



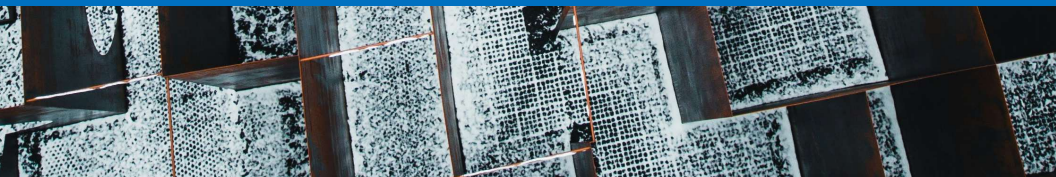
OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



MAY 2025

NON-JEWISH BELIEVERS NAVIGATING
THE MESSIANIC JEWISH MOVEMENT



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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries
and Messianic Apologetics*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

Outreach Israel News is the monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries, a non-profit organization with an emphasis on reaching, teaching, and encouraging the Messianic community. Subscription to **Outreach Israel News** is without cost and supported only by donation.

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OLM UPDATE

May 2025

J.K. McKee

NON-JEWISH BELIEVERS NAVIGATING THE MESSIANIC JEWISH MOVEMENT

Have you taken a recent look at who is present at your typical Messianic congregation or synagogue, certainly here in North America? While it is not universal, in many places it is non-Jewish Believers—and not necessarily Jewish Believers—who make up the majority of people in attendance. *This has actually been the case for many years.* Many of these people are fully committed to the Messianic mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, Israel solidarity, and in standing against anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.

Yet one significant factor needs to be raised: How long have these people been involved in things Messianic? 2-3 years? 4-6 years? 8-10 years? 15-20 years? 25-30 years? When reviewing how long, a majority of the non-Jewish Believers in today's Messianic movement are likely to have been involved, it is definitely in the single digit years. Families like mine, which have been involved since 1995, a full three decades as of this year's Fall High Holidays, are very few and far between! Many non-Jews who come into the Messianic movement, do not make it past three years. Many will end up returning to a traditional Christian environment, or leave for an alternative place.

So why might there be such a high turnover rate?

Every person or family, from an evangelical Protestant background, tends to have a unique story or series of events, associated with why they have investigated things Messianic. Unlike Messianic Jewish Believers, who need a congregation or synagogue to maintain their Jewish heritage and resist assimilation—non-Jewish Believers getting involved in the Messianic movement, can often be because of many varied reasons. And, not only is each person or family different, but each Messianic Jewish congregation or synagogue is also different, which directly affects their Messianic experience and how long they may stay.

Getting Involved

Because non-Jewish Believers make up the majority of those involved in Messianic Jewish congregations and synagogues, at least in North America, the factors involving *why* such people would get involved in things Messianic, necessarily need to be probed. Certainly everyone has their own story, regarding how they got led into the Messianic movement. Some of the initial, starter points, can vary across the spectrum:

1. Someone was invited to a congregation's *Shabbat* service on Saturday morning, and/or to a member's home for an *Erev Shabbat* meal.
2. Someone attended a Passover *seder* presentation at an evangelical church, led by a Messianic rabbi, later wanting to find out more about the Messianic Jewish congregation or synagogue represented.
3. Someone was reading Holy Scripture, perhaps a critical passage like Matthew 5:17-19 about the Torah not passing away, or simply wanting a better handling on the Old Testament.
4. With the rise of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism in our world, many want to be part of a faith community where they can tangibly support Israel and the Jewish people, perhaps also having a better idea about where the world is, in terms of pending end-time events.
5. Many feel that the Messianic Jewish experience is closer, and is more authentic, to what the Believers in the First Century C.E. had.

It does have to be emphasized, that there are many non-Jewish people, who get pulled into the sphere of influence of things Messianic, because they have been inappropriately sensationalized into thinking that everything Christianity has stood for throughout history, is utterly pagan. This ranges from things like Christmas, Easter, and Sunday Church, and can go all the way to the Trinity, going to Heaven or Hell upon death, and the inspiration of the Greek Apostolic Scriptures (NT). What has developed (or some might now say, devolved) into the Hebrew Roots movement, is more often where these

kinds of people end up—often because Judaism is believed to be utterly pagan, and to be staunchly rejected as well.

Non-Jewish Believers who enter into Messianic Jewish congregations and synagogues, tend to be far more stable and fair, when it comes to their previous Christian experience. They do often recognize some of the limitations of traditional Christianity, and its frequent approach to the Old Testament. They recognize that Judaism and Christianity have had a complicated relationship, but that efforts have been made by many to counter the negative affects of anti-Semitism. They also tend to have a burden for the salvation of the Jewish people, and want to eagerly co-labor in the Messianic mission, where they can.

When my family entered into the Messianic movement in 1995, this is something which had been preceded by my father's death in 1992, my mother remarrying in 1994, and the new blended family searching for the right place to be spiritually planted. My late father, as a lay leader and Sunday school teacher, definitely saw the significance of Jesus in the feasts of Israel, and in the Jewish Roots of Christianity. Six months into their new marriage, Mark and Margaret Huey went on a Zola Levitt tour to Israel (December 1994), where they were supernaturally impressed by the Lord to remember the Biblical feasts. By the Fall High Holidays of 1995, our family was getting pulled into a Messianic Jewish congregation in Dallas, Texas. Some unique circumstances, involving the new course of life we were placed on, directed us into the Messianic movement.

Like many who are called from evangelical backgrounds, we went through a period of transition. From late 1995 to early 1996, we attended *Shabbat* services on Saturday, while continuing to attend Church on Sunday. We were surely participating in various appointed times, but at the same time remembered Christmas in 1995. We knew that Jewish people did not eat pork, and wanted to be sensitive to what we brought to different fellowship meal times. But it was not until Spring 1996 that our family itself made a commitment to go Biblically kosher. 1995-1996 was our first year through the Torah cycle. Our family made decisions based on what we believed was the leading of the Holy Spirit, as we were convicted that what was taking place in the Messianic Jewish movement, at the time, was a more authentic

expression of faith, consistent with the First Century Believers.

Did we make some mistakes, in our early years of entering into the Messianic movement? Yes. While our family was being convicted of the importance of things like *Shabbat*, the festivals, and kosher—and we did not force our opinions or newfound views onto our extended family and friends—we were not adequately prepared to answer many of their questions and criticisms. At most, the main material out there, offering some alternative views for common inquiries involving the ongoing validity of the Law, came from the 1995 *Jewish New Testament Commentary* by David H. Stern. And while this was an adequate resource for many things, it did not always answer what we needed help with. So some of us, in various weak moments, did make various inappropriate remarks, perhaps invoking terms like “lawlessness” or “the Church system.” Yet, we never went as far as some did, overplaying apparent pagan influences on historic Christianity—or even writing our relatives to never mail us Christmas cards or Christmas presents, *or even contact us again*.

Some of my initial tests, involving my long term involvement in the Messianic movement, came when I was in college. I did get involved, and was initially welcomed, in various on campus Christian groups and Bible studies. Many knew that my family was involved in things Messianic, and I would be asked many questions about what made us a little different. There was not a huge amount of material available, which I felt comfortable referencing people to. A number of the books circulating at the time, deliberately overplayed paganism, rather than looking at the positive contributions of the Synagogue and Church, and how the Messianic movement is continuing the legacy of two significant faith traditions. It was in college that I had my initial calling into full time ministry, which doubtlessly kept our family locked to what God was doing with the emergence of this unique faith community.

Continuing

The first several years, for non-Jewish Believers being involved in the Messianic movement, can be an exciting time. Participating in the weekly *Shabbat*, which for many congregations and synagogues is an all-day activity—ranging from a morning service, *oneg* or fellowship

meal lunch, afternoon studies, and possibly even an evening *havdalah*—can truly be the highlight of one’s week. Involving oneself and one’s family, in the annual appointed times, is to do something which Yeshua or Jesus truly did! They are definitely seasons of significance for one’s local assembly as well, with exciting events. While eating a kosher style of diet, mainly by giving up pork and shellfish, can have its challenges for many—it also can invite people to try a selection of new foods and recipes. Some of these may include traditional Jewish dishes, or delicatessen favorites, eaten by one’s Messianic Jewish friends and colleagues. It may also involve experimenting with some new dishes.

The Messianic Jewish movement is admittedly a very small group of people. There are not Messianic congregations and synagogues everywhere. In fact, it is not unusual for some to have to drive an hour or more, on *Shabbat*, to attend services. Many Messianic Believers do not have a congregation to go to, at least on a weekly basis. And, even with people who are able to easily attend weekly services, one’s Messianic congregation or synagogue, may not be very large. This is especially true when you think about teenagers and young adults, needing to interact with others in their age bracket. To compensate for some of this, but most especially to keep Messianic people across broad geographic areas connected, there have definitely been regularly held regional and national Messianic Jewish conferences. Perhaps the most well known, and long lasting of these, has been the annual Messiah Conference in Grantham, PA. A place like this is where those in seemingly “isolated” congregations, get to interact and fellowship, with the much larger, worldwide Messianic movement. Many non-Jewish Believers, navigating through the Messianic Jewish movement, should make it their business to attend at least one Messiah Conference.

As various non-Jewish Believers get exposed to the greater Messianic movement, beyond the confines of a local congregation or synagogue, it can quickly be obvious how it is a still developing and maturing faith community. If one was originally part of an established Protestant denominational tradition, going back several centuries, then it can be plain enough how the Messianic Jewish movement is still developing and maturing in many areas. Some consider it to be

an important, end-time prophetic move of the Holy Spirit. Others are working toward Messianic Judaism becoming a recognized and established branch of Judaism. The Messianic movement is in a strong position to declare the good news of Israel's Messiah to the Jewish community, and also help many non-Jews better appreciate their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures.

Yet at the same time, today's Messianic movement tends to be behind the curve in many areas as well, where the institutions of the contemporary Jewish Synagogue and Christian Church, are much stronger. Sorting through many of the standard questions, of Biblical reliability and cosmic origins, are not easily conducted within today's Messianic movement. Matters of modernity and post-modernity, and having to sort through many of the social and ethical challenges of our day, are frequently dismissed. If parents have a high school or college student, who is having to wrestle with various matters of faith, and having to wonder if the Holy Scriptures are trustworthy, the Messianic movement does not tend to offer very much in helping. The religious culture, of far too much of today's Messianic movement, has broadly tended to decide to ignore many of the contemporary challenges of our day. These are the kinds of things which non-Jewish Believers, from established and mature evangelical Protestant backgrounds, do not usually appreciate about the Messianic community.

One matter, which one will quickly find within one's Messianic participation, is encountering some kind of sensational teacher or leader, using a platform of the Hebrew Scriptures to promote "nuggets" of insight or wisdom. While the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement tends to get far more attention in the area of false teachings, hype-laden messages, and false end-time predictions—the Messianic Jewish movement is not entirely immune to these sorts of matters, either. One of today's most publicly known Messianic Jews, has seen his influence grow, precisely because of having a compelling, sensationalistic message—to the point where he is regarded as an actual prophet by hundreds of thousands! Many non-Jewish Believers, being Divinely called by the Lord into the Messianic movement—and focusing on various "big picture" matters—learn how to quickly navigate sensationalism and fundamentalism. Many

others, though, find themselves strongly influenced by it—especially if it involves some kind of determined or strong-willed end-time prediction. There can be a learning process for many!

Another significant matter, which will also occur within the scope of one's Messianic participation, is sorting through your first Israel or Jewish crisis—and seeing how one's local Messianic congregation, and the larger Messianic community, responds. While this has been significantly piqued since the terrorist attacks of 07 October, 2023, those of us involved in the Messianic movement, for many years, have seen our fair share of crises come and go. One of the first matters our family had to experience, was the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin in 1995. We have had to go through multiple Israeli election cycles, anti-Semitic threats and attacks, and different stages of the Middle East peace process, among other things. These kinds of matters can frequently spark end-time speculation, but can also, if kept unchecked, cause a great deal of fear and paranoia. For certain, being a part of the Messianic Jewish movement means a focus on Israel, the Middle East, and prophecy. Yet this also has to be done rationally, and not sensationally. That is frequently not always possible.

Bumps Along the Road

As various non-Jewish Believers continue their participation in the Messianic Jewish movement, it is inevitable that there will be some kind of “bump” along the way. Perhaps it will be something external, as one receives criticism from one's Christian family or friends. Or perhaps it will be something internal, as there might be a conflict or tension, of sorts, which occurs with some aspect of the Messianic Jewish experience. Messianic Judaism is not evangelical Protestantism, and as such is a still-developing and still-maturing religious movement.

The original Messianic Jewish vision was to provide a place for congregations and synagogues, where Messianic Jews could believe in Yeshua as Messiah, and not have to assimilate into wider Christianity. It would be a place rooted within Judaism and the Jewish community. It would be a place to see Jewish outreach and evangelism occur, in a Jewish context, per the thrust of Romans chs. 9-11. Yet, in the past several decades, more has obviously been occurring, with

scores of non-Jewish Believers, being called by the Lord to embrace their faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel, and participate as co-laborers with Messianic Jews in the salvation of the Jewish people and restoration of Israel.

How easily, or not, has Messianic Judaism adapted to more taking place, beyond some of its original vision? When non-Jewish Believers in Messianic Judaism experience some unwelcome incident, they often fail to consider how they cannot expect the Messianic Jewish movement to operate like an evangelical denomination.

How many stay?

Sooner or later, non-Jewish Believers involved with Messianic Judaism, will have to sort through a negative encounter or incident of some kind. *Non-Jews in Messianic Judaism will find something they disagree with.* While frequently, one might be inclined to think that it may have something to do with a Messianic Torah lifestyle, some Jewish tradition they do not understand, or various Messianic Jews possibly thinking that their identity is being infringed upon—this may not actually be the case. There are Messianic Jewish Believers who welcome non-Jewish participation in various outward aspects of Torah, provided they do not pretend they are ethnically or culturally Jewish, and that they are active participants in the Messianic Jewish mission and stand with Israel. They certainly have no issue with non-Jewish Believers being involved in weekly Torah study.

After several years of being involved in the Messianic Jewish movement—three years is a good number—there might be something which comes up, **entirely unexpected.** Various non-Jewish Believers, committed to a Messianic lifestyle involving *Shabbat*, the festivals, and a kosher-style diet—might experience a conflict, of sorts, with Messianic Jewish Believers, over various aspects of their value system. *What do we do about this in life? What do we do about that in life?* This kind of clash is likely to take place over an issue someone did not at all anticipate, and it can often result in a non-Jewish individual or family questioning their long-term participation in the Messianic Jewish movement. This does not necessarily mean that such persons have turned on Israel or the Jewish people in God’s

plan; but it might mean that a long-term, congregational association with Messianic Jewish Believers, is something incompatible for them.

I myself can attest how I have gone through seasons of incompatibility with the Messianic movement. There have been times in the past, when I have actually disagreed with the Messianic movement, more than I have agreed with it. **It has never been over the centrality of Israel proper or the Jewish people in God's plans, or the significance of the Messianic lifestyle.** It has always been over secondary and tertiary issues, which can be navigated and outflanked. For example, after almost thirty years of being involved in the Messianic movement—Messianic Judaism has had very little to communicate to the McKee family over matters involving dating, marriage, and family. This is an area where the strong, Protestant, and notably Scottish egalitarian values, which my parents Kimball and Margaret McKee raised me with, have had various tensions with what I have encountered in my Messianic Jewish experience. My assignment in today's Messianic movement, has largely forced me to place these matters off to the side, given our incompatibilities.

Why Bilateral Ecclesiology Does Have an Appeal for Some

Bilateral ecclesiology largely espouses the idea that while all Believers in Israel's Messiah are a part of the Ephesians 2:11-13 Commonwealth of Israel—that such a Commonwealth of Israel is to be bifurcated, between the ethnic Jewish people/Messianic Jewish community on one side, and the Christian Church on another side. Many are of the opinion that this is an unnecessary division in the people of God, and runs contrary to Yeshua's John 17 prayer for unity. Others are of the opinion that maintaining a separate Messianic Jewish community, is necessary for generational cohesion. All Believers in Israel's Messiah are involved in matters of Israel, to be sure, but that the Messianic Jewish community needs to be largely off to itself.

Not everyone in the Messianic movement adheres to a bilateral ecclesiology. **I do not adhere to a bilateral ecclesiology.** Yet, when non-Jewish Believers get involved in Messianic Judaism for a season, are appropriately enriched by their faith heritage in Israel's Scriptures, and rightfully understand how God is not finished with the de-

scendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—what might they do, when some aspect of Jewish culture or the Jewish experience, is incompatible with their evangelical Protestant value system? Many, who are genuinely called by the Lord into the Messianic movement, find ways to maneuver around differences of perspective on life matters. Others, who may not be so called, find a bilateral ecclesiology model inviting. They may end up returning to a Christian church environment. This may be a church which is friendly to Israel and the Jewish community, opposes anti-Semitism and replacement theology, and believes in the moral principles of Moses' Teaching. But the main reason such a non-Jewish Believer may have been seen to vacate Messianic Judaism, was that direct, permanent involvement in the Jewish experience, was too much for one to spiritually or psychologically handle.

I do not adhere to a bilateral ecclesiology. But as a matter of information, non-Jewish Believers not being able to fully navigate some aspects of Messianic Judaism, does contribute to some adhering to it.

A Long Term Approach

For non-Jewish Believers called by the Lord to participate, on a permanent basis with the Messianic Jewish movement, I can say that navigating this faith community or sphere of influence, **is something which never ends**. There are always going to be challenges with people and matters of Torah legalism, or various Messianic Jews overplaying their Jewish identity at the expense of their Messiah identity. There will be problems of people forgetting their personal relationship with Yeshua, who taught them how to love others, serve others, and sacrifice their human flesh daily.

It is absolutely imperative for us today to understand Yeshua within Judaism, and restore the Messiah to His Jewishness. But along with that, there is also the significant, end-time mission today's Messianic movement is to accomplish. It is often in knowing how the Messianic movement has a vitally important role to play in the days leading up to the Messiah's return, where various non-Jewish Believers have been assigned to participate, as co-laborers with their Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters—contributing with unique gifts, talents, and skills *for the long term...that many choose to stay*.