

B'nai Chayim Children of Life: First Winter Series: Who is This Guy Anyway?
A Messianic Jewish Understanding of the Messiah, the King of Israel

Oct. 13. **Series Introduction: Luke 24:25-27**

Torah: **Gen. 6:9-11:32**
Haftarah: **Is. 66:1-24 (Rosh Chodesh)**
Brit Chadashah: **Matt. 24:36-46**

It is my usual custom to preach a series of messages on a specific topic. This prevents me from saying the same things over and over again without a **clear focus**. Repetition is a good learning device, but you need a clear focus or objective to avoid just going around in circles.

Another reason for the use of a series is that I want to be sure that I do not grow stale, or fall into a rut, where I cannot successfully respond to the changing dynamics of our community and of the world around us. I have heard it said that perspectives are like clothing styles, they come in and out of fashion very quickly. I have also heard it said that revivals die in their third generation and I feel it is mainly due to two or three considerations.

First of all, as a community grows, it tends to set up **primary bonds** among its members, and can gradually lose contact with those outside its orbit. Secondly, any stable group develops a **subculture** with its own lingo and distinct life style and this tends to cause the differences between it and the larger culture to increase until the two are no longer really relevant or intelligible to each other.

Lastly, when a new group forms around an ideology, there is a tendency to crystallize this worldview into a **classical statement** which is defended against all attempts to modernize it or alter it in any way. How do we, as a new growing movement, protect ourselves from the **built-in obsolescence** which so many other movements suffer from?

I would like to suggest at least three or four ways, and then I would like to give you a brief introduction to my first winter series, which will take us up to Saturday, Dec. 29th. The first, and in my opinion, the best way to avoid **insular obsolescence** (otherwise known as the **colony** or **ghetto** mentality) is to know your history and be constantly reminded of why the movement came into being and what its objectives and priorities are.

This **serial self examination** has kept Judaism alive and well through the many generations and cultures our people have wandered since the destruction of the second temple. Some movements, however, are no longer relevant or have become obsolete. To my knowledge, there is no longer a woman's suffrage movement active anywhere in the world. This is because the objectives of the worldwide movement: the right of women to vote has been accomplished.

There are still several temperance movements still in existence, but they have lost nearly all of their influence, because their real agenda was not temperance (the reasonable use of wisdom and control in the consumption of alcohol), but prohibition and this created more problems than it solved. We need to know both when our **objectives** have been accomplished and also whether our **agenda** has any ongoing relevance to the world at large.

The second dynamic we have to build into our movement is a commitment to allow each up and coming age group to develop its own traditions and observances as it strives to express the principles and priorities of our movement in new and different contexts. In other words, strategies which were relevant for and older generation are like technologies – they wear out and need to keep pace with a changing market.

Thirdly, new ideas are not a **threat** to any movement, unless that movement is no longer prepared to explain itself and adapt itself and pass **the critical, ongoing test of time**. Civilizations which are focused on the past and on current technologies are usually defeated by less advanced groups who have come up with newer and better weapons technologies like the horse, the stirrup, the canon, the repeating rifle, radar and sonar and the list continues.

People often develop **romantic attachments** to the good old days, but realistically I am glad the world no longer smells of horses and that most places have electricity and flush toilets. However, I personally never thought I would live to see the strangest and least expected creature in the universe – an aging hippy – the next twenty year anniversary of Woodstock will be a festival of walkers and adult diapers.

Lastly, **newcomers**, both from the outside and from the inside help to keep the energy of a movement fresh and vibrant. Even though there is nothing new under the sun, each generation ages and fades and each new generation needs to rediscover and personalize the unchanging faith we profess. New **challenges** will always arise and new **ideas** will always try and take root and new comers will always bring their **energy** and their **baggage** as they take root in our midst.

One of the greatest weaknesses of Talmudic Judaism is the endless burgeoning of new traditions, rules and regulations, without letting go of old traditions and rules which no longer apply. Change is always viewed as adding to, and never taking away from the body of traditions which have down form the fathers – even though changes do occur – but not without a **long fight** and a good deal of **resistance**. The Catholic Church and the orthodox churches face the same challenge, as do all traditional societies when their stability appears to be threatened by outside influences.

Messianic Judaism is **not** the latest new kid on the theological block; it is the re-emergence of a bridge between two worlds, which was suppressed and destroyed, both by the community it grew out of (Judaism) and by the community it gave birth to (Gentile Christianity). We are not trying to turn the clock backwards and build up walls that were supposedly turned down.

We are challenging the **historical status quo** which has robbed the Gospel of its Jewishness and which has given rise to a revised Talmudic Jewish misunderstanding of the Messiah. Yeshua never claimed to be anything else but the promised Messiah, the true King of Israel and His early followers took His dual message to the ends of the then known world so that He could be both a blessing to the great nation of Israel and also a blessing to all nations.

He even included a **time frame** for the fulfillment of His ministry before the end of end of the age, so our movement will not have time to grow irrelevant. He said that Jerusalem would be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is over and that happened in 1948 and 1967. He also said that there would be a national revival of faith in Messiah Yeshua among the Jewish people before the end.

We have seen the first stage and we are living the second. I wanted to spend some time looking at what the Bible says about the **Jewish Messiah** for a number of reasons, but perhaps there are two which stand out. First we want to be able to explain to our people what the Scriptures say about the Messiah and we also want to do the same thing for the Gentile Church. The degree of receptivity we encounter is only partially under our control and it is twofold. We need to earn the right to be heard (I P. 3:15) and we need to be able to explain our faith, both to those who are interested and to our many detractors, to the Jew first and also to the Gentle.

Let's take a few minutes and look over the series.