



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

REACH TEACH ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE

SEPTEMBER 2011
WHO WILL WE SERVE?



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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 congregation 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

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OIM UPDATE

September 2011

The month of September has traditionally been one of our favorite times of the year, as the weather begins to give us a break, with school starting and multiple memories that link back to the early weeks of this month. Since embracing a Messianic lifestyle, we have been blessed with participating in not only the Fall Feasts of the Lord, but also in rejoicing as the annual Torah reading cycle comes to a close and begins anew.

As September winds down on the secular calendar and Elul arrives on the Hebrew calendar, the Hebrew month of Tishrei looms as *Rosh HaShanah* will soon welcome another year. This will be followed by the Ten Days of Awe culminating in the commemoration of *Yom Kippur*. Once again, similar to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *Chanukah* (the Feast of Dedication), and *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles), we find these to be special times of reflection to press in closer to God. For many years we have sent out different teachings at these times via our Virtual Series, which is intended to strengthen you and see you be further encouraged in your walk with the Lord. This year, we once again pray that you will be blessed, and we urge you to use these teachings and exhortations to reach out to others, who are seeking a deeper and fuller walk of faith. Additionally, the new paperback *TorahScope Haftarah Exhortations* will be available for the upcoming cycle, as Messianic Believers examine the weekly Torah readings yet again.

With the thought of rededicating one's life and service to the Lord, this issue of OIM News has some exhortative, encouraging, but also challenging teachings as we prepare our hearts to enter into the Fall High Holidays. J.K. McKee has written a short piece, called "What Will the Fall Holidays Mean for You?" as he reflects upon the significance of the Fall holidays that are soon to come, and current changes occurring in the Messianic community. I was prompted to write an article entitled, "Who Will We Serve?" in order to guide each of you to overcome some of the negative reports that we are constantly bombarded with by television news, Internet postings, and/or radio commentators. It seems like everywhere you turn, simply to be informed about what is happening in the world, you are blindsided by a diverse array of negative reports. The cumulative effect can be discouraging, if we do not have the Lord and His Word to focus our attention upon.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that we should not remain aware of what is happening in and around our world on a regular basis. For example, we should all be in prayer for what is anticipated at the United Nations on September 20-21. The Palestinians are seeking a UN vote on a resolution that declares an independent Palestine state, disregarding any compliance or agreement with the Israelis. This action has the potential to ignite serious conflict in the region. Therefore as always, we recommend that people pray not only for modern-day Israel, but as directed by the Psalmist, the peace of Jerusalem:

"*A Song of Ascents, of David.* I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.' Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together; to which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD—an ordinance for Israel—to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For there thrones were set for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you. May peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.'** For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, 'May peace be within you.' For the sake of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good" (Psalm 122:1-9).

We appreciate your continued support of our Prison Outreach efforts!
Advancing His kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

WHAT WILL THE FALL HOLIDAYS MEAN FOR YOU?

by J.K. McKee

The Fall High Holidays of *Rosh HaShanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkot* always tend to mark a turning point in the yearly cycle of the broad Messianic faith community. It is definitely a time when we reflect on what has transpired in the past year, and we look to the future and consider what will happen in the forthcoming year. At the present time, there is a great deal of attention being focused by many groups of Messianic Believers on what is transpiring in Israel, especially with the possibility of a Palestinian state being declared. While this is disturbing, to be certain, two-thirds of the world's countries already recognize an independent country called "Palestine," including Russia and China. And while some of us may not like to hear it: What if an independent Palestinian state is indeed a part of God's sovereign, end-time plan regarding Israel and the Last Days? Do any of us really want to be found getting in prophecy's way?

With much discussion occurring in the Messianic world surrounding events in the Holy Land, what piques my attention far more—because it affects my daily activities as a Bible teacher—are spiritual developments in the Messianic movement. Just the other day I received a certain publication in the mail, and the thought I immediately received was a line spoken by M to James Bond in *You Only Live Twice*: "This is the big one, 007. That's why I'm out here myself." Suffice is to say, the spiritual war for the heart and soul of the emerging Messianic movement is becoming more and more complicated. Even though Messianic Believers tend to think that apostasy can only occur within outside ranks, there is nothing that is Biblically prohibiting apostasy existing within our own ranks.

There is much that each of us can find wrong with the world, our Messianic movement, or our lives at this time of year. But whether we have entered into the final stage of human history, as many think, or we are simply in for an elongated period of negative trends, Yeshua's word still remains most relevant: "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). As is quite typical of many *Rosh HaShanah* services throughout the Messianic community, they will be swelled with various Christian visitors expecting the pre-tribulation rapture. Others will be at a place where the congregation can demonstrate how "super Jewish" it is, and while non-Jewish visitors are likely going to show up during the Fall High Holidays, this is not encouraged to be something regular. Other services will stay away from any traditional liturgy or remembrances, and be places where so-called "traditions of men" are attacked. **How much of what we will be commemorating in the coming weeks is going to be that concerned with bringing honor and glory to the Lord?**

Over the past few years, my own personal approach to the Fall High Holidays has been a little mixed. On the one hand, I fully believe and consider this to be a very important time for all of God's people to press into Him, and to seriously pause and consider some significant themes of holiness. *Yom Kippur*, even

with the final sacrifice of Yeshua covering our sins, should still be a time when we desire to make reconciliation with other people, and intercede for Israel and the world. *Sukkot* should be a time when some of us get a little bit of rest, as we contemplate the Lord dwelling with us, and the inevitability of the New Creation. Yet, because people are people, the Fall High Holidays have tended to instead be a time for me when I get to review the strategies for taking on the spiritual and theological challenges of the day.

When I look at the 2011 Fall High Holidays, what do I see? While there are many things that I could be justifiably upset about, many of those circumstances are beyond my human control. *What am I going to do to make sure that I have been faithful to the Lord, so that the 2012 Fall High Holidays allow me to have confidence that I have continued in His work?* This past year, aside from some of the economic challenges, and with a family definitely in transition as we are going to all relocate out of Central Florida to North Texas—I have committed myself to seeing more and more titles added to the TNN Press Book Printing project. Some of these have not taken that long to read through and see updated, although at least two titles have taken quite a bit of energy and proverbial “steam” out of me (expanded to around 500 pages). Within the next year, more titles will be completed. But I have always known that this was going to be a multi-year project, with a need to stay committed and consistent. The preparation work is far more grueling than making sure that funding is available for the release of new paperback titles!

As I think about the Fall High Holidays of 2011, and the different things present within the Messianic world, I also cannot forget how in the past year various people have contacted me directly, and have quite clearly said something to the effect: *“Do not change anything that you are doing.”* They have recognized that there have been some ups-and-downs in the Messianic world, involving some spiritual and theological issues, religious politics, and the instability that comes with it all. For them, Outreach Israel and TNN Online have been a steady voice, guaranteeing them a fair-minded view on the issues that matter. This does not mean, of course, that we are not anticipating issues that need to be addressed, where we might differ from some within the Messianic world. The big, uncharted frontier for Outreach Israel will definitely be *reaching out* to those issues and subjects that have largely remained unseen by Messianic eyes and untouched by Messianic hands. So, between now and the Fall High Holidays of 2012, it will be interesting to observe what transpires...

So, not quite knowing what unique things the future may hold, let us simply consider a doxology offered by the Apostle Paul, when all of God's people must turn to Him for answers:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? [Isaiah 40:14; Job 15:8; Jeremiah 23:18; Job 41:3] For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

WHO WILL WE SERVE?

by Mark Huey

Upon surveying the tumultuous world scene today, it is understandable to conclude from a finite human perspective that we are faced with significant global challenges to peace, security, and relative prosperity. Despite the best efforts of world leaders and astute economists, unsettling turmoil exists specifically in Arab countries as evidenced by the “Arab Spring,” while the global economy precariously oscillates on the precipice of stagnation, recession, or worse. Even with unbridled communication enhanced by the technological strides of the past few decades, making access to overwhelming flows of information nearly instantaneous, the problems persist. One would think that with all of the advances in human ingenuity, that the ability to operate and especially cooperate politically and economically more efficiently in the world would be greater, but this does not appear to be the case.

So, with the disconcerting realities of what is transpiring in the world, what should followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be doing to overcome these challenges—especially as the attacks upon our walk of faith continue to increase? How important is it to be about following the patterns established over the millennia, by the faithful who have endured equal if not greater predicaments, without the benefit of modern technology? This is a challenging question that surfaces in the hearts of many of today’s Believers—and yes, even Messianic Believers—as the volleys of fear-inducing reports enter into the minds and the thoughts of people, through hearing or reading some of the seemingly overwhelming negative news reports. Human nature is not immune to the paralyzing power of pessimistic and unconstructive rumors, hearsay, and bad accounting. History is littered with examples of people who have suffered the consequences of believing a bad report, rather than trusting in the Creator God.

In order to understand this, one need only simply recall the trials of our spiritual forbearers, as the escaping Israelites were on the doorstep of entering into the Promised Land to fulfill their God-ordained destiny. Recall that God commanded Moses to send in one leader from each of the twelve tribes to survey Canaan, and come back with a report to the rest of the camp:

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, ‘Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers’ tribes, every one a leader among them.’ So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel...When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, ‘Go up there into the Negev; then go up into the hill country. See **what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many. How is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live, are they like open camps or with fortifications? How is the land, is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not? Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land.**’ Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes” (Numbers 13:1-3, 17-20).

Without the availability of modern communication satellites emitting GPS signals, or video cameras to record the report, the twelve spies traveled through the Promised Land for forty days. Upon their return to the camp of Israel, they gave a mixed report about what they had witnessed. Beyond describing the physical attributes which affirmed that the territory was indeed quite fertile and blessed, the ten spies made negative statements about it also being occupied by different peoples who appeared unconquerable:

“When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. Thus they told him, and said, ‘We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.’ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, ‘We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.’ But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us.’ So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, ‘The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size. There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight’” (Numbers 13:25-33).

Only Caleb and Joshua, among the spies sent in to survey Canaan, were filled with enough faith to overcome the challenges. They admonished the camp of Ancient Israel to trust in the Lord for His ability to overtake the inhabitants, and to establish the people in what He had promised for their inheritance. However, as the text reveals, the hearts of the people had been negatively impacted by the overall negative report, to the point of wanting to stone the appointed leaders of Israel:

“Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’ So they said to one another, ‘Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.’ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, “The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against

the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.' **But all the congregation said to stone them with stones.** Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel" (Numbers 14:1-10).

Thankfully, the glory of the Lord appeared and the stoning did not occur. But, the consequences for the majority of Ancient Israel, in believing the bad report and not trusting in the Lord, were devastating. All of those older than twenty were to die in the wilderness over the next forty years, except Caleb and Joshua:

"The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'How long *shall I bear* with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me. Say to them, "**As I live,**" says the LORD, "**just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.** Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey—I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness. Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer *for* your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness. According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, *even* forty years, and you will know My opposition. I, the LORD, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die.'" As for the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land and who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing out a bad report concerning the land, even those men who brought out the very bad report of the land died by a plague before the LORD. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land" (Numbers 14:26-38).

As noted above, the ten spies with the bad report actually died in the plague that followed the outbreak of anger noted by the Lord. So, the consequences of conveying a bad report and believing in it, *can be absolutely dreadful if not deadly!*

Why should modern-day Believers in Yeshua be reminded of some of these familiar ancient testimonies, as we face challenges today? Because, simply recalling them, and many others, will serve as reminders that these historical accounts are to serve as instructions, warnings, as well as guides for those who will live in the final period of time before the full inauguration of God's Kingdom on Earth. As the Apostle Paul informed the Corinthians,

"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed

them; and the rock was Messiah. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY' [Exodus 32:6]. Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:1-11).

Even in the First Century, with the *pax Romana* and security of the Empire allowing for excellent regional communications in the Mediterranean, far better than in the time of Moses—Paul knew that it was imperative for Messiah followers to be frequently reminded of the trials and tribulations of the Ancient Israelites. The well known axiom, "If one fails to know history, you are doomed to repeat it," is something that is definitely rooted in past ancient experience and reflection. Paul knew that it was beneficial to recollect the failings and foibles of Ancient Israel's ancestors on a regular basis. He understood that the human proclivity to follow after the fallen nature was rampant. Certainly by systematically reviewing the given Scriptural examples of how tempting it is to fall back into sin, people will be frequently reminded of how to direct their lives in a way that is instead, pleasing to the Lord. Even with the post-resurrection benefit of being filled with the Holy Spirit of the Most High, and empowered to observe His Instruction via the promise of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; cf. Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:14-18), it still remains a choice for people to follow the leading of the Spirit or succumb to their own mortal inclinations.

So, what is recommended for those seeking to please the Almighty in these troubling modern times?

Is there a time tested way to ward off the negative reports, that pummel people day and night *and* from near and far, in order to avoid surrendering to a life spent reacting to negative news? What about following the patterns established ages ago by the ancient Sages, who believed the Word of God and trusted in its precepts, to order their lives and the lives of others? Would not wisdom dictate that those who claim to believe in the veracity of Holy Scripture, spend some time studying and reviewing it, because, after all, these ancient texts contain the good news of eternal salvation—which ultimately overcomes all of the bad news the world can muster?!

Perhaps one of the reasons, that the broad Messianic movement has developed increasing adherents in the past few decades, is because people have faithfully returned to these time-tested means of studying Holy Writ. No doubt, repeating and meditating upon the *Shema* has certainly contributed to a generation of Messianic Believers, who are being reminded of the importance of inculcating the heart and mind with the Word of God. The additional admonition, to pass this understanding on to future generations, is a regular part of the spiritual activities of Messianics every week in the *Shabbat* service:

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the

LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

The significance of the *Shema* is reiterated in the teachings of Yeshua, when He was questioned by an ancient Torah teacher, about what the most important commandment in Moses’ Teaching was:

“One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND’ [Deuteronomy 6:5]. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF’ [Leviticus 19:18]. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).

Here in Yeshua’s response, He first referred to the *Shema*, and then quoted from Leviticus 19:18 about loving one’s neighbor as yourself. It is the continual reminder of the requirement to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and might, and your neighbor as yourself—that should set Believers apart from those who do not believe.

Modern-day seekers of the Most High need to follow in the footsteps of those who have preceded them. This includes taking the opportunity to follow the annual cycle of Torah teachings, via the weekly *parashot*, as developed over the centuries by those who understand that Moses’ Teaching forms the foundation of the rest of God’s Word. However, it is critical that one approach these studies with an understanding that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel! One must survey the Torah and associated Haftarah readings with the knowledge that they are to ultimately point to Him as “the culmination of the law” (Romans 10:4, TNIV). Complimenting a study of Moses and the Prophets with a comprehensive understanding of the Apostolic Scriptures, helps Believers better understand the weightier things of the Torah that Yeshua desired for His followers (cf. Matthew 23:23).

While Yeshua was most concerned with the weightier provisions of the Torah, He did not abolish its other provisions that define the daily conduct of God’s people. This is why Messianic Believers today adhere to things like keeping the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed time of Leviticus 23, and eating kosher. Discovering that the Lord never changed or abolished these instructions is a blessing to those who adhere to them. With this in mind as the Fall High Holidays are fast approaching, there is an opportunity to participate in these as special times of spiritual introspection and intercession, and be rededicated to another year of service unto the Lord. What a great time to reinvigorate yourself and your family in the ways of the Lord!

With the constant challenges of the world hounding each and every one of us from near and far, there is no better time than to follow the pattern of one of

the two spies who received the blessing of returning with a good report. As Joshua surveyed his life years later after conquering the Promised Land, he was adamant to proclaim to his fellow Israelites something that should be the personal motto of each of us:

“And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; **but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD**” (Joshua 24:15).

There is no doubt that the cares and concerns of this world will increasingly come to plague people, with thoughts that attempt to take them away from obeying the command to love the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. The key to avoiding the pitfalls, of wavering belief or lack of faith, is making a heartfelt decision that you and your family will serve the Lord *no matter what*. You will develop a method of study and reflection that keeps you focused on the Messiah Yeshua and His work, capable through you. You will teach your beliefs to the next generation, and be an example to them of one who does not waver in his or her faith.

The days are challenging, but according to the Holy Scriptures, they are going to get worse before they get better. Will you be able to stand for the faith through the battles that lie ahead? Will you have trained yourself to live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)? Will you know that with the help of the Lord, you can overcome the giants that we face each day?

How about dedicating your life to be a dispenser of the good news, rather than succumb to the waves of bad news that will constantly barrage you? *It is your choice*. Who will you serve?

KOSHER YOUR PLATE

edited by Margaret McKee Huey

Here is a wonderful recipe for your commemoration of *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah!*

Apple Mixture

3 cups sliced apples
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon flour
4 tablespoons butter
¼ teaspoon nutmeg

Mix flour, baking powder, salt, and cut in the butter with a knife. Mixing with the knife, slowly add milk. When stiff dough forms, divide it into 6 pieces. Roll out each piece and add portions of apple mixture. Bring corners of dough up and around apples, pinching to hold in place. Prick with a fork and place in greased baking pan. Bake 10 minutes at 350 degrees, then lower to 300 degrees and bake for 25 minutes until browned. Drip honey on top of each. Enjoy! Serves 6

TORAH AS CONSTITUTION

by J.K. McKee

In our generation, we have witnessed a profound growth and expansion of the Messianic movement.¹ Not only have many Jewish people come to a saving knowledge of Yeshua the Messiah, but many non-Jewish Believers have embraced the richness of their Hebraic Roots and heritage in Israel. Many Believers are undeniably awakening to the deep truths of the Torah. Each of us must be disciplined in our Bible study as we apply the Torah's *mitzvot* (מִצְוֹת) or commandments to our lives. We must seek to have a healthy reading of the whole Bible, Genesis to Revelation, in its ancient context and setting. As we do this, issues often pop up that require a little bit of targeted attention.

One area that receives some discussion, in various parts of the Messianic movement, is whether or not the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)—which we usually refer to as **the Torah**—should ever be called **the Law**. A statement that can be heard from time to time in our Messianic faith community, is: *The Torah is teaching. The Torah is not the law*. It is said that Torah just means Teaching or Instruction, and should never be referred to by the term law.

We should all agree with the fact that *torah* (תּוֹרָה) **must**, as far as our *individual selves* are concerned, be viewed as *personal* teaching or instruction. Was it God's intention to codify a listing of rules and regulations that His people would follow legalistically out of some kind of forced obligation? No. The essence of the New Covenant is that "I will put My Teaching into their inmost being and inscribe it on their hearts. Then I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33, NJPS; cf. Hebrews 8:10; 10:16).

However, even when we believe that the Torah is Teaching or Instruction, there is still one issue that remains: Why is the Torah frequently referred to as the Law? Concerning the definition of *torah* (תּוֹרָה), the *BDB* lexicon, one of the most widely used for meanings of Hebrew words, says that *torah* means "direction, instruction, law,"² leaving some things open for discussion concerning the application of *torah* in theology. It references that the Hebrew word *torah* is derived from the root *yarah* (יָרָה), meaning "throw, shoot," "lead, guide," and "teach."³

Torah Translated as Nomos

In the Greek Septuagint, the Hebrew word *torah* (תּוֹרָה) was translated with the Greek word *nomos* (νόμος). (Be aware of how νόμος is pronounced properly as *nōmōs*, with a short ō sound. It is more common, although incorrect, to hear it pronounced with a long ō sound, although the *omicron* [ο] and not the *omega* [ω] is the vowel used.) *Nomos* is a term that in its strictest sense means "law," but such law need not always be Biblical instruction. It can also be representative of

¹ This article has been reproduced from the forthcoming *Messianic Torah Helper*.

² *BDB*, 435; cf. *HALOT*, 2:1710-1712; *CHALOT*, 388.

³ *Ibid.*, 434.

extra-Biblical Jewish Talmudic rulings, Greek or Roman civil code, and can be indicative of laws of nature that govern the universe. L.A. Jervis indicates in the *Dictionary of New Testament Background* how “The Greek word usually rendered ‘law’ by the translators of the NT is *nomos*. This word meant both ‘law’ and ‘custom’ and so could refer to the laws of a society and to that society’s habits and customs.”⁴ *Nomos* (νόμος) can also be used in speaking of spiritual laws, more clearly defined as spiritual constants, which may be viewed as something like the law of sin and death or the law of the spirit of life (cf. Romans 7:6; 8:2).

Many evangelical Christians’ apprehension, to following the Torah as today’s Messianics do, is based on some misunderstanding of the concept of “law.” The problem can be compounded by some Messianics who say that *nomos* was an improper rendering of *torah*, because *nomos* does not strictly mean “teaching” or “instruction.” Certainly, one can recognize the fact that “law” has a bad connotation among many people. But then again, being called “lawless” is not a compliment that most Christians like having directed at them.

The usage of *nomos* (νόμος) for *torah* (תּוֹרָה) dates back to three centuries before Yeshua, with the Jewish scholars who produced the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Hebrew Tanach. According to tradition, seventy translators were split up in separate rooms and they each translated the entire Torah into Greek. When they compared their translations, it is said that they were all the same—and many believed that this translation was inspired of God. Whether what we now call the Septuagint is inspired, to such an extent or not, is unimportant here. What is important here is that the LXX rendered the Hebrew term *torah*, teaching or instruction, as *nomos*, or law. The usage of *nomos* representing the Torah of Moses was carried over into the Greek Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, which many, Messianic and Christian alike (especially me), believe is inspired of the Holy Spirit.

Was this rendering of *nomos* for *torah* a mistake? Some of today’s Messianics would brazenly say yes. Some would say that *nomos* brings with it the idea of strict law, rules and regulations, and it presents a God who is more concerned about strict obedience by His subjects rather than delivering loving instructions to His children. However, the historical background behind this suggests otherwise. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, under its entry for “Torah,” indicates how “The Septuagint rendered the Hebrew *torah* by the Greek *nomos* (‘law’) probably in the sense of a living network of traditions and customs of a people.” However, this same entry goes on and says, “The designation of the Torah by *nomos*, and by its Latin successor *lex* (whence, ‘the Law’), has historically given rise to the sad misunderstanding that Torah means legalism.”⁵ Jewish Bible scholar Pamela Eisenbaum further summarizes,

“That Greek-speaking Jews chose to use *nomos* as the equivalent for Torah should not be taken as an indication of a lack of spiritual fervor or that Jews were becoming more ‘legalistic’ in the postbiblical period. It is likely that Hellenistic

⁴ L.A. Jervis, “Law/Nomos in the Greco-Roman World,” in Craig E. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 632.

⁵ Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, “Torah,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. MS Windows 9x. Brooklyn: Judaica Multimedia (Israel) Ltd, 1997.

Jews found *nomos* the most appropriate or natural equivalent because it expressed a quality highly valued throughout the Mediterranean at the time. Both the Greeks and the Romans placed a very high value on ancestral tradition and the rule of law. That Jews described Torah as an ancient constitution, which they cherished, carefully preserved and protected, and to which they strictly adhered, indicates they were presenting themselves as a society that was credible and comprehensible to Greek and Roman rulers, elites, and intellectuals. Ancient Jewish writers also portrayed Torah not just as one particular constitution, but as one founded on universal principles and in which the noblest ideals of human communal life are embodied. Torah contains the ultimate system of morals and values because its origin is divine; it was given to the ancient Israelites by God via Moses.⁶

The term “law” has never had a negative connotation within Judaism. While the terms “Torah” or “Teaching” may be preferable or more commonplace, you will find the term “law” used in Jewish translations of the Tanach, as well as many Jewish commentaries.

Torah As Constitution

Placing the Septuagint’s usage of *nomos* (νόμος) for *torah* (תּוֹרָה), in an ancient historical setting is important, as the Greek LXX would be used to spread a message about the Holy One of Israel to many people in the Greek-speaking world, before the arrival of the Messiah. With the Tanach transcribed into Greek, many Greeks and Romans came to a knowledge of the One True God, and it paved the way for the spread of the gospel message. This is self-evident by the fact that there were many Greek proselytes and God-fearers in the Jewish synagogues in the Mediterranean basin, as witnessed throughout the Book of Acts.

The Jewish translators of the Septuagint, undoubtedly wanted to show the pagan Greeks the awesomeness of the God of Israel and of His Torah. In rendering *torah* as *nomos*, they used a Greek term that the Greeks were highly respectful of. The five books of Moses composed the *nomos* of Israel, the living, breathing collection of principles, instructions, and directions for how to conduct oneself and one’s community properly—in obedience to the Creator God.

Ancient Greece itself was made up of various city-states, each one known as a *polis* (πόλις). Each *polis* had an official known as a *nomothetēs* (νομοθέτης) or a “lawgiver,”⁷ whose job it was to transcribe and enforce the *nomos* (νόμος) or “law” of that city-state. Historian Oswyn Murray comments, “The figure of the lawgiver (*nomothetēs*) is a response to this double need to curb the power of the aristocracy and maintain the force of customary law. The lawgiver was chosen from among the class of experts, and could therefore be given absolute power to establish a written code.”⁸ The *nomos* of the Greek city-state would not at all be “rules and regulations” to be rigidly mandated onto people, but would rather compose

⁶ Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 83.

⁷ Cf. James 4:12.

⁸ Oswyn Murray, *Ancient Greece*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp 181-182.

the principles that would govern the city, establish an identity for the people, and be concerned with matters of justice. *The nomos would be the constitution.* The Vine lexicon indicates that “*nomos* became the established name for ‘law’ as decreed by a state and set up as the standard for the administration of justice.”⁹ The *nomos* would help to establish the government, which would in turn be able to provide for the order and well-being of the people.

In the Apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees, a related term to *nomos*, *nomimos* (νόμιμος), “conformable to custom, usage, or law, customary, prescriptive, established, lawful, rightful” (LS),¹⁰ is used in a depiction of some of the terrible things that occurred during the crisis that ensued, as the identity of the Jewish people was attacked and subverted:

“And the royal privileges granted special favour to the Jews by the means of John the father of Eupolemus, who went ambassador to Rome for amity and aid, he took away; and putting down the governments [*politeias*, πολιτείας] which were according to the law [*nomimos*, νομίμου], he brought up new customs against the law” (2 Maccabees 4:11, LXE).

This chapter of 2 Maccabees tells us that a Jewish leader named Jason (2 Maccabees 4:10) was responsible for bringing in specific Greek customs and cultural practices (2 Maccabees 4:12-15), which later resulted in sacrifices to pagan gods and apostasy. The source text itself of 2 Maccabees 4:11 indicates something very interesting. 2 Maccabees 4:11 tells us that Jason put down the Biblically mandated form of government derived from God’s Law, and brought in anti-Torah practices. The RSV translates it with, “he destroyed the lawful ways of living and introduced new customs contrary to the law.”

The Greek term *nomos* (νόμος) or its cognates, do not communicate any negative idea. *Nomos*, representative of God’s Torah, is designed to communicate the idea of government, of constitution. Such a constitutional perspective, of the Torah or Law of Moses, was something that was surely opposed by the Syrian-Greeks during the Maccabean crisis of the Second Century B.C.E. Yet, the very promise indicated in 2 Maccabees 2:18 is, “as he promised through the law [*dia tou nomou*, διὰ τοῦ νόμου]. For we have hope in God that he will soon have mercy upon us and will gather us from everywhere under heaven into his holy place, for he has rescued us from great evils and has purified the place” (RSV). Israel will one day be restored, as is promised in His Law.

How important is it to view the Torah as the *nomos*/constitution of God’s people? Recognizing the association of *nomimos* with *politeia* (πολιτεία) in 2 Maccabees 4:11 is useful, because of another important location where *politeia* appears. In Ephesians 2:12 the Apostle Paul writes the non-Jews in Asia Minor, that prior to saving faith, that they “at that time [were] separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” The CJB renders this admonition with, “You were estranged from the national life of Isra’el.” Prior to knowing Israel’s Messiah, they were not a part of *tēs politeias tou Israēl* (τῆς

⁹ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), 354.

¹⁰ LS, 534.

πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραήλ). The term *politeia* not only means “the right to be a member of a sociopolitical entity, *citizenship*,” but also “behavior in accordance with standards expected of a respectable citizen, *way of life, conduct*” (BDAG).¹¹ Attaining citizenship within Israel via Messiah faith is not enough; it must be followed by the appropriate conduct which responsible citizens are expected to demonstrate.

Only in post-Apostolic Christianity will you really find the idea that “law” was apparently something that was bad, such as in the context of the Torah being “rules and regulations” designed to bring Ancient Israel into (hopeless) bondage. But even the idea of the Torah being instructions or directions, or more specifically *instructives or directives*, can be viewed in a negative light. The same is also true with law. It can be viewed as “rules and regulations,” or it can be viewed as *constitution*: the ruling precepts of a government designed to bring justice to a people or society.

It was never the intention of the Jewish translators of the Septuagint to render *torah* as *nomos*, so as to imply that the Torah should be viewed as burdensome regulations and dictates. Rather, it was probably their intention that the Torah should be viewed as the constitutional law of the people of Israel—something to be looked at in a very positive sense. All Messianic Believers today, when encountering the term “law” in their English Bibles, need to similarly adopt the perspective that the Torah serves as the constitution of God’s people Israel. Such Instruction is intended to one day herald a complete reign of global peace, with the Messiah enthroned as King over Planet Earth (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4).

Responsibly Approaching the Usage of “Law”

For a variety of reasons, not all of today’s Messianic Believers approach the Greek term *nomos* (νόμος) from the perspective of *torah* (תּוֹרָה) serving as the constitution of God’s people. On the contrary, some Messianics have been told to approach the term “law” with a great deal of negativity, with a few even taking their various English Bible versions and crossing out the term “law,” and replacing it with “Torah.” But this is very ill-advised. Due to the varied usages of the term *nomos* in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures, it would be irresponsible of any Messianic person to simply cross out the word “law” in their New Testament translation and write in “Torah.” This can actually create more problems than offer solutions, because sometimes *nomos* does not refer to the Torah of Moses. Context always determines how *nomos* is to be properly applied.

Believe it or not, today’s Messianic Believers also need to be a bit more conscious of how they use a term like *torah* (תּוֹרָה), specifically “Torah” without the definite article “the.” In much of contemporary Judaism, *torah* does not always refer to the five books of Moses, but also is intended to include the oral instruction of the Jewish Sages as principally seen in literature like the Mishnah or Talmud. This necessarily requires today’s Messianic Believers, who do not consider the Oral Torah to have Divine inspiration and authority, to not exclusively use a term like *torah* in teaching and conversation, and employ a selection of valid

¹¹ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, third edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 845.

synonyms.

While it is likely that today's Messianic movement, in describing the instruction of the five books of Moses, will use the term *torah* (תּוֹרָה) the most, we should not at all be fearful of also speaking of "the Law of Moses." One certainly needs to have a comfort level in reading and using the term "law" for the Torah, if you hope to be able to reasonably engage with Jewish and Christian Bible scholarship. Likewise, we should also be able to use terms like *Chumash* or Pentateuch, which simply mean "book of five."

With my various writings, you will encounter a variety of terms used to describe *torah* (תּוֹרָה). This includes the rather common terms: the Torah (of Moses), the Law (of Moses), as well as the Pentateuch (the five books of Genesis-Deuteronomy). Another description I have learned to employ is taken directly from John Goldingay's *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*, where he has been most helpful by frequently using the terminology: Moses' Teaching.¹² This is a rather useful and valid term to use for English speakers, for whom only having to use the labels Torah and/or Law can get a little tedious and tiresome at times.

I personally prefer to alternate between Torah, the Law, Moses' Teaching, and Pentateuch. Regardless of which is used, I am most concerned that today's Messianic Believers are allowing themselves to be guided, informed, and molded by the supernatural nature of God's commandments. Such Instruction is to serve as the constitution of the Kingdom of God, and is to teach us about the righteousness and holiness of our Creator.

¹² Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*, pp 27, 29.

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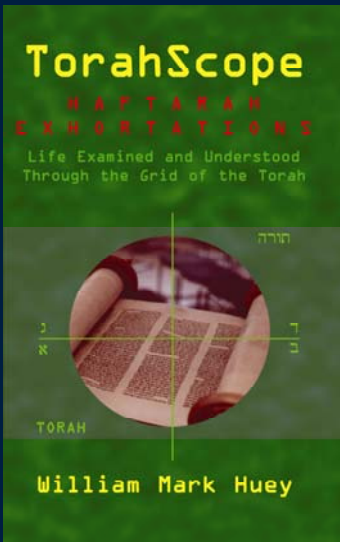
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In Jewish synagogues and Messianic congregations all over the globe, the weekly Torah portion is read on the Sabbath. Traditionally associated with the *parashah* is a small selection called the Haftarah, meaning “conclusion.” This is usually a segment from the Prophets or Writings of the Tanakh (Old Testament) which bears a thematic connection to the Torah reading. While the custom of considering a prophetic section arose during tenuous times in Jewish history when the people were forbidden to study from the Law of Moses, it was something firmly in place during the time of Yeshua (Jesus) and the Apostles (Luke 4:16-17; Acts 13:15).

Commonly in some parts of today’s Messianic community, we tend to forget that the Torah makes up the foundation of the Holy Writ, but by no means is the whole of the Holy Writ. Messianic Believers have a great blessing to consider the associated text from the Haftarah every week along with their Torah studies, from which they



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