

Why Messianic Judaism Does Not Want to Address the Two-House Teaching

by J.K. McKee posted 01 March, 2008 www.tnnonline.net

It is undeniable that when you diagnose the current attitudes of Messianic Judaism to the Two-House teaching of Judah and Ephraim that one detects a great deal of hostility. A great deal of this hostility has been caused because of some of the gross overstatements of “The Ephraimite Error” white paper produced by the IMJA. Likewise, among many Two-House proponents themselves, the message is commonly taught as a form of “identity,” as opposed to the reunification being a key component of Israel’s restoration in the eschaton. It is very easy to see extremism on both sides of the debate: with one arguing that the Two-House teaching is heresy, and with another overly arguing that non-Jewish Messianics can feel “born again again” by accepting it and considering oneself as somehow being a part of “Ephraim.”

I was introduced to the Messianic movement in 1995 through Messianic Judaism. At the time, things relating to *Shabbat*, the Biblical festivals, kosher, *tallits* and *tzit-tzits*, traditional customs and liturgy, etc., were quite foreign to me. It certainly did take some time for me to appreciate my spiritual heritage in Judaism. I learned a great deal about the Hebraic Roots of my faith, the Synagogue, and a distinctly Jewish way of looking at the world. I read books by Messianic Jewish leaders like Dan Juster and David Stern, and got to see some of the theological discussions going on in the mid 1990s regarding the phenomenon known as “Messianic Judaism.” Likewise, I could see that some substantial controversy was on the horizon as many Christians—non-Jewish Believers like myself—were being convicted by the Holy Spirit to embrace a Messianic lifestyle.

Since that time, many of us have seen a controversy arise in Messianic Judaism over what to do with “Gentiles.” Some in Messianic Judaism honestly want to recognize that all people, regardless of ethnicity, are to be one in the Lord, and that they all share the same equal rights and privileges as members of the Commonwealth of Israel (cf. Ephesians 2:11-12). These people think it is absolutely acceptable for non-Jewish Believers to embrace a Torah obedient lifestyle. But then again, many others in Messianic Judaism feel that the Torah is only to be followed by Jews, and that a Messianic lifestyle is, at best, *optional* for non-Jewish Believers. And still, many Messianic Jews want a Messianic Judaism for only Jews without any kind of external outreach.

Because of much of the inequality that exists in Messianic Judaism between Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, when the message of the “Two Houses of Israel” began being popularized in the late 1990s, it was accepted with enthusiasm by many. For me in particular, I thought the Two-House community would bring more equality, as well as a respected place for our Christian theological heritage that I had not seen in Messianic Judaism. *I thought it was going to be the logical extension of Messianic Judaism.* Not wanting to identify anyone with a particular “tribe,” I always thought that the Two-House teaching as defined by Scripture recognized that *all* Believers, Jewish or non-Jewish, were a part of the end-time reunion of all Israel—and God in the end would sort out the details of Judah, scattered Israel/Ephraim, and the nations. The key was that the venue for Israel’s restoration was the entire world and extended beyond just the Jewish people.

Unfortunately over the past ten years (1998-2007), this is not what has occurred. By-and-large, a majority of Two-House advocates have been responsible for not only repudiating evangelical Christianity and our Christian brethren, but also Judaism and Jewish tradition (often promoting anti-traditional Karaitism).¹ Some are even responsible for promoting forms of racially-based salvation, and other *added* teachings that are anything but Biblical (and in some cases outright heretical). Suffice it to say, I think more has been done to keep Israel divided than to unite God’s people.

But the blame does not rest solely at the feet of many Two-House advocates themselves. A significant part of what is happening in today’s Messianic movement has been caused by Messianic Judaism. Why Messianic Judaism, and many of its great minds, are often unwilling to even consider and discuss the prophecies of Israel’s restoration, this is interconnected with a great

¹ Consult the editor’s article “You Want to be a Pharisee.”

number of other—*significantly more important*—issues. Using the words “Messianic” and “moderate” in the same sentence are a contradiction in terms for too many in our communities—Messianic Jewish, Messianic Two-House, Messianic independent, or Messianic whatever. Yet it is absolutely imperative that we begin to moderate ourselves and “mellow” a bit if we are to be truly used by God in the future. The extremism and polarization from which we all suffer can no longer be the main order of business.

What has happened?

In the past ten years (since 1998), it is clear that Messianic Judaism has dropped the proverbial “ball” in the furtherance of its own theology, and this has had an impact on the rise of an independent Messianic movement, much of which does espouse some (and often varied) form of Two-House teaching. In the mid-to-late 1990s many Messianic Jewish publications hit the market, including: Messianic Jewish Bible translations, commentaries, books on the Messianic Jewish lifestyle, worship and dance, the Biblical festivals, and even a few books on how Christians can embrace their Jewish Roots. All of these publications have helped the Messianic movement grow and be given exposure in the wider world (and significantly and *positively* aided my own family). Today, even the venerable Christian Book Distributors catalogue has a section on Jewish books where Messianic Jewish writers are featured.

But what happened in the early 2000s? The last major Messianic Jewish publication that was written appeared in 2001, entitled *Voices of Messianic Judaism*. This book had almost two-dozen contributors from across the Messianic Jewish spectrum, each addressing a particular side of a (somewhat) debatable issue. The issues considered ranged from: the role of Jewish tradition for Messianics to Messianic Jewish organizations/denominations to Messianic Jewish education to intermarriage to the role of women. One theme that was concurrent throughout the various articles was to express Messianic Judaism as a branch of Judaism among a plurality of modern-day Judaisms. As its editor, the Reform Jewish professor Dan Cohn-Sherbok, expressed, “pluralists maintain that the exclusion of Messianic Judaism from the circle of legitimate expressions of the Jewish heritage is totally inconsistent.”² Certainly, while one cannot castigate Messianic Jews from wanting to be recognized *as Jews* by their *fellow Jews*, what has taken place—or not taken place—since 2001 in the Messianic Jewish world? Has the Messianic Jewish vision been a bit too limited?

An issue that has arisen since 2001 has been the Messianic Jewish hostility toward advocates of what is commonly called the One Law position in the greater Messianic movement. A short white paper was released by the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) entitled, “One Law Movements: A Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community.” It castigates “groups [who] see all believers as grafted into the Olive tree, and therefore called to obey the same Torah as Israel.”³ This white paper **condemns anyone** who takes James’ statement in Acts 15:21, “For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath,” as relating to Torah obedience for non-Jewish Believers as going against the New Covenant.⁴ Its authors candidly conclude, “There is no word in the New Testament that exhorts Gentiles to circumcision, feasts, purity laws, Sabbaths, fast days and more, but these practices were, and continue to be, central to Judaism.”⁵ Here, non-Jewish Believers—whether they believe in any kind of “Two-House teaching” or not—are effectively told that God’s

² Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Voices of Messianic Judaism: Confronting Critical Issues Facing a Maturing Movement* (Baltimore: Lederer, 2001), xiv.

³ Dan Juster and Russ Resnik (n.d.). *One Law Movements: A Challenge to the Messianic Jewish Community*, UMJC. Retrieved 26 February, 2008, from <<http://www.umjc.org>>.

⁴ Consult the editor’s book *The New Testament Validates Torah* for an examination of Acts 15:21 and other related Scriptures.

⁵ Juster and Resnik.

Torah is not for them.⁶ And, it does not express a very high view for non-Jewish Believers keeping the so-called “moral law” of the Torah, either.⁷

Since the early 2000s, not surprisingly, one has seen a sharp rise in the growth of an independent Messianic community. With such independence, as should be expected, we also have witnessed a great and diverse array of Messianic beliefs and opinions present themselves. We have also witnessed a great deal of disarray and people not totally knowing what to believe or even what to do as God’s people. Many non-Jewish Messianics, partially due to the attitudes of Messianic Judaism toward them, have thrown and cast aside Jewish culture and tradition as being important elements of Messianic expression. Still, others have simply wanted to take elements of the Messianic movement or our Hebraic heritage, sensationalize them, and have produced nothing more than hype and pulp fiction and greater confusion.⁸ Very few are actually aware of what the Messianic movement needs to become as a missional community that can serve the needs of others, because we know that both Jews and Christians today—and indeed society in general—**must return** to foundational ethical and moral principles as chiefly embodied in God’s Torah.

I think that what has occurred in the 2000s in the Messianic community is a combination of a number of factors. First of all, Messianic Judaism on the whole does not want to be that welcoming of non-Jewish Believers. This is completely anti-Scriptural, and goes against God’s mandate of Israel being a light and blessing to the entire world (Genesis 12:3; Deuteronomy 4:6-8; et. al.),⁹ and the Torah going out to all nations (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2). Secondly, having been spurned from the Messianic Jewish community, Messianic non-Jews often find themselves “free” to seek other forms of Torah expression independent of our Jewish *and* Christian theological heritage. In many cases, this has been seen with some kind of a veneer of a Two-House teaching, which has not brought a great deal of credibility *and believability* to the restoration message of all Israel. Obviously, there have been faults made on both sides, and extremism as usual has gotten the better of us. We need to move beyond what we have seen as we will shortly enter into the 2010s and a new chapter of Messianic development.

Most people that I talk to in the Messianic world at large are reasonable people. They want a Messianic community where all of God’s people are welcome to display their spiritual gifts and be used, where our Jewish *and* Christian heritage is properly respected, and above all where we can make a serious difference for God in the world. ***God’s people should desire such stability!*** Yet, in order to achieve that stability and be molded into a people that can be used by Him in the world, we have to move beyond where we have been. For some, this means recognizing that Messianic Judaism—at least in its present form—might not be able to move forward. And likewise, this means that if an independent Messianic movement is the only viable alternative to a “Jews-only club,” that those of us who compose it must be spiritually edifying and solution oriented in all that we do. We have to take the best of what Messianic Judaism gave us, and add those things to it which it currently lacks (or may not even want), **particularly in the areas of equality for all and Biblical scholarship.**

A Fair-Minded View of the Two-House Teaching

I do not hide the fact in my teachings or writings that I am an advocate of the Two-House teaching. This has certainly raised some eyebrows among a few of my friends who are One Law advocates, yet who believe that Messianic Judaism is in error for teaching against non-Jewish Believers keeping the Torah. However, when I get a chance to explain what I believe, they get to

⁶ Messianic author Tim Hegg has responded to this UMJC white paper in his article “Is the Torah Only for Jews?” (2003), available online at <<http://www.torahresource.org>>. Also consult his book *Fellow Heirs: Jews & Gentiles Together in the Family of God* (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 2003), which analyzes some of the related issues.

⁷ For a review of the issue of God’s “moral law” from a Christian perspective, consult the book *Five Views of Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

⁸ Consult the editor’s article “The Top Ten Urban Myths of Today’s Messianic Movement.”

⁹ Consult the editor’s commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, particularly in terms of what Paul means by asserting, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU’” (Galatians 3:8).

see that I am not some fierce advocate of an “Ephraimite identity” and a Messianic faith devoid of respect for Judaism and Jewish tradition, as is too frequently seen among today’s Two-House Messianics. What they basically see from me is a Messianic Jewish style of faith which advocates equality toward all of God’s people, and recognizes that we are all *somehow* involved in the prophecies of Israel’s restoration. I find that people are far more empathetic and considerate toward this view, than some of the Two-House extremism that has arisen in response to Messianic Jewish extremism against non-Jewish Believers. My One Law friends also see that I am very much engaged in a wider theological conversation, and that my spiritual identity is **firmly rooted in the work of Yeshua at Golgotha** (Calvary)—*not* whether or not I am an “Israelite.”

To briefly summarize, the Two-House teaching should be viewed as a Messianic understanding of God’s elect. It is an understanding of ecclesiology.¹⁰ Basically, what the Two-House teaching advocates from the Scriptures is that our Creator has only one group of elect: the people of Israel, all of whom are Believers in the Messiah. This Israel is composed of the House of Judah, the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim, and those companions of the nations who join into the restoration process. One’s ecclesiology affects how a person views the Scriptures, it affects his lifestyle, and it affects his view of the end-times. What makes the Two-House teaching controversial is that it not only advocates that all Believers are a part of Israel, but it also advocates that all Believers should *live as Israel*. This is often not well received by those in either Messianic Judaism or mainstream Christianity—at least at present. And, it is in this area regarding lifestyle where Messianic Judaism has the most problems with non-Jewish Believers labeling themselves as “Messianic.”

There is a great deal of overlap between the Two-House teaching’s definition of God’s elect and the view commonly held among One Law proponents. *Both agree* that all of God’s people are a part of Israel. Perhaps the only major difference is that a greater consciousness that the Lord is in the process of restoring His people is present among Two-House advocates. Some believe that simply being a part of Israel and keeping the Torah are controversial enough, and choose to remain “agnostic” about any further details. I really cannot blame people such as these for not wanting to consider a Two-House teaching that is too-often promoted as being racially-focused with people identifying themselves as “Ephraim,” rather than eschatologically-focused with the identification of any person resting solely with the Lord following His return.

Two-House proponents such as myself do believe that many non-Jewish Believers (“Christians”) may be flesh-and-blood descendants of the Northern Kingdom Israelites captured and dispersed by Assyria in 722-721 B.C.E. Yet, **I would never base my personal redemption on such a possibility**, nor would I ever suggest that salvation is contingent on anyone’s ethnicity. I personally do not know if I am of scattered Israel or not; I simply acknowledge the promise of God to spread the seed of the Patriarchs worldwide (Genesis 26:4; 28:14; 35:11; et. al.). It matters not in terms of my personal salvation, but in terms of the corporate restoration that is promised to His people. We do believe that one day people of the scattered House of Israel/Ephraim will return to the Land of Israel, just as the House of Judah has, in fulfillment of critical end-time prophecies such as: Isaiah 11:14; Jeremiah 3:18, 30:3; and Zechariah 10:7, 10. What God has promised will surely come to pass, and I do not believe we can avoid it.¹¹

Two-House proponents and One Law proponents are in absolute agreement that non-Jewish Believers in Yeshua who are coming to a knowledge of their Hebraic heritage should obey the Torah, among many of the things they share in common. Hopefully in the future, once some of the confusion and extremism are dispelled about the Two-House teaching—particularly that has been caused by those who attempt to identify themselves as “this tribe” or “that tribe”—some

¹⁰ Ecclesiology is a technical term meaning “The area of theological study concerned with understanding the church...Ecclesiology seeks to set forth the nature and function of the church” (Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999], 42). For Messianics who believe that God has only one group of elect, Israel, it regards our understanding of how we as Believers are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, and how this affects our walk of faith and mission as His people.

¹¹ This phenomenon is more fully discussed in the editor’s book *When Will the Messiah Return?*

more reasoned dialogue can occur on the implications of the prophecies among moderate Two-House proponents and One Law proponents. I believe this will be possible when some of the misunderstandings of the Two-House teaching, *which too many proponents often do not clarify*, are clarified. Then we can answer the wider array of questions about *why* so many non-Jewish Believers are being led to embrace their Hebraic Roots.

One of the great confusions about the Two-House teaching is that it is a racial teaching which advocates that all non-Jewish Believers are physical Israelites. **This is not true.** While emphasizing that there is a scattered Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim out in the world, and thus the actual numbers of physical Israel would be more than the 14-15 million Jewish people of today, those who are true “Gentiles” and of the nations are *included* within Israel. The prophecy of Ezekiel 37:16 indicates that this reunion is “For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his **companions**...For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his **companions**.” The “companions” or “comrades” (ATS) or “all who are joined with him” (CJB), represent those who are not physically Israel, but enjoin themselves to one of the Two Houses of Israel. Citizenship in Israel is *open to the foreigner or sojourner* who enjoins himself to the God of Israel, and it ultimately is determined by faith in Israel’s Messiah.

When we can emphasize the Two-House teaching as *eschatology* and an end-time expectation of Israel, rather than as “identity,” then a fair-minded view on what God seeks to be accomplished can emerge. **Then we can all make the progress as “Israel” that He desires us to make!** We will be able to appropriate the message of being “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:5-6) who are to serve the Lord as His intermediaries in the world.

What theological issues has Messianic Judaism widely avoided?

While certainly many Two-House proponents themselves, by presenting an extreme form of the Two-House teaching, have kept people—particularly Messianic Jews—away from considering God’s promises to restore Israel, there is an inherent Messianic Jewish attitude toward “controversial issues” that likewise needs to be considered. The book *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, aside from its intention to at least indirectly acknowledge Messianic Judaism as just another branch of Judaism, is probably the only concentrated effort (at least as far as I know as of 2008) to substantially consider the important issues that cause friction among Messianic Bible teachers, with some well-explained points of view. However, since 2001 and the subsequent thrust of Messianic Judaism to speak against non-Jewish Messianic Believers embracing a life of Torah observance, it can be very easily said that it has made very little theological progress *on any front*.

In my article “‘The Ephraimite Error’: Critical Errors,” I address the six principal problems that I have with the MJAA white paper against the Two-House teaching. There are things that I *do agree* with the white paper on, and I do fully admit that the Two-House teaching, among other aspects of Messianic doctrine, does need to be subject to further refinement and discussion—things that will take some time. Yet, one of the main areas where I disagree with “The Ephraimite Error” white paper is **that no alternative interpretation of Ezekiel 37:15-28 is often provided by Messianic Jews**, the prophecy of the two sticks of Judah and Ephraim coming together. I do not believe that it is unreasonable or unfair to ask Messianic Jews to offer another interpretation, as Two-House proponents are basing their belief in the restoration of Israel *on unfilled Bible prophecies* such as this.¹² In response to this request, however, I was actually told by one person,

“To say that it is ‘an error’ to have ‘no alternative interpretation of the two sticks prophecy of Ezekiel 37’ is typically Greco-Roman thinking—needing to have an answer for everything and not letting God be God.”

Whether we realize it or not, this is the same attitude that predominates Messianic Jewish thought on a great deal of other, *significantly more important*, Biblical issues—some of which directly relate to salvation and who Yeshua the Messiah is to us. **It is entirely confounded** to

¹² Consult the editor’s article “The Two Houses of Israel in the End-Times” for a further discussion of these prophecies.

equate having “an answer for everything,” whether it be discussing the two sticks prophecy of Ezekiel 37 or some other issue, as simply being “Greco-Roman thinking.” The Apostle Peter clearly admonishes, “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15, RSV). Likewise, Luke records in Acts that the Bereans “received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Surely, searching God’s Word for answers, and developing interpretations aimed to further the cause of the gospel, is not “Greco-Roman”—it is being a mature Believer guided by His Holy Spirit! We might not have all of the answers for everything all at once, but we certainly cannot avoid our required homework as Believers. We cannot expect to stand before the Lord and get away with saying that “The dog ate it,” or worse yet that we did not want to do it. We are all required to expel some effort to get the most of our relationship with the Holy One. A policy of avoidance will simply not “fly” in the Kingdom of God.

After 2001, Messianic Jewish theology hit a virtual standstill, with no major books or theological works released. In all honesty none of us should be surprised why Messianic Judaism does not want to address the Two-House teaching—**because it avoids the issues that are many times more important** that it could have been addressing! Just consider some of the issues and controversies that have faced the broad Messianic movement from 2001-2007, and how *little Messianic Jewish* information is available, especially from people within Messianic Judaism who can be considered trustworthy and scholastic when it comes to matters of Biblical orthodoxy:

- The controversy over the Divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua
- The controversy over the composition of the books of the Bible, specifically the reliability of the Apostolic Scriptures
- The mission of God’s people as originally given to Ancient Israel in the Tanach, and how we are to accomplish it today
- A balanced appreciation for our shared Jewish and Christian spiritual heritage
- The role of the Messianic community in modern/post-modern society¹³

Up until very recently (February 2008), I had found myself praying over and over to the Lord about *why* Messianic Judaism just seemed to stop after 2001. Sure, while there would be an occasional devotion book produced here or there, I seriously wondered why more had not been accomplished. “Does Messianic Judaism just have no work ethic?” I would validly ask. “Are these people just complacent while people are out there dying on the vine?” I would wonder, finding myself stressed out and exhausted, without enough hours in the day to complete all the tasks the Lord had before me.¹⁴

Then in late 2007 David H. Stern’s updated book *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement With an Ancient Past* was released. Even though this was not a new book, being a revision of his previous *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1991), I did read it with intense interest to see whether or not my question would be answered. Stern has certainly helped the Messianic world through his publications the *Jewish New Testament Commentary* and *Complete Jewish Bible*, and as a former professor and academic I greatly appreciate the fact that he is very well read and scholastic in his approach. **Stern gave me my**

¹³ Of course, I could list many other issues, but this is to give you a small sampling of the things Messianic Judaism could have addressed from 2001-2007, and largely did not. You can only imagine some of the *other issues* that likewise await our broad movement in the forthcoming 2010s.

¹⁴ Indeed, our ministry (and myself, in particular) is probably well over-worked in an effort to address many of the issues and controversies listed above, among other things.

For the **Divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua**, consult the editor’s articles “Answering the ‘Frequently Avoided Questions’ About the Divinity of Yeshua” and “Answering the ‘Frequently Avoided Questions’ About the Messiahship of Yeshua.”

For the **composition of the books of the Bible**, consult the editor’s publications *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic* and *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* (forthcoming 2008).

For the **role of the Messianic community in society**, consult the editor’s article “How Are We to Live as Modern Messianics?”

answer as to why a great deal of theological progress has not been made in Messianic Judaism in the 2000s.

As he explains, “between 1999 and 2003, after publishing the Complete Jewish Bible, I stopped writing, and when I was asked, ‘What book are you working on now?’ I answered, ‘None. I’m working on personal issues.’ I felt compelled to do this because until then I had been so much a ‘head person’ that I had put matters of the heart aside,”¹⁵ and then proceeds to describe some of the personal challenges that he faced. It certainly does take *a great deal of courage and maturity* for one to actually *stop the work of ministry* to focus on oneself for severe spiritual conditioning. Stern goes on to explain that he did this “for the sake of the movement, and for the sake of Messiah’s Body,”¹⁶ summarizing,

“There are believers, some of them good pastors and leaders, who win unbelievers to the Lord (good deeds), but their own marriages, families and other relationships are a shambles (lack of love). They can give wonderful sermons and teachings but are secretly addicted to pornography or other sexual sins, or to substance abuse. They are violent physically or verbally. They have ethical lapses in their use of money. Or they have other serious sins in their lives. By God’s grace they manage to function and do some good in the world, even though their ‘holiness’ is a facade. But their functioning is truly dysfunctional—they are not operating at God’s optimal level, and they do damage along with the good they accomplish. Usually the poor quality of their prayer life and devotions in the Word are an indicator of this sort of difficulty. What is required in such situations is less doing and more being, more being open to letting God work in their life. I call this receiving of God’s love being open-hearted or seeking truth in the inner person. Our movement, as well as the Church at large, is in drastic need of narrowing the gap between what we say we believe and what we really are, of being truly godly instead of putting on a show, of shining forth Yeshua from within instead of being hypocrites.”¹⁷

Here, Stern testifies that many of the problems that Christian pastors face are the same that are now being faced by many Messianic Jewish leaders. Such people are human beings, and as such do face common human problems. Yet, for a figure as significant as Stern to take an almost ten-year Sabbatical from writing—and then have to say something like this about other pastors, teachers, and leaders in Messianic Judaism—indicates that this is a big problem. Furthermore, it may also indicate that at the opposite end among many of the Two-House extremists, similar problems probably also exist. I do, however, commend Stern for his honesty and integrity in taking the time he needed to resolve some of his personal issues. Most people would be unable to do this.

How do we fix the problems?

To once again go through all of the dirty laundry of the emerging Messianic movement would be a very unproductive and demoralizing exercise. *Each of us knows that there are problems*, and that change must be enacted for us to have a secure future. Messianic Judaism has caused problems, as have many Messianic independents and Two-House proponents. Yet who is to blame more? Messianic Judaism did not address some of the things regarding basic Biblical theology that it should have—and it had the time, resources, and minds to do so. It could have prevented some of the apostasy from faith in Messiah that we see in our midst today, by expending a little more energy and effort in researching the subjects that matter most to Biblical students as they concern the life of Yeshua and the reliability of the Scriptures. But it did not do this, and it should be no surprise why even a moderate form of the Two-House teaching—with an emphasis on eschatology—is **not even open for any or some kind of discussion by them**. *We often cannot even sit down and honestly consider the Scriptures in question with Messianic Jews*, without someone reacting, twitching, or acting like an adolescent child.

¹⁵ David H. Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement With an Ancient Past* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2007), 276.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

How we move beyond some of the extremism that has been allowed to fester is not going to be easy, but certainly is achievable for the next decade. We have to be guided by a more comprehensive approach to Scripture, and stop avoiding those books of the Bible that often have the answers to the problems we face. As the Messianic community, we have to demonstrate the progressivism of Paul—who had to provide pragmatic solutions for complicated problems, with the brevity of the Prophets—those who spoke directly and candidly to the wider issues of holiness, righteousness, and justice. And not surprisingly, the Pauline Epistles and the Prophets are the two most avoided parts of the Bible by *most Messianics* today!

Independent Messianics are more than likely going to be those who have to pick up the slack with the issues and controversies that Messianic Judaism has chosen to not address, consider, or just outright ignore. This will involve both One Law and Two-House advocates. And, for the Two-House proponents who present the teaching from a *Biblical perspective*—emphasizing the restoration of all Israel in the eschaton—our burden of proof is to address what it is in the context of a wider Biblical theology. Just as former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl advocated “German reunification in the context of European unification”¹⁸ in the late 1980s as communism was falling in the East, **so must the Two-House teaching be presented among an entire array of *other*, far more important Messianic issues** that are all well-considered, well-reasoned, and part of a larger theological discussion.

Achieving this objective will require a great deal of work, as well as some time. Not only will some of us find ourselves continuing the work of our Jewish and Christian forebearers, but we may actually find ourselves continuing the work stopped by today’s Messianic Judaism. I just hope that if the latter is the case, the answers and theology that many in Messianic Judaism have been praying for in past years—are not *all* formulated by *non-Jewish* Messianic Believers. I hope we can all, both Jewish and non-Jewish, learn to appreciate one another as we seek the Father’s will for the restoration of His people, truly accomplishing the mandate He has given Israel to be a blessing to the entire world! I pray that we can all learn to present a Messianic faith where “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28), and all of the talents and skills of God’s people can be respected and employed. May we all work toward this end, my dear friends!

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.

¹⁸ Cf. Christopher S. Allen, “The Making of the German State,” in Mark Kesselman and Joel Krieger, eds., *European Politics in Transition*, fourth edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), pp 336-337.