelical.

Very quickly in 1986, Kim and Margaret McKee became active in a new church plant in Florence, KY, Christ United Methodist Church, and also became active in different Methodist ministry venues, notably including the Lay Witness Mission, the Walk to Emmaus, and Chrysalis, throughout both Kentucky and Ohio. In my elementary school years, I was raised around the church, church related activities, and I knew church and denomination business. My father was licensed as a lay minister, and taught the Single's Sunday School. He not only went on various Emmaus walks, but even led them, notably including the first men's Emmaus walk in Madras, India in January 1991. My mother too was used in United Methodist ministry, as a representative at the annual Kentucky Conference which often met at Asbury College, and leading Chrysalis and Emmaus walks. Kim and Margaret McKee modeled my sisters and me a partnership marriage, husband and wife mutually submitted to one another, which centered around their faith in the Lord.

My father's theological quests in the mid-to-late 1980s were affected by a great deal of the popular, quasi-dispensational presentations of the end-times, the pre-tribulation rapture, but also with a strong support for Israel. My father was exposed, like many evangelicals of the 1980s, to concepts like "Jesus in the Feasts," particularly through the teachings of the late Zola Levitt. During Holy Week each year, as anticipation was on the rise for Good Friday and Easter Sunday, my father gave our church a presentation on Maundy Thursday on Passover and the Last Supper. In 1992, my father was being called into full-time ministry, and had received

Introduction to Things Messianic

approval for the initial stages of becoming ordained in the Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church. In March 1992, however, he was diagnosed with malignant melanoma, and then died five months later on September 1.

Kim McKee's death on September 1, 1992, at the age of 41, totally altered the trajectory of my family: my mother, myself, and my two sisters Jane and Maggie. In May 1993 my mother made a point to attend my father's twentieth college reunion at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. At this reunion, she was reacquainted with Mark Huey, who she had dated immediately prior to meeting my father, and who was concluding a difficult divorce. By the end of Summer 1993 after dating on the phone, Mark and Margaret were engaged. In May 1994, as the school year ended, I left my family home in Northern Kentucky to move to Dallas, TX. Mark and Margaret were married at Amelia Island, FL in June 1994, and we began the process of starting a new blended family, including my two stepsisters Danielle and Marielle, but most especially involving what expression of faith we were supposed to be involved with.

Mark Huey had come to faith in 1978, shortly after moving to Dallas, and not surprisingly had become involved in various dispensational Bible churches highly influenced by Dallas Theological Seminary. There was little chance that he was going to become Methodist, any more than my mother Margaret was going to become Bible church. So, after some trial and error during Summer 1994, Mark and Margaret Huey started attending charismatic churches influenced by the Toronto Blessing. Yet, while many were being influenced to go up to Canada—Mark actually had the prompting to sign the two of them up for a Zola Levitt tour to Israel in December 1994. During the tour to Israel, and not even married for a full six months, Mark and Margaret were supernaturally told by the Lord, in Israel, *to keep the feasts*.

1995-1996: Early Messianic Days

After returning from Israel in early 1995, the new blended family of Mark and Margaret tried getting involved in some independent, Spirit-filled churches in Dallas. There was a continual nagging though, in my parents, to get involved in the festivals of Israel. As Fall 1995 approached, they visited a number of Messianic fellowships and groups, eventually landing, as many people in the DFW Metroplex have, at Baruch HaShem. They have said it many times: my parents were encapsulated by the Messianic music in Hebrew, the Davidic dance, the weekly Torah portions,

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

and the fellowship of many Messianic Jewish Believers. They certainly had a few questions and a number of concerns regarding their acceptance as non-Jewish Believers, from a few of the Jewish Believers. But that did not stop Mark and Margaret Huey from taking the New Member's class and Hebrew class, and as such being exposed to an array of Messianic Jewish materials from figures such as David H. Stern or Dan Juster. My parents were there to learn and soak up what they could.

I had just started high school in Fall 1995, and even though I had an appreciation for the Old Testament "moral law" and supported Israel and the Jewish people as a good evangelical—I really saw no reason to get involved in attending Messianic Jewish services on Saturday morning. So for Fall 1995, Mark and Margaret alone were widely attending *Shabbat*, but the whole family was attending church on Sunday. When Spring 1996 came, I was pulled into more of the *Shabbat* activities, especially the congregational *chavurahs* on Saturday night. Spring Break 1996, however, was a real turning point. While on a road trip my mother was reading an early edition of *Messiah Magazine* by First Fruits of Zion, and was convicted by the Holy Spirit that we needed to commit ourselves as a family more fully to the Messianic lifestyle. While our family was participating in *Shabbat* services, and appreciated the value of the Biblical feasts—we had yet to integrate anything involving the kosher dietary laws, except my mother being careful not to bring anything with pork or shellfish to the Messianic Jewish congregation. When we returned from our roadtrip, obviously unclean things like bacon, ham, and shrimp got tossed from the refrigerator and freezer. It was not particularly easy for me to make a change over to the Messianic lifestyle in Spring 1996, as we began to conclude ties with Sunday church, but I did it.

Late Spring 1996 saw our early Messianic days get a little more complicated. Do recognize how it had not even been a full two years since Mark and Margaret had been married, and I had only lived in Dallas for less than two years as well. My father Kim McKee had only been deceased for a little over three-and-a-half years. I had just finished my freshman year of high school, and all of us were trying to still sort through why we, as good conservative evangelicals, at least, were now being pulled into the Messianic Jewish movement. *There had to be some distinct reason for this.* As late Spring to early Summer 1996 came around, our family was introduced to some very compelling prophecy teachings, which were predicting the Abomination of Desolation in March 1997, and the return of the Messiah by Rosh HaShanah of the Year 2000.

Introduction to Things Messianic

Our family was very, very new to the Messianic movement and experience. While I had been reared in Kentucky on the any moment pre-tribulation rapture, by Fall 1995 and into Spring 1996, I had already seen many flaws in the pre-tribulation rapture in my own personal Bible reading, and was heavily leaning toward some kind of post-tribulation scenario. So, when our family was exposed to the idea that the Tribulation period may have begun with the signing of the Middle East Peace Accord in September 1993, and the half-way point was March 1997—coupled with all of the drama of my father’s death in 1992, my mother’s remarriage in 1994, moving to Dallas, entering into a new life and high school, and being brought into the Messianic Jewish movement—this must have been all because the return of the Messiah was soon to take place. So I thought at the time. It certainly did get our family into the Bible like never before, reviewing end-time prophecies, and considering various geo-political matters at a new level.

During Summer 1996, with a combination of being new to the Messianic Jewish movement and hearing some compelling teachings on the end-times, Mark and Margaret went to two major Messianic Jewish conferences. Our family was still getting acclimated to the Messianic movement and lifestyle, and they wanted to get more information about what was possibly happening in the world. In early July 1996 they attended the Messiah Conference in Grantham, PA, hosted by the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA). In mid-July 1996, they attended the annual conference of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), held that year in Sturbridge, MA. Coming back from both conferences, and getting a feel for much of the Messianic Jewish movement, my parents concluded in 1996 that the MJAA was especially marked for its emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and evangelism, while the UMJC focused its attention more on systematic theology. But the real questions that we had throughout the remainder of 1996 concerned the end-times, and the possibility of us being in the actual Tribulation period. Throughout Fall 1996, these created some difficulties for us at our local Messianic Jewish congregation in Dallas, as our family was certainly seen to be asking questions.

1997-1999: End-Time Speculation

At the beginning of 1997, and with the thought of possible end-time difficulties forthcoming, our family relocated out of North Dallas, to what was then the small town of McKinney, TX. My parents purchased a large

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

ranch style house, with several acres of land, a barn, and an adjacent corn field. If any difficulties were going to manifest themselves, our family's thought was that we needed to be out of the big city. The compelling end-time predictions that we had heard were not materializing exactly as many had anticipated, but that did not stop my stepfather Mark Huey. Throughout Spring 1997, and then later in Fall 1997, he hosted a series of prophecy conferences under the label, "The Remnant Exchange." He also was co-host of a shortwave radio program called "The Remnant Report." Most important, perhaps, was that on August 15, 1997 I launched my website The Tribulation News Network, or TNN Online. This site, in its initial startup, was mainly put together to discuss the end-times, and posit questions about Bible prophecy.

Throughout 1997 my parents were exposed to many teachings and perspectives on the end-times. Some of these had some kind of Messianic or quasi-Messianic emphasis, but some of these also delved into other areas, as they investigated various secret societies such as the Freemasons, Illuminati, and issues such as the Nephilim and possible UFO connections. 1997 was quite a year!

Not quite knowing what was going to happen next, as tensions started to build toward the Year 2000, my stepfather Mark Huey got involved with a shortwave radio enterprise in the highlands of Central Honduras. Throughout the Fall and into the Spring, he made several trips to Honduras. The project he was involved with was going to build shortwave radio towers, broadcasting the gospel in both English and Spanish to the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, for the Last Days. It was also going to require our family to relocate. In April 1998, our home in McKinney, TX was sold, our belongings were packed into two twenty-foot containers, and they were sent to Roatán, in the Bay Islands of Honduras. My stepfather's plan was to relocate our family to the mainly English-speaking and more international Roatán, which had many retired Americans and Europeans, and he would commute to the mainland. Our family made the long drive through Mexico and Guatemala to Honduras in late April-early May 1998.

Yet, as we were getting acclimated on Roatán, it became clear that the shortwave radio operation was not going to work out. Throughout Summer 1998 and into Fall 1998, our containers remained on the dock, never opened. My parents looked into various endeavors to get involved with, but my stepfather would be unable to work as a real estate broker in a saturated market. Working with other ministries was not materializing, either. In October 1998, the answer to our wondering what we did in going

Introduction to Things Messianic

to Honduras came: Hurricane Mitch. Once the storm had dissipated, my stepfather Mark Huey made a visit back to the United States, to touch base with family and friends.

The original reasons our family had relocated to Honduras, had not worked out. Yet Hurricane Mitch, which had wreaked havoc on Central America, was a logical reason for us to return to the United States. My stepfather Mark Huey received an offer in November 1998 to begin a consulting position with a Messianic prophecy ministry out of Norman, OK. *It was an opportunity to return to the U.S.* By December 1998, our family had ventured across the high seas to Tampa, FL, our containers were unloaded, and by January 1999 we were settling into a rental home in the college town of Norman. While to this day we wonder sometimes about the factors involved in going to Honduras, we do not wonder about how the Lord used this circumstance to set our family onto the path of full-time ministry.

Throughout the year of 1999, the ministry my stepfather consulted for was conjuring up various new theories about the return of the Messiah, in association with the Year 2000 and Y2k. I continued to keep up my website, Tribulation News Network, but the end-time speculations were not something I was as attuned to—and neither was our family. We were back in the United States! I was finishing up my high school via the Abeka correspondence program and was accepted into the University of Oklahoma. There were no more questions about whether or not I would go to college. While a wide number of the Messianic people we became acquainted with in Central Oklahoma, at the time, were end-time preppers—throughout 1999, our family was just thankful we were back in the United States, able to return to a wide degree of normalcy, and that the opportunities which we thought were completely over were still there. I would go to college, my sister Jane would finish high school two years later and also go to college, and my sister Maggie would be able to start elementary school.

2000-2002: The University of Oklahoma

I started at the University of Oklahoma in Fall 1999, and I chose political science as my major and history as my minor. I continued to have my website, TNN Online, although it was clear enough that I was starting to address fewer matters involving prophecy and the end-times, and more matters involving theology and Messianic practice. As I became integrated into college life, I tried out a number of on campus ministries where my

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

friends attended, including: the Baptist Student Union, Campus Crusade for Christ, and Chi-Alpha. My college studies and academic pursuits began to impact the level of my Bible studies and writing articles. By this time, though, I was not worried about the Year 2000 and Y2k. The Lord had shown our family through the Honduras experience that He was able to protect us through difficulty.

Simultaneously occurring to my going to college, the Messianic movement was entering into a new phase of development—whether it liked it or not. Waves of non-Jewish Believers had entered into Messianic congregations in the late 1990s, by this time outnumbering Jewish Believers in various places. Messianic Judaism, reflecting much of the Jewish community, has been pluralistic on many theological matters.² At the turn of the Millennium, one noticeable shift was a sector within Messianic Judaism which believed that the movement could one day be recognized as a formal branch of Judaism alongside the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, etc. branches.³ This was not embraced by the significant majority of Messianic Judaism—which saw the movement more as an organic move of the Holy Spirit—but it has affected a sizeable part of Messianic Jewish theological development. It was clear enough that Messianic Judaism was going to enter into a post-missionary phase, where it had to think beyond simply Jewish outreach and evangelism.⁴

With non-Jewish Believers entering into the Messianic community, in greater numbers, there were a number of responses on how to proceed forward. Some Messianic Jewish congregations (greatly) discouraged non-Jewish participation. Still, various Messianic Jewish congregations did embrace non-Jewish Believers, who were called into the Messianic movement, as fellow brothers and sisters, and together as representatives of the “one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15, NRSV/CJSB). Still, though, a wide number of non-Jewish Believers, being led by the Lord to embrace their faith heritage in Israel’s Scriptures—in particular the appointed times or Biblical feasts—can say that they did not fully find themselves treated as equals of the Jewish Believers in Messianic Jewish settings (cf. Galatians 3:28). A number of these non-Jewish Believers, not fully feeling welcome in

² This is particularly reflected at this time in the 2001 compilation Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Voices of Messianic Judaism* (Baltimore: Lederer Books, 2001).

³ Some of this is covered in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Messianic Judaism* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000).

⁴ Whether one agrees with his conclusions or not, this matter is raised in Mark S. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).

Introduction to Things Messianic

Messianic Judaism, either returned to their previous Church settings—or entered into a number of the new sub-movements that spun off of Messianic Judaism by the early 2000s.

Answers were being sought in the early 2000s for why so many non-Jewish Believers were being drawn into the Messianic movement. By far, the most provocative answer, which began being promoted en masse in the late 1990s, was seen via the emergence of the Two-House sub-movement. The Two-House sub-movement widely postulated that the reason why so many non-Jewish Believers swelled the Messianic community, was because they were members of the Ten Lost Tribes (Ephraim), and are being reunited with the Jewish people (Judah), in fulfillment of prophecies such as Ezekiel 37:15-28. 1998 saw the release of the book *Who Is Israel? And Why You Need to Know* by Batya Wootten,⁵ including a full page advertisement in *The Messianic Times*. The International Messianic Jewish Alliance responded in 1999, with the issuance of “The Ephraimite Error” white paper,⁶ which did not focus so much on resolving the questions of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, in Biblical history and prophecy, as much as it did focus on some of the shoddy interpretations and bad behavior of various Two-House supporters, particularly Moshe Koniuchowsky, who had a major Sacred Name Only agenda.⁷ Early Two-House conferences (1999-2002), while not uniformly Sacred Name Only, did see an affluent use of the Divine Name YHWH/YHVH (typically Yahweh or Yahveh).⁸ Far from wanting to facilitate some degree of unity with individual Messianic Jewish Believers, at least, the Two-House sub-movement became riddled with a great deal of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian sentiment. Far from wanting to see a

⁵ Batya Ruth Wootten, *Who Is Israel? And Why You Need to Know* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 1998), which has been re-written and re-released several times since.

Other Two-House publications of note from the time include Angus Wootten, *Restoring Israel's Kingdom* (St. Cloud, FL: Key of David, 2000); Eddie Chumney, *Restoring the Two Houses of Israel* (Hagerstown, MD, Serenity Books, 1999).

⁶ Kay Silberling (1999). *The Ephraimite Error: A Position Paper Submitted to the International Messianic Jewish Alliance*. Available online via <<http://umjc.org>>.

⁷ He notably offered a refutation of “The Ephraimite Error” in Moshe Koniuchowsky, *The Truth About All Israel: A Refutation of the I.M.J.A. Position Paper on the Two Houses of Israel* (Miami Beach: Your Arms to Israel, 2000).

⁸ Not only that, but Two-House literature frequently was associated with various Sacred Name Only materials, including, but not limited to: C.J. Koster, *Come Out of Her, My People* (Northriding, South Africa: Institute for Scripture Research, 1998); *The Scriptures*, second edition (Northriding, South Africa: Institute for Scripture Research, 1998); Lew White, *Fossilized Customs: The Pagan Sources of Popular Customs* (Louisville, KY: Strawberry Islands, 2001).

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

greater degree of unity between “both houses of Israel,” as they would say, the Two-House sub-movement widely did more to divide and condemn Jews and Christians and their so-called “paganism” and “traditions of men”—to say nothing of its widescale dismissal of responsible Biblical scholarship and exegesis.

A far less provocative answer to the non-Jewish question, but also controversial, was seen in the early 2000s with the emergence of the One Law or One Torah sub-movement, originally spearheaded by the popular ministry First Fruits of Zion (FFOZ), but especially via the theology and teachings of Tim Hegg of TorahResource. The original premise of One Law theology, was seen in their approach to a statement such as, “There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you” (Exodus 12:49, ESV). The implication was that God’s Torah is universal instruction to all of His people, regardless of whether or not a person was Jewish or non-Jewish. Non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement were to be likened unto the sojourners or *gerim* in Ancient Israel, with the frequent conclusion drawn that there were no differences or distinctions of any kind between native and sojourner.⁹ A number of the early materials reflective of One Law, and published by FFOZ, included *Torah Rediscovered* (1996)¹⁰ and *Take Hold* (1998)¹¹ by Ariel and D’vorah Berkowitz, and later *The Letter Writer: Paul’s Background and Torah Perspective* (2002)¹² by Hegg. Another influential book would be *The Mystery of the Gospel: Jew and Gentile in the Eternal Purpose of God* (2003)¹³ by D. Thomas Lancaster. To its credit, some of these materials and teachers, genuinely wanted to engage in Biblical scholarship, exegesis, and they certainly had a more positive than negative disposition toward the Synagogue and Church. Many non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement joined into First Fruits of Zion’s Torah Club program, and their materials were even seen in various parts

⁹ Deuteronomy 31:10-13 did specify how all in the community of Ancient Israel were to receive instruction from Moses’ Teaching, even if their adherence to it was not one-hundred percent identical.

¹⁰ Ariel and D’vorah Berkowitz, *Torah Rediscovered* (Lakewood, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 1996).

¹¹ Ariel and D’vorah Berkowitz, *Take Hold* (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 1999).

¹² Tim Hegg, *The Letter Writer: Paul’s Background and Torah Perspective* (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 2002).

¹³ D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Mystery of the Gospel: Jew and Gentile in the Eternal Purpose of God* (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 2003).

Introduction to Things Messianic

of Messianic Judaism. Yet, various Messianic Jewish leaders were seen in the early 2000s to come out against a One Law theology.¹⁴

It would have been very difficult, if you were a non-Jewish Believer in the sphere of influence of things Messianic—not to have encountered teachings and teachers who did not identify as either “Two-House” or “One Law” in the early 2000s. Many of us were affected by a number of these ideas. While approached negatively by much of Messianic Judaism even today in 2022, neither Two-House nor One Law are identical.

In late Spring 2000, my family’s time in Norman, OK came to a conclusion, as my stepfather Mark Huey moved on to another consulting position, this time with a ministry in Kissimmee, FL. This would involve networking with many of the non-Jewish Believers and independent fellowships—influenced by various Two-House and/or One Law ideas—which did not find themselves too welcomed within Messianic Judaism.

I continued attending the University of Oklahoma, only spending the Summers of 2000, 2001, and 2002 in Central Florida. During this time, while working toward my bachelor’s degree, I kept up the TNN Online website, now composed of three sub-websites: Tribulation News Network, Theology News Network, and Two-House News Network. I admit, I took it upon myself to see that “all” of the controversial issues which I thought were unnecessarily dividing us, could be addressed out in the open and be taken care of. This was the time period that the main material for my two earliest books, *When Will the Messiah Return?* and *The New Testament Validates Torah* (formerly *The New Covenant Validates Torah*), was written. Today in 2022 I have come a long way in my theology and approach to the issues I encountered in 2002. I might have made some different choices if the Messianic environment of the early 2000s had not been so polarized. Still, it was far better for me to come to some incomplete or under-developed theological conclusions in my college days—than be drunk or promiscuous or addicted to drugs, as many in college frequently are.

2003-2004: Outreach Israel Ministries

Like the experience of many young people, I think if I could, there would be a number of things that I would go back in time and correct from my college experience. During my university years of 1999-2003, I did my best as a Messianic person to fellowship with various on campus Christian

¹⁴ Daniel Juster and Russ Resnik (2005). *One Law Movements: A Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community. Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations*. Available online via <<http://umjc.org>>.

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

ministries. My roommate my junior year (2001-2002), was even the son of a pastor! I focused on issues of common faith in the Lord first, and was not hard and heavy about some of my Messianic convictions, typically only offering a Messianic perspective as one of “enrichment” or a “deeper understanding.” The fact that I had my own theology website, however, did occupy a great deal of my free time. I did not socialize with others, like I could have. Looking back on things, I had the experience in college that I needed to have, as I was working through a great number of issues. It was far better that I worked through some of these matters within the privacy of my dorm room, than out in a public ministry venue.

In September 2002, the ministry consulting position, which my stepfather Mark Huey had in Kissimmee, FL, came to a close. Over a number of months, my parents were seeking the direction of the Lord regarding what to do. It was becoming clear enough to them, especially with me finishing my undergraduate degree and some of the books that I had been producing, that we were being prepared as a family to start our own ministry. Outreach Israel Ministries was officially launched in November 2002, with an original focus on the people and the Land of Israel. While at this point, the pendulum had shifted away from Messianic Judaism toward more independent Messianic expressions, we definitely felt the need to be veered back toward building bridges, if possible, with open-minded and welcoming people in the Messianic Jewish community.

I graduated from the University of Oklahoma in May 2003, and relocated to Central Florida. Very soon, Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online would start producing an array of educational materials, as our family anticipated that the Messianic perspective was about to blow open. One of the things that I had, being a new university graduate, was a college degree. Far too many of the leaders and teachers who one will encounter across some parts of the Messianic spectrum, are not adequately trained. But more important than that, we wanted to be able to produce materials which could help people like us, from evangelical backgrounds, avoid some of the pitfalls and mistakes which we made. Some of the early publications we released in 2003 and 2004, included: *Torah In the Balance, Vol. I, Hebraic Roots: An Introductory Study* (now *Messianic Beginnings: An Introductory Study*), *The Dangers of Pre-Tribulationism*, *Messianic Winter Holiday Helper*, *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*, *Messianic Fall Holiday Helper*, *Messianic Sabbath Helper*, and *TorahScope, Vol I*. And yes, this would later be followed in early 2005 with *Introduction to Things Messianic*. Other potential projects had open files. Some of these projects reached various stages of completion, others did not materialize.

Introduction to Things Messianic

Mark Huey began 2004 with the intention of seeing Outreach Israel Ministries grow, which for him meant that we had to interact in person, with various speaking trips to different congregations and small groups. I had to learn how to balance some of the early research and writing of our new ministry, with our travel schedule. We went on a number of multi-week excursions, driving from Florida to the Midwest several times, flying out to Western Canada, flying out to the West Coast, hosting a tour to Israel, being invited for ten days to the United Kingdom, and driving in a Southwest-Southeastern tour. Our ministry certainly met and networked with many people. For me, it was an opportunity to see new parts of North America and the world. But most importantly, we got a hands on feel for some of the difficulties and controversies which were coming, seeing them in their infancy. These included not only some of the problems originating from Sacred Name Onlyism, Two-House and Israelite identity, but also the various so-called “restored Biblical calendar” systems, the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew and Matthew 23, and most especially those who would recognize Yeshua as Messiah but not as God. And yes, we would also encounter those who would place a lifestyle of Torah before their presumed faith in Yeshua.

The traveling throughout 2004 was not easy for either Mark Huey or myself, but we had to do it. While one would think that in interacting with new and idealistic Messianic people—that they would want to see the love of Yeshua and a desire to live like Him be the major motivating force for their actions, we encountered this far less often than we should have. We encountered far more people with a drive for the so-called “Truth” with a capital T, far too many non-Jewish people who placed some elusive identity as members of “scattered Ephraim” as more important than Messiah faith, and a majority who had major problems with some of the legitimate contributions of evangelical Christianity. It was not easy going from place to place, knowing that you were most probably going to see that each group had its own particular “issue” of dominance—which was hardly consistent with the original Messianic Jewish mission of Jewish evangelism, outreach, and support for the State of Israel. Our new family ministry tried many things in 2002-2004, our first two years, and we learned a great deal as well. We did make a few mistakes along the way. I honestly wondered at the end of 2004 if I had been truly called by the Lord into this, and I had no idea about the kinds of changes which I would be going through as 2005 began.

2005-2008: Asbury Theological Seminary

For the first decade or so, throughout our early Messianic experience, our family had certainly encountered our fair share of problematic and false teachings. We had also been subjected to various under-whelming levels of theological engagement. This was not limited to either parts of Messianic Judaism, or the more independent persuasions we were involved with in the early days of Outreach Israel Ministries. The one common thread throughout some of these challenges, was that very few leaders and teachers had any formal theological training, from either a Bible college or seminary. In fact, a number of people went out of their way to especially attack anyone who went to “cemetery.” Yet, these were some of the same people who had done no real study in Hebrew or Greek, their engagement almost entirely limited to Strong’s Concordance, and they certainly would not know how to engage with the proposals of contemporary Bible scholarship, accessing technical commentaries and studies. Traveling throughout 2004 was good in that it gave us an in-person idea about the sorts of matters we would have to confront (even if it were just bad attitudes). Our family was not going to stay in full-time ministry, unless one of us received some formal theological training—and with it a certain ability to not fall into the traps which we saw traveling the circuit.

There is no doubt in my mind why my family had to spend time in Central Florida: the satellite campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. In Summer 2004, I had submitted my application and was accepted to begin my master’s degree at Asbury, for Winter 2005. It was a good thing that Asbury had a campus in Orlando, because if I had moved to Wilmore, KY, given my family’s deep Methodist heritage, I may not be writing this, and I would have left things Messianic. Instead, I went to Asbury Orlando, a different place with no significant family memories.

I went to seminary with a specific goal: to learn the necessary skills to be able to be theologically engaged. We had encountered far too many people in our 9-year Messianic experience, to this point, who could not do this. Many, upon hearing that I was going to seminary, certainly did not respond well. “Why do you need to do that? Are you going to learn anything that you have not already learned?” And indeed, throughout my coursework toward my degree in Biblical Studies, I had numerous occasions, I believe, to separate from the Messianic movement and return to evangelicalism.

Introduction to Things Messianic

One of the things I quickly learned at Asbury, as I started classes for the Spring 2005 semester, is how much I had been influenced by fundamentalism for the previous 9-10 years of my spiritual life—a direct consequence of being a part of the Messianic movement. It did not matter whether it was Messianic Judaism or interacting with those who identified as some other independent expression. One of my first Asbury professors identified as holding to extreme minimalism, the belief that almost everything in the Tanach (OT) up to the so-called “return” of the Jewish exiles from Babylon, was largely assembled as a myth, so that the Persian Empire would fund their relocation to the Holy Land, in order to build a better life. Hearing this would be the point where most Messianics I know, would leave. It is also an extreme example—but if you want to be in full-time ministry, you cannot limit yourself to only hearing the voices you want to listen to. More often than not, as I was first taking classes in 2005, I was being exposed to conservative opinions about the Tanach and its historicity, that even to this day in 2022, would not be too welcome in some sectors of the Messianic community.

I got along with the vast majority of my fellow students at Asbury, because I did not go to seminary with the intention of trying to “convert” my fellow students to some of my different Messianic beliefs. Many of my students at Asbury Orlando had to commute between two or three hours, from all over Florida and Georgia. In the different breaks between classes, they hardly ever wanted to discuss theology; most wanted to instead seek solace from their fellow students in ministry, over the various difficulties they were facing as pastors. So, by the grace of God, I never really got involved in any theological debates over Messianic minutiae.

The independent Messianic community, as it was perhaps best considered then, went through a number of significant controversies from 2005-2008, the same time as I was at Asbury. During Summer and into Fall 2005, Monte Judah of Lion and Lamb Ministries, issued a series of teachings dismissing the Epistle to the Hebrews as legitimate Holy Scripture.¹⁵ One of his major claims against Hebrews was that various Tanach quotations (i.e., Jeremiah 31:31-34 in Hebrews 8:8-12) did not align with what was seen in the Hebrew. To be certain, anyone who would have possessed a minimum amount of formal Biblical training, would have been

¹⁵ Monte Judah. “The 7 Everlasting Covenants, Part 1 of 2” [Yavoh: He is coming!](#) Vol. 11 No. 9, September 2005; “The 7 Everlasting Covenants, Part 2 of 2” [Yavoh: He is coming!](#) Vol. 11 No. 10, October 2005; “The Paradigm of Hebrews” [Yavoh: He is coming!](#) Vol. 11 No. 11, November 2005.

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

able to easily answer this: the author of Hebrews frequently does not quote from the Hebrew Tanach, but instead the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation. This was the first major test for me at Asbury: Would I stay in a Messianic movement where these kinds of errors would be present? Would I stay in a Messianic movement that gave a high regard for Hebrew, but often demonstrated an ungodly prejudice toward Greek?

How did our ministry respond to the Hebrews fiasco of 2005? We used this as an opportunity to assert ourselves as an up-and-coming educational ministry. I did a Bible study on Hebrews, as part of a new recorded Wednesday Night Bible Study (before podcasts). I would use the material, when completed, to produce a volume in our new *for the Practical Messianic* series. These would be technical studies, but not overly so, as we would also reflect upon the condition of the *emerging* Messianic movement, and ask difficult questions regarding what the Lord wanted us to *emerge* into. Throughout 2005-2016, our ministry released a wide selection of these commentaries including, in order: James, Hebrews, Philippians, Galatians, Apostolic Scriptures Survey, Tanach Survey, Ephesians, Colossians-Philemon, Acts 15, the Pastoral Epistles, 1&2 Thessalonians, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians.

A much bigger test for our family's long-term involvement in Messianic things, but most especially regarding what we were going to do with the whole Two-House issue, came in early Summer 2008. In late Spring 2008, avid Two-House proponent Moshe Koniuchowsky released his book *Sex and the Believer: Shocking Freedom of Sexuality in Torah*,¹⁶ which unashamedly embraced and endorsed the practice of polygamy, men having multiple wives. At this time, our ministry had maintained an elusive approach to the specifics of the issue of Two-House. We acknowledged that there were unfulfilled prophecies like Ezekiel 37:15-28, that the restoration of Israel's Kingdom was bigger than just today's Jewish people, and speculated that some non-Jewish Believers might be members of the scattered Northern Kingdom—but ultimately known only to God. Polygamy in our minds—and certainly in the minds of many others—was not only an aberration introduced by the Fall, but King Solomon's polygamy was a direct cause of Ancient Israel's split into two kingdoms.

The Two-House sub-movement could have used the issue of polygamy as a means to recognize the errors and sins of Ancient Israel, not to be repeated. Instead, most leaders decided to remain quiet. Many, due

¹⁶ Moshe Koniuchowsky, *Sex and the Believer: Shocking Freedom of Sexuality in Torah* (Margate, FL: Your Arms to Israel Publishing, 2008).

Introduction to Things Messianic

to the patriarchal nature of many of its leaders, would instead be seen emphasizing that without the two wives and two concubines of Jacob, there would have been no Twelve Tribes. For our family, this triggered a significant difference in values between Two-House patriarchy, and the egalitarianism we believed instead needed to come forth among all Messianics. The failure for various Two-House leaders in 2008 to forthrightly condemn teachings endorsing polygamy, led me especially to start steadily pulling away from anything having to do with the label “Two-House,” save the relevant prophecies which speak of the reunion of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

2009-2012: The Transition

My time at Asbury Theological Seminary from 2005-2008 was much different, and much better, than my time at the University of Oklahoma from 1999-2003. I was definitely able to reconnect to my evangelical and Wesleyan heritage in a substantial way, and it really started to come through in my ministry. When I graduated, I received the Zondervan Biblical Languages Award—for Greek, no less! But when graduation was all over, there was a nagging question: What is our ministry going to do now? The fact was that our family was loosely associated with various independent Messianic people, not necessarily Two-House or strident One Law, but not necessarily Messianic Jewish, either. What was our future going to be? Continue to write books? In 2009, social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube were still relatively new. Smartphones were also just coming onto the market. And, anyone in the United States in 2008 was confronted with the words “Change” and “Hope,” because of the election of Barack Obama. If I had not attended seminary when I did, between 2005-2008, I may not have attended at all—because of the 2008 financial crisis.

Immediately after my graduation in Spring 2009, our family started asking questions about what was next. Within the next school year, my youngest sister Maggie would be graduating from high school. Were we going to spend the rest of our lives in Central Florida? One of our thoughts was to relocate northward up near Jacksonville, as we had extended family and my grandmother in the area. We began putting out prayers, as well as feelers. Yet during Summer 2009, my mother, Maggie, and I all went on a road trip, which began to change our trajectory completely. Initially, Maggie believed that just like her sister Jane (2001-2005), she would attend Vanderbilt University. Due to her high academics and athletics at high

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

school, she was also very interested in the Naval ROTC program. Yet in 2009 Vanderbilt had become much more difficult to enter. My mother knew that Maggie needed to also visit the other “family school,” the University of Oklahoma. So, the three of us took a trip in mid-July 2009 to Norman, OK. I had not been back since my graduation, so I was very happy to reconnect. But I absolutely remember what happened, as all three of us walked into the Armory, where both the Army and Navy ROTC had their units. We were all hit with supernatural knowledge, just by that military machine shop smell, that Maggie was going to OU. She attended OU from 2010-2014, receiving both her bachelor's and master's degrees, and meeting her husband, Taylor Willetts.

In late Summer 2009 a huge theological development hit the Messianic world, as First Fruits of Zion made a shift in their theology away from One Law to Divine Invitation. This was basically the belief that while Jewish people had a covenantal obligation or requirement to keep matters of Torah such as the Sabbath, appointed times, and dietary laws—non-Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah had no expectation to do these things, but could be regarded as invited by God to do them if they were so led.¹⁷ Easily for the next several years, 2009-2011, people across the board were scrambling over what to do and how to respond to this. Tim Hegg of TorahResource, who did not join with FFOZ in this change, issued a strong rebuttal.¹⁸ All of a sudden, FFOZ teachers could be seen attending what were considered to be mainstream Messianic Jewish events and conference. And if you were not Jewish, but in some kind of Messianic ministry, you were definitely being asked about where you stood regarding non-Jewish Believers and Torah. As we have done with so many polarizing issues, our ministry decided to take a third, alternative approach, rooted in the prophetic expectations of Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4, and the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27: Supernatural Compulsion. God writes God's commandments on the hearts of God's people at the pace of God's Holy Spirit, dependent upon the

¹⁷ Much of this is covered in Boaz Michael and D. Thomas Lancaster. “‘One Law’ and the Messianic Gentile” Messiah Journal Issue 101, Summer 2009/5769; Aaron Eby, Toby Janicki, Daniel Lancaster, and Boaz Michael. (2009). *Divine Invitation: An Apostolic Call to Torah. First Fruits of Zion*. Available online via <<http://ffoz.org>>; Toby Janicki. “We are the God-Fearers” Messiah Journal Issue 103, Spring 2010/5770; “One Law for All” Messiah Journal Issue 105, Fall 2010/5771; Boaz Michael. “Messianic Judaism: Reconsidering the One Law, Two-House Trajectories” Messiah Journal Issue 111, Fall 2012/5773.

¹⁸ Tim Hegg. (2009). *An Assessment of the “Divine Invitation” Teaching. Torah Resource*. Available online via <<http://torahresource.com>>.

Introduction to Things Messianic

willingness of a man or woman to grow and mature in faith. Salvation history has progressed toward the era of New Covenant. The 2009 change on the part of FFOZ, was partially responsible for the 2013 release of our ministry's *Messianic Torah Helper*.

Throughout Fall 2009 and well into Summer 2010, I knew that my seminary training would have to be reflected in our ministry publications. So, I began a steady process of editing, updating, and expanding our resources. At the time, only a handful of our ministry books were in paperback, with the majority still only available in spiral bound comb. I knew that in the future, if we were going to see all of our books in paperback, they would have to be substantially updated. I had learned a great deal in seminary, which now needed to be integrated into our materials. I had no idea what the Lord was readying us for.

In 2005 my maternal grandmother, Mary Ruth Jeffries (now deceased-2019), had moved down from Annapolis, MD to a retirement center in Orange Park, FL, adjacent to my aunt and her family. We would visit Grandmother Jeffries every few weeks. She started out with a rather large apartment, and then sized down to a one-bedroom apartment, and then later to memory care. In 2010, during her third move, which we went up to help, my mother and I both had the same experience: as we were leaving the complex to go have lunch, the Lord gave us the same word, "I would much rather move back to Dallas." We were counting on one day moving up to the Jacksonville area, but here we were both thinking about moving back to Texas. Not coincidental by any means, Mark Huey was in Dallas that weekend visiting with family and friends. He was absolutely elated when we told him! But the pull westward had already started in 2009, on the trip with my sister Maggie to the University of Oklahoma.

The process of moving back to Texas would not take place instantly. My sister Jane was presently without employment, and had moved from her job in Nashville to live with us in Kissimmee. The DFW Metroplex, however, has always had a dynamic economy. By late Fall 2010, my sister Jane had moved back to Dallas, and my stepfather Mark would share an apartment with her and travel back to Orlando for however long the transition period took, to relocate our entire family and ministry. I spent most of 2011 continuing to update our ministry publications, particularly with the knowledge that in relocating back to North Texas, we would be associating in some way with a large Messianic Jewish community. The TNN Online website contracted to Theology News Network. This was the time when the Lord showed me some important, alternative approaches to Bible passages such as Galatians 5:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, in

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

anticipation of encountering many who were beginning to avidly espouse bilateral ecclesiology.¹⁹ This was also the time when our ministry publication *Israel in Future Prophecy* was being prepared, which would offer a fair resolution to the Two-House controversy, thoroughly engaged with Jewish and Christian Bible scholarship and not Lost Tribes fairy tales.

Due to the real estate market in Central Florida, our family and ministry did not move back to North Texas until two-and-a-half years later in December 2012. It was a very long and arduous wait. But it was well worth it!

2013-2018: Messianic Jewish Reconnections

It was rather surreal moving back to Dallas in late 2012 from Central Florida, to the same zip code where I had originally moved in 1994 from Northern Kentucky. Dallas Take II had begun! My entire family was now in North Texas, with my sister Maggie just a few hours away at the University of Oklahoma. But I was realistic about what had just started for our family and ministry. 2009-2012 was not an easy time for the Messianic community, particularly with many sorting through and responding to the theological changes of First Fruits of Zion,²⁰ their association with branches of Messianic Judaism avidly supporting bilateral ecclesiology, and more than anything else a prevailing spiritual ideology of distinctions among God's people being more important than common faith in the Messiah. Our family and ministry were not overly rigid, and certainly were open to adjusting and refining our theology where appropriate. So as 2013 began, I was quickly writing the publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*, supportive of an "enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel" ecclesiology, based on Amos 9:11-12—with a restored Twelve Tribes at the center, and enlarged borders to welcome in the righteous from the nations. Yes, Jewish and non-Jewish Believers had their differences and they were not exactly

¹⁹ Bilateral ecclesiology is the premise that while all of God's people may be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13), such a Commonwealth of Israel is composed of two main, quasi-independent entities: the Jewish people/Messianic Jewish community and the Christian Church.

²⁰ Some of these changes are represented in the materials: Toby Janicki, *God-Fearers: Gentiles & the God of Israel* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012); D. Thomas Lancaster, *Grafted In: Israel, Gentiles, and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2009); *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians: Sermons on a Messianic Jewish Approach* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011); Boaz Michael, with Jacob Fronczak, *Twelve Gates: Where Do the Nations Enter?* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2012); *Tent of David: Healing the Vision of the Messianic Gentile* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2013).

Introduction to Things Messianic

the same—but such differences should not be as pronounced or over-emphasized as bilateral ecclesiology proponents were advocating. Emphasizing differences first tends to create division and suspicion, rather than unity and partnership.

What were we going to do, and where were we going to fellowship, as a family, upon returning to North Texas? Not unlike 1995, our family returned to Baruch HaShem, where we originally got started in the Messianic movement. The congregation and its facilities were much larger now—but the main reason we first attended, was to reconnect with our old friends from the late 1990s. Most of them had gone on to other places. One of those friends was David Schiller, who had started a new work, Eitz Chaim, which met in nearby Richardson. This was a much smaller fellowship, which hosted an oneg lunch after *Shabbat* services. Many of our friends from our previous time in Dallas were attending this congregation. During Spring 2013 we often visited between Baruch HaShem and Eitz Chaim every other *Shabbat*, but after returning from our family's annual reunion in Gulf Shores, AL, I had decided that Eitz Chaim was where the Lord wanted me—and my parents subsequently agreed. Reconnecting with David and Elizabeth Schiller, joining Eitz Chaim as members in 2014, and my stepfather Mark Huey becoming a deacon in 2014, and then an elder in 2015, were some of the major activities which led to our present association with Messianic Judaism.

Anyone who has been a part of the Messianic Jewish community, knows that issues of ecclesiology (study of the people of God), Jewish Believers, and non-Jewish Believers, are not uniform. Regardless of what some leaders and teachers choose to write on paper,²¹ the situation on the ground, in actual Messianic congregations, tends to be much different. While the 2010s began with a wave of some Messianic Jewish groups emphasizing a distinctions first ideology, to keep various non-Jewish Believers away from things of Torah (i.e., *Shabbat*, festivals, kosher)—the fact is that on the ground, non-Jewish Believers make up the majority of today's Messianic Jewish community, and also provide Messianic Judaism with the vast majority of its financial resources. In spite of various protestations and theological machinations, non-Jewish Believers are

²¹ Some of this was seen in the early 2010s with: David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); IAMCS Steering Committee (2014). *One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement, A position paper of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues* (IAMCS). Available online via <<http://iamcs.org>>.

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

coming into an understanding of the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6), and are embracing their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures in tangible ways. I am very thankful to say that my personal involvement in Eitz Chaim, in 2013-2014, was significantly due not only to my previous friendship with David Schiller in the late 1990s—but also because I did not feel that he, as a Messianic Jew, felt his Jewish identity was somehow infringed upon because our family was Torah observant. He could tell from the ministry that we had built in the time we were away from Dallas, that it was a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and that we were trying to indeed facilitate Jewish and non-Jewish Believers as “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15) working in common cause together.

It does take a few years for one to get reacclimated to a new setting, and so a great deal of my initial time back in North Texas was spent working on additional publications, which had been open files back in Central Florida. These notably included *Confronting Critical Issues* (2013), the massive *Messianic Kosher Helper* (2014), and *Torah In the Balance, Vol II* (2015). Later studies would be *Salvation on the Line, Volumes I & II* (2017, 2018), defending Yeshua's Divinity, and *Men and Women in the Body of Messiah: Answering Crucial Questions* (2018), sorting through an egalitarian ideology. A number of notable things would develop as we waited upon the Lord, became active members of a Messianic Jewish congregation, met some new Messianic Jewish friends, and began to get a feel for a sector of Messianic Judaism which has to be experienced firsthand in person.

In 2014 the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) was hosting its regional conference in Grapevine, TX, just north of DFW Airport, and our local assembly, Eitz Chaim, was an active participant. Because my stepfather had just been ordained as a deacon in 2014, this immediately gave our ministry the ability to exhibit our publications. While I know that I was skeptical at first, we were very much welcome to attend and we did well. I was introduced to a number of the MJAA leaders, including Joel and David Chernoff, as well as the late Mark Dayan who helped facilitate the MJAA conferences. It was a first step toward our family and ministry becoming more formally involved in Messianic Judaism.

It would have been our plan to exhibit at the 2015 Messiah Conference in Grantham, PA, but Summer 2015 was full of too many family activities, as my sister Maggie married Taylor Willetts in May. Upon returning to Dallas in June 2015 from our annual Gulf Shores, AL family vacation, the domain tnonline.net had been quickly swooped up, as the automatic renewal had not processed while I was away. Seeing my domain held hostage for tens of thousands, rather than attempt to get it back, we took

Introduction to Things Messianic

this as both a prompt and a sign, that it was time for TNN Online-Theology News Network to transition into **Messianic Apologetics**, messianicapologetics.net.

Throughout a great deal of June and July 2015, I had to go through our website and books, changing non-time sensitive references from “TNN Online” to “Messianic Apologetics.” While this was taking place, the Hebrew Roots Network, a largely non-Jewish affiliation, was holding its conference in Dallas. We knew a number of people who were attending, and so my parents Mark and Margaret Huey went downtown for a few dinners. They certainly asked why our ministry was not exhibiting its publications—and the reason was, is that while we did apply for a book table, we were rejected, being told that our ministry “did not have a stable and secure message.” This dismissal was a signal that in 2015, the Lord wanted us to be veered in a Messianic Jewish direction.

Something else which notably took place in 2015, as a side event of sorts, is how Steve Harper, formerly a vice president at Asbury Theological Seminary while I was attending—and one who laid hands over me at my graduation in May 2009—came out publicly in favor of homosexual marriage in Spring 2015,²² right before it was made legal in the United States. This was an indication, to me at least, of a major jump forward in the Last Days scenario.

Many of us recognize the huge societal changes which took place in 2016-2017, because of the unexpected election of Donald Trump as president here in the United States. Our own family’s Messianic experience took a huge leap forward, with some unexpected circumstances. In early 2016, my stepfather Mark Huey and his brother Doug, were taking Grandpa Huey (now deceased-2018) to an MRI appointment at Baylor, Scott, White in Dallas—and while waiting they ran into an acquaintance of Doug, who worked for the hospital system. Mark immediately struck up a conversation and discovered that this gentleman helped with moving surplus and secondhand but almost new, medical equipment and supplies, from the Baylor, Scott, White hospital network, to international venues of need, often via the help of various Christian ministries. My stepfather asked him if they would give equipment to Israel, and shortly thereafter he was talking with Joel Chernoff and Hank Rich of the MJAA’s Joseph Project. Within a year, my stepfather was working as a consultant with the Joseph Project, fundraising mainly in the North Texas area—but most

²² Steve Harper, *For the Sake of the Bride: Restoring the Church to Her Intended Beauty* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014).

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

especially with seeing a new source of humanitarian aid opened up for this enterprise. Much of what Baylor, Scott, White has been able to provide the Joseph Project, has helped enhance its relations with the Israeli government.

My stepfather working with the Joseph Project made our ministry's first time at the Messiah Conference go very smoothly. In July 2016, we attended Messiah 2016 at Messiah College (now University) in Grantham, PA. This was followed up by me being able to have a speaking slot at the MJAA Regional in Grapevine, TX in November 2016. My parents, Mark and Margaret Huey, then attended the annual Rabbis Conference of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS) in Orlando, in January 2017. Messiah 2017 in July was much easier, as by now our family and ministry were becoming more widely known. I was able to speak at Messiah 2017 and Messiah 2018. The MJAA became very welcoming of us, with various leaders definitely recognizing that we were the kind of non-Jewish Believers who God had definitely called into the Messianic movement. While attending the IAMCS Rabbis Conference in January 2018, my mother Margaret saw someone being ordained as a Messianic Teacher, which was something appropriate to look into, with me being non-Jewish and part of an educational ministry. Being ordained as a Messianic Teacher would help our ministry credibility, and also serve as an economical way to continue my education. My parents shortly attended the MJAA Regional in Irvine, CA that following February 2018, and Joel Liberman (MJAA president 2019-present) quickly saw that my application was processed and approved.

2019-2021: Rebooting Toward the Future

Sometimes, the Lord has to provide each of us some drama, not only to get our attention, but also to make the changes necessary for the future. 2019 began optimistically, but unrealistically. My parents and I, the three of us, started the year by attending the IAMCS Rabbis Conference. Here I was interviewed and then formally licensed as a Messianic Teacher, entering a 2-year program where I would take various courses and remain in communication with the IAMCS leadership. This was excellent. But after returning home to Dallas, some unexpected things would happen, which definitely altered some of our plans.

For the first six years in our time back in Texas, our family rented a large house in North Dallas, which was able to fully accommodate my parents, myself, and our ministry offices. It was our intention to buy this

Introduction to Things Messianic

house, and as 2018 came to a close, the owner announced his intentions to sell. Upon returning from the IAMCS Rabbis Conference, the second week of January 2019, our offer was not received. Immediately we had to find a new place for our family and ministry—and so only by the grace of God, within six weeks, in late February 2019, we had closed on a much larger and newer house. This was located, in of all places, the McKinney area. We were returning to the very area where we had left for Honduras in 1998! *We had literally come full circle!*

The move out of North Dallas to McKinney was hurried. The new home we moved into needed some remodeling work, including our new ministry offices. A wide number of things happened behind the scenes, while we were remodeling—because as different home remodeling projects were taking place, our own family had to go through some substantial spiritual remodeling. This would also include a ministry reboot and rebranding for Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics, with our ministry websites going blank for a period of about six weeks in Spring 2019. Spring and Summer 2019 were not an easy time for me, as I was under a great deal of spiritual stress and demonic attack. I had a great deal of prayer and reflection to go through, not quite knowing what the Lord was preparing me for.

In December 2019 our ministry exhibited at the MJAA Regional in Orlando, FL; we returned in January 2020 for the IAMCS Rabbis Conference; and in February 2020 our ministry exhibited at the MJAA Regional in Irvine, CA. I especially got a feel at these three consecutive events, about much of the possible state of Messianic Judaism. And, on the return drive from California, I came down with the nascent Coronavirus, having picked it up at the conference from various guests at the hotel.

Today as I write this (August 2022), there are still many questions left unanswered regarding COVID-19. But in March 2020, it was clear enough to me why I had gone through some of the supernatural drama I did in 2019: COVID-19 and the lockdowns were going to change everything, and the Body of Messiah would be doing things much differently in the future. While a number of people were predicting the immediate end of the world because of the Coronavirus scare, I knew to be more pragmatic and graded with my words. I do believe until this day that the COVID-19 situation was used by the Lord to get the attention of many, in a very significant way, and that things could no longer be “business as usual.” I believe that COVID-19 was intended to be a huge wake up call to many people, especially in the still-maturing and emerging Messianic movement, for

My Family's Messianic Experience: 1995-2022

them to get serious about issues and matters which have been put to the side too often.

Then another severe matter, for which even more questions abound, came with Election 2020. Once again, the Lord was trying to get the attention of many.

I am not so sure that as many people who should be paying attention, actually are. Far too many, especially because of the failed end-time predictions at the turn of the Millennium, do not want to be bothered about current events. So we wait...

2022 Onward: More Will Come

Following several years of being on hiatus from larger Messianic conference-level events, canceled because of COVID-19 issues, I was formally ordained as a Messianic Teacher by the IAMCS at the 2022 Rabbis Conference in Orlando. It was an important rite of passage, and a symbol that our family's ministry activity is being conducted in alignment with the original work of the Messianic Jewish pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s. The original Messianic Jewish vision of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity is rooted within Bible passages such as Paul's expectations of Romans chs. 9-11. Yet in reality, a dual mission has emerged for much of the Messianic community, as many people from the nations are indeed streaming toward Zion to be instructed from Moses' Teaching (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4).

Many more non-Jewish families, such as my own, have entered into the Messianic movement. Some have been welcomed, and others have felt turned away. As we have entered into the 2020s, new challenges regarding the non-Jewish question, and likely new waves of pessimism, immaturity, insecurity, and some religious politics are likely to present themselves.²³ While much of the Messianic Jewish movement likes to call itself "the end-time move of God," how much of this is more marketing versus an actual praxis of faith, is hard to tell at present.

My family is unique in that over the years we have had direct interaction with all of the various sectors of the broad Messianic movement, and the sub-movements which have split off: Messianic Judaism, Two-House, One Law/One Torah, Hebrew Roots, and now

²³ Consult David Rudolph. (2021). *One New Man, Hebrew Roots, Replacement Theology*. Available online via <<http://tku.edu>>; Dan Juster. (2021). *Messianic Jewish Movement Compared to Gentile Jewish Roots One Law Movement. Restoration from Zion*. Available online via <<http://restorationfromzion.com>>.

Introduction to Things Messianic

Pronomian Christianity. I believe that while not always positive at times, we have had all of these interactions, to be substantially equipped for the tasks of the future.

Reading through just some of my family's Messianic experience, you have probably seen that at various points we have had a number of legitimate reasons to leave the Messianic movement, and return to a more established, sometimes more stable, and often more welcoming evangelical Protestantism. **I do not believe that our family was called into the Messianic movement; I believe our family was assigned to it.**

While my record of full-time ministry for over twenty years bears the significant labor of writing and producing books, studies, and commentaries—there are some things you have probably noticed which have not been present. In all of the time I have served in Messianic ministry, and in all the venues and congregations I have been a part of and places I have visited, I am, at the age of 41 in late 2022 (longer than the life of my late father), a single man. The opportunity for marriage to a strong woman, from a compatible background and values, has never presented itself in all of my time in Messianic ministry. Similarly, I have never been approached, in spite of my academic credentials and formal ministry training, to serve on the leadership board of a Messianic congregation. Perhaps these will be resolved in the future, but if nothing changes, I will still continue.

I have come a long way since *Introduction to Things Messianic* was originally released in 2005. Our own Messianic movement has come a long way since our family was directed into it in 1995. We believe that the Messianic movement is the end-time move of God. Whether this involves the formal Messianic Judaism we are presently serving with, in North America, is something which involves questions regarding its long term future and viability. The original Messianic vision of Jewish outreach and evangelism will doubtlessly continue. Many non-Jewish Believers, such as my family, will be exposed to their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures and matters such as *Shabbat* or the Biblical festivals. Some will embrace them wholeheartedly as we have, others will be enriched for a season, and others will not be that impressed. I completely agree: **if you are not Jewish, you need to be supernaturally called, summoned, and assigned by the Lord into this movement.** But far more important than the non-Jewish question, will be for us to consider the place that the Messianic community is to play in the Last Days, and its adaptability to future events and revelations...