One of the biggest, divisive issues in contemporary theology, involves women in ministry. There are denominations which support females serving alongside of males as co-leaders of the assembly, ordained as pastors, and there are other denominations which strongly oppose females serving in such a capacity. When it comes to marital relationships, there are those who believe that a husband leads the family while the wife follows behind him, and there are others who support partnership marriages where husband and wife are co-leaders of the family. How should today's Messianic movement best approach this?

This resource, *Men and Women in the Body of Messiah: Answering Crucial Questions*, is divided into two main discussions. The first part, "Answering Evangelical Questions," familiarizes today's Messianic people with the evangelical Protestant debates which have taken place between complementarianism (equal in value, separate in roles) and egalitarianism (equal in value, open in opportunities). The second part, "Answering Messianic Questions," discusses how the issues involving women in ministry, marriage, and singleness, have been approached in our faith community. A third part of this resource, "Is Polygamy for Today? The Case Against Polygamy," forthrightly addresses the blight of plural marriage which has manifested in various sectors of the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement.

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE BODY OF MESSIAH

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Answering Crucial Questions

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.blog

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE BODY OF MESSIAH

Answering Crucial Questions

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION ..... **xi**

MEN AND WOMEN:
ANSWERING EVANGELICAL QUESTIONS **1**

"Today, there are significant trends in the contemporary Church, which demonstrate that traditional gender roles are being challenged. Quite disturbing is how many individual churches incorporate not only females as leaders, but how various denominations are ordaining women to the pastorate." *6*

"There is a Creation order detailed in Scripture, where the man was created first, and hence the man bears the responsibility of leadership in both the home and the church. Woman was created to be the man's helpmate." *11*

"Old Testament examples of women operating in leadership were intended to shame weak-willed men who should have been leading, but failed to do so." *16*

"While there is ontological equality of men and women in Christ, it is also clear that there are distinctions maintained in Scripture." *18*

"The teachings of the New Testament are clear: the man is to be the head or leader of the household. Only some creative, theological gymnastics can get around this certain teaching of the Scriptures." *26*

"In spite of the compromising trend that promotes a doctrine of 'mutual submission,' godly wives are supposed to submit to their husbands as an act of obedience to God." ... *37*

"It is very true that Jesus and the New Testament writers treated women with a great deal of honor and respect. This does not mean, though, that they endorsed female leadership in the church." *47*

"Women played an important role in the New Testament church, but not as leaders or teachers. In fact, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 explicitly tells women to keep silent." *56*

MEN AND WOMEN:
ANSWERING MESSIANIC QUESTIONS **67**

"Men and women have equal value and dignity in the eyes of God from Creation, but they have been created to occupy different leadership roles." *72*

"Mankind fell from grace because Adam did not lead, permitting his wife to lead and be deceived by the serpent." *76*

"Torah only presents males as capable leaders of the community, not females." *79*

"Torah presents men as head or leader of the household, not women." *82*

"Torah upholds male leadership in the family, because the husband has the right to cancel the oaths and vows of his wife and daughters." *85*

"Women occupying positions of prominence or leading is an exception in the Bible; it is not something normative to God's order." *91*

"The writings of the Apostles make it clear that wives are to submit to their husbands."95

"Paul had a high regard for women, but his writings do not permit females serving in high positions of leadership in the Body of Messiah." *98*

"In spite of some of Paul's own personal opinions, celibate singleness is not at all to be encouraged in the Body of Messiah." *103*

IS POLYGAMY FOR TODAY?
the case against polygamy 111

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 167

BIBLIOGRAPHY 169

STATEMENT OF FAITH 191

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: *Encylopaedia 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
MARV: Messianic Apologetics Revised Version*
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)

* This is a modified and adapted edition of the public domain World Messianic Bible (WMB).

Introduction

One of the things which I have highly regarded from the broad Jewish tradition, is that people are encouraged to ask questions. A significant virtue of the Jewish people, is that people not only talk, but they are encouraged to speak their minds and develop opinions about both God and the issues of the day. Being raised in an evangelical Protestant family, it was emphasized that each Believer can read the Bible for himself or herself, going to God with one's concerns. I was also raised where if there were any important topics facing us, our extended family, our local church, or society as a whole—such issues **were openly discussed.** It is witnessed in both Judaism and Protestantism, how issues facing one's community should not go unaddressed indefinitely, especially if inaction or avoidance of something could lead to generational harm.

People in today's broad Messianic movement, in a similar vein, tend to be open-minded when it comes to a variety of theological issues, particularly as it involves the centrality of Israel and the Jewish people in God's plan, the ongoing validity and relevance of the Torah for the post-resurrection era, and more generally the Jewish Roots of the faith (both in the Second Temple and post-Second Temple periods). If you attend any Messianic congregation, Torah study, Bible study, home fellowship group, etc., you will certainly see a wide array of issues and topics addressed—which would scarcely be touched in your average evangelical Protestant church, to be sure. I have widely appreciated the openness of many people in today's Messianic movement, from both Jewish and Protestant backgrounds, to not only discuss various "inconvenient" issues, but to demonstrate an open-mindedness to (re)evaluate previously held beliefs and theologies, putting them to the touchstone of Holy Scripture.

From time to time there do arise various issues where those within today's broad Messianic movement, tend to be very close-minded, and even a bit rigid and controlling, when alternative points of view are mentioned. One of the biggest issues which has started to significantly stir—beneath the surface for sure—involves **men and women in the Body of Messiah.**

Men and Women in the Body of Messiah

It is no secret that in both Conservative and Reform Judaism, as well as in many evangelical Protestant denominations, that both men and women can be ordained as either rabbis or pastors. For certain, both men and women can serve side-by-side within the leadership structure of various local synagogues and churches, as both facilitators and teachers. In stark contrast to this, most of today's Messianic congregations and synagogues are led entirely by males, few females tend to serve within the leadership structure of the assembly, and almost no females would be expected to give a teaching on *Shabbat*. This is then widely reflected in the marriages of many Messianic men and women, where the husband is the leader of the family, and the wife is expected to follow and defer to him, in most if not all matters. In terms of congregational and familial leadership, the broad Messianic movement is a virtual carbon copy of complementarian Protestantism, where male leadership and almost exclusive authority is upheld as the ideal.

Anyone who has closely followed my teachings over the years, knows that I have taken a huge risk by openly identifying myself as an egalitarian. I believe that in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were created as co-equal partners, to be tending Creation together (Genesis 2:23), and that as a result of the Fall, a battle of the sexes erupted (Genesis 3:16). I believe that salvation history has been steadily returning humanity to what was lost in Eden, and that with the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah and His sacrifice, the equality of the sexes has been restored (Galatians 3:28). *Men and women are to serve as co-leaders of the assembly, and husbands and wives are to serve as co-leaders of the family—in mutual submission to each other as equal partners (Ephesians 5:21).* Instruction in either the Tanach or Apostolic Writings, which appears to be restrictive toward women (i.e., 1 Timothy 2:11-15), needs to be reevaluated for what it communicated to its ancient audience first, *before* we begin deducing Twenty-First Century applications. And perhaps most important to consider, is that there are scores of intelligent and capable women in today's Messianic community—far more capable than many men—who are dismissed as potential leaders, teachers, and facilitators, precisely because of their gender. There are also many Messianic marriages I have directly encountered, where there is little love and respect, precisely because the husband has been encouraged to be an autocrat, and not approach his wife as an equal.

In my many ministry interactions with people over the years, the Messianic community is hardly one-hundred percent complementarian. There are many people who attend male-led and male-directed Messianic assemblies, who keep their opinions to themselves. More frequently than not, those who are egalitarian leaning, are younger people. When such

young men and young women ask legitimate questions from the Holy Scriptures, they often find themselves patronized, ignored, and silenced.

My simple, yet complicated goal in Messianic ministry, is to help facilitate stability across what I believe is *the* end-time move of God. I want to see each and every one of us, Jewish and non-Jewish, male and female, be encouraged to employ all of our gifts, talents, and skills in the Lord. I want an environment where men are encouraged to look at women with respect as their equals, and where women do not have to be in fear of being treated as second class or inferior any longer. And, if we truly are getting closer and closer to the Messiah's return, we are not going to be able to handle any of the difficulties of the Last Days too easily, if we are a faith community composed of strong men and weak women. We will only be able to achieve the Kingdom's objectives if we are a faith community composed of strong men *and* strong women.

It is my sincere hope that this resource, *Men and Women in the Body of Messiah*, raises the critical questions we need to be asking in a fair and reasonable way. I hope for you, that it leads to further investigations into one of the biggest theological issues and discussions facing the *ekklēsia* today.

J.K. McKee, Editor
Messianic Apologetics

Men and Women: Answering Evangelical Questions

Anyone who receives a broad-based theological education today, will quickly find that there are a number of issues upon which scholars, congregational leaders, and laypersons not only disagree about—but will starkly divide over. One of the biggest, divisive issues in contemporary evangelical Protestant theology, involves **women in ministry.** There are denominations which support females serving alongside of males as co-leaders of the assembly, ordained as pastors, and there are other denominations which strongly oppose females serving in such a capacity. When it comes to marital relationships, there are those who believe that a husband leads the family while the wife follows behind him, and there are others who support partnership marriages where husband and wife are co-leaders of the family.

More books, articles, analyses, refutations, counter-refutations, blogs, and op-ed pieces, have been composed on men and women in the Body of Messiah, than one frequently knows what to do with! Over the years, I have gathered and collected many pieces of information on debates over women in ministry, husbands and wives in marriage, and the differing and complex feelings of people involved—which have certainly overwhelmed me at times. As someone who likes to be well-informed and logically sort through the different perspectives involving a debate like how males and females should relate to one another in the community of God—I have had to definitely pace myself and choose my words carefully. Like many on both sides of the discussion, I have been affected by emotionalism, and cannot say that I have never been offended by some of the positions I have seen represented or opinions expressed. I have also wondered how in the world I should best present the relevant issues to those, who are not too familiar with the main components of the theological debate.