

**Borough Park Symposium (October 2007)**  
**Dreaming of the Day: A Prophetic Portrait of Revival**  
**by Rabbi Jason P. Sobel**  
© Jason P. Sobel

*Introduction*

For the last couple of decades, many Jewish leaders have been terribly concerned with the relatively small percentage of Jews who are committed to practicing Judaism. This lack of commitment has contributed to a high degree of assimilation among our people. As a result, the number of Jews in the US will dwindle by one to two million within the next two generations. This has led many community leaders to speak out about the need for Jewish survival. Our leaders are asking what can be done to help save the Jewish people from further demographic and spiritual decline. Similarly, over the years many Messianic Jewish leaders have wondered if this will be a one generational movement. They have asked what can be done to save our congregations as well as the Messianic Jewish movement as a whole.

To ask ourselves what we need to do to survive is to ask the wrong question. If survival remains our focus, we will never spiritually flourish. The issue is not survival; rather it is personal and communal revival. What the Messianic movement needs is another Shavuot experience like our ancestors experienced both at Sinai and in the Book of Acts. That is why I am pleased to share this address entitled “Dreaming of the Day: A Prophetic Portrait of Revival.”

There are many different perspectives on what authentic revival looks like. The Messianic movement ought not to pattern its vision of revival after our memories of past ones, but rather after the promises of God outlined in the Hebrew Scriptures and *Brit Hadasha*. In this presentation, I will share the four key signs of revival. When these signs are missing, authentic revival does not occur, and we miss out on the fullness of God’s blessing.

**A Commitment to Greater Unity**

The first sign of true renewal is increased unity among God’s people. Greater unity helps to foster revival and is its natural outcome. God works most powerfully among his people when they are unified. This is demonstrated by two important biblical events that occurred on Shavuot.

Fifty days after our ancestors left Egypt, God descended upon Sinai and spoke to over two million of them. Rashi states that Israel camped “In a state of total unity, as if they were one person with one heart.” His comments are based on the fact that Exodus 19:2 uses both the singular and plural forms of the Hebrew verb “to camp” to describe Israel’s encampment at Sinai. As the Torah states, “They encamped [plural] in the desert. Israel encamped [singular] there towards the mountain.” This reading of the text underscores the fact that God’s manifest presence and power are inextricably tied to the unity of God’s people.

Israel’s spiritual state at Sinai stands in stark contrast to the disunity that characterized their Egyptian exile. Stephen highlights this state of disunity and its serious consequences:

"When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites

who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?' But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons." (Acts 7:23-29)

Their utter disunity and lack of love for one another made them oblivious to the work of God in their midst and even seems to have delayed their redemption by forty years. This same sort of *sinat hinam*, baseless hatred, which also characterized the Jewish Community in first century Judea, culminated in the death of our Messiah and the destruction of the Second Temple (Yoma 9b). In the same way, we must be careful that our disunity and lack of love do not hinder the work that the Lord wants to accomplish through the Messianic Jewish Movement.

The Book of Acts uses similar language as Rashi to describe the love and unity among the first followers of Yeshua:

When the Day of Shavuot [Pentecost] had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Acts 2:1

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had (Acts 4:32)

The apostles worked many signs and miracles among the people. One in heart, they all used to meet in the Portico of Solomon. Acts 5:12

From these two Shavuot experiences, we learn that loving other people and striving to cultivate unity among God's people helps to foster the fullness of His power, presence, and revelation among us. In fact, Yeshua himself specifically prayed for our unity:

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you... I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

When God's people put aside their differences to build the Kingdom, awesome things occur. Unity is one of the chief desires and greatest values of our younger people. They cannot understand why some leaders do not get along and why they do not want to partner in expanding the Kingdom of Heaven. Many think, and I believe rightly so, that we will not experience true renewal in our movement until we cultivate love for one another that leads to better relationships. The younger people's desire for unity is evident in both the formal and informal gatherings that are already taking place. Examples of this include the Young Messianic Jewish Scholars Conference and the Young Messianic Leaders Shabbaton, which are organized by the Yachad Network with sponsors and attendees representing diverse sectors of the Messianic world. Recently, there have also been informal gatherings of MJAA and UMJC young people for the purpose of fostering greater unity. This Symposium has the potential to set a great example for the next generation.

Unity does not mean uniformity. Unity does not mean we all have to come to a theological consensus, nor that we have to express our Messianic and Jewish commitments in the same way. It does mean that we share basic core commitments like the ones outlined for this event. It is also predicated upon the belief that our success as a Jewish people movement for Messiah Yeshua rises or falls on our success as an entire community. No matter what our differences, every

individual present at this forum is invaluable to the development of our movement. We all have something unique to contribute and therefore we need to respect, appreciate, build relationships with, and learn from one another, even those with whom we might disagree. If this Symposium helps to move us a little further in this direction it will have been a great success.

### **Loving Others through Social Justice: *Tikkun Olam***

A second evidence of revival is a greater commitment to helping the needy and fighting injustice through charity (*tzedakah*) and social action (*tikkun olam*). Engaging in *tikkun olam* involves partnering with God in healing and redeeming the world from the forces of oppression. When our community lacks sensitivity and commitment to social issues, we have missed the heart of God and are far from experiencing authentic renewal.

The early Yeshua community demonstrated their commitment to helping the poor and disenfranchised through both word and deed:

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord *Yeshua*. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. Acts 4:32-35

And Ya'akov, the brother of Yeshua states:

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:26-27).

If our communities were as socially conscious and as radically committed to helping the needy, I believe we would experience a great work of revival in our midst.

A key prophetic text that also ties renewal to social justice is the *haftarah* for Yom Kippur, Isaiah 58:

“Why have we fasted,” they say, “and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?” Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? ... Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter--when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear

guard... You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (Isaiah 58:1-12)

A radical corporate commitment to treating each other with kindness, helping the oppressed, and taking care of the poor is one concrete sign of, and condition for, authentic renewal.

Furthermore, if we are going to impact younger people and the Jewish community for Messiah, we must not underestimate the importance of engaging in *tikkun olam*. When a 1988 LA Times poll asked what was most essential to Jewish identity, only 17% said religious observance, but 59% said a commitment to social justice.<sup>1</sup> This is corroborated by the 2002 “Eight Up” study in which 58% of the one thousand college students surveyed said that making the world a better place was very important to them and their identity as Jews.<sup>2</sup> If we want to be attractive, relevant, and engaging to younger Jewish people and develop a better reputation and testimony in the wider Jewish world, we must find ways to participate in social action.

Conversely, if we fail to help the needy, do not fight against racism and discrimination, and show little concern for environmental issues, we run the risk of disenfranchising the younger people in our communities. This is precisely what happened to Monique, a human rights lawyer, who shared the following with me:

I grew up in the Messianic movement and have always considered it my spiritual home. As a child I always envisioned taking a leadership role within the movement. I loved God, loved living as a Jew, and wanted to help other people, so I thought about pursuing full time spiritual work. But it soon became clear that vocational ministry wasn't for me. And as I abandoned my plans for ministry, my eyes were opened to the presence of systemic injustice in the world. Violence against women, genocide, slavery, torture, poverty, disease ... I'm a Jew, so I had to do something about it, of course.

My consciousness and commitment to pursue justice grew as I came into my 20s, but I was surprised by the negative response that I encountered by some Messianic leaders to my musings. It should be no surprise that this response to my call to seek justice was one reason that I left the movement (temporarily, at least) as a young adult.

In the end, what drew me back was a series of fortuitous meetings with Messianic leaders and young people who actually care about repairing the world and fulfilling the Torah's mandate to seek justice. They articulated interests in alleviating poverty, assisting immigrants and refugees, preventing torture, ending slavery and genocide, and combating violence against women. Their very existence and passion to do something has drawn me back into my spiritual home. It's here more than anywhere else that I feel called to pursue God's call to seek justice. I'm hoping now that in addition to being called, I'll be able.

All of us, like Monique, have a God given responsibility and mandate to bring healing and hope to this world through engaging in *tikkun olam*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Elliott Abrams, *Faith or Fear* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p.128

<sup>2</sup> Ariela Keysar and Barry Kosmin, “*Researching Findings on the Impact of Camp Ramah*” (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004).p.20

Historically, Messianic Jewish organizations like the International Messianic Jewish Alliance and Chosen People Ministries were heavily involved in social ministry. Today, this same sort of social commitment is being demonstrated by Messianic organizations like Chevra International and the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America, which have invested a great amount of time and resources to meet the material needs of our people both in Eastern Europe and Israel. By cultivating this sort of social commitment we bring honor to God (Mat 5:16), inspire younger generations, and bring hope to Israel and the nations.

### **Returning to Torah**

True biblical revival is always marked by a return to Torah. The third sign of biblical renewal is an increased commitment to observing God's commandments. The portrait that the prophets paint for us is very clear:

When all these things befall you--the blessing and the curse that I have set before you--and you take them to heart amidst the various nations to which the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God, and you and your children heed His command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and take you back in love... You, however, will again heed the LORD and obey all His commandments that I enjoin upon you this day. And the LORD your God will grant you abounding prosperity... since you will be heeding the LORD your God and keeping His commandments and laws that are recorded in this book of the Teaching/Torah. (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law/*Torah* in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33).

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains... Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law/*Torah* will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.... They will beat their swords into plowshares.... Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree... (Micah 4:1-8 & Isaiah 2:3).

The first Servant Song of Isaiah, which describes the Messiah's mission on the earth, also calls for a return to Torah:

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law/*Torah* the islands will put their hope. (Isaiah 42:3-4)

The *Brit Hadasha* also sees a return to Torah as evidence of revival. In the Book of Acts, Ya'aqov the brother of Yeshua relates to Paul that many priests had believed in Yeshua and were zealous for the Torah. Why did Ya'aqov feel the need to make this statement? He mentions God's work among the priests in relation to Torah to underscore that what was happening in Jerusalem was authentic revival in the prophetic sense. The Messiah, as the prophets clearly foretold, would lead Israel back to Torah and not away from it.

As a Jewish movement for Yeshua, we cannot fulfill the Great Commission if we do not bring Jews closer to Torah. We must be vigilant to guard against the mistake of making generic followers of Messiah, which is the natural outcome of neglecting Torah. For if we fail to make better Jews out of Jewish believers, we fail both our people and our Messiah. By not placing emphasis on Yeshua and Torah, our Messianic young people will likely assimilate into the larger Gentile *Ekklesia*, thereby losing their Jewish identity, or reintegrate into the wider Jewish community apart from faith in Yeshua. Both paths detract from the growth of our Messianic Jewish community and the health of the wider Jewish community.

In addition, if we fail to return to Torah as a movement, we will never have any credibility in the eyes of the Jewish community. Guarding our credibility in relation to Torah observance was a task of the first Messianic leaders in Jerusalem. They sought to quell the rumor that Paul was teaching that Jews should *not* keep the Torah.

Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. *They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses*, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you... *Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.* (Acts 21:20b-24; emphasis added)

Without a return to Torah, we are not truly experiencing the type of renewal promised by the Prophets, but something other. For centuries, the Jewish community has perceived a disregard for Torah among Jewish followers of Yeshua. The contemporary Jewish community also continues to see us as a key factor in their continued spiritual decline. This perception is reinforced by the negative testimony of the many Jews who to come to faith in a Gentile context and as a result lose their Jewish identity and commitment to live as Jews. When the Jewish community sees a Jewish believer who does not possess the Torah, our message sounds hollow and communicates that belief in Yeshua undermines living as a covenantally faithful Jew. No matter how we slice it, if this is the message we send, than the mainstream community will not view us as Jewish or as an authentic revival. We must therefore be diligent and intentional about making *talmidim* who are passionate and committed to Messiah Yeshua and God's Torah, which a sign of revival according to Torah, the Prophets, and the Brit Hadasha.

Today, Messiah *Yeshua* is guiding many Jewish believers into the path of *Torah* like the priests in the book of Acts. Many Jews, myself included, have returned to the *Torah* on account of our *Yeshua* faith. Our embracing of *Torah* has fueled our zeal for *Yeshua* as well as our passion for Israel. The story of my friend Ben is but one example of a Jewish believer who has found a greater connection to Yeshua and personal renewal through returning to Torah.

When I was a boy, the words of Yeshua, then known to me as Jesus, comforted me, challenged me, and held me in awe. By the time I had reached middle school, I "learned" that even though I had a rich Jewish heritage, I could not "believe in Jesus, and be Jewish." This lie affected me so deeply that I could not even bring myself to continue believing in Yeshua until I was in my senior year of high school. At that time I vowed to dedicate my life to God and his Son.

During my first two years of college, things became increasingly difficult for me spiritually. My faith was a budding flower that had not been planted in the proper soil. There was no Christian community that I felt called to, and I was, for all intents and

purposes, a nominally practicing “believer.” Then, I finally decided to try a Messianic Synagogue, Ruach Israel, and after a Yachad sponsored Shabbaton during Shavuot, I received the Torah of God, the Torah of Sinai, the Torah of our people, and it illuminated the Living Torah within me, Yeshua; the one whom I had received, but had not understood. If Yeshua had not brought me back home to Torah I would have lost him altogether. It is my love for Yeshua that brought me to his Father. And it is his love for me, that he has brought me to the soil where I can grow and flourish...the Torah.

This return to Torah is not a matter of personal preference but rather the leading of Yeshua who is drawing us back through his Spirit. When we see tens of thousands of Messianic Jews like Ben who are zealously striving to fulfill the Torah on account of their faith in Yeshua, it will be clear to all that God is working in our midst. We cannot truly fulfill our destiny as the Messianic remnant of Israel nor experience the End Times revival spoken of by Scripture if our faith in Yeshua does not lead us back to greater covenant faithfulness. Each of us must become a Messianic Jewish disciple who lives out Yeshua’s words: “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31). By returning to Torah we powerfully testify to the reality and power of Yeshua, the one who will ultimately bring about large-scale prophetic renewal in and through our movement.

### **Hoping for the Messianic Redemption: *Tzipita L’yeshua***

The fourth sign of revival is an increased hope and longing for the Messianic redemption--*tzipita l’yeshua*. The purpose of prophecy and prophetic events is to transform us in the present and prepare us for the Messiah’s coming. Prophecy and prophetic events are meant to foster our transformation to prepare us for Messiah’s return. God’s vision for the future is our blue print for life in the present. If we desire to be biblical, our view of revival must focus upon both personal and global change, not on End Times prophetic events. As Peter states, “You ought to live holy and godly lives, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God” (2 Peter 3:11-12). By focusing upon End Times scenarios and by marrying prophecy to current events, we miss the transforming power of *tzipita l’yeshua* and prophetic renewal.

The opening chapter of Acts highlights this connection for us:

When they had come together, they asked him [Yeshua] saying, “Will you restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?” He answered and said, “It is not for you to know the time or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be witness to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:6-8)

*Yeshua* draws his disciples’ attention away from speculation about Israel’s prophetic fulfillment. Instead, He calls his *talmidim* to work on building the Kingdom of God in the here and now. This passage also clearly associates their longing for the Messianic redemption with Yeshua’s promise of God’s empowering Spirit. When we labor in the present we begin to experience the prophetic renewal of the Kingdom now.

Luke 2:25-28 further underscores the connection between longing for the Messianic redemption and the work of God’s renewing Spirit:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s

Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child *Yeshua* to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God.

True biblical renewal is always accompanied by a heightened love for Messiah and a desire for the consummation of all things. By corporately longing for the Messianic redemption, like Simeon and the early Messianic community, we will not only experience a greater work of the Spirit in our midst, but also provide clear evidence that authentic renewal is occurring among us.

By cultivating this type of longing for Messiah and the final redemption, we will transform and inspire a younger generation to sacrificially serve *Yeshua*. Our Movement should always be marked by a contagious zeal for the Messianic redemption. When we celebrate Shabbat in our home, we often sing a *niggun*, a wordless melody, to which we add the following lyrics, “We want Mashiach, send us Mashiach, we want Yeshua right now!” When Messiah comes He will bring the fullness of revival. In the mean time, however, we must strive to make this prophetic vision of the future a present reality in accordance with the expectation of the Prophets.

### **Conclusion**

Would you please take a moment to dream with me? Imagine the day when thousands of young Messianic Jewish leaders are faithfully serving Messiah as they longingly await the Messianic redemption. Imagine the day when we will be of one heart and one mind in Messiah. Imagine the day when Messianic Jews of various stripes will stand together in Jerusalem and raise their collective voices in prayerful thanks to the Lord. Imagine the day when we will unite in order to build something beautiful for future generations. Imagine of the day all Israel will recognize that the Messianic Jewish movement is the result of a prophetic move of the Spirit of God. Imagine the day when all Israel will recognize that *Yeshua* is *Melech HaMashiach*

If we as a body of leaders commit to living out these biblical signs of the End Time renewal promised by the Prophets, it will change the very course of our future. God’s revelation in Scripture ends with a prayer; let it be our prayer as well, “*Bo na Ha-Adon Yeshua! Come Lord Yeshua!*” (Rev. 22:20)



