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THE GOOD NEWS PROCLAMATION BY
THE MESSIANIC CONGREGATION

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My thesis is that for me *messianic congregations* best accomplish the proclamation of the Good News to my people. By Good News I understand that in Messiah Yeshua, God has faithfully confirmed His Abrahamic promises to Israel redeeming all who have faith in Him. By congregation (e.g., *kehilah*, *edah*, synagogue),¹ I mean a local community of disciples that gather regularly for prayer and teaching, in mutual accountability to Scriptural authority, as opposed to a weekly bible study or a fellowship meeting, that may also meet regularly, and contain both prayer and teaching, but would lack the mutual accountability to Scriptural authority.² By “messianic” I refer to the faith in Messiah expressed in a biblically Jewish frame of reference.³ There are three basic values generating the *kavanah*-driven methodology that actively proclaims the Good News to my people through a messianic synagogue.⁴

MY VALUES FOR PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS THROUGH A MESSIANIC CONGREGATION

The Value of *Tikkun Olam*: the Promised Good News Repairs the World

The Good News is God’s way to restore what sin has destroyed, and I will refer to this restorative work using the common phrase *Tikkun Olam*. God wants the world restored to His purpose and not merely recreated in our own image.

¹ For some “church,” but this term is not used as its usage suggests a non-Jewish identity.

² 1 Tim 3:15; Acts 14:23; Deut 21:1-9; Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:1-6:8; Acts 2:42; Luke 4:16; Heb 10:24-25; Isa 56:7; 1 Tim 2:1; Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2; 1 Tim 4:6, 13.

³ There are many that share these simple definitions but may yet differ greatly on many other areas. This simpler definition provides a wide variance of application because of the liberty of expression in the Good News, as in 1 Cor 9:19-23.

⁴ Admittedly, these three values broadly reflect Jewish thinking that are mainstream, rabbinic and Zionist.

The triune God created us in His image to rule creation.⁵ Today, ruling may suggest domination. But pre-sin, ruling was a responsibility best seen in Adam's gardener-training phase by cultivating and keeping⁶, that is, to serve and protect it. The surprise is that in creating Adam in His own image, HaShem then proclaimed that it is not good for man to live alone. I believe we best represent God in loving relationships and these loving relationships are most effectively seen in a caring community—a loving group, not a lone hermit.

We see this loving relationship re-emphasized by the command that HaShem gave Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.”⁷ From the beginning, “God blessed *them*,” not just him or her.⁸ Adam and Eve were blessed in relationship together. They were created with complete dependence on their Creator to fulfill His will.

However their impact upon the world as His representatives was not yet a restoration, redemption or salvation issue; it preceded their sin. Our faithful service is to represent God for who He is through His word regardless of the world's condition. It is only with the catastrophic fall in Genesis 3 that we have Tikkun Olam. The purpose of Tikkun Olam is to restore this sin ruined world, that is, to restore our severed relationship to God and our divided community with each other. When sin necessitated redemption, God promised a Redeemer from “the seed of the woman.”⁹

⁵ Gen 1:26.

⁶ Gen 2:15 (Hr " (m . v ' l . W Hd " Eb . [' l .).

⁷ Gen 1:28. Translations are in NASB unless otherwise noted.

⁸ Ibid. Italics mine.

⁹ Gen 3:15.

God focused the promise through His covenant to give Abraham a land, a people, and a blessing,¹⁰ so that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.¹¹ The Covenant promises moved Abraham to have a blessed impact on his world. In the midst of pagan Canaan, Abraham “called upon the name of the Lord,”¹² thus applying Tikkun Olam. So also, in representing God, Abraham took disciple-making seriously with the 318 servants (or literally, “dedicated ones,” *wyk 'øynIx]*) that “were born in his house.”¹³ This community of disciples shared in his urgent Tikkun Olam service.¹⁴

In the Prophets, Tikkun Olam takes on a national urgency, like a responsible watchman (*hp , Coh ;*) warning the Jewish community of impending judgment.¹⁵

The New Covenant teaches that Yeshua is HaShem’s faithfulness to Israel. The Good News of Messiah is the realization of the promise to our fathers¹⁶ and HaShem’s eternal will for Tikkun Olam. Messiah’s death and resurrection fulfilled God’s Edenic promise, and as Abraham’s ultimate Seed He sent out His talmidim to make disciples of all nations. The fulfillment of the promise¹⁷ called us to make disciples from the beginning until He returns. His representatives who value Tikkun Olam impact Olam HazeH through Olam Haba’s Good News proclamation to our people.¹⁸

¹⁰ Gen 12:1-3.

¹¹ Gen 22:18.

¹² Gen 12:8.

¹³ “All proselytes are considered ‘children’ of Abraham because it was his mission to draw all peoples toward the service of HaShem . . . (R. David Cohen.)” *Bereishis*, Vol 1(a) (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1986), 432; Quoting *Rambam*, “Because Abraham is the ‘father’ of a multitude of nations, all converts are considered as his descendants and a convert is therefore referred to as *son of Abraham*.” *ibid.*, 562 (italics in original).

¹⁴ Gen 14:13-16.

¹⁵ Ezek 33:1-11; Isa 6.

¹⁶ Gal 3:8, John 8:58, Matt 13:17; Heb 11:13, 39-40.

¹⁷ Like Abraham, He also left his Father’s house for the promise of world redemption, Gen 12:1; John 16:27-28; like Isaac, who never left the promised land, Yeshua went only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; Gen 26:2; Matt 10:5; but as Jacob had many sons, so “He will see His seed” and “lead many sons to glory,” Gen 35:23-25 and Isa 53:10, Heb 2:10.

¹⁸ Rom 1:2; 1 Tim 1:9; Heb 1:1-3; 6:18.

The Value of *Kiddush HaShem*: His name is sanctified in Messiah's Good News

Kiddush HaShem values the sanctification of God's name. When we desecrated His name through sin, we were separated from God, even though we were created in His image. The fact is that Messiah lived and died for Kiddush HaShem.¹⁹ The messianic congregation especially values Kiddush HaShem since His name is sanctified through the Good News that is to the Jew first. This priority is critical, for the Good News is validated if God's righteousness is revealed. Paul's theme in Romans is that the Good News of Yeshua reveals God's righteousness.²⁰ Paul defines the Good News as having three essential elements that demonstrate God's righteousness in Yeshua.

First, the Good News is God's "saving power" in Yeshua. HaShem demanded a consistent righteousness from His people.²¹ What He provided in Yeshua's life, death and resurrection is the work of righteousness, required to restore us to a right standing with our Creator.²² The Good News of Yeshua is the message of God's righteous work that powerfully saves, reconciles and restores the lost nations of the world as well as the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Second, the Good News is "to all that believe" it.²³ Since the Good News is what God has accomplished and provided in Messiah Yeshua, therefore that same message requires

¹⁹ This is especially emphasized in John 5:43; 10:25; 12:13, 28; 17:6, 11-12, 26; Rev 15:3-4; 19:12-13, 16.

²⁰ Rom 1:16-17. This is the normative view held by most commentators, e.g., Robert Haldane, *An Exposition of Romans* (McLean: MacDonald, 1958), 55; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary: Romans: Vol 1: 1-8* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 89; Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 21; and F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 77.

²¹ Lev 19:2; Isa 64:6; Ezek 3, 18, 33; Psa 15, etc.

²² "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer 23:6), this has always been our only hope in all Tenach (Gen 15:6; Isa 45:24; Jer 33:16; Psa 32:1-2). And so therefore Paul in Rom 3:21-26; 2 Cor 5:21; and 1 John 2:1-2.

²³ Just as the present tense of "unashamed" and "it is the power" refers back to the Good News, so the present tense of "believe" refers back to the Good News in order to have God's righteousness.

appropriation by faith.²⁴ Salvation by faith in Yeshua demonstrates God's righteousness for it confirms that God is faithful to His promise for His name's sake. Just as Abraham believed the same promise and it was accounted to him for righteousness, so also those who are His children by faith are likewise reckoned righteous before God. So what God has powerfully done that was witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets is "the righteousness of God through faith in Yeshua the Messiah for all those who believe."²⁵

Third, the Good News is "to the Jew first and also to the Gentile." What about that Good News being the righteousness of God demands that it be to the Jew first, or chiefly?²⁶ The covenant with Abraham and his seed is the only hope of the nations. No other covenant of redemption was made with another people. The Good News is always "to the Jew first" because it is always the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. God could not righteously save anyone apart from what He promised Israel, as corroborated in Romans 9-11²⁷ and "confirmed" in Romans 15:8.²⁸ The same covenant that promised blessing for the nations in Abraham's seed also promised Abraham a people and a land. It is one covenant. If God were to fulfill one promise but nullify another He would break the covenant, therefore being unrighteous with Abraham and his descendants.

²⁴ In Isa 53:1, the prophet assumes that Messiah's atonement is applied to believers only, and that not all will believe it. The partial acceptance is restated in 53:11, "to the many" (עַל־רַבִּים); and see Rom 5:15, 19.

²⁵ Gen 15:6; Rom 3:21-22; 4:16-25.

²⁶ As *proton* is used in Rom 2:9, 10; 3:2.

²⁷ Some have taught that Rom 9-11 is written to justify God's rejection of the Jews. Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary, Vol. 4, Matthew—Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1832), 107; Calvin notes that through this passage the Jews "were at last cut off from the covenant" John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Vol. 19, Acts 14-28, Romans 1-16* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 409. Calvin sees "all Israel" Israel as "the Church" including all Jews and Gentiles, leaving no hope for the Jewish people as Israel, *Ibid.* 437.

²⁸ For even as the New Covenant is made with the same people He brought out of Egypt, so the actual inauguration of the New Covenant by Messiah at the Passover commemoration of the Exodus also simultaneously "confirmed the promises to the fathers." Jer 31:31-34; Luke 22:20; Rom 15:8, here Paul's summarizes Yeshua's work as a ministry to the Jewish people to confirm the Abrahamic Covenant promises.

It is this 3-fold Good News that reveals God's righteousness in Messiah. If we remove any element then you have a different message that defames God's righteous character. Yeshua is the public demonstration of HaShem's righteousness for my people first. In fact by its existence, a messianic congregation demonstrates that the Good News is to the Jew first, since Yeshua is God's faithfulness to our people. If the Apostle to the Gentiles expected the Gentile believers to be unashamed to proclaim the Good News to the Jew first, how can a messianic congregation do any less?

The Value of *Am Yisrael Chai*: God is faithful to Israel in the Good News.

In Messiah, God faithfulness to Israel is best evidenced in the messianic congregation, through an identifiable community of Israel. *Am Yisrael Chai*—the people of Israel live!—is the outworking of our concern for *kol yisrael* to be saved. Why? The redemption of Israel means having identifiable Jews. The non-messianic Jewish community is not yet concerned about Isaiah 53. Rather, their felt concern is the continued existence of the Jewish community. Will we continue as an identifiable people? This must be our concern as well.

Sadly, believers have dismissed this concern in many ways. The victory of Messiah over sin and death was often pictured as the church over the synagogue. The lack of Jewish identity in the faith was thus seen as purity of faith in Messiah; our Jewish identity was described as our “mark of Cain.”²⁹

I've witnessed the residual effects of this anti-Jewish posture throughout my ministry. Back when using the label “Hebrew Christian” was suspect, a great expositor and president of my bible college looked me in the eye and said to me, “I *hate* hyphenated Christians.” As the movement grew, some Christians even accused Messianic congregations of diluting the biblical

²⁹ Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, Book 12, 318-322, in *The Master Christian Library: Version 8* on CD-ROM, disc 2.

message with Jewishness to “Lure Jews to Christianity.”³⁰ We could have responded, “So you’re expressing your faith using a Gentile culture to lure in ignorant Gentiles?” The president of a Christian university was aghast that our sanctuary didn’t display a cross. He concluded that not displaying the cross denies it! The truth is that many identify their faith by their cultural expression. For them a change in cultural expression is a change in the actual faith as well.

Moreover, it is assumed that *Am Yisrael Chai* is irrelevant. Salvation as a concern always trumps Jewish identity. Like our sins, Jewish identity was made past tense by whatever church we joined. As a young believer I was taught, “Jews won’t come to faith in any great numbers now; those that do are no longer Jews but are Christians.” I was taught this in the most pro-Jewish group I could find!

The loss of Jewish identity means the loss of the identifiable Jewish community. This loss was one of the great threats of our messianic faith to the non-messianic Jewish community. The testimony of one lone brilliant Hebrew Christian is less effective to the larger Jewish community than most impressed churches understand. It may actually reinforce the Jewish community’s fears, as they see another Jew lost to the Jewish community. The messianic congregation must share that concern. For this problem didn’t go away with Jewish revivals of the 70s and the 90s; success only made the loss more obvious. Now what was an occasional issue was seen as a growing threat. The response in major Jewish communities was no longer “ignore it, and hope it goes away.” With the exception of a few noted rabbis,³¹ for the most part the greater Jewish

³⁰ From a letter from Grace Community Church, dated Feb. 1985, titled “The American Messianic Synagogue Movement: Deficiencies, Mistakes, and Errors in Light of the Scriptures,” quoted in Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin: Ariel Ministries, 1993), 929.

³¹ As noted by John Fischer in *How Jewish Is Christianity?: Two Views on the Messianic Movement*, Louis Goldberg, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 50-51.

community circled the wagons, developed strategies, and became alert to missionary presence in their midst.

I must assert that I am *not* primarily driven to express my faith via my culture by the desire of being a more effective witness to the greater Jewish community. If every Jewish person was already a believer, I'd still be determined to establish messianic synagogues. The importance of our Jewish community's visible existence is the importance of God's faithfulness to His word. God started with one man, and said, "I will make of you a people." Starting with a couple unable to naturally have a child He produced a people as proof of His faithfulness and power. His testimony of faithfulness to His promise is seen in a community of Jews. For the One who came to "confirm the promises to the fathers" therefore came to keep this people as His testimony; admittedly as a remnant, but as an identifiable remnant. God's testimony through Israel is His testimony through a people, a community.³² So Yeshua said that "upon this rock" He'd build His community.³³

The Jewish community's concern to survive is not just our Jewish concern; it is also the God of Israel's concern!³⁴ The Body of Yeshua in general and the messianic congregation in particular are established by HaShem to represent to the world His faithfulness in Messiah to the Jew first. The messianic congregation shares and speaks to this divine concern testifying of Messiah's faithfulness to Israel as an identifiable Jewish community. As that part of the Body of

³² Gen 12:3, "I will make of you a people." "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers," Deut 7:7-8; cf. Exod 32:13, etc.

³³ Matt 16:18; Psa 138:4.

³⁴ Jer 31:35-37. This also seems to be the intent of Gen 17:4-13, 19 as understood by the psalmist, "He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant" (Psa 105:9-10). It was also seen as an eternal commitment through His covenant promise by the New Covenant writers, Luke 1:55, Acts 7:5; Rom 9:3-5; 11:28-29; 15:8.

Yeshua within the Jewish community, the messianic synagogue has the dual responsibility for being a witness to Israel, and a witness of Israel. Therefore, this should be every believer's concern and stewardship, whether Jewish or Gentile. Let us consider how the messianic congregation demonstrates the testimony of both groups:

1) *A Jew in the present tense.* First, the messianic congregation is the best testimony for the present tense Jewish believer. If in the Good News of Yeshua, God is supposed to be seen as presently faithful to Israel, then the Good News must manifest Jewish believers living as present tense Jews. The messianic synagogue is the best means to maintain the present tense community of Jewish believers.

Our desire, prayer and goal is for “all Israel to be saved,”³⁵ that is, for every Jewish person to come to personal faith in Messiah Yeshua. I see not only the difficulty of realizing this lofty goal but a more serious dilemma if this prophetic objective were actually realized any time soon! If every Jewish person came to faith in Yeshua today, where would these millions of new Jewish believers go for fellowship and discipleship? For even if they went to genuinely good churches (doctrinally sound, even pro-Israel), within two generations it's unlikely that there would remain an identifiable Jewish community! God's commitment is to preserve Israel as an identifiable people. Some might say, “Well isn't keeping the Jewish people as an identifiable people God's sovereign business?” Certainly, it is His sovereign business, and therefore as His servants it is also our stewardship responsibility.

Some Christians do not realize that there are Jews who are unlearned about their heritage. In any Jewish community there are some unlearned Jews, but they're not expected to represent the entire community. But by being part of their community their existence is itself a meaningful testimony. So also, the messianic community has all sorts of Jews. Each person's existence as

³⁵ Rom 10:1; 11:26.

part of community contributes to the communal testimony, without placing undue expectations on any individual.

In Romans 11:1-10, the Jewish remnant according to grace is Paul's first evidence of God's faithfulness to Israel. Paul views himself (11:1), along with the testimony of Elijah (11:2-4) and all the Jewish believers at "this present time" (11:5-6), as one proof of God's faithfulness, that HaShem has not rejected His people. Paul says, "I *am* an Israelite" even as he had said, "I *am* a Jew."³⁶ For Paul, God's present tense faithfulness to the Jewish people is seen in the present tense Jewish testimony of a Jewish believer.

A Jewish believer saying "I *was* an Israelite," or his child saying, "My dad was a Jew but now he's a Christian," becomes an ineffectual testimony of God's faithfulness. It reinforces the canard that faith in Yeshua ends Israel's existence. This inadequate witness develops from a lack of proper discipleship. In light of the messianic Jewish remnant's existence, Israel's national unbelief is only *partial* (11:1-10); the Jewish remnant is the guarantee, as it were, of the future national revival, that all Israel will be saved.

2) *And also to the Gentile!* Since Messiah is God's faithfulness to Israel, it is present-tense Gentile believers who as Gentiles make Israel jealous for Messiah, that effectively communicate the Good News. Thus, the messianic congregation is also the best testimony for the present tense Gentile believer.

The status of Gentiles in Messianic Congregations is a controversial issue for many. Because this is so controversial, I want to take a deeper look at this issue. I suggest that the inclusion of the properly disciplined Gentile believer in the messianic congregation enhances the testimony of the messianic Jewish community. Such a Gentile believer represents the testimony of God's faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

³⁶ As Paul declared in various settings, e.g. Acts 21:39; 22:3.

God said to the Fathers: “in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed.”³⁷ From the beginning, HaShem’s ministry to “the Jew first” inseparably assumed “and also to the Gentile.”³⁸ This inseparability is actually highlighted in the prophetic testimony of the Messiah, the greater Seed of the Fathers. It was directly stated that to be the Redeemer of Israel, He must also be the Savior of the world.³⁹ To Shiloh would come “the obedience of the peoples.”⁴⁰ The root of Jesse would be “a standard for the peoples” to whom “the nations would resort.”⁴¹ The “King upon Zion” installed by HaShem has the “nations as an inheritance.”⁴² This credential, so vital in the *Tanakh* and the rabbinical writings, is that the Jewish Messiah has a sovereign impact on the nations for Israel’s good.⁴³ The messianic congregation’s testimony pictures restored Israel with the Nations in the commonwealth of Israel.⁴⁴

I believe this is why Paul writes that the faithfulness of God in Messiah is further evidenced by the Gentile believers’ calling to make Israel jealous.⁴⁵ How were Gentiles to make

³⁷ Gen 12:3; 18:22; 18:18; 26:4; 28:25. This recognized relationship between Israel’s calling and the well being of the nations was at times overstated in Rabbinical tradition, e.g., Numbers Rabbah 2:13, “Israel is indispensable for the existence of the world as it is written ‘in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed.’”

³⁸ And it was so assumed in Song Rabbah 7:11, “this is the Messiah who will guide all humanity in the way of repentance before the Holy One, blessed be He.”

³⁹ Gen Rabbah 44:23, “But in the days of the Messiah they shall once again belong to Israel, in order to fulfill God’s promise [to Abraham’s seed].”

⁴⁰ Gen 49:10, Genesis Rabbah 97 905-906; 98:8; Zohar Bereshit, 1:143a; 1:237b-240a.

⁴¹ Isa 11:10; Genesis Rabbah 97: 900; 98:9; Zohar 2:172b.

⁴² Psa 2:7-8; Sukkah 52a. See also Gen 9:27.

⁴³ We might easily add that as HaShem’s Servant, it is by being “cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due” that His atonement would “sprinkle many nations” and therefore “bring justice to the nations” (Isa 52:15; 53:8; 42:1). And so as the Zion’s humble King “endowed with salvation” He therefore “will speak peace to the nations” (Zech 9:9-10).

⁴⁴ Eph 2:12, 19, as pictured in Gen 17:4-7, 16; 35:11.

⁴⁵ Rom 11:11-32.

us jealous? It is by the same mercy they received.⁴⁶ On the other hand, if their faith was expressed in arrogance, then it would bring about Christianity's anti-Jewish posture, as Paul feared.⁴⁷ Ironically, the same history that has obscured the testimony of Yeshua to our people has also obscured the Gentile believers' calling.

Paul writes, "I am writing to you who *are Gentiles*."⁴⁸ Just as Jews that believe in Yeshua are still present tense Jews, so Gentiles who believe in Messiah are still present tense Gentiles. Paul wanted Gentile believers to reach out to the Jewish people *as Gentiles*.⁴⁹ Paul's apostolic calling was to show Israel that the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled in Yeshua, the greater seed of Abraham.⁵⁰ Gentiles' love and mercy to the Jewish people is God's spiritual proof to Israel of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant in Yeshua; and so, Yeshua is truly Israel's Messiah.⁵¹ The messianic congregation testifies that the same God who by grace keeps a Jewish remnant also calls the Gentiles to love Israel. In Yeshua, God proves He's faithful to Israel in this dual-witness testimony.⁵²

Messianic discipleship is the key to Gentiles understanding how to make our people jealous, because one is jealous over something that rightfully belong to him. Since we are *His*

⁴⁶ Rom 11:30-31.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, vv. 17-18, 25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vv 13.

⁴⁹ As Gentiles, that is, *not* by calling themselves Jews or by becoming Jews.

⁵⁰ So Paul understood from the beginning, Acts 9:16, 20; 13:46; 24:14-15, 17; 26:6, 20, 23; 28:20.

⁵¹ This may also explain why Paul risked his life, let alone his freedom, to bring the Shavuot love gift from the Gentiles to Jerusalem (see 1 Cor 16:3; Rom 15:25-27; Acts 21:11-13). To Paul, this gift would be the first fruits of what God had promised in the prophets, as Isaiah says, "The wealth of the nations will come to you" (Isa 60:5). Thus Yeshua is the seed of Abraham, for in Him all the nations are blessed, and blessing Israel (Isa 2:3; 60:1-6; 66:19-21).

⁵² Deut 19:15; Matt 18:16. The apostolic mission also reflected this purpose. Paul saw himself as representative redeemed Israel in bringing the Messiah, the seed of Abraham to the nations (Gen 12:3; Matt 28:19), but not to the neglect of Israel. Ministry to the Jewish people is Paul's ministry as well as Peter's, for all believers are called "to the Jew first."

people, going after other gods makes the Lord Himself “jealous”.⁵³ You kiss your spouse, fine; you kiss my spouse, not so fine! Christmas trees and Easter eggs may even evoke envy from some Jews, but they do not arouse the proper jealousy that God is talking about. According to Paul, seeing the Jewish relevance of faith in Messiah will bring about this sort of “zeal for righteousness according to knowledge” that is to say, faith in Yeshua.⁵⁴

The messianic congregation is the Jewish Olive Tree through which the present tense Jew and Gentile proclaim the Good News that in Messiah: God is faithful to Israel! *Am Yisrael chai b’Yeshua haMashiach!* The people of Israel live in Yeshua the Messiah! I believe the messianic congregation is the most advantageous spiritual home for Gentile believers who desire to demonstrate God’s faithfulness to Israel and identify with the visible remnant of Israel.

Yeshua commanded us to make disciples, not merely decisions.⁵⁵ As we are convinced of His Lordship, we are to be committed to His discipleship. Discipleship may start with identifying with Messiah through immersion, but it’s a lifetime of following and growing in Messiah that reveals the faithful character of God.⁵⁶ We are created to relate to God so we can represent Him. We reveal Him best as we lovingly relate in community. God’s faithfulness is seen in a well-disciplined believer. Just as in the Good News of Messiah, God is committed to keep an identifiable Israel, so all His disciples must have this same Good News commitment to Israel.

It is the messianic congregation that must assume leadership in the Body of Yeshua to effectively proclaim the Good News to our people and all people, and to make mature messianic disciples. So for the sake of HaShem’s testimony of faithfulness, I’m praying for many more evangelistic and disciple-making messianic congregations to be established worldwide.

⁵³ Num 34:14.

⁵⁴ Romans 10:2-4

⁵⁵ Matt 28:18-20.

⁵⁶ The reality of God’s faithfulness is always reflected in those that follow Him, for we’re to be “holy as He is holy” (Lev 19:2; 1 Pet 1:15).

MY PRACTICE OF PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS THROUGH THE MESSIANIC CONGREGATION

All of what I've said thus far amounts to nothing if we do not put these things into practice. Our congregation may easily become the best kept secret to our greater Jewish community.

We're encouraged by the early messianic believers who did all they could for our people. They may not have had printing presses, newspapers, or internet, yet they reached the crowds as best they could. In Ephesus, Paul taught "both publicly and from house to house."⁵⁷ Sometimes, He "sat in the synagogue" and waited to be called upon to speak before saying anything.⁵⁸ Elsewhere, he initiated action, boldly preaching in the marketplaces "to anyone that happened to be present."⁵⁹ In general, Paul made himself to be as a "servant to all... that unto the Jews he became as a Jew, to those under the Law as under the Law... that he might be a partaker of the Good News."⁶⁰ If "Wisdom shouts in the street" and "lifts her voice in the square,"⁶¹ should not those who are wise today do the same?

Our congregational leaders try to model the values that we teach and expect the congregation to follow. We use our opportunities and occasions for sharing Yeshua with our people each week. Our congregational responsibility is to cast a vision for outreach.

For our congregation, the Shabbat service is the chief vision-casting opportunity. I've found that if the *bema* isn't behind outreach, it doesn't go very far. Our sermons teach the

⁵⁷ Acts 20:20.

⁵⁸ Acts 13:14-15.

⁵⁹ Acts 17:17.

⁶⁰ 1 Cor 9:19-23.

⁶¹ Prov 1:20.

responsibility to bring the Good News to all people, especially to our people. Our congregational outreach is profiled, prayed for, and promoted.

Our congregation's intercessory prayer teams pray daily and then together for an hour before Shabbat School. We pray during weekly Shabbat services for Israel's coming to faith in the Prince of Peace. We pray once a month after the Shabbat service for the partners we support around the world.

About 15-18 leaders in the congregation go away for a planning weekend once a year. We work together on developing our witness and outreach. There is planning for developing materials for outreach training and discipleship as well as planning to communicate vision for the outreach and training. We plan on evangelistic outreach through various means: external, internal and personal. While we don't presume any method in particular to "work," we continue to try different things.

We have several outreaches a year, for campuses, parks or beaches and other events such as concerts, sporting events or at busy street corners, where Good News materials, books, and bibles may be distributed, and where contacts are made and followed up on. Teams may go to Israeli stores on Myrtle Beach, or speak to Israelis working the local malls. Others are involved in activities at the JCC, and in pro-Israel rallies. We have several *chavurot* (home meetings) each week which reach out to different neighborhoods. Some members volunteer at a mostly Jewish senior citizen center. For a time we had weekly studies and monthly music for the residents there. We also use the internet, profiling the Good News through our website and blog. We have weekly ads in the local paper, which also gets us contacts and visitors. We likewise place ads for the various festival services.

We purposely reach out to local churches for them to learn about witnessing and also to invite their Jewish friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc., to our various meetings. We have a quarterly congregational newsletter to encourage them in this regard. We have Shabbat School classes, yearly Jewish evangelism seminars, and regular midweek evening classes for understanding the distinctives, developing the proper sensitivity by learning how to strengthen our relationships through asking and answering questions. Since Gentiles are called to make Israel jealous, our congregation purposely reaches out to churches encouraging them to witness and teach them to more effectively witness to and to disciple their Jewish friends.

We plan all our services to be visitor friendly, encourage members to invite family and friends and expect interested Jewish visitors from the various outreaches.

The Shalom team, which is our Greeters ministry, tries to connect members with visitors from their area. After each service, our *oneg* (after-service food) is designed for members to mingle and meet visitors. Our internal monthly newsletter and visitor packets further explain our congregation and Messiah. The packet contains a card that is filled out, put in the *pushke* as they leave. That information is recorded that day, and sent out for follow up within two weeks by phone, email, or personal visit. People further away are sent letters, their names being passed on to messianic congregations closer to them. All of our festival and special services are advertised on radio, in the papers, internet, and we see it as opportunity to share Yeshua. There are congregational business cards and messianic Good News material in racks in the foyer; the material is in English, Russian and Spanish.

For our congregation, however, the personal approach is still the most effective. We encourage members that outreach starts in our personal worship,⁶² is in our personal works,⁶³

⁶² Psa 122:6; Matt 9:28, Rom 10:1; Col 4:2-4.

and then is in our personal words.⁶⁴ In our various classes, we teach that personal spiritual maturity must include sharing Yeshua with others. The Body in general and the individual member in particular must be “other-oriented” to be spiritually healthy. Our personal discipleship includes “sharing Messiah with those around you” as normative for all maturing believers in all circumstances of life.

In considering membership individuals need to be aware that sharing your faith with Jewish people is a congregational value for all congregation members. Upon acceptance into membership each person becomes a part of our various service ministries and of the outreach of the congregation. Each member is expected to have a messianic expression of faith at the congregation or in all public congregational activities, as they represent the congregation calling to be a witness to Israel and of Israel.

The proclamation of the Good News within the greater Jewish community through a messianic congregation has permitted our whole membership to testify as a witness to Israel that Yeshua is the Messiah, and of Israel that the people of Israel live for God is faithful to Israel in Messiah! For the membership of Hope of Israel Congregation, the Good News has produced Tikkun Olam in a loving community of Jewish and Gentile believers; the Good News has meant Kiddush HaShem as our faith honors and suffers for the Name that is above all others; and the Good News has created Am Yisrael Chai as a living hope for the promises found in Yeshua, who is the same yesterday, today and indeed forever.

⁶³ Prov 11:30; Matt 5:16; Col 4:5.

⁶⁴ Prov 14:25; Dan 12:3; Col 4:6; Jas 5:20.

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