

The Quest for Credibility

by J.K. McKee posted 01 September, 2004 www.tnnonline.net

In the history of our faith, whenever the Lord would reveal something new to His people, or a forgotten truth has been restored, the enemy has always been present to derail it. This is true from the early movement of Believers in Yeshua the Messiah all the way to the present time. When the Apostle Peter proclaimed at *Shavuot*/Pentecost, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Messiah—this Yeshua whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36), you can be rest assured that the forces of darkness were there watching and waiting to take action. Satan had tried to kill the Son of God, but in trying to destroy Him he actually ended up creating even more of a problem for himself. But instead of giving up, the enemy only altered his tactics. The enemy was likely thinking, "Well, if people are now going to receive Him in massive numbers, the least I can do is get this new movement off course."

How many of us consciously realize that if we are returning to the faith of the First Century Disciples and Apostles, that we will be returning to the *exact same problems* that they faced? If you want an idea about the kinds of problems we will be facing as the Messianic movement today, just read the Book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles. They are rife with situations that are going to become all too commonplace in the near future for us.

Many Messianics today are greatly disturbed, and rightfully so, that many in the movement are getting involved with Jewish mysticism and studying Kaballah. While this is something that needs to be spoken against, it is not something new in the least. This kind of nonsense was going on in the First Century as well. Consider the example of Simon the magician, also called Simon Magus, in Acts 8:9-11:

"Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, 'This man is what is called the Great Power of God.' And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts."

Simon Magus apparently welcomed the good news of Yeshua the Messiah and accepted Him (Acts 8:12-14). But, when Peter and John entered into Samaria and encountered him, Simon offered them money to purchase the Holy Spirit. Simon told them, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:19). He wanted to purchase the Holy Spirit so that he could use the Spirit to promote his own self-serving ends. The Apostle Peter rebuked him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:20-21).

The Biblical account does not say that much more about Simon Magus. But the Christian writers of the Second and Third Centuries write extensively about him, as he gained a substantial following and the *ekklēsia* had to deal with his many heresies. *ISBE* describes his followers, the Simonians or the Simonians:

"It is a matter of scholarly debate...whether the historical Simon was actually a Gnostic. His followers and adherents, called Simonians, were both active and influential for several centuries after the death of their founder. The later Simonians were an eclectic sect of Christian Gnostics who were frequently attacked by Christian apologists and heresiologists...In fact, some Christian apologists stated that Simon claimed to be the son of God...plausibly suggested that 'the Great Power' was the high God invoked by Simon in his magical spells, and that in the style of many incantations found in Greco-Egyptian magical papyri, Simon identified himself with this deity using the 'I am' formula."¹

The Fourth Century Christian historian Eusebius describes Simon Magus in his book *Ecclesiastical History*, stating, "Coming to the aid of his insidious artifices, he attached many of the inhabitants of Rome to himself in order to deceive them. This is attested by Justin...where he wrote thus: 'And after the ascension of our Lord into heaven, certain men were suborned by

¹ D.E. Aune, "Simon Magus," in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:516-517.

demons as their agents, who said they were gods...Simon, a certain Samaritan of the village called Githon, was one of the number, who, in the reign of Claudius Caesar, performed many magic rites by the operation of demons, was considered a god in your imperial city of Rome, and was honored by you with a statue as a god, in the river Tiber, (on an island) between the two brides, having the superscription in Latin, *Simoni Deo Sancto*, which is, *To Simon the Holy God*" (2.13.2-3).²

Practice or study of anything mystical or Gnostic is not new.

There are other problems that were going on in the First Century as well. Consider all of the frustration that Paul demonstrated in his two epistles to the Corinthians. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:1, "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife" (RSV). There was incest going on in Corinth! Later on he warns the men in Corinth, "Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH" (1 Corinthians 6:16), implying that some men who were purportedly Believers in the Corinthian assembly still frequented the many bordellos in town. And this is just the tip of the iceberg as far as the many problems we see in the Pauline Epistles that the good rabbi from Tarsus had to address.

Why Are There Problems?

We could go on and on for many more pages discussing how there were problems in the First Century and how many of those problems are now manifesting themselves today in the Messianic movement. But that would only stir up negative emotions. We have to understand *why there are problems*, so that we might properly counter them.

The Torah admonishes us, "So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which you will possess" (Deuteronomy 5:32-33). We are to walk a straight and narrow path, because if we deviate from that path, then we will find ourselves going on tangents. We will find that we are cursed, not blessed, and that we have placed barriers between ourselves and the Father. Most importantly, we will find that we are ineffective in His service.

As Believers, Yeshua admonishes us all, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Above all else, as the gospel is proclaimed in the world and people come to faith, we are to see that these new Believers are properly trained and discipled. They must be properly raised up in the faith.

We have many new people entering into the Messianic community today. Many of them are looking for an appropriate example to emulate. Sadly, there are too few people setting the appropriate example. We have to empower these new people to change for the better, and not only grow in their knowledge of God, but also grow in their knowing God more intimately. The responsibility that is upon us as teachers is immense. If we lead any one person astray, Yeshua says, "but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

A Lack of Credibility

I am in a unique position as a Messianic apologist, because I get to deal with information and teachings from all across the theological spectrum. About 50% of what I do, and I enjoy it quite a bit, is helping new people come into the Messianic movement, and tell them about what the Lord has done in my life as I have pursued Him and adopted Torah obedience. I get to tell them how much of a blessing it is to be led by the Spirit and obey Him because I love Him. I get

² Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C.F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), pp 47-48.

to help them examine the Scriptures from a Messianic perspective and discover new things that will enrich their faith and relationship with the Father.

The other 50% is not as fun. I have to answer the false teachings that are going around the Messianic movement today. I have to write theological position papers and give lectures on teachings that are damaging people, and quite possibly leading others away from faith in Yeshua. While I do not allow myself to be intimidated by anyone, it is not necessarily something one would wish for.

The challenge between these two aspects of ministry is how am I to encourage new people in a Messianic walk, but at the same time see that they are protected and warned of the dangerous teachings that are being circulated. And, they have to be protected from these dangerous things while at the same time *not being turned off* to the Messianic movement and what the Holy Spirit has convicted them about.

The crisis that we are facing today is one of credibility.

Allow me to emphasize that credibility is not the same thing as popularity. The English word “credible” is defined by *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus* as something “that can be believed, reliable.”³ “Popular” is, “commonly accepted; prevalent,” and “liked by many people.”⁴

The tactic that the enemy has used in recent days, and sadly has been quite successful with, in order to deter the prophesied “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21) and the reunion of all Israel, has been to bring discredit to the Messianic movement. Satan has done this in any number of ways, and through many eager vessels who are trying to promote themselves, rather than help other people grow in the knowledge and grace of Yeshua. Satan has done this through many different things, three of which we will examine in this article.

How has the enemy brought discredit to much of the Messianic movement? Consider the Torah principle “on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed” (Deuteronomy 19:15). This means more than anything else that in order for something to be true, it must be verified by evidence. How many people have you heard say something without substantiating it with evidence or some outside proof? If a person does not have any proof for his case, then at the very least what he is teaching is *his opinion*, and it is not fact. Sometimes, we hear teachings that not only do not have two or three witnesses confirming what is being said, *but sometimes do not even have one witness!*

Another way, sometimes combined with lack of evidence, is the attitude in which a teacher approaches a subject. You always have to question the motives of someone to see if he or she has honorable intentions. Is what is coming out of a person’s mouth edifying to the Body of Messiah? Does it draw people closer to the Lord and help them in their spiritual walk? The Scriptures plainly tell us, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29).

There are three areas that have seriously damaged the credibility of the Messianic movement in recent days. Many outsiders who are truly convicted by the Holy Spirit about Torah observance and the Messianic lifestyle are turned off because they see the widescale proliferation of these phenomena occurring in the Messianic community, without enough people standing for the truth and setting the proper example. What are these three areas?

1. Denial of the Divinity of Yeshua the Messiah
2. Denial of the inspiration of the Greek New Testament
3. Treating Christians and the Christian Church with utter contempt and hatred

I believe that these three things form the “make-it or break-it” point for the Messianic movement today. If an outsider sees that we deny Yeshua as God in the flesh, that we deny the inspiration of the Apostolic Scriptures, and that we treat Christians like the “scum of the Earth,” I believe that this person is fully justified in being suspect of the Messianic movement. I would be

³ *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc, 2002), 146.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 492.

turned off by the Messianic movement too—if this is what is truly going on. I would be turned off by any movement that draws people *away from Yeshua*, and not toward Him.

Fortunately, however, I am pleased to report that these problems are being caused by only a handful of people. They by no means make up the majority in the Messianic movement. However, the Scriptural word, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough” (1 Corinthians 5:6), remains absolutely true. It is time for some self-examination on our part, so that we might learn to be more effective for the task that God has for us. Yeshua says, “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye” (Matthew 7:3-5).

If we can see that some of our own problems are solved first, then we can get to the Father's business of helping others.

If you are new to the Messianic movement, and you have concerns, many of those concerns are no doubt warranted. They are legitimate, and there are others like us who have been in the Messianic community for some time who are willing to speak up. We do not want the Messianic movement to be considered un-credible. Rather, we want it to be credible and believable, as we see many Believers turning toward their Hebraic Roots and are truly being convicted by the Lord that this is of Him. It will only be considered of God if it draws others into a closer relationship with Him.

#1 Denial of the Divinity of Yeshua the Messiah

The first credibility problem we are facing in the Messianic movement today is very serious. It is sad, but there are people in the Messianic community today who are denying the Divinity of Yeshua. It is a fact that most of those who deny Yeshua as being God in the flesh, later deny Yeshua as being the Messiah. Why people deny Yeshua's Divinity varies from person to person and group to group, but it is not in compliance with Holy Scripture. Oftentimes, you run into people who are trying to “figure out God,” and because in their human brains they are incapable of understanding the co-existence of the Father and Son, they denigrate the Son as being something less than God.

Why must we believe that Yeshua is God?

How many times are we told in the Tanach (Old Testament) that God, the LORD, is our only Savior or Redeemer?

“My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence” (2 Samuel 22:3).

“I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God; incline Your ear to me, hear my speech. Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand from those who rise up *against them*” (Psalm 17:6-7).

“For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place” (Isaiah 43:3).

“I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me” (Isaiah 43:11).

“Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me” (Isaiah 45:21).

“You will also suck the milk of nations and suck the breast of kings; then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 60:16).

“Yet I *have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no savior besides Me” (Hosea 13:4).

The Psalmist declares that “No man can by any means redeem *his* brother or give to God a ransom for him” (Psalm 49:7). No human man can redeem us. We are told instead, “God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me” (Psalm 49:15). The Hebrew Scriptures make it clear that only God can save us from our sins, and that only He can redeem us.

The angels proclaimed at the birth of Yeshua, “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord” (Luke 2:11). How many times do the Apostolic Scriptures tell us that Yeshua is our Savior?

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly], He Himself *being* the **Savior** of the body” (Ephesians 5:23).

“Paul, an apostle of Messiah Yeshua according to the commandment of God our **Savior**, and of Messiah Yeshua, *who is our hope*” (1 Timothy 1:1).

“[B]ut now has been revealed by the appearing of our **Savior** Messiah Yeshua, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

“To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Messiah Yeshua our **Savior**” (Titus 1:4).

“[L]ooking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and **Savior**, Messiah Yeshua” (Titus 2:13).

“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Yeshua the Messiah, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and **Savior**, Yeshua the Messiah” (2 Peter 1:1).

“[T]hat you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and **Savior** *spoken* by your apostles” (2 Peter 3:2).

“We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the **Savior** of the world” (1 John 4:14).

Yeshua can only be our Savior if He is God in the flesh. If the Scriptures are clear that only the LORD, God, is our Savior—and Yeshua is not God—then who on Earth is He? If He was just a human man, then how can He redeem us from eternal punishment?

Some at the time of Yeshua believed He was blaspheming because His actions demonstrated Him to be God. Yeshua forgave the sins of others, and being able to forgive sins was something that only God could accomplish. It was not something that any human man could do:

“But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?’” (Mark 2:6-7).

“The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?’” (Luke 5:21).

Are we saying that the issue of Yeshua’s Divinity is a **salvation issue**? If God is the only One who can save us from our sins, then **yes!**

Some say the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4 makes it impossible for God to be a plurality, and thus for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to co-exist. This declaration of Biblical monotheism states, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” But what the *Shema* is more than anything else it is a declaration of the primacy of the Holy One of Israel in the lives of His people. It is a declaration and commitment of His people to obey Him, and place Him above all other gods or objects of worship.⁵

The fact that God, or Elohim, is a plurality, is demonstrated from the very beginning of the Book of Genesis, when He says, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (1:26). He later says when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us” (Genesis 3:22). When God scatters the nations at the Tower of Babel, He says, “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:7). In each of these instances, God speaks to Himself, and it is evident as a *plurality*.

This is most clearly evident in the Psalmist’s declaration, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet’” (Psalm 110:1). Here, the Hebrew text reads *ne’um YHWH l’Adonai* (נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי), and clearly God is speaking *to*

⁵ For a further examination of Deuteronomy 6:4, consult the editor’s article “What Does the Shema Really Mean?”

Himself in this Scripture. This Scripture is referred to numerous times in the Apostolic Writings, notably when Yeshua speaks before the Sanhedrin at His trial:

“And Yeshua said, ‘I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.’ Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses?’” (Mark 14:62-63).

The high priest considered Yeshua to be committing blasphemy here, because He associates Himself with being that “Power” by saying “I AM.” This was a very direct way of Yeshua identifying Himself as God.

In the Hebrew Tanach when the Lord appears to Moses at the burning bush, we are told, “Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-14). God specifically tells Moses that He is *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה), “I Shall Be As I Shall Be” (ATS). It is from the Hebrew verb *hayah* (הָיָה) or “to be” that His proper name of יְהוָה or YHWH is derived, a loose meaning of which would be “Eternal One.” In the Greek Septuagint, the Hebrew phrase *ehyeh asher ehyeh* was rendered as *egō eimi* (ἐγὼ εἰμι), “THE BEING” (LXE). *Egō eimi* or “I am” is used numerous times in the Apostolic Scriptures by Yeshua, each instance being a proof of His Divinity.

In Matthew 14:24-27, the Disciples are in a boat on the Sea of Galilee and are being swayed to-and-fro by a storm. They see Yeshua walking on the water, and they are frightened, believing Him to be a ghost. The Messiah comforts them by telling them “I am”:

“But the boat was now in *the* middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. But in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the sea. And seeing Him walking on the sea, the disciples were troubled, saying, It is a phantom! And they cried out from the fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be comforted! I AM [*egō eimi*]! Do not fear” (LITV).

Peter goes out to meet Yeshua on the lake, but begins to sink because of his lack of belief. The two of them enter into the boat together. “When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘You are certainly God’s Son!’” (Matthew 14:32-33). The Disciples ask themselves, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mark 4:41). Notice that the Disciples all worship Yeshua, and they recognize that as God among them He has the power and authority over the weather.

In John 8:56-59, Yeshua is talking to a group of Jews who ask Him about Abraham. Yeshua responds to them, telling them that Abraham rejoiced over His day. These Jews ask Him how He could possibly have known this, considering the fact that Yeshua was not even fifty years old, and Abraham was long since dead:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.’ So the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Yeshua said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I **am** [*egō eimi*].’ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Yeshua hid Himself and went out of the temple.”

Notice the reaction of the Jews here. Yeshua says the quintessential statement, “before Abraham was born, I am.” This speaks of Yeshua’s preexistence as God, because He did not say, “before Abraham was, I was.” These Jews pick up stones to stone Yeshua because He was identifying Himself as God in the flesh. They considered this to be blasphemy.

In John 18:4-6, Judas and a mob of Roman soldiers come to arrest Yeshua. They ask Him who He is, and He responds by telling them that He is Yeshua of Nazareth and with “I am”:

“So Yeshua, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ They answered Him, ‘Yeshua the Nazarene.’ He said to them, ‘I **am** *He*.’ And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, ‘I **am** [*egō eimi*] *He*,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.”

What happens to those whose intent was to violently seize Yeshua when He tells them “I am *He*”? “Then when He said to them, I **AM**, they departed into the rear and fell to the ground”

(LITV). These Roman soldiers, total heathens, had no choice but to be overwhelmed by the power of Yeshua and they fell back when He spoke the word *ehyeh*.

We then see Yeshua using “I am” at His trial before the Sanhedrin:

“But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, ‘Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ And Yeshua said, ‘I am [*egō eimi*]; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.’ Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses?’” (Mark 14:61-63).

“And they all said, ‘Are You the Son of God, then?’ And He said to them, ‘Yes, I am [*egō eimi*].’ Then they said, ‘What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth’” (Luke 22:70-71).

At this trial before the Sanhedrin, Yeshua is asked if He is the Messiah. Yeshua responds to them with *ehyeh*, which has been transcribed for us in the Apostolic Scriptures as *egō eimi*. He just does not say “I am,” but He says “I AM” connecting us back to Moses at the burning bush where the Lord reveals Himself to him. Yeshua did not just say “I am He” in the context of Him being the Messiah as some would like to say. Ancient history proves that there were many people in the milieu of First Century Judaism who believed themselves to be some kind of messiah. But the difference between those others who believed themselves to be the messiah, is that Yeshua said He was God in the flesh. He evidenced this very clearly by saying “I AM.” The Sanhedrin court considered this blasphemy, and that is why Yeshua was executed.

Yeshua the Messiah is God in the flesh. He can only be our Savior if He is the LORD God. People in the Messianic movement denying the Divinity of Yeshua have brought discredit to us all. But even more importantly, people denying the Divinity of Yeshua are denying the Source of their salvation. Yet only God can determine if they are truly saved, and that is not our job. Thankfully, however, there are people standing up in our day and defending Yeshua’s Divinity.

#2 Denial of the Inspiration of the Greek New Testament

The second credibility issue we are facing in the Messianic movement today is serious, because it derides the message of the gospel that has been preserved for us for almost 2,000 years. Many in the Messianic community believe that the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament was written in Hebrew. In fact, many believe that it is incumbent upon themselves to call the Apostolic Scriptures the “*B’rit Chadashah*,” when in fact this is a misnomer as the *b’rit chadashah* is not any portion of new Scripture, but rather is the promise that the Lord will write His Torah onto the hearts of His people (Jeremiah 31; Hebrews 8). What we often consider the “New Testament” comprises the Spirit-inspired writings of the First Century Apostles, thus the neutral terms Apostolic Scriptures/Writings or Messianic Scriptures/Writings are more appropriate. To ask the question, “Was the *B’rit Chadashah* originally written in Hebrew?” is manipulative because it presupposes that there was a Hebrew original.

The problem with believing that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew is multi-faceted. First of all, what you are suggesting is that not only were the Gospels and the Book of Acts written in Hebrew, but that the General Epistles and Pauline Epistles were written in Hebrew as well. This means that not only did Paul write to Timothy in Hebrew, but he wrote to Titus and Philemon in Hebrew as well. While it is historically valid to say that most of Yeshua’s spoken dialogue was in Hebrew or Aramaic, it is also to suggest that the vast majority of all of the dialogue in the missionary journeys undertaken by the Apostles into the Mediterranean basin was likewise in Hebrew, and that Paul spoke in Hebrew to the Athenians at Mars Hill, among other examples.

Many in the Messianic community rightfully emphasize that we need to think of Yeshua as a First Century Jewish Rabbi living in the Land of Israel, and understand the Jewish culture He interacted with. While it is rightfully emphasized that we need to think of Him as Yeshua HaMashiach, *Salvation*, we cannot divorce Yeshua from the larger world in which He lived. Whether you like it or not, Judea was a province of the Roman Empire, and First Century

Judaism was part of the Roman world. Yeshua and the Apostles had interactions with those who did not speak Hebrew as their native language, and to say that they exclusively spoke Hebrew is historically invalid. It is to say that Pontius Pilate, the Roman centurion, and the Syrophoenician woman all spoke to Him in Hebrew. The Hebrew New Testament advocates cannot explain why two of the Gospels, Markos (Mark) and Loukas (Luke), have names of Latin and Greek origin, respectively, and why two of Yeshua's Disciples were named Andreas (Andrew) and Philippos (Phillip). Whether you like it or not, these were names that were not of Hebrew origin.

Before we go any further addressing this problem, allow us to state that there is validity to understanding the Hebraic background of the sayings of Yeshua, and the fact that if you do not understand that there are idiomatic Hebraic expressions in the Gospels, you are likely to misinterpret some things that Yeshua teaches. He tells us, "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23). The "eye" being spoken of here is not necessarily a person's physical eye, but rather it speaks of the nerve center of a person's thoughts and motivations, his mind. It represents all that it encompasses. In this vein, He says, "The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). When a person commits himself to good deeds internally, these good deeds will be evident in his whole body and in everything that he does. This is one of many examples that we could give of an Hebraism in the Gospels. Not understanding them properly has nothing to do with the written Greek text we have today. It has everything to do with understanding the culture and times in which Yeshua lived.

But there are those who go too far in claiming that this expression or that expression is an idiomatic Hebraism. Consider Yeshua's infamous words to Peter, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matthew 26:75). I have heard it said that the reference to the "rooster" or "cock" is not to a chicken, but rather a priest in the Temple. Those advocating a "Hebrew New Testament" say that this is an idiomatic expression speaking of a priest performing his daily duties in the Temple, and that it could not possibly be a chicken as chickens were supposedly not allowed in the city of Jerusalem. I have not seen any historical evidence substantiating the claim that chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem, but even if they were not, that does not mean that roosters could not be heard crowing from outside the city. We must consider this so-called proof invalid.

There are several inherent problems with people who advocate an original "Hebrew New Testament." First of all, where is this Hebrew New Testament that supposedly exists? Secondly, can it be determined based on ancient history, taking into account where the authors of the Apostolic Scriptures were when they wrote, when they wrote, and the audience to whom they wrote, that the Messianic Writings were composed in Hebrew? And third, is God incapable or impotent of inspiring His Word in languages other than Hebrew?

Most often, when you ask people who believe that the Apostolic Scriptures were written in Hebrew where this text is today, they will tell you something along the lines of, "It was destroyed." The preface to one Bible version that has been produced from the premise that the Apostolic Scriptures were written in Hebrew actually says, "the original Hebrew Messianic Scriptures...were possibly destroyed in those early days by anti-Jewish gentiles, or else set aside or decayed, for they were probably written on papyrus which is a perishable substance."⁶ What is being said here is that the original "Hebrew New Testament" was destroyed and that "There was no other choice but to resort to the existing Greek manuscripts."⁷ Christian theologians and scholars legitimately have problems with the Messianic community because there are those among us who cannot exegete what we believe from the Greek New Testament and available Greek lexicons and dictionaries.

⁶ *The Scriptures*, first edition (Randburg, South Africa: Institute for Scripture Research, 1993), xii.

⁷ *Ibid.*

But where is the proof that these texts were destroyed? Where is the proof that these texts ever existed in the first place? And if they did exist, why did God, in His omniscience and sovereignty, *have them destroyed?* Those advocating an original “Hebrew New Testament” cannot answer the question of why God in His infinite wisdom would have had these texts destroyed. Of course, these texts never existed, and that is why we have no extant evidence to their existence.

Even those of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, an organization largely touted as promoting a “Hebrew New Testament,” have to admit that the Apostolic Scriptures we have today were transcribed in the Greek language. David Biven states, “From time to time, one hears reports of the discovery of a portion of the New Testament written in Hebrew or Aramaic. To date, such reports have proven false. Readers of *JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE* should realize that there is not a single extant Hebrew-language manuscript from the early Christian era of any of the New Testament books.” He also states that “The scholars of the Jerusalem School do not claim that the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were originally written in Hebrew,” and even that “Contrary to what one might expect, however, the book of Hebrews is written in the purest Greek of any book in the New Testament.”⁸ It may be that some people are misinterpreting conclusions made by the Jerusalem School. They advocate, as do we, that it is important to understand the culture and times of Yeshua to understand what He is saying in the Gospels—not that the Greek text we have today is invalid.

The second issue pertains to the historical background of each of the books of the Apostolic canon. This is something that we have never seen anyone, who advocates that the Apostolic Scriptures were written in Hebrew, address. How many people take into account the fact that the first Gospels were not written until a minimum of thirty years after the ascension of Yeshua into Heaven? It is widely agreed that the Gospel of Mark was written first, and according to tradition it was written by John Mark as he traveled with the Apostle Peter to Rome who was visiting the Apostle Paul. Mark was a companion of Peter, and Mark’s Gospel comes from Peter’s perspective on the life of Yeshua. The material in Mark’s Gospel was borrowed by Matthew and Luke for writing their Gospels.

However, before any of the Gospels were written, the epistles, or letters were written to the various communities and assemblies in the Mediterranean basin. Almost all of the congregations outside the Land of Israel, be they in Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossi, or Thessalonica, spoke Greek as their primary language. The only exception would have been Rome, because Latin was spoken in the Italian peninsula. But even Rome had a Greek quarter. Greek was spoken as the international language of the Eastern Mediterranean, just like English is the dominant language of international diplomacy and commerce today.

No one advocating a written Hebrew New Testament has ever done a book-by-book analysis of the Apostolic Scriptures, and explained why—from a legitimate historical perspective—how each of the books was written in Hebrew. **This is because they cannot do it.** The historical case will prove that the Apostolic Scriptures were transcribed in Greek.

But what about the Gospel of Matthew? There are some historical references given in the writings of the Church Fathers that would seem to suggest that it was originally written in Hebrew. Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, referencing the writings of Papias, a Second Century Christian, says that he wrote “Matthew composed his history in the Hebrew dialect, and everyone translated it as he was able.”⁹

But there is a problem with this statement. Michael L. Brown points out in an unpublished article entitled “Recovering the ‘Inspired Text,’” “With the exception of Jerome, none of the other church fathers seemed to have any first hand knowledge of Matthew’s ‘original’ gospel; they were simply repeating what they had heard. Moreover, the statement of Papias is open to widely divergent interpretations, and Jerome’s own testimony is difficult to evaluate, since

⁸ David Biven. *A Gospel Written in Hebrew?*. *Jerusalem Perspective Online*. Retrieved 03 August, 2004, from <<http://articles.jerusalemerspective.com/>>.

⁹ *Ecclesiastical History*, 106.

he makes reference to either *two* or *three* gospels, called by various names, which he either saw, translated, or transcribed, and apparently *none* of these gospels is our canonical Matthew!" (pp 8-9).

There was a Fourteenth Century Hebrew Matthew text compiled by the Baal Shem Tov, which some in the Messianic community believe is the "original Matthew." The problem is that this text was preserved as an anti-missionary document, and used by Jews of the Middle Ages to use against those who believed in Yeshua. This text is not accepted by textual experts such as those of United Bible Societies or the American Bible Society as being the original Matthew, or for that matter valid for consulting in textual criticism.

Even more problematic than this, the so-called Hebrew Gospel of Matthew is riddled with some very bad theology. Many do not examine this "Hebrew Matthew" with a critical eye. One of the most profound examples appears in Matthew 24:14-16, where the spread of the gospel message in the Last Days is considered to be antichrist: "And this gospel, that is, evngili, will be preached in all the earth for a witness concerning me to all the nations and then the end will come. This is the Anti-Christ and this is the abomination which desolates which was spoken of by Daniel [as] standing in the holy place. Let the one who reads understand."¹⁰ This is a far cry from the Greek version of Matthew 24:14, which says "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

But some, rather than making the claim that the Apostolic Scriptures were written in Hebrew, will say that they were written in Aramaic, a Semitic relative of Hebrew. Portions of the Books of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were written in Aramaic. However, **Aramaic is not Hebrew**. While Aramaic was a widely used language in First Century Judea, and indeed Yeshua spoke Aramaic along with Hebrew, Aramaic is not Hebrew and any claim that Aramaic is Hebrew is false. Aramaic is also called Chaldee in many lexicons and dictionaries, and was in fact the language used by the Babylonians.

Those who believe that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Aramaic believe they have a case because of the existence of the Peshitta New Testament. The Peshitta is the canonical Scripture of the Syrian Orthodox Church, which according to its traditions is the originally written Scriptures of the Apostles. The Peshitta New Testament is often consulted in textual criticism by many Christian scholars and theologians today. But the Peshitta New Testament is younger than the Greek New Testament that we have today, although it was one of the first languages into which the Apostolic Writings were translated. *ISBE* attests to its Fourth-Fifth Century compilation date:

"[T]he origin of the version must antedate Rabbula. This dating is required by the version's canon, which lacks 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and the Apocalypse. This is the same canon used in the patriarchate of Antioch in the 4th cent. before books were added—so it would seem—just prior to the 5th century....Further indications for a late-fourth-century date come from intrinsic evidence. Unevenness in textual character, a vocabulary that is not consistently employed, and varying mannerisms and techniques of revision all suggest that several hands were at work on it."¹¹

It was not until the Fifth Century that the Peshitta reached its present form, and the Peshitta New Testament today still excludes 2 Peter, 2&3 John, Jude, and Revelation. So any claim that the Peshitta New Testament is the original must include the belief that these five books are not canonical Scripture.

Aside from knowing that the Peshitta cannot be original because it was compiled later than the Greek texts that we have, we can determine that it is younger than our extant Greek texts because of its theology as well. Consider Acts 15:24 translated from the Peshitta, versus being translated from the oldest Greek texts at our disposal:

"It has been heard by us that men from us have gone out and disturbed you with words and have upset your nefeshot [souls] while saying that you must be circumcised and observe the Torah, which we did not command them" (Acts 15:24, Hebraic-Roots Version "New Testament").

¹⁰ George Howard, trans., *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 143.

¹¹ A. Vööbus, "Versions, Syriac," in *ISBE*, 4:975.

“Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls” (Acts 15:24, NASU).

Notice that the New American Standard 1995 Update does not have the expression “You must be circumcised and keep the Law” (Lamsa), in regard to what the non-Jews coming to faith were required to do. This expression does not appear in the oldest extant Greek texts, but does appear in the Aramaic Peshitta and in the Greek Textus Receptus, the source text for the King James Version. The KJV does say “*Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law.”

The phrase *humōn legontes peritemnesthai kai terein ton nomon* (ὁμῶν λέγοντες περιτέμνεσθαι καὶ τηρεῖν τον νόμον) is omitted from the oldest extant Greek texts. In its explanatory notes which demonstrate the alternative reading among extant texts of the Apostolic Scriptures, United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* indicates that this phrase first appears in the miniscule 1175,¹² which dates from the Tenth Century C.E.¹³ The phrase *terein ton nomon* (τηρεῖν τον νόμον) or “keep the Law” first appears in quotations of Acts 15:24 in the Apostolic Constitutions and in the writings of Amphilochius. In its list of the Greek Church Fathers, Amphilochius¹⁴ is listed as having died “after 394,” and the Apostolic Constitutions are dated “about 380.”¹⁵ This expression, appearing in the Aramaic Peshitta, is internal evidence that the Peshitta was nothing but an Aramaic translation of the Greek text that would later be used for the King James Version.

The phrase “keep the Law” was added to the text of Acts 15:24 by the Fourth Century C.E., at the same time that Roman Catholicism was getting its start. The last thing that this new religious establishment wanted was for its members to be following the Torah or Law of Moses. By the Tenth Century, “be circumcised” had been added to the text as well. Thankfully, due to textual criticism, that is the science of examining and comparing ancient Biblical texts and translations of texts to determine the original reading of them, the statement “be circumcised and keep the Law” has been discovered to not be in the original reading of Acts 15:24. Based on this and other texts, we do not consider the Aramaic Peshitta as being primary to our extant Greek New Testament.

But what are we saying here, in spite of the fact that a written Hebrew New Testament did not historically exist—that there is no Hebraic connection at all to the Apostolic Scriptures? No. There is a way that you can determine what the Hebraic meanings the Apostolic writers are trying to convey, that is widely known and used by theologians and scholars today.

Three centuries before Yeshua, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Tanach was produced. This translation, which we call the Septuagint (LXX) today, was produced for Greek-speaking Jews in Northern Egypt. Later, it would be widely disseminated throughout the Mediterranean basin as Pharisaical Judaism would plant synagogues and seek proselytes. The LXX became the canonical Scriptures of Greek-speaking Jews, and was influential in many non-Jews coming to the knowledge of the God of Israel. The LXX was in existence at the time of Yeshua, and is quoted many times in the Messianic Scriptures.

There are Greek words used in the Apostolic Writings which correspond to Greek words used in the Septuagint, which have Hebrew meanings behind them. A notable word is *ekklēsia* (ἐκκλησία), which in most English Bibles is rendered as “church.” *Ekklēsia* in the Septuagint is used to translate the Hebrew word *qahal* (קָהָל), a word meaning “assembly” almost exclusively used to refer to Israel. When the Apostolic writers use the term *ekklēsia*, they are not referring to a separate group of elect called “the Church.” They are using it to refer to the assembly or *qahal* of Israel.

The Septuagint is an important bridge to use when understanding the deeper meaning of words in the Apostolic Scriptures. In the past, many Greek New Testament scholars would

¹² Aland, Kurt, et. al., eds., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998), 476.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 467.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

consult the works of Classical Greece and the philosophers to understand the Bible. But in the past century or so, many have seen the light and are now turning to the Septuagint to interpret the New Testament so they can see the Greek vocabulary words with Hebraic meanings. We in the Messianic community need to learn to do the same when we examine the Apostolic Scriptures, and consult the wide array of Greek resources that take into consideration the Septuagint, and hence the underlying Hebraic meanings of Greek words.

Ultimately, the debate over the inspiration of the Greek Scriptures comes down to ideology. Many people in the Messianic movement misapply the words of the Prophet Zephaniah, “For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder” (Zephaniah 3:9). They conclude that the “pure language” being spoken of here is Hebrew, and that the God of Israel will only inspire His words in Hebrew.

This Scripture is speaking in the future tense, and so to say that the “purified lips” being referred to is Hebrew, or any Earthly language for that matter, is reading messages into the Biblical text. Secondly, to say that the Rabbis of Judaism have always interpreted this as referring to the Hebrew language—and that they are always right—is to say that the Rabbis of Judaism cannot be fallible. But we know that the Rabbis of Judaism have been wrong just as the Church Fathers have been wrong. Thirdly, and most important, it is to place the God of the Universe in a box and say that He is incapable of inspiring His Word in whatever language He wishes.

Ultimately, the debate over whether or not the Greek New Testament is the inspired Word of God is going to be ideological. We believe that the Lord is capable of inspiring His Word in Hebrew, Greek, or whatever language He wants. We especially believe that He is capable of causing the Messianic movement to grow, primarily through usage of the English language today. Because of this, in the First Century He was fully capable of inspiring the message of His Son in Greek, albeit the Hebraist Greek of the Septuagint.

We fully affirm the inspiration of the Greek New Testament, and know that it upholds our beliefs. It is a documented fact that people who deny the inspiration of the Apostolic Scriptures often later deny Yeshua. Once you deny the inspiration of the message, it is not that far until you deny the Messenger. We have a responsibility to stand firm, and against the errant and unsupportable *opinion* that the Apostolic Scriptures were written in Hebrew.¹⁶

#3 Treating Christians and the Christian Church with Utter Contempt and Hatred

The third area that has been discrediting the Messianic community is different than the first two. It is different because it does not deal with theology, nor scholarly Biblical history, but instead our attitude as Believers. We all need to be aware of the fact that a principal part of Torah observance is the command to love one another. Our Heavenly Father says, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18). Yeshua considered this to be one of the two greatest commandments in the Torah. We are to love others, and recognize that it is the Lord, and only He, who can take vengeance and perform ultimate justice for us.

Yeshua emphasizes this important concept for us by saying, “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). We have to remember this in our dealings with others. As I often have to remind audiences when giving a lecture, “If you treat others with respect, you will be treated with respect in return. But if you treat others like dirt, don’t be surprised when you get treated like dirt back.” This is especially true when you deal with people from mainstream Christianity, who you may have fellowshiped with in a church setting, or who may have even been your close friends.

¹⁶ For a further discussion of this issue, consult *Scripture Under Scrutiny: Was the New Testament Really Written in Hebrew?* available from TNN Press.

I am really getting tired of people in the Messianic movement who hate mainstream Christianity. When I say “hate” here, I am not talking about those who have theological disagreements and legitimate criticisms of the Church. I have disagreements with mainstream Christianity. I believe that the Church as a whole is shallow and incomplete in its view of the Scriptures. I believe that many in Christianity today have lost their way because they have decided that the Torah or Law of Moses has little or no relevance for them. I believe that, sadly, the Church is going downhill and that there are many who are being led astray. But in spite of this, **I do not hate the Church, nor do I hate Christians.**

The problem that exists is not with Messianics who have theological disagreements with mainstream Christianity. The problem is with those who make it their “duty” to continually harp, berate, and harass the Church. They will not think twice about saying things like “The Church is pagan and worthless. Christians are servants of Satan.” If you have said something like this, do not be surprised when a Christian says something similar about Messianics. Who knows, some of the criticisms of the Messianic movement based on our attitude may even be right! Shame on us if what they say about us is right!

I know what it is like to unfairly criticize Christianity, because I once did it myself. In my Spring 2003 semester at the University of Oklahoma, my last semester of college, I was spurned by all of my Christian friends. There were some rumors going around about me on campus that I was a legalist or perhaps that I had even left the faith and was becoming “Jewish.” My Christian friends would not talk to me about it, and I admit that I harbored some unforgiveness and held onto it for much of 2003. Thankfully, in early 2004, and through the Lord bringing some new, and thankfully, very sincere Messianic friends my own age into my life, I have put the past behind me, and I do not dwell on any bad memories any more. I concentrate on the future, and what I can do to help others.

My criticism of the Church never got as bad as many of the people you have probably encountered. I never believed that all Christians were condemned, and neither did I believe that the Church system was “utterly pagan.” I was just apathetic about the whole thing, and basically believed that mainstream Christianity was not being used by God in any way, shape, or form. Then in the Fall of 2003, God began to convict me as I began to encounter the bad attitudes of some other Messianics in action. At one Bible study I attended, someone got up and made the comment, “That is a bunch of Christian bulls@%*.” I knew then in my spirit that something was going to have to change. And as 2004 began, I knew I had to be very careful with what I wrote, because other people were reading my articles and making life-decisions and formulating opinions on what I was saying.

I do have issues with mainstream Christianity, and I do have many disagreements with it. Most of us would not be in the Messianic movement today if we did not have some problems with today’s Church. But as I have had problems with mainstream Christianity, I look back on my past, and I look at all of the sincere, truly born again Christians, who invested time in my spiritual growth and maturity, and who truly helped me in my walk of faith. They invested things in my life that I will always be thankful for. I am grateful for the example of my late father, Kimball McKee, who was a lay minister, and who was bringing the Passover into the Methodist Church. I remember our former pastor, Bill Hughes, who was there to minister to our family when he died. I have been told great things about my great-grandfather, Bishop Marvin A. Franklin, who was one of the youngest bishops ever in the Methodist Church, serving as bishop for the state of Mississippi. And I could go on with many more people who were Christians who helped me.

But in spite of all the fond memories that we have of our Church experience, the time came for our family when we were not being spiritually fed or fulfilled at the Church anymore. We knew that there was more out there, and the Messianic movement has fulfilled our spiritual hunger and thirst. Yet we do recognize where we came from, and that there are sincere Believers who are where we once were. We do not condemn or damn them, because that will not encourage them to change. We have to show these people that by adopting a Messianic lifestyle, that we have changed for the better in our walk of faith, and are truly being led by the Spirit. We

have to show them that we are becoming *more like the Messiah*, not less like Him. Yeshua tells us, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

It is a significant problem that some people in the Messianic movement are harboring hatred and animosity toward their Christian brethren. This is not Yeshua, **and it is certainly not the Torah that so many claim to uphold!** Having hatred for mainstream Christianity is ultimately what drives people into apostasy and denying Yeshua. And sadly, many outsiders, because unfair criticism of Christianity is often not spoken against in the Messianic movement, Christians who are sincerely convicted about the message of Torah validity and want to embrace their Hebraic Roots, can be turned off to the message. These problems are only caused by a handful, but these few are vocal, and it is our job to make sure that it stops. If we disagree with the Church, then we need to disagree while still maintaining some level of respect. It is not our job to judge any Christian's salvation; that job is for God Himself. But we can diagnose another person's spiritual maturity, and we have to show our Christian brethren the better way. Rather than insulting them as is the pattern of too many Messianics, we need to let the Word of God speak for itself, and allow the Holy Spirit to woo them toward the truth. We need to be the examples of people who have changed for the better, and not for the worse.

What are we to do to be a Credible Movement?

How is the Messianic community today to become credible and believable? Aside from all the issues relating to theology and examination of Biblical history and Scriptural exegesis, it always comes back to who we are as Believers and what we are doing. It all comes back to our motivations and how we share our faith with others. Are we helping people, or are we hurting them?

I do not know what you do in the morning when you wake up, but the first thing that I do is pray. I believe that prayer is extremely important when you start your day, because it is that special one-on-one time with the Heavenly Father, where we can all tell Him about our thoughts, our desires, our hurts, and ask Him questions. When I pray, I thank the Lord for what He has done in my life, the salvation I have in Yeshua, the course that He has me on, the people that He has put in my life, and the great things that I know are coming in the future. I ask God to forgive me of sin, specifically to forgive me for doubting Him and being impatient. I ask Him to convict me of areas of my life that need to change, so that I may serve Him better. I then pray for my family and my friends, and whatever situations they are facing. I pray especially for my Messianic friends my own age, because they face the exact same problems I face, and have the same unanswered life questions that I have. As I conclude my prayers, I pray for myself. I let my requests be made known to God. I ask the Father to continue to mold me into a man of principle and spiritual integrity, who can continue to perform the tasks that He has for me, and so that I can lead by a positive example. I have many unanswered life questions that are not of a theological nature. But, I have the internal spiritual assurance that as I remain in His service, these questions will be answered, and they will be answered properly by Him and in their appropriate time. Faith is all about things expected and hoped for that cannot be seen (Hebrews 11:1). Yet in order for these questions to be answered, I cannot be selfish, and in ministry I have to be in a position where I am always helping others.

I do not know what other Messianic Bible teachers do in the morning. I share this with you to show you that I am a human being like any other. I have faults and weaknesses. In spite of these faults and weaknesses, I pray every day that the Lord would give me the desire to have honorable intentions, and that these honorable intentions would be evident in all that I do. I have no interest in fleecing the flock or promoting myself. My only agenda is to be as Scripturally sound as possible. I want people to draw closer to the Lord and be more like Yeshua. I want people to experience the blessings that I have partaken of through becoming Messianic and Torah obedient.

Having proper motivations will be the ultimate test of whether or not the Messianic movement is credible or non-credible. The prophecy of the two sticks in Ezekiel 37 makes it clear

that Israel is only reunited in the hand of the Son of Man, Messiah Yeshua. If Yeshua is not at the focus of what we are doing, then what we are doing will fail—*and rightfully so!* I do not know if those who have brought error and discord into the camp are true Believers, and thankfully it is not my job to find out. But I can say that there are teachings going around that are causing significant damage both inside and outside our ranks, and it needs to stop.

We need to be taken seriously and get beyond some of the childish games being played. We need to allow proper Biblical scholarship and handling of Biblical history to prevail. We need to affirm the Divinity of Yeshua, the inspiration of the Greek New Testament, and treat those in mainstream Christianity with respect, so that they may be drawn to the truth. We need to be humble servants of the Lord, and always be asking Him how we can help others.

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