OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

REACH TEACH ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE

APRIL 2009

CROSS GRAINING

OUTREACH ISRAEL
NEWS
REACH TEACH ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online

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.

There is only one assembly of chosen ones/elect, the people of Israel, of which all Believers in Messiah are a part. God does not have two groups of elect: Israel and "the Church."

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

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the saints 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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OIM UPDATE
April 2009

We have just celebrated the Spring festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread, and have commemorated the waving of the First Fruits beginning the start of the Omer Count. We are quite busy about the Father's work, encouraging His people to continue to labor among this lost and perverted generation, making a difference for Him! The tasks of God's Kingdom never subside, but rather they continue to be present in our hearts. We seek to reach, teach, encourage, and disciple those who receive this newsletter, our many Internet postings, and are blessed by our teaching materials.

It is during this special time of year that I would like to encourage you to take the Counting of the Omer seriously. It is first seen in Leviticus 23:15-16, as one tallies the days and weeks toward *Shavuot*:

"You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD" (ESV).

I have compiled two devotional books (*Counting the Omer* and *Sayings of the Fathers*), which were written specifically for encouraging times of reflection and prayer during this unique period. This year, we will be celebrating *Shavuot* with our local congregation here in Orlando from May 29-31. You are welcome to join us! (Please call us for details.)

This month, with the great contrast between what is transpiring in the world—and our faithful desire to simply obey and please the Lord—I was prompted to write an article entitled, "**Cross Graining**." Hopefully as you read it, you will realize the very unique call that the Lord has upon your life. Representing the Holy One of Israel in this world, with all of its challenges, might at times be discouraging. *So be encouraged*. You are not alone! In fact, the Lord says that He has a call upon your life to be a part of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation—called to do some important work as His representative:

"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

The Apostle Peter elaborates on this, coupling it with how many have stumbled over Messiah Yeshua:

"For *this* is contained in Scripture: 'BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.' This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,' and, 'A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE'; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed. But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NA-

TION A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;" (1 Peter 2:6-9).

J.K. McKee contributes an article entitled, "**Adopting a Messianic Lifestyle**," reproduced from the forthcoming paperback edition of *Introduction to Things Messianic*.

Finally, in order to get some feedback from a few of our readers, I have included a short "red flag" test. I hope that this will make you think about some of the things that are occurring in and around the Messianic community today—in an effort to encourage critical-thinking skills.

May you be blessed in your pursuit of the Holy One, and if and when we can be of service to you in prayer, counseling, or comfort, please let us know!

Blessings, William Mark Huey

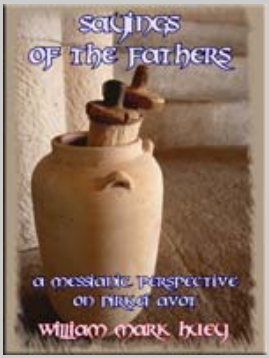
COUNTING THE OMER

Have you ever considered the command of Leviticus 23:15-16 to Count the Omer, and wondered how this applies in the modern era? Have you ever wondered how this decree could be more meaningful and fulfilling in your Messianic walk of faith? What critical lessons can be learned in the time between the festivals of Passover and *Shavuot*?

If you can identify with these questions, then *Counting the Omer: A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot* is just the book for you!

SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS

A Messianic Perspective on Pirkei Avot



Sayings of the Fathers: A Messianic Perspective on Pirkei Avot takes readers through not just one, but two years of fifty-day reflections—and six bonus days—of some of the ancient wisdom seen in this valuable text. You will not only be introduced to some of the key views present in the Apostolic period, but also be able to weigh the value that the Jewish Sages have in your own personal study and reflection upon the Scriptures. Be prepared to join into an ancient discussion that spans the ages as you reflect on these words. Be blessed as your faith and outlook on the world are enriched, and you have more to take to your Heavenly Father in prayer!

CROSS GRAINING

by Mark Huey

During the Spring season, as the annual transformation of nature reinvigorates the landscape from dull browns to vibrant greens and verdant colors of emerging flora, the cycles of life once again come into focus. Convincingly, the rebirth of dormant nature subliminally reminds even the hardest heart—whether one wants to believe it or not—that there is renewed life after apparent death. Scientifically this phenomenon can be readily explained in relatively simple terms on a tangible, even verifiable level. This is good, because these consistent and somewhat predictable realities, confirm that the human environment has relative stability leading to perceived security in the here and now. Yet, beyond the present state for the Believer in the God of Creation (with even a modicum of understanding about the concepts of the intermediate state and resurrection), this is a wonderful time of year to meditate upon the possibility of future renaissance and spending eternity in the presence of the Almighty!

In the Judeo-Christian world, the themes of deliverance from the bondage of sin and/or resurrection of life dominate not only the discourse, but are woven into various religious activities that commemorate either Israel's escape from Egypt, or the sacrificial death and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah. For the Messianic community of faith, fully aware of the instructions regarding the appointed times of the Lord, it is a unique privilege to weave together not only the Spring *moedim* (Leviticus 23:5-14), but also the recognition that the Lamb of God has fulfilled the atoning sacrifices required for access to the Most High (Hebrews 10:19).

Each year, increasing numbers of seekers, sincerely desiring to know more about God and His ways, are being exposed to an amplified traditional Passover *sedar* meal that more fully explains the progression of His plan for the world (Genesis to Revelation). Now, in locations all over the globe, people that can classify as "end-time saints" who know Messiah Yeshua and keep His commandments (Revelation 12:17; 14:12), are faithfully participating in these commemorations. **It is awesome to witness born again Believers learning about the things that Messiah Yeshua did!**

While contemplating these thoughts, in conjunction with keeping abreast of the world and national events—as the proliferation of knowledge and information increases exponentially (Daniel 12:4)—an image flashed across my mind that I thought was applicable to the circumstances of the season. I must confess that while I am not an avid angler, I have read and imagined and even seen documentaries on the illustration that came to mind. I pictured a vibrant, foaming river or stream that cascaded down a rocky gorge—with a great number of fish seeking to jump upstream against the rushing flow. Of course, the thought of salmon seemingly flying against all odds, in their instinctive nature to spawn upstream, was what I was observing in my mind's eye.

For a moment, as I contemplated this scene, I first thought about how we as Believers are in many respects very similar to the spawning salmon, in their strug-

gle to fight against a torrential flow of a freshwater stream tumbling to the ocean. With the world seemingly heading pell-mell toward the events described in the Book of Revelation, the frigid ice-melting enhanced rapids reminded me of the direction our world is headed. The flying salmon are struggling to locate upstream in calmer waters, like Believers swimming against the tide of humanity, who are unfortunately heading toward a God-less eternity.

As I let my mind wander on these thoughts, I then saw a more refined image of a single fish that was not only trying to move upstream, but was actually swimming across the stream from one eddy to the other. As this particular salmon leapt from one side of the stream to the next, the flight was in direct opposition to the flow of the river. I concluded that this must be a "cross grain" pattern, rather than a straight up grain or upstream approach. While the fish was making progress up the incline from side to side, the possibility of exposing its broadside to the water was making its transverses even more precarious. However, to make progress, the fish had to locate calm eddies to rest and regain strength before the next flight across and up the river. In light of the current season, I wondered if the eddies might not be like the times of refreshing when the feasts of the Lord are commemorated. Perhaps the Creator had designed these times when rests for the body, soul, and spirit are ordained, in order to renew our strength to persevere in the struggles of life?

These images faded from my reflections, and I wondered to myself if this was an impression of what life as a **Messianic Believer** might be like, as we travel the path that has been chosen for our walk with the Messiah. After all, while we are Believers in the Messiah of Israel and have faith in His accomplished work at Golgotha to atone for our sin, we also are fully convinced that obeying and observing God's commandments is applicable to us and should be embraced as His people. We have the double blessing of not only knowing the Messiah Yeshua as Savior and within us a resurrected life with the Father (1 Peter 1:3-9; 3:15), but we also have the opportunity to receive blessings from the Lord by being obedient to Him (Deuteronomy 28; 1 John 3-5). Unlike a mass of today's Christians, who are like a great majority of salmon simply jumping straight upstream to spawning spots—we are actually a small slice of the remnant, perhaps a remnant of the remnant for that matter, who can be considered some of the saints called to do *all the things* that our Father has commissioned His people to accomplish.

Moments later, I thought about the words **"cross grain."** They came to my mind and I could not help but think about the suffering of our Lord Yeshua on the cross for our sins. I had heard in years past about groups that promote the concept of **"cross training,"** or living a crucified life, and the play on words sparked my attention. I was even reminded of a commitment I made decades ago to incorporate the principles of living a **"crucified life"** into my own walk of faith, as the Apostle Paul once wrote, "I have been crucified with Messiah; and it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

There is no doubt that Paul was one of the foremost recognized Messianic Believers who has ever lived. He lived during a time when the larger world, as it

then existed, was at diametrically-opposed odds with not only the claims of the Jewish people who served the One True God—but furthermore those who recognized Messiah Yeshua as the Deliverer of Israel and that world! If he had known about the salmon, I would suspect that Paul would probably identify with the concept of going "cross grain," with the fomenting tide of his generation. The First Century followers of Yeshua were an infinitesimal minority among the mass of humanity.

Have you ever really considered the calling that was on the life of a servant like the Apostle Paul? Certainly, Paul was called to be a spokesman for the Messiah among the nations (Acts 9:15), but he was also someone who suffered immensely for it (Acts 9:16). Here was a man who was not only reviled by many of his own Jewish brethren, but he also had to move against the collective philosophical streams of his age. If you ever feel like you are having some challenges in your chosen "Messianic" walk with the Lord, as you might be criticized for your convictions by various family members, friends, or colleagues—while you are in good company, few of us have ever had to endure the hardships that the First Century Believers had to experience. Consider the great difficulties a man like Paul had to encounter on his multi-year missionary journeys. Paul labored upstream, as he testified of the gospel message to fellow humans along the roads and sea lanes of the Roman Empire. He offers a summary of some of the trials he endured:

"Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked a night and a day I have spent in the deep. *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure" (2 Corinthians 11:24-27).

The Apostle Paul desired not only to see people born again and delivered from demons, but most especially to see Jewish and non-Jewish Believers united as one Body of Messiah, defined as God's "one new humanity" (Ephesians 2:15, NRSV/CJB). *Even today, seeing this enacted in the Messianic movement is a great challenge with significant obstacles.* Those of us who work toward this end often face a great deal of harassment and insult, and an Adversary who does not want to see the Father's people restored.

I would suspect that for Paul, a loyal Hebrew of Hebrews, he was most assuredly thankful when, even after he fully exposed himself by going across the grain of his contemporaries in the torrid marketplace of ideas where he labored, the restful eddies of life, exemplified by the commanded times of rest in the year (cf. Acts 20:16), must have been a joy to reach. If anyone ever needed a time to rest, recuperate, and reflect upon his work for the Kingdom, it was Paul! Thankfully, Paul was given the time to exemplify a faithful walk with the Messiah that we can emulate (1 Corinthians 11:1), and also record his thoughts for future generations!

In light of the current season, when we have just remembered the deliverance from Egypt and Yeshua's resurrection, there is one Pauline passage that

speaks to a renewal and recommitment of pursuing the work of the Kingdom. In his letter to the Philippians, in a somewhat confessional and autobiographical way, Paul described not only some of his personal history, but most importantly his desire to be useful in the call that was upon his life. The Apostle Paul recognized the significant value he possessed in being a faithful Jew and a Pharisee—yet at the same time also recognized that his human pedigree was not much in view of what Yeshua had accomplished for him. His desire was to move forward in the calling God had placed upon Him, so that his life would be so conformed to Yeshua's that he would endure sufferings, death, and ultimate resurrection—in a similar manner to that of his Lord:

"If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the assembly; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Messiah. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Messiah, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Messiah, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, **that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.** Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Messiah Yeshua. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Yeshua**" (Philippians 3:3b-14).

For modern day "cross grainers" called into the Messianic community of faith, this passage is one that can be understood in some rather significant ways. I personally find going back and reflecting on these truths to be especially pertinent—particularly the recollection that our righteousness is not to be derived from our human Torah observance—but rather is found "through the Messiah's faithfulness" (CJB),[1] or His faithful obedience to the Father unto death (Romans 3:25-26). Our obedience to God's Torah is to only come *as we emulate our Messiah Yeshua*.

As we bounce from one eddy to another eddy of the rushing stream—attempting to broadside us on our life's journey upstream—we need to consciously recall the responsibility we have to move ahead smartly and with the right motives. While you remember the blessings of having a greater revelation of God's instruction to you, living a life of Torah obedience, share such a truth in a manner that properly reflects His character. Be tempered by the mercy and grace of our Heavenly Father. Precede wisely, as Ancient Israel was called to be a proper testifier of God's truth to the nations surrounding it (Deuteronomy 4:6).

Paul might not have had the possibility of a mental impression of salmon

[1] Grk. *dia pisteōs Christou* (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ).

spawning to work with, yet he did use the Scriptures to gain understanding and encouragement for the call God placed upon him. In Paul's search to know the Almighty, he frequently turned to Biblical books like Psalms or Isaiah for comfort and strength. Isaiah, similar to Paul, was also known exhorting people to know the Lord. He was able to use illustrations from animals like the eagle, which soared over the Judean and Samarian mountains, to encourage people to overcome the challenges of life and travel against the streams of humanity that have forever opposed the Creator God:

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary" (Isaiah 40:28-31).

Recognizing yourself as a Messianic Believer, cross graining a contemporary, fallen human culture—**be encouraged that you are not alone!** Find solace in images like salmon spawning, or eagles gliding, that can remind you not only about the challenges we endure, but also the opportunity we have to be refreshed and renewed on the path of righteousness. It is possible, similar to the Prophet Elijah, to think that we are the only ones enduring the hardships of life. But remember, despite Elijah's weary and despondent query of the Lord, He reminded him that he was not alone, but indeed that there were some 7,000 who had not bowed or kissed Baal (1 Kings 19:4-18).

Today, brothers and sisters, there are far more than 7,000 Messianics. *Our numbers are steadily growing.* The Lord is preparing a people to greet Him at His return. May we each be counted among such "cross grainers" as we wait upon Him. I pray that we would all be renewed in our desire to share the good news—a message that can keep us, and countless others, from being swept into the great divide by the ravaging storms and flood waters of life!

Until the restoration of all things…

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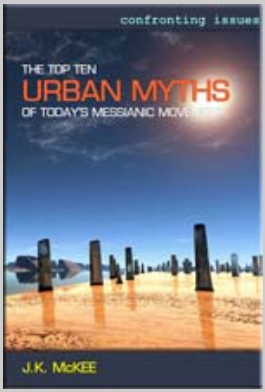

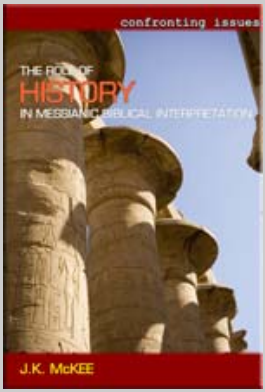

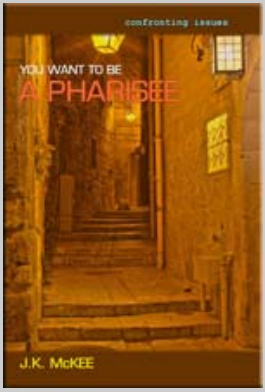

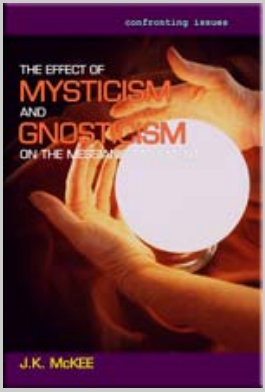

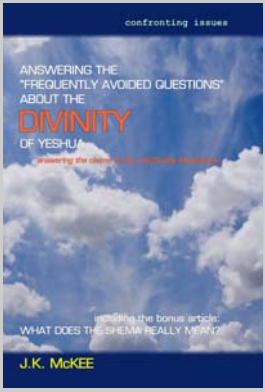

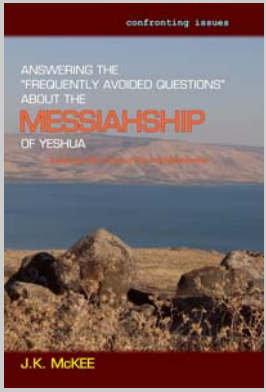

RED FLAG?

by Mark Huey

As an educational ministry that diligently sends out teachings and exhortations throughout the week, we discuss a wide array of issues inside the office. We frequently wonder: Are we accomplishing our goal to reach, teach, encourage, and disciple the Body of Messiah? Is this being achieved via our articles, books, booklets, and various audio teachings? Does the Body of Messiah benefit from our diligent research of hard-hitting issues? With some of this in mind, we would like to get some feedback to ascertain if our audience is learning some of the *very basics* of the Messianic walk of faith that we are encouraging.

Recently, we received an advertisement from multiple sources (and therefore, I assume it is permeating the Messianic community via prolific e-mail forwarding) that began with the following statement:

> ***Every single prophecy in the Bible was written to a Hebrew, within a Hebrew culture and in the Hebrew language.***

As someone who has likely read the whole Bible, does this statement sound accurate to you? Or, might it raise a "red flag" in your thoughts?

- Is "every single," used here, a kind of hyperbole or exaggeration? Or, could it be a misstatement to promote a certain point of view?
- Does "the Bible," used here, mean the Tanakh or the Old Testament? Or, does it mean the entire Word of God from Genesis to Revelation?
- Do "Hebrew culture" and "Hebrew language" disregard the broad cultural world of the Bible? What about Ancient Israel's neighbors, and the Roman Empire to which the Apostles went out and proclaimed the gospel?

These are not trick questions, but rather sincere inquiries we have as our ministry monitors the Messianic world and some of the things happening this year. We know from previous experiences that discernment is not often one of the strong suits of those pursuing Messianic things. But we are hopeful that our persistent teachings and instructions will have a positive impact. While things in the short term may be dominated by some sensationalistic rhetoric, things in the long term will be marked by an ability to help the world with a positive message of spiritual growth and greater holiness.

Please feel free to comment and answer any or all of the questions above. *We really do look forward to what you have to say.*

E-mail me at info@outreachisrael.net

Adopting a Messianic Lifestyle

by J.K. McKee

Up to this point in our study introducing the Messianic movement, we have examined some of the aspects of Messianic theology and lifestyle practice. Some of the most obvious differences, between your standard Christian and Messianic Believer, is that Messianics believe themselves to be a part of Israel and not part of a separate "Church"; Messianics believe in the continued validity of the Torah or Law of Moses for Believers; and a growing understanding within the Messianic movement is that the Lord is reuniting the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim with the House of Judah, per the prophecies of Israel's end-time restoration. It is imperative that before we move forward that we discuss the various aspects of the Messianic lifestyle, steps that you need to take if you are new to all this, challenges that you will face, and the appropriate attitude that you should have should you be criticized.

You should be motivated to pursue Messianic things first and foremost because **the Holy Spirit has convicted you** and personally shown you that there is indeed "something" to all of this. Your motivation should be wanting to get the most out of your relationship with the God of Israel, pursuing full compliance with Holy Scripture, and living as a disciple of Messiah Yeshua.[1] You should be motivated out of a strong desire to grow and mature in your faith, and because you are not satisfied with having a stagnant faith. You want to know more about the mysteries of God, and indeed know God better yourself, being more sensitive to His leading.

It is likely that many of you, as readers, come from an evangelical Protestant Christian background, as I do. As such we need to recognize the fact that regardless of what denomination we came from, that denomination had both truth and error. The Protestant Reformation was birthed out of the inherent need for the *ekklēsia* to return to a strong Scriptural foundation and eliminate any non-Biblical, Roman Catholic practices from the faith. This was certainly accomplished to a large extent as your conservative, Bible believing Protestant denominations do not practice Mary veneration, prayers to the saints, confession to a priest, a belief in purgatory, and veneration of images—among other things. Bible believing evangelical Christians rightly teach that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is the only way to salvation. They rightly teach that we must receive Him into our lives for the forgiveness of our sins and that we must emulate Him and His love.[2]

The challenge that people face is the fact that when you are completely honest, and you recognize who the Messiah actually is, you recognize that as the Word of God made flesh (John 1:1) that He embodies ***all of Scripture*** in His teachings, actions, and deeds—and He in no way contradicts it. The foundation of

[1] Greg L. Bahnsen makes the important remark, "Christians throughout the history of the church who have advocated the authority of the Old Testament law in Christian moral instruction, such as the Reformers or Puritans…have done so only because their true Lord and Authority, Jesus Christ, directs them to honor and obey the moral commandments of Moses" ("Response to Douglas Moo," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 391). Similarly, Messianic Torah observance must be focused around what Yeshua has instructed for His followers to do.

[2] I would add that my own Wesleyan background placed a high emphasis on personal holiness and obedience to God via the moral law, positively affecting my own Messianic experience.

all of Scripture is found in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible more commonly called the Law of Moses or Pentateuch. One thing that the Messianic movement emphasizes quite strongly is a return to a Torah foundation in our faith. When an inquisitive Christian begins to study the Torah on a consistent basis, and then begins to examine the Messiah's words in light of the Torah's instruction, he or she often has many questions. The person's understanding of our Lord's ministry and teachings may be challenged. This is because the person does not see Yeshua contradicting the Torah, but rather living it out properly (cf. Matthew chs. 5-7). This runs contrary to much of modern Christian theology which tells us that the Messiah came to abolish the Law, when in fact Yeshua *upholding* the Law is one of the definite proofs of His Messiahship (cf. Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2; Romans 3:31).

The biggest challenge that one will face as he or she enters into the Messianic movement is encountering criticisms regarding the Messianic lifestyle. This is different from one's theology concerning God's elect or Torah study or even the end-times. The criticism that you will face regards how you practice your faith on a daily basis, and the actions that others see you perform (cf. Matthew 5:16).

There are three critical elements that exist when one realizes that the Messianic lifestyle is for them. Three areas where the bulk of criticism against us is often found include:

1. The seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*
2. The appointed times of Leviticus 23
3. The kosher dietary laws

It is likely that many of you reading this publication, and have been involved with Messianic things for any elongated period of time, have no doubt heard about the importance of these things. (In our further studies, we will examine the significance that these areas of obedience have for Believers today, and respond to the criticisms that many encounter.) These three areas may often be described as "hurdles" for the new person. It is not just because these are three things that are often not practiced by Christians today; it is also because there are an incredible amount of stereotypes that exist regarding them, and social pressure not to do them exercised by friends and family. This can be very frustrating for the new person whose understanding of Scripture is growing on one side, but is being criticized on the other side.

We must all remember that the pursuit of truth is not an easy one. Many of the Reformers who protested against the false doctrines of Catholicism were tried as heretics and executed. Our family and friends ***will never*** go to such lengths as this, but people who are new to the Messianic movement do receive confrontational criticism, are often treated unfairly, and can be socially spurned by others. Yet, if one's heart is in the right place, we should all remember that the Lord is merciful to us and will see us through whatever difficulties we may encounter. If you are a new person to Messianic things, remember that God will *only* give you what you can handle. Criticism you may be experiencing is a part of your refinement process so you can perform the life tasks that He has before you. Take encouragement from the following Scriptures:

"You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me" (Psalm 40:11).

"He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me. Selah. God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth" (Psalm 57:3).

"He will abide before God forever; appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may preserve him" (Psalm 61:7).

"For His lovingkindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 117:2).

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).[3]

You must also remember that while the Father will see you through any challenges that you may face, you have a responsibility to forgive others who may slander you and reject you or exclude you. Yeshua the Messiah tells us that if we do not forgive others, than our Heavenly Father will not forgive us. These are some very direct words from the Lord:

"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:14-15; cf. 18:35).

If we fail to forgive others for any criticism that we receive, then God cannot forgive us. Not only will God not be able to forgive us, but we will give the enemy a legal right to harass us. When this happens, we not only damage the communication that we have between God and His Holy Spirit, but also will present the truths that the Lord is restoring to His people in a way that is neither edifying nor constructive. In adopting a Messianic lifestyle, we must demonstrate a *positive* change in our walk of faith to others around us, as opposed to a *negative* change. Be aware that many of the problems that people encounter for becoming Messianic is not exclusively because of how the message was received by Christian friends or family. *How* the message was presented may have something to do with how it was received.[4]

Adopting a Messianic lifestyle is by no means an immediate process. In fact, some of us who have been in this for a number of years are still discovering areas of our lives that need to be altered, as we study the Scriptures more and more and the Lord continually refines us. However, even though these changes do not occur instantaneously, our heart should be in the right place where we allow the Lord to accomplish His will and change us for the better. Slow, consistent growth is by far much better than a rapid growth followed by a rapid decline.

There are challenges you are going to face if you are relatively new to the Messianic understanding. Because the Messianic movement, as compared to mainstream Christianity, is relatively small, be aware of the fact that you will find yourself lonely at times. But be rest-assured that God is with you and that there

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[3] "Righteousness" (Heb. *tzedaqah*, צְדָקָה; Grk. *dikaiosunē*, δικαιοσύνη) has a variety of contexts, notably including God's vindication of His people. As the Psalmist cries out, "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; be gracious to me and hear my prayer" (Psalm 4:1).

[4] Do note how James 1:2 says "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." The verb *peripiptō* (περιπίπτω) actually means "*so to fall as to be encompassed by*" (*Thayer*, 504), better rendered as "when you fall into various trials" (NKJV). None of us is to actively seek trial, and do keep in mind that much of the criticism Messianics receive is actually of their own doing.

are others in your same situation. Be thankful for the multiple tools available via venues like the Internet and e-mail, where you can communicate with others of like mind all over the world. However, do try to be in some kind of fellowship with Believers of like mind, that search the Scriptures with you, encourage you, and most importantly are there to support you when personal issues arise that are not theological.

One of the most common issues relates to those who are just coming into the Messianic movement and are still involved in a Church setting. The person wonders whether or not he or she should stay in Church, or move exclusively into a Messianic congregation. This is challenging, not because the new person realizes that much of what is taught in mainstream Christianity is incomplete (or even shallow), but often because of friends and family and their valued fellowship. This is a dilemma for many, and one where there is no definite answer. I can only tell you that based on my experience your time in the Church is likely to not last forever.

As the Holy Spirit moves upon you to search out your Hebraic heritage more and more, the Messianic understanding becomes much more than just "enrichment" to your faith or a phase—it becomes a lifestyle. Keeping *Shabbat* and the festivals take top priority to Sunday Church and Christmas and Easter. You begin to have less in common with your Church friends because you cannot communicate with them on the same spiritual level. In time, many of your Church friends could shut you off. Some of you who are new to Messianic things might have an open door with your Church friends right now to share new truths with them, but in time do not be surprised when those doors are closed. But when they are closed, have faith that the Lord will have prepared you for new opportunities and that you are in His will. You planted seed that could very well germinate in the future, when you encounter your Church friends again.

The greatest challenge regarding adopting a Messianic lifestyle is for us to overcome the hurdles and prejudices that we all have, and seek Scriptural compliance. While doing this, we must demonstrate to our Christian family and friends the testimonies of people who are truly seeking God and are experiencing a positive lifestyle change. Furthermore, we must maintain good relations with these people, and endure the criticism we may encounter. *We must live and act and love like Messiah Yeshua!* As you are criticized, you will be forced back into the Scriptures like never before, and will be forced to reevaluate some things you were taught in the past. But, be aware that your faith will not be stagnant. You will have to rely on the Lord unlike never before! And above all things, that is what He wants. Our Heavenly Father wants you to make Him the first priority in your life, **so He can bless you and prepare you for great things ahead.** That is what the Messianic lifestyle is ultimately about, and regardless of any obstacles any of us may have faced—it is what keeps people like me committed to the Messianic movement.

***This article has been reproduced from the forthcoming paperback edition of* Introduction to Things Messianic.**

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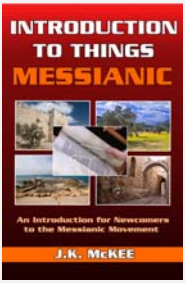
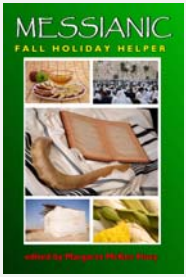
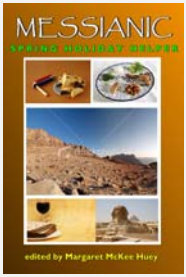






KOSHER YOUR PLATE

edited by Margaret McKee Huey

Here are some wonderful salad recipes for all of you Messianic Kosher cooks to enjoy as the Spring and Summer produce is ready to pick!

Israeli Salad

3 large cucumbers
6 roma tomatoes
Greek salad dressing
fresh mint leaves
feta cheese

Peel and chop up the cucumbers. Chop the tomatoes. Mix both together and add 2 tablespoons of fresh chopped mint leaves. Mix with 3-4 tablespoons of Greek salad dressing to make a nice consistency. Add feta cheese to your taste on the top and throughout. Enjoy!
Serves 6

Fruit Salad on Spinach

6 cups spinach leaves
½-cup sliced celery
1 can mandarin oranges
1 apple, cubed
½ -cup seedless red grapes, halved
½-cup raspberry vinaigrette
3-tablespoons toasted sliced almonds

Mix all together and top with almonds.
Serves 6

Spinach Salad

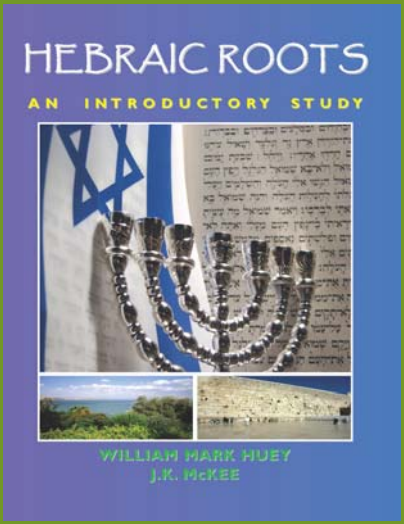
6 cups spinach leaves
¼-cup virgin coconut oil
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
¼-cup orange marmalade
1 orange peeled and sectioned
pine nuts
olives

Mix the coconut oil, balsamic vinegar and the orange marmalade to make your marmalade dressing. Add to the spinach and toss to coat thoroughly. Mix in the orange sections. Add some pine nuts and olives to garnish if you like.
Serves 6.

A new release coming from TNN Press:

HEBRAIC ROOTS

AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY



paperback edition ©2009

Hebraic Roots: An Introductory Study has been written as a primer for the emerging number of people who are being drawn into a more comprehensive grasp of the ancient roots of our Biblical faith. As a family that has been active in the Messianic movement since 1995, we came to the unanimous conclusion that a book about many of the areas for growth would be beneficial for the many thousands who are being prompted into a fuller and richer pursuit of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--and who truly want to live the way that Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), our Jewish Savior, lived.

Have you heard about the Messianic movement? Have you heard about the significance of the Torah for a Believer's walk of faith? Have you been in the Messianic movement for some time? Do you even know why you are in it? Do you need a foundational introduction to the Hebraic Roots of our faith and who Yeshua truly is in His Biblical and historical Hebraic context? Do you want to know more about what God is doing in this hour? *If you have ever asked any of these questions, then this workbook will help get you started!*

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