

A Gentile's Guide to the Messianic Movement

Introduction:

Basic Concepts: Judaism, Messianic Movement (the Jewishness of Jesus)

Since the seventies, there has been an increasing interest in things Jewish among believers, both Evangelicals and mainline Christians. It would be hard to trace exactly when or from where this trend began, because there have been many different manifestations of this fascination with things Jewish throughout church history. Christianity began as a Jewish movement, when Jewish believers obeyed the L-rd's command to take the Gospel to the Nations, even unto the ends of the Earth. **The Old Testament is a Jewish Document and so is the New Testament** (even Luke was a Greek speaking Jew).

Greek was the international language of the Roman World, especially in the East and the New Testament was written in **Koine Greek**, because this was a language that all peoples could understand: the Jew first and also the Gentile. The **Septuagint** was written by the Greek speaking Jews of Alexandria and was considered such a masterpiece that that its authority was esteemed to be equal to that of the Hebrew editions. Into this linguistic linking of many peoples into one language, appeared the Gospel, a Jewish movement that set out to conquer the world for Messiah, **not by force, but by persuasion** (II Cor. 10:4, 5; II Cor. 5:20).

Jewish people lived throughout the Roman Empire and further east, in India and China. Wherever there were Jewish communities, there were converts - proselytes, Gentiles in various stages of conversion to Judaism - **Sabbath keeping, Kosher eating G-d worshipers**, not quite prepared to undergo circumcision - though more and more were doing so. In the Roman world, proselytes usually outnumbered circumcised Jews about **three to one** in the Jewish communities outside of Israel.

These Gentile converts and their Jewish brethren carried the Gospel

into the second century of the Common Era, However, once persecution of the Jews became severe, the church lost its Jewish contingent (circumcised and proselyte) and became a Gentile institution. Today, with Jewish people rediscovering Yeshua of Nazareth, there is also an awakening among Gentiles who are fascinated by a **Jewish lifestyle** and by a **Jewish approach to spirituality**. It is to this group of Gentiles that this workshop is directed. People who have discovered the Jewishness of the Gospel and want to become involved in two things: **outreach to Jewish people** and **rediscovering the Jewishness of the Gospel**.

Wannabes? Judeophiles (Philosemites - Jew lovers)? Yes and no. Despite a long, sad history of intense persecution from the time of the Romans onwards, **Judaism has welcomed converts on a somewhat smaller, though consistent, scale than Christianity and Islam**. Gentiles have either joined Judaism as full converts, or come alongside as friends of the community, with intermarriage and assimilation going both ways, which is why Judaism has become so racially diverse.

As well, as a religion, Judaism has changed radically over the centuries; with a considerable amount of **cross-pollination** both between various Jewish Communities and between the church and the Synagogue. Two events have galvanized modern Judaism, both Rabbinic and Messianic: the **Holocaust** and the **Birth of Israel**. Jewish pride and anger have joined hands in a rebirth of a nation with growing cultural vitality and the advent of an anomaly, the non-assimilated secular Jew. Gentiles in our society are increasingly friendly, even sympathetic towards Jews and Judaism and many are open to assimilation and conversion. As well, Philosemites outnumber anti-Semites among most believers today.

Stages of Involvement:

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| I. Curiosity: | Wow! (everything even remotely Jewish is uncritically praised) |
| II. Exploration: | What does this mean for me and my spirituality? |

III. Integration: How do I become involved? As a Gentile, or a Convert (hot, issue)?

What does the future hold?

1. Many Messianic Congregations have Gentile majorities and that does not seem to be about to change quickly. Many of these have discovered a **Jewish ancestor** of some kind.
2. Most Jews who are accepting the L-rd are still joining Gentile Christian congregations and unfortunately **assimilating out of the Jewish community**.
3. The hostility and suspicion of the Jewish Community towards the Messianic Movement means that Jews who become involved in the Messianic Movement pay a high price and some secret believers are still sojourning in the Synagogues (**Messianic Marranos**).

Messianic Congregations are unique communities where Jews and Gentiles live together in harmony, following a Messianic Jewish lifestyle (not to be confused with a Noahide Lifestyle). They observe the Feasts and Festivals, and have an increasing knowledge of the particulars of Biblical Judaism and a love for Jews and for Israel. It is a commitment that not all people will be willing or able to make. **It usually means to begin Saturday worship, keep Kosher and live a Hebrew-friendly lifestyle.**

It is not a pulling away from the Gospel, but a **moving towards the Jewish roots of the natural olive tree**, into which the Gentile church is grafted. It is not a salvation by works that wants the whole church to become Jewish; the first Jerusalem council settled that issue. It is, however a commitment to have a part in restoring a balance which the L-rd is bringing back to the church (Rom. 1:16).

Jewish believers and Gentile believers should always be free to follow the dictates of their conscience, because it is the L-rd's calling that each one of us needs to follow (I Cor. 7:17-20). It is also not a moving away from Yeshua into Judaism, although this

sometimes does occur; for in every spiritual quest, there will be casualties. For us, as Messianic Jews and Gentiles, it is exploring an aspect of our faith that has been suppressed and which the church has been deprived of for too long – the Jewishness of the Gospel.

It is also creating a context where Jewish people can respond to the Gospel without having to leave their Jewishness behind. It is being a bridge between the church and the synagogue, **so that understanding and appreciation can replace the centuries of oppression and persecution**. It is a catalyst to root out and eradicate theological anti-Semitism by proclaiming that Judaism is just as valid a context to fully express the Gospel as any other cultural context, **especially since it is the birth context where our faith began**.

It means living as an **outside insider**; if you are Jewish, and as an **inside outsider**; if you are a Gentile. It also means running the risk of being misunderstood and even sometimes discredited (II Cor. 6:4-10). But for many of us, it also means discovering our calling, as born-again disciples, both Jewish and Gentile (I Cor. 7:17-20) and finding our place, and our identity in the body of Messiah, either as a supporter of, or as a participant in what G-d is doing among His Jewish people today. He is both calling them home to Israel (Luke 21:24) and home to the Gospel (Rom. 11:25).

Concepts and vocabulary

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| 1. Bar/Bat Mitzvah | -son/daughter (of the) covenant |
| 2. Bema | -pulpit or raised table to open and read the Torah scroll |
| 3. Brit Chadashah | -new (chadashah) covenant (brit) |
| 4. Brit Milah (mohel) | -covenant of circumcision (one trained to perform the rite) |
| 5. Chasidic | -followers of mystical teachings, with strict ritual observance |
| 6. Chabad (Haredi) | -Chasidic Jews who follow the |

7. **Challah** teachings of teachers (rebbe) and who try and influence all Jews to adopt strict ritual observance (orthodox Jews in Israel hostile to secular authorities)
-sweet braided Sabbath bread, from bread that was placed before the L-rd daily in the tabernacle
8. **Conservative Judaism** -Jews trying to balance orthodox and Reform positions
9. **Eretz Israel** - the land of Israel
10. **Chalacha (Bet Din)** -"to walk", practical and ritual applications of the Torah and the Talmud to daily life (quorum of practicing Jews whose decisions determine correct ritual observance)
11. **Hatikvah** -Israeli national anthem. Literally: "the Hope"
12. **JCC, JNF** -Jewish Community Centre. Jewish National Fund
13. **Kashrut (Kosher)** -ritual procedures for the preparation of food (separate, or proper food that is ritually clean, also anything that is done properly)
14. **Kiddush** -blessing over wine and bread during the Sabbath service
15. **Kipah** -skull cap worn in synagogue and at home by observant Jews
16. **Kabala/cabbala** -mysterious system for finding the "hidden" meanings of the Bible by calculating the supposed numerical value of words
17. **Lunar/Solar Calendar** -based on lunar phases, with provisions to align with solar year
18. **Menorah** -seven branched candelabra, symbol of the divine presence
19. **Mezuzah** -decorative container with scroll of
20. **Mishpocah**
21. **Mitzvah**
22. **Noahide Laws**
23. **Orthodox**
24. **Parashiot**
25. **Pesach**
26. **Reform Judaism**
27. **Shabbat (Shalom)**
28. **Shema**
29. **Shul or shule**
30. **Siddur**
31. **Tallit**
32. **Talmud (Mishnah)**
33. **Tefillin**
34. **Tenach/TNCH**
- Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41 attached to doorposts of observant Jewish homes
-family or community of Jews, local and worldwide
-good deed performed in response to a commandment (mitzvah)
-rabbinic list of Seven (supposed) Biblical Laws for "righteous" Gentiles
-Jews who follow a strict, literal interpretation of the Talmud
-one of 54 weekly portions (divisions) of the Torah
-Passover
-Jews who view Judaism as an historical, cultural heritage
-Sabbath (peace). Traditional greeting, wishing someone the peace of the Sabbath
-"hear" o Israel – the traditional chant of Deut. 6:4-9
-Yiddish for synagogue, from the German word for school
-traditional prayer book used daily, on Sabbath and festivals
-prayer shawl with special tassels and knots
-detailed commentary on the Torah (traditional, ritual decisions and rules, and applications compiled in stages since the Babylonian Captivity and organized by sections and sub-sections) Considered of equal authority to the Torah by many traditional, practicing Jews.
-small leather boxes containing Scripture, attached to the head and the arm during morning weekday prayers
-acrostic for the Bible: **Torah**: (Law)

35. **Torah**

Neviim: (prophets) **Chetuviim:** (holy writings)

-teaching or law, usually meaning the first five books of the Bible

36. **Yeshua HaMashiach**

-Jesus Christ: Greek *christos*, anointed one, Hebrew: Mashiach

37. **Yom Tov (festivals)**

-"good day", or holy day with special observances

Bibliography: A Guide to Evaluating Books on Judaism and the Messianic Movement

This is not an exhaustive list, but one that I have built up by visiting book tables at conferences, and my local library and several bookstores (new and second hand). If I find a book that I like, I check the bibliography and go from there. What follows are some very basic books of a general nature that I have found useful as a good beginning in building up a serious **Messianic Jewish library of Judaica**. There are thousands of excellent books printed every year about Jewishness and Israel, and it is easy to become overwhelmed. The best way to conduct your investigation is to consult with your local messianic congregation and join a Bible Study, or at least develop a relationship with messianic believers where you feel comfortable asking questions.

Traditional Jewish Sources:

(1)Elliot Abrams, **Faith or Fear, How Jews Can Survive in Christian America** (The Free Press, New York) 1997

(2)the Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, **Everyman's Talmud** (E.P. Dutton & Co., INC. New York) 1949

(3)Dan Cohn-Sherbok, **The Jewish Faith** (Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania), 1993

* (4)Dan Cohn-Sherbok, **Messianic Judaism** (Castle, Wellington House, London, New York) 2000

(5)Joan Comay, **The Diaspora Story** (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London) 1981

(6)Lucy S. Dawidowicz, **The War Against the Jews 133-1945** (Bantam Books, New York) 1975

(7)Max I. Dimont, **Jews, God and History** (Signet Books, New York) 1962

(8)Shmuel Pinchas Gelbard, **Rite and Reason 1050 Jewish Customs and Their Sources** (Mifal Rashi Publishing, Petach Tikvah, Israel) 1998

(9)Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, **The Passover Seder, Pathways Through the Haggadah** (Ktav Publishing House Inc. Hoboken, New Jersey) 1985

(10)Jerome S. Hahn, **Bible Basics, An Introduction and Reference Guide to the Five Books of Moses** (International Traditions Corporation, Boca Raton, Florida) 1996

(11)Hayim Halevy Donin, **To Be a Jew, A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life** (Basic Books) 1991

(12)Hayim Halevy Donin, **To Pray as a Jew, A Guide to the Prayer Book and the Synagogue Service** (Basic Books) 1980

(13)Eric A. Kimmel, **Bar Mitzvah a Jewish Boy's Coming of Age** (VIKING, New York, New York) 1995

(14)Elias Kopciowski, **Praying With the Jewish Tradition** (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan) 1997

* (15)Alfred J. Kolatch, **The Jewish Book of Why** (Jonathan David Publishers, Inc. Middle Village, NY 11379) 1981

(16)Maurice Lamm, **Becoming a Jew** (Jonathon David Publishers, Inc. Middle Village, New York) 1991

*(17) Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Rabbi Ronald H. Isaacs, **The Second How-To Handbook for Jewish Living** (Ktav Publishing House, Inc. Hoboken, New Jersey) 1996

(18) Jacob Neusner, **The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism** (Dickenson Publishing Company, Inc. Encino, California) 1974

(19) Howard M. Sachar, **Diaspora, An Enquiry Into The Contemporary Jewish World** (Harper & Row, New York) 1985

(20) Solomon Schechter, **Aspects of Rabbinic Theology: Major Concepts of the Talmud** (Hendrickson Publishers) 1998

(21) Frederick M. Schweitzer, **A History of the Jews Since the First Century A. D.** (The Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, New York) 1971

*(22) Adin Steinsaltz, **The Essential Talmud**, (Bantam Books, New York) 1976

(23) Bernard Susser & Charles S. Liebman, **Choosing Survival Strategies for a Jewish Future** (Oxford University Press, New York) 1999

*(24) Leo Trepp, **The Complete Book of Jewish Observance**, (Behrman House, INC. New York) 1980

An Asterisk(*) indicates an especially recommended book

Messianic Jewish Sources:

*(1) Your Bible: New and Old Testament (Tenach and Brit Chadashah - Torah [Chumash], neviim, ketuvim)

(2) Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz, **Torah Rediscovered**, (First Fruits of

Zion, Littleton Colorado) 1996 (careful – it teaches incorrectly that Gentiles must observe Judaism)

(3) Yohanna Chernoff, **Born a Jew. . . Die a Jew** (EBED Publications, Hagerstown, MD) 1996

*(4) Jeffery Enoch Feinberg, **Walk Genesis, Walk Exodus, Walk Leviticus, Walk Numbers, Walk Deuteronomy** (UMJC Press, Dallas Texas) 1998

(5) Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum **Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History, and Philosophy** (Ariel Ministries Press, Tustin, California) 1992

(6) Mitch and Zhava Glaser, **The Fall Feasts of Israel** (Moody Press, Chicago) 1987

*(7) Daniel C. Juster, **Growing To Maturity** (UMJC Denver, Colorado) 1987

(8) _____, **Kesher**, A Journal of Messianic Judaism (UMJC, Albuquerque, Nm 87198) 1994 etc. - especially 1998

(9) Neil and Jamie Lash, **Havdalah, A Celebration of Separation for New Covenant Believers** (Love Song Messiah Fort Lauderdale, Florida) nd

Other Sources:

Anything by the UMJC and other recognized Messianic Publishers
Stern's **Commentary on the Jewish New Testament**
Merrill C. Tenny's **New Testament Commentary**
Edersheim's **The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**

How to Evaluate a Book (or Any Source) Before You Read It or Buy It

1. Peruse the book: title, covers, introduction, table of contents, and index.
2. Ask four questions:
 - (i) Does the author know what he is talking about?
(Credentials and sources)
 - (ii) Is the book well written?
(Clearly worded, well organized and easy to read)
 - (iii) What Do I Want to Learn from This Book?
 - (iv) Am I prepared to verify its statements from the Bible?
(Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; I Cor. 4:6; 2 Cor. 2:17)

For a fuller discussion of topics related to the practices of Judaism from a Messianic Jewish point of view, we invite you to visit our website:

www.bnaichayim.com

You may also contact us through email at:

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Saturday 11:00 A.M

Weekday Prayer Meeting and
Bible Study(Yeshiva)

We are a Messianic Jewish congregation of Jews and Gentiles that acknowledges that Yeshua is the promised Messiah, and celebrates this fulfillment of Torah in a Jewish lifestyle.