

# OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries  
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



OCTOBER 2024

GIVING UP ENTITLEMENTS

Difficult Factors Raised by Yeshua, James, Paul

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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.

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# OLM UPDATE

October 2024

*J.K. McKee*

The price of discipleship, of following and emulating Yeshua as Lord, can be one which has been very, very high throughout many centuries. One of the biggest challenges issued by the Messiah, is seen in the word, "If anyone wants to follow Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross every day, and follow Me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:23-24, TLV). The statement, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him say 'No' to himself, take up his execution-stake daily and keep following me" (CJSB), is one where total devotion to the Lord, and giving up one's presumed, human entitlements, is necessary.

There are numerous places witnessed in the Gospels, where Yeshua directed His followers to take up their own cross or execution-stake, and follow Him (Mark 8:34-38; Matthew 10:37-39; 16:24-28; Luke 14:25-27). That Yeshua, in a prophetic capacity, demanded that His followers be willing to stand against prevailing, popular trends—in order to serve a Kingdom of God, subversive to the ways of the world—is clear enough. An unwillingness to follow Yeshua, and seriously consider the example He has left, came with an extreme warning from the Lord:

**"Then He called the crowd, along with His disciples, and said to them, 'If anyone wants to follow after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and keep following Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the sake of the Good News will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? For what could a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels!'" (Mark 8:34-38, TLV).**

Many of the early Messianic Jewish pioneers were ostracized or disinherited from their families, for expressing trust in Yeshua as Messiah. They indeed had to experience firsthand, what Peter testified: "Look, we've left

## GIVING UP ENTITLEMENTS Difficult Factors Raised by Yeshua, James, Paul

everything to follow You!” (Mark 10:28, TLV). Yeshua, fortunately, did respond with “there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for My sake and for the sake of the Good News, who will not receive a hundred times as much now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and property, along with persecutions; and in the *olam ha-ba*, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30, TLV). Much of this came, however, with the Messianic Jewish community taking the place of the extended families of many Jewish Believers. And along with this, the Lord superintended many non-Jewish Believers to come in alongside of such Jewish Believers, with many Messianic congregations representative of the Ephesians 2:15 “one new man/humanity.”

There is a widespread conviction across the Messianic spectrum, that our faith community has been uniquely called and chosen by the God of Israel, to fulfill some important work in the days to come. Things are different in the Messianic movement, than they are in more standard Synagogue or Church settings. **How many of us need to be reminded of some of the implications of Yeshua’s word about picking up our cross/execution-stake, and following Him?** Given today’s increasing challenges, as we edge closer and closer to the end-times and His return, how do we need to see some of our values challenged by the life examples of those such as Yeshua, James, or Paul? Which one major thing did they have to give up, which many of today’s (young) men and women—throughout the Messianic sphere of influence—absolutely believe they are entitled to?

Neither Yeshua, James, or Paul ever married, nor did they have children. They remained single and celibate, specifically because of the task they performed in God’s service was too vital—leaving behind legacies we all benefit from today. And this is something many of today’s Messianic young people are going to have to consider, more and more, as the future unfolds.

## What does the Tanach actually prescribe?

What causes many (young) men and women, who claim to follow Yeshua the Messiah and emulate Him—automatically assume that they are entitled to a husband or wife, children, and a family? Much of it actually involves some incorrect approaches to God’s intention at Creation, which have probably gone unaddressed or unspoken, for far too long in much of our Messianic experience.

Quite frequently when the issue of marriage is discussed in a Messianic context, one will be quoted Genesis 2:18, where God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (TLV). The implication often drawn from this, is that not only males, but also females, should diligently seek to be married. If

there is a single man or single woman within the community of faith, then there is probably something desperately wrong with that person. Some customary Jewish commentary on Genesis 2:18, consulted by Messianics, will only then reinforce this. In his *Pentateuch & Haftorahs*, J.H. Hertz concluded, "From this verse the Rabbis deduce that marriage is a Divine institution, a holy estate in which alone man lives his true and complete life. Celibacy is contrary to nature."<sup>1</sup> So, many think that if a man or woman is unmarried, he or she is not fulfilling his or her Divinely mandated role, is incomplete as a person, and perhaps may even be said to live in some kind of disobedience or rebellion toward the Creator.

While no Bible Believer can deny how marriage is a blessed and sacred institution, between one man and one woman, established by God—it is useful to remember what the original setting of God's statement in Genesis 2:18 actually was. The Creator had already completed His various activities involving the universe and rested (Genesis 2:1-3), the first human being had been created and implanted with His Divine breath of life (Genesis 2:7), and *ha'adam* or "the man" was placed in Eden (Genesis 2:8). The Garden of Eden was a paradise which the man was to tend and cultivate (Genesis 2:10-15). It is observed that within His Creation *ha'adam*, or the man, had no counterpart—and so with that in view, God made the observation, "It's not good for the human being to be on his own" (Genesis 2:18, The First Testament). What is then detailed is the creation of the female from the male (Genesis 2:21-23), and how marriage was to be an institution of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24).

As wonderful and blessed as marriage between a man and a woman is to be, the statement "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18, NASU) **directly concerned Adam as the first and only member of the human species.** After the creation of all members of the Animal Kingdom, Adam as the first human being was indeed all alone and by himself. In this regard, Adam did not need to be alone, and required Eve, the first female, to be brought forth from his side. It can and should be challenged, though, whether all men and woman on Planet Earth since, are somehow to be regarded as "alone." Today there are over 8 billion people in the world. Married or unmarried, no one is "alone" in the sense that Adam was alone in Genesis 2, as the only human. Sadly, in being told that unmarried persons are always alone, incomplete, unfulfilled, or even in disobedience—many will seek marriage to someone, *anyone in fact*, settling for a spouse who rather than bringing them companionship, completion, and fulfillment—**may instead bring frustration, emotional turmoil, abuse, and later possibly**

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<sup>1</sup> J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1960), 9.

**divorce.** Genesis 2:18 and its reference to the man being alone, is a restricted statement to Adam as the first human being, and should not be applied universally to all men and women, as though all must be married.

Another key statement appearing in early Creation, is how Genesis 1:27-28 stated, "God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the land, and conquer it. Rule over the fish of the sea, the flying creatures of the sky, and over every animal that crawls on the land'" (TLV). Both male and female were created in God's image. It is directed, "Be fertile and increase" (NJPS). No reader can deny how human beings were expected to procreate.

The direction "Be fruitful, be numerous" (Genesis 1:27, The First Testament) is given some very high priority, in traditional Jewish categorization of the 613 Torah commandments, frequently being listed as first.<sup>2</sup> Some of the commentary one may witness on this, is rather daunting.<sup>3</sup> **It is assumed that this is a command that one must be married and have children.** In the Orthodox Jewish *ArtScroll Chumash*, it is stated generally how "One who neglects this has abrogated a positive commandment, incurring great punishment, because he thereby demonstrates that he does not wish to comply with the Divine will to populate the world (*Sefer HaChinuch*)."<sup>4</sup> Among the various historical Jewish opinions offered by Abraham Chill in *The Mitzvot: The Commandments and Their Rationale*, he notably indicates regarding Genesis 1:28,

"To fulfill this *mitzvah* adequately, a man must beget at least one son and one daughter who, in turn, must be physically capable of begetting children of their own. In other words, one has not fulfilled the *mitzvah* of procreation if, for example, he begets a son who is sexually impotent or a daughter who is barren."<sup>5</sup>

Judaism has historically viewed the direction of Genesis 1:28, being a universal instruction applying to all. It is witnessed, for example, that young men who are unmarried between the ages of 18-25, are considered to be in disobedience.<sup>6</sup> Now, we may assume that these Orthodox Jewish opinions

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Chill, *The Mitzvot: The Commandments and Their Rationale* (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1974), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Yisrael Meir haKohen (The Chafetz Chayim), *The Concise Book of Mitzvot: The Commandments Which Can Be Observed Today* (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1990), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Nosson Scherman, ed. et. al., *The ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition*, 5th ed. (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2000), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Chill, 3.

<sup>6</sup> *The Concise Book of Mitzvot*, 59.

have certainly been watered down, or even dismissed, by the Conservative and Reform movements today. But many of the Orthodox opinions can and have made their way into various Messianic settings, and the thoughts of many.

Of course, the original context of Genesis 1:28 in the Creation narrative, was not to be taken as specific direction to each individual man and woman who would come afterward. **This was a general direction to human beings to take proper dominion over Planet Earth, and administer God's Creation in a responsible manner.** One man and one woman, in a marriage, are surely anticipated to start a family and procreate. But human life being what it is, many married couples are incapable of having children. Likewise, many single men and single women within today's faith community, are not single because of choice, but because of circumstance. Yet, in our family's many years of service to the Messianic community, we know that there have been young men and young women, because of incorrect approaches to Genesis 2:18 and 1:28, who have been made to feel guilty, disobedient to God, out of order, and even in rebellion *if they are unmarried and/or without children*. They have shed many tears, expressed great anger, and have sought our ministry for another view.

Many unmarried men and women, in today's Messianic movement, are unmarried because of the small size of our faith community, and with it the small pool of options. *In many cases, they end up leaving to go to the Jewish Synagogue or Christian Church.* But among those who stay Messianic, and have been incapable of finding an appropriate, compatible spouse—it is no surprise why the examples of significant figures such as Yeshua, James, and Paul are frequently invoked. **They were all single and celibate.** Are their examples at all to be taken seriously?

## Yeshua the Messiah's Challenge

All readers of the Apostolic Scriptures acknowledge how Yeshua of Nazareth was single, He never married, and He never had children. From time to time, a number of Jewish anti-missionaries have disregarded Yeshua as Messiah, because of His singleness, and with it His presumed violation of Torah directions to be fruitful (Genesis 1:28) and not be alone (Genesis 2:18). A common response to this was how Yeshua functioned as a Prophet, and prophets like Jeremiah had been set aside as single and childless (Jeremiah 16:1-2).

There is little doubting, as one surveys the teachings and ministry of Yeshua, how He considered marriage to be a blessed estate between one man and one woman. The Messiah was questioned by various Pharisees

about the matter of divorce, and His position on it was that Moses gave Israel the option of divorce, because of hardness of heart. Yet, the cause for divorce had to be something quite serious, something at the level of sexual immorality (Matthew 19:3-9). The response of the Disciples to the Messiah's teaching was, "If that's the case for a man and his wife, it's better not to marry!" (Matthew 19:10, TLV). Following this, Yeshua issued a severe challenge to those present:

"But He said to them, 'Not everyone can accept this saying—only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made that way by men; and there are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who can accept this, let him accept it'" (Matthew 19:11-12, TLV).

*Lattimore* renders Matthew 19:12 somewhat uniquely:

"For there are sexless men who have been so from their mother's womb, and there are sexless men who have been made sexless by other men, and there are sexless men who have made themselves sexless for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let him who can accept, accept" (Matthew 19:12, *Lattimore*).

Yeshua, in His own ministry service, was neither married nor did He have children. From the Messiah's own teachings, He acknowledged the value of celibate singleness—as the time and energy needed by a husband, to devote to a wife and children, could instead be redirected into matters of the Kingdom of God. When a young man or young woman in today's Messianic community cannot find a compatible spouse, is it possibly because that person has been called to a unique level of service to the Holy One? The Messiah's example is one not to be dismissed.

## James the Just's Challenge

James the Just, half-brother of Yeshua, is an interesting case to be considered. No specific marital status is noted regarding James, either in his epistle or in the Book of Acts. In his letter, he does speak about the transitory nature of human life (James 4:13-16), so one should have expected James to have a similar approach to carnal matters, as Yeshua did. Given the fleeting nature of human beings compared to an Eternal God, James' letter would stress marriage as a gift from Him to be sure—but limited just the same: "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming

down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17, NASU).

In ancient Christian history, James the Just was known for his great piety. Hegesippus, a Christian leader from the Second Century C.E., is recorded by Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* to bear the following testimony of James:

"James, the brother of the Lord, who, as there were many of this name, was surnamed Just by all, from the days of our Lord until now, received the government of the church with the apostles. This apostle was consecrated from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woolen, but linen garments. He was in the habit of entering the temple alone and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people; so that his knees became as hard as camel's, in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And indeed, on account of his exceeding great piety, he was called the Just, and Oblias (or Zaddick and Ozleam) which signifies justice and protection of the people; as the prophets declare concerning him" (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.4-6).<sup>7</sup>

Conservative examiners widely recognize how the Epistle of James bears a tenor quite similar to Yeshua's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7), or some of the Tanach's Wisdom literature. From ancient Christian testimony, James lived as a quasi-ascetic. He did not drink alcohol, ate vegetarian, did not bathe or shave or use perfume. James, being regarded as Just, was one who prayed and interceded for his fellow Jews constantly. Given such a lifestyle as one set aside from the womb, a man such as James would also not have had sexual relations. The work of the Kingdom of Heaven utterly consumed the attention of James.

Some may object to James being celibate and single. Did not Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:5 ask, "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" (NASU). Was not James among the brothers of the Lord? Mark 6:3 notes these brothers to be "James and Joses and Judas and Simon" (NASU). We know that Judas/Jude survived long enough into the late First Century C.E. to produce an epistle, a text which is connected to him being the brother of James (Jude 1). We can safely assume that Jude was probably married. James, on the other hand, died in approximately 61-62 C.E. (*Ecclesiastical*

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<sup>7</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea: *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C.F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), pp 59-60.

*History 2.23.11-18*). The description of him as semi-ascetic would not lend strong support for him ever having married.

## The Apostle Paul's Challenge

Some of the most difficult questions, involving marriage and singleness, are raised from the opinions expressed by the Apostle Paul. For certain, Paul lauded the value of the married estate, as he used it as a frame of reference for understanding the relationship of Yeshua to the assembly (Ephesians 5:21-23). He acknowledged, "each has his own gift from God, one in this way, and another in that" (1 Corinthians 7:7b, 2020 NASB), as marriage was a legitimate gift granted to some by God. But, Paul also recognized celibate singleness as an equally valid gift, granted by some to God. Within marriage, there were duties which both a husband and wife were to fulfill to one another (1 Corinthians 7:3-4). The challenge for many, is that in the estimation of Paul, while marriage had value, for him personally being single had more value. He stated,

"But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they abide even as I" (1 Corinthians 7:8, author's rendering).

For Paul, marriage as a necessity, was available for those who needed to experience heterosexual intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:9). But for Paul himself, he saw a significant value in celibate singleness, in how a single person could be fully dedicated to the Lord's work:

"But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:32-33, NASU).

Paul did not speak from the vantage point as someone who was irresponsibly spurning marriage and parenthood; he spoke from the perspective of one who had a distinct mission assigned to him by the Lord (Acts 9:15). The Book of Acts bears witness to the significant assignment he was commissioned to undertake for the expanse of the good news in the Mediterranean. While many of the Jerusalem apostles and leaders remained largely constrained to the environs of Judea—precisely because of marital and family commitments—Paul had a freedom to be mobile. Paul and his company were able to more easily move about the Diaspora, declaring the good news and seeing congregations of Messiah followers established. And one can see from his testimony, that the work the Lord had given Paul was extremely stressful (2 Corinthians 11:24-31)!

If Paul had been married, none of us today would benefit from not only the legacy of his epistles—but we would not benefit from his work as one of the major figures for spearheading the expanse of the good news out into the Greco-Roman world. In his own words, he asked, “Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife. . .?” (1 Corinthians 9:5a, NASU). His conclusion, though, presents a difficult challenge for many to weigh: “we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Messiah” (1 Corinthians 9:12, NASU). Paul recognized marriage and family, while good things blessed by God, **were entitlements to be given up in view of the massive burden of Kingdom labor.** His example is one to be seriously considered by Messianic young people, as we contemplate the days ahead.

## Giving Up Entitlements

The Bible provides readers a variety of perspectives as it involves human living on Planet Earth. The court speaker of Ecclesiastes 9:9 exclaimed, “Live joyously with the wife whom you love all the days of your fleeting life that He has given you under the sun during all your fleeting days—for this is your portion in life and in your toil that you labor under the sun” (TLV). The perspective of Qohelet was largely one where human life was transitory and fleeting, although it did contain beautiful aspects. The perspective of the Apostle Paul, in some of the final days of his life and ministry, were, “For we brought nothing into this world, So we cannot take anything out of it. But having food and clothing, with these things we shall be content” (1 Timothy 6:7-8, TLV). Given the challenges and stresses of much of what he had endured, Paul knew never to take the basic essentials of living for granted. Both the perspectives of Qohelet and Paul have their place—but Paul was an active servant of Yeshua, whereas Qohelet was a court philosopher in the Southern Kingdom. Whose perspective do we need to be considering more closely, when we evaluate our time today?

When I was at Asbury Theological Seminary (2005-2009), the statistical possibility of a man and woman getting married, and then having a divorce, was estimated at around 55% (without any other factors considered). Today that rate has dropped, but the cohabitation rate of unmarried heterosexual couples has skyrocketed! **Marriage comes with a huge risk.**

Many throughout our rather small and insular Messianic community, know the difficulties of having a Messianic marriage. *You just cannot find another single man or single woman, and then “get married.”* For perhaps a majority of Messianic Jews, their major criteria of getting married, is whether or not a potential husband or wife is Jewish. Many of today’s Messianic

Jewish couples, often have a unique story regarding how they were brought together. Likewise, given the small size of our faith community, when a Messianic Jewish couple has been dating, and then breaks up—or gets a divorce—many indeed know about it, and indeed talk about it!

Given the small size of the Messianic movement *and* being in full-time ministry, my personal ideology toward marriage has always been: **we either do this right, or not at all.** My responsibility is to replicate the type of marriage modeled to me by my parents, something which to date, at almost 44 years of age, has never been possible—even with our family being in the Messianic community for almost three decades. Fortunately, I do not look at marriage or children as an entitlement. In the third decade of the Twenty-First Century, it is a privilege and a luxury, and not everybody gets to have it. If I had been married immediately out of college or seminary, our ministry would not have the array of resources it has produced. Rather than time committed to a wife and children, I have instead been able to commit time to research and study. While some might look at my example, and conclude that they need to pray harder for all of the single men and single women in the Messianic movement—I would ask you to consider praying for something far more important. **Pray for a more egalitarian Messianic culture to emerge, where married couples and singles are looked at as being co-equal, welcome, and able to contribute to our spiritual vitality.** Marriage should not be treated as a barometer of greater spiritual maturity.

One of the major words about the Last Days is that there will be “marrying and giving in marriage” (Matthew 24:38), and then the flood of judgment will come. Those who see matters such as marriage, family, and children as entitlements guaranteed to every Believer—may be less apt to pay attention to *when we are in history*, than those who do not recognize them as guaranteed, with their attention focused on the coming Kingdom. It is widely concluded that the 144,000 sealed servants of Revelation are going to be mainly composed of male celibates (Revelation 14:4). Perhaps one of the main reasons they have to be dramatically sealed by God, is because of failing to be adequately recognized as leaders because of their single status.

The life examples of Yeshua, James, and Paul ask each of us some questions we often do not consider enough. Yet, if we consider ourselves as Messianic Believers to compose “the end-time move of God,” **that means things are never going to be normal or ideal.** Marriage and family can be a great gift and blessing, to those granted these things by the Lord. But celibate singleness can also be a great gift and blessing, as was modeled by Yeshua, James, and Paul. They left us with significant spiritual legacies to be taken more serious by us in the future unfolding!