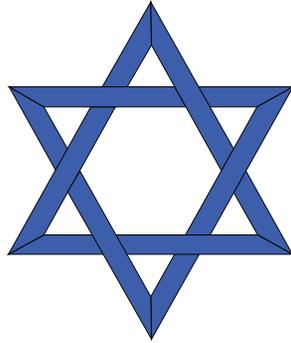


# MESSIANIC JUDAISM



by Neil and Jamie Lash

## **...Life from the Dead (Romans 11:15)**

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## Table of Contents

	Preface . . . . .	i
	Introduction . . . . .	i
I.	Messianic Judaism Defined . . . . .	1
II.	What We Believe . . . . .	2
III.	Beginnings . . . . .	3
IV.	1967: A Turning Point . . . . .	5
V.	Messianic Jewish Lifestyle . . . . .	5
VI.	Jews and Gentiles Together . . . . .	7
VII.	The Messiah in Prophecy. . . . .	8
VIII.	Yeshua the Messiah . . . . .	10
IX.	Messiah and You . . . . .	10
X.	A Final Word . . . . .	11
XI.	Bibliography . . . . .	12

# Preface

Neil and Jamie Lash have been involved with Messianic Judaism since 1976, the year in which the God of Israel supernaturally spoke to Neil at a 6:00 A.M. prayer meeting. As Neil relates the encounter, he began to suddenly experience the most intense grief that he had ever experienced from the “kishkes,” (the inner depths of his being). Not understanding where this grief was coming from, Neil asked God to explain to him what he was experiencing. God’s answer: “This is how I feel about the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” Neil’s reply: “What do you want **me** to do about it?” God’s commission: “I want you to start a Messianic synagogue.”

The rest is history, not **our** story but **His** story—the story of Yeshua Ha Mashiach (Jesus, the Messiah) who is revealing Himself to His own people in these last days. It is the story of the God of Israel who is providing a vehicle whereby Jewish people can retain their Jewishness once they receive Ben Elohim, the Son of God, the promised Messiah.

This booklet is an overview of Messianic Judaism but not the whole story. We encourage you to seek out a Messianic synagogue and attend a Shabbat service to see for yourself what God is doing among His Jewish people as history is being written in our day.

\*Several years later Neil realized that he had experienced part of the grief that caused Yeshua to weep over Jerusalem: “*Now as He (Yeshua) drew near, He saw the city and wept over it...*” (Luke 19:41).

# Introduction

From the *Tanach* (Hebrew Scriptures):

“*The soul who sins shall die.*” (Ezekiel 18:4)

“*A person shall be put to death for his own sin.*”

(2 Kings 14:6)

From the *B'rit HaDasha* (the New Covenant):

“*And you HE MADE ALIVE, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*” (Ephesians 2:1)

“*For if their casting Yeshua aside means reconciliation for the world, what will their accepting Him mean? It will be LIFE FROM THE DEAD!*” Romans 11:15 (Jewish New Testament–JNT)

When **anyone** receives Yeshua and accepts His death as an atonement for their sin, they pass from spiritual death to spiritual life. When a Jewish person receives Yeshua as his Messiah, resurrection life occurs, not only on a personal, spiritual level, but on a more global, prophetic level as well. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob promised His people that they would experience both a spiritual and physical resurrection. (Ezekiel chapter 37) When God’s people Israel recognizes Yeshua as their Messiah, resurrection life, fullness, revival, and untold blessings will be the portion of both the Jewish people and the nations. The promise of Ezekiel 37 is being fulfilled today in the Land of Israel and around the world.

Messianic Judaism is LIFE FROM THE DEAD now and a prophetic picture of even greater resurrection life to come!

# Messianic Judaism Defined

“Messianic” comes from the word “Messiah” (Hebrew: *Mashiach*), which literally means the “Anointed One,” and is translated as “Christ” in most English Bibles. Messianic Judaism is Judaism **with** the Messiah, the One who would one day come to redeem God’s People Israel as promised by the Jewish prophets. “Judaism” is a covenantal relationship which began when God found a man (Abram, later to become Abraham) who had the faith to believe God and became His friend. God promised that this covenant would be available to Abraham’s descendants and that He would bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham (Genesis 18:18). The covenant was renewed at Mt. Sinai with the twelve tribes who were descendants of Abraham’s grandson Jacob, making this a covenant that was now open to a nation— the nation of Israel.

God brought this nation into the land that He had promised His friend Abraham, and Temple worship was initiated. The Judaism practiced at the time of the first Temple consisted of five major aspects:

1. the **moral** law (Exodus chapter 20) which lists the Ten Commandments;
2. the **festival** law (Leviticus 23) which contains all the appointed Feasts of the Lord;
3. the law of **separation** (Leviticus chapters 11-15,18) which made this nation different from all the other nations on earth (since their God was different);
4. the **sacrificial** law (Leviticus chapters 1-7) which enabled this people to maintain their relationship with God in spite of their human failings;
5. and the **civil** law (Exodus chapters 21-23, Deuteronomy chapters 19-26 and others) which provided for the rules and regulations for daily life and commerce.

The Torah remained the standard for life until the Land of Israel was conquered by the Babylonians, the Temple was destroyed, and the people were carried off due to their disobedience (approx. 586 B.C.E. = Before Common Era: B.C.). While in exile, a flexible Judaism became a very rigid Judaism as the rabbis of the time shifted the emphasis of Judaism from sacrifice to *mitzvot* (good deeds, ethical behavior), prayer, and Torah study. Layer upon layer of laws and requirements were imposed by the rabbis. Following the destruction of the second Temple during what is called the Talmudic Age (actually covering the period from 2nd cent. B.C.E. to 500 C.E. = Common Era: A.D.), the rabbinic laws and regulations, traditions, customs, rites and ceremonies, discussions and debates, opinions, and moralistic teachings of the rabbinic sages took their place in Judaism as “the enlarged and illustrated Bible of Israel.” This body of knowledge, known as the Oral Torah (*Torah sheh be-al-Peh*) and these traditions handed down from the sages of Israel were accepted as being as authoritative as the Torah of Moses.

This is where “Rabbinic” Judaism and true “Biblical” Judaism go their separate ways! Whereas Rabbinic Judaism accepts that the Written and Oral Laws are both divinely revealed, Biblical Judaism does not. Messianic Judaism is true “Biblical” or “New Covenant” Judaism. The Bible, both the *Tanach* (the Old Covenant) and the *B’rit Hadasha* (the New Covenant), are considered the final authority for both belief and practice.

Messianic Judaism includes the belief in a personal Messiah. Some branches of Judaism do **not** believe in a personal Messiah while others do. Messianic Judaism is a monotheistic religion. We have this in common with Rabbinic Judaism, with the *Shema*, “*Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One!*” (Deut. 6:4) at the center of our belief system. Messianic Jews consider the Holy Scriptures to be divinely inspired and authoritative. Most branches of Rabbinic Judaism would not agree with this.

Messianic Judaism is a sovereign move of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit)! It is a congregational movement in which Jewish people hear the Good News of Yeshua the Messiah in a Jewish context and continue in their customs and traditions after finding the Messiah. Messianic Judaism is a prophetic, end-time phenomenon and acknowledges the fulfillment of a New Covenant (*B’rit Hadasha*) between God and His Jewish people as promised by the God of Israel through the prophet Jeremiah in the Holy Scriptures:

“Here, *the days are coming,*” says Adonai, “*when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra’el and with the house of Y’huda. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them,*” says Adonai. “*For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra’el after those days,*” says Adonai: “*I will put My Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be My people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, ‘Know Adonai’; for all will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more.*” Jeremiah 31:31-33 (Complete Jewish Bible)

In Messianic Judaism the Law of God moves from the outside (tablets of stone) to the inside (the human heart). The Law is not done away with (Matthew 5:17). Man is given the power, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, to do the will of God.

Messianic Judaism is **not** a cult. There is no one worldwide leader except for Yeshua, who is the One we follow! Messianic Judaism is a growing “people movement.” In 1967 there were approximately 2,000 Messianic Jews in the U.S. By the year 2012 there were an estimated 350,000 Messianic Jews in over 2000 congregations worldwide, with more than 150 of these in the Land of Israel!



## What We Believe

**WE BELIEVE** in the physical and spiritual restoration of the Jewish people:

Deuteronomy 30:1-6: *“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you; and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul; that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you; Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers; And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”*

How does God circumcise a person’s heart? We are told in the *B’rit Hadasha* that God causes a change in one’s orientation to life. Circumcision of the heart causes a Jewish person to seek God’s approval, rather than man’s.

*“But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”* (Romans 2:29)

In Deuteronomy 30:1-6, the Lord promises to perform this supernatural surgery on His Jewish people in the land of Israel. The 100+ congregations of Messianic Jews in that land testify to His ongoing work.

Ezekiel 36:24-27: *“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”*

Again we see God promising both physical and spiritual restoration to His Chosen People. Cleansing, a new heart, and a new spirit are all part of the new birth that a Jew experiences upon receiving Yeshua as Messiah. A “heart for God,” a spirit that comes alive (resurrected from the dead), and the reality of being free from sin, guilt, and shame are all part of the wonderful Messianic Jewish experience.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (see page 3) shows us that a Jewish person doesn’t have to be in *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel) to meet Messiah! Yeshua is available in any country, at any time, always waiting patiently for His precious people to come to Him. Through the New Covenant, sealed by the blood of Yeshua, a Jewish person’s sins are cast into the sea of God’s forgetfulness, never to be remembered again. The believer comes to **know** God. The Hebrew word used for “know” is “*yada*”, the same word used in Genesis 4:1 where *“Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived....”* One of the greatest joys of Messianic Judaism is the intimate, warm, close, loving relationship with God that is made possible through the Messiah. We have never met a traditional Rabbinic Jew that could testify to such a relationship.

**WE BELIEVE** that the Bible (both the Old and New Covenant Scriptures) is the Word of God and is inspired by the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit). One book. One message. It is our guidebook for life and our final authority.

**WE BELIEVE** that Yeshua (Jesus) is the promised Messiah, the Son of God (as prophesied in Psalms 2:7), who was born in

Bethlehem (as prophesied in Micah 5:2), and who died by crucifixion (as prophesied in Psalms 22:16). We believe that Yeshua rose from the dead (as prophesied in Psalms 16:10), made atonement for our sin, and is coming again to judge the world. Yeshua is both fully God and fully man, the only way to an intimate relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the One who purchased eternal life for us.

**WE BELIEVE** in one Messiah and two comings. Yeshua came the first time as a suffering servant to make atonement for the sins of mankind. The New Covenant (the *B'rit Hadasha*) sealed in His blood, makes it possible for all who receive Yeshua to come directly into the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, both here and forever in eternity.

Yeshua is coming a second time as a ruling King. He will reign for 1,000 years during what is called the “Millennium.” His throne will be in Jerusalem, and peace will prevail over all the earth.



## Beginnings

The first believers in Yeshua were all Jewish. Yeshua Himself said that He came for His own people: “*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” (Matthew 15:24) It was the Jews, not the Gentiles, who had been promised a Messiah by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because Yeshua was raised in Nazareth, His first followers were called Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). (*Notzrim* in Hebrew.) There were hundreds of thousands of them. The Nazarenes continued to keep the Jewish hour of prayer (Acts 3:1). They also continued worshipping in the Temple in Jerusalem. We read about their activities in the *B'rit Hadasha* in the book of Acts chapter 2, verses 46-47: “*Continuing faithfully and with singleness of purpose to meet in the Temple courts daily, and breaking bread in their several homes, they shared their food in joy and simplicity of heart, praising God and having the respect of all the people.*”

The early Messianic Jews were a spiritually vibrant, focused group of believers. Many of them had seen Yeshua after He was raised from the dead (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:3-8). Their lives were changed forever. No longer were they the group that scattered at Yeshua’s arrest. This was a group with holy boldness who believed so strongly that they were willing to die for their belief. In fact, by historical accounts all but one (John) of Yeshua’s *talmidim* (disciples) suffered violent deaths for their faith.

Did the early believers in Yeshua put aside the Law once Messiah had come? Certainly not! We read in Acts 21:20 that they continued to embrace the Law fervently. The following was reported to Rabbi Sha’ul (the Apostle Paul) by the elders of the Jerusalem congregation: “*You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.*” These believers were still Jews, but now they were completed or fulfilled Jews. The Hope of the Ages, their Messiah, had come! Paul, in particular, continued living as a Jew. He went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feasts of the Lord, offered sacrifices in the Temple, (Acts 21:26) and in all ways lived as an observant Jew.

Although Jewish people were the first ones to receive Yeshua as Messiah, God’s plan from the beginning of time included the Gentiles. Salvation was to be “*to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Gentile)...*” (Romans 1:16). In a very interesting portion of the Hebrew Scriptures in the book of the prophet Isaiah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob speaks to His Son, Yeshua, and tells Him of things to come: “*It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant; to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth*” (Isaiah 49:6).

In the *B'rit Hadasha* we read that Yeshua came to be a “*light to the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel*” (Luke 2:32).

The first believers did not understand that God had a plan for the non-Jews. Because of this, there arose a controversy over whether or not a Gentile could receive the Jewish Messiah without becoming a Jew.

God first showed Peter (*Kefa*), one of Yeshua’s *talmidim*, that He was no respecter of persons when He caused the *Ruach HaKodesh* to fall on a group of Gentiles in the home of a Roman army officer named Cornelius. (See Acts 10.) (Today the situation is reversed, and the question is: “Can a Jew receive Yeshua without becoming a Gentile?” The answer is: Yes! A Jew is born a Jew and dies a Jew. Receiving a Jewish Messiah does not make one a Gentile!)

After that, the Good News of Messiah began to be shared with the Gentiles and many came to believe in Yeshua. In time,

the number of Gentile believers outnumbered the Jewish believers, and a strong Gentile influence infiltrated the Messianic faith. Holidays such as Christmas and Easter were introduced. Although Yeshua never told us to celebrate His birth (Jews traditionally remember the **death** of a loved one and Yeshua did tell us to remember **His death** (I Corinthians 11:24-26), the early Gentile believers chose to turn a pagan celebration of the birth of the “Sun God” into a celebration of the Son of God. Their hearts may have been in the right place, but the fruit of their decision has contributed to making the Body of Messiah more like a Christmas tree than an olive tree, cut off at the Jewish root! The same can be said of Easter. If the new Gentile believers had continued to celebrate the resurrection of Messiah when it actually occurred, at Passover, the Messianic faith would have remained more recognizably Jewish. Messianic Jews certainly believe in the resurrection of Yeshua. But we do not accept Easter bunnies, eggs and the rest of the Gentile wrappings.

There were also some historical incidents which caused the Jewish believers to separate themselves from their Jewish brethren. One of these happened in 70 C.E. when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. The Jewish believers fled the city before the attack following the instructions of Yeshua (Luke 21:20-21). They were considered traitors by the surviving Jews.

Something also occurred in 132 C.E. which caused a separation between Jewish believers and their unbelieving brethren. A famous rabbi of the time, Rabbi Akiva, proclaimed Simon Bar Kochbah to be the Messiah. The Jews who were followers of Yeshua separated themselves from the followers of this other so-called messiah which further isolated them. After what is called the Bar Kochbah Revolt against Rome, the Messianic Jews were again considered “traitors” and were banned by the rabbis from the Jewish community.

The other force that Messianic Jews had to reckon with were the Gentile believers. As the Messianic Jews brought the message of Yeshua further and further from Israel, the Jewishness of the faith began to erode. At Antioch a Greek name was given to the believers. No longer were they “*Natzratim*.” They became “Christians.” (Acts 11:26) Christian actually means “followers of Christ,” which is the Greek translation of “Messiah,” so the meaning was still very Jewish, but the Greek/Gentile influence prevailed. Gentiles became the leaders of the faith.

Anti-Semitism crept in slowly but surely. By the fourth century, the Emperor Constantine made “Christianity” the official religion of the Roman Empire. When he did this, he also began to enact restrictions against the Jewish people. Anyone who worshipped “like the Jews” suffered for it.

At the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. it was decided that the Roman pagan calendar would replace the Jewish biblical calendar. The Jewish feast of First Fruits, on which Yeshua rose from the dead, was replaced by Easter, a spring festival of worship to the pagan goddess Ishtar. The day of Yeshua’s death at Passover was changed to “Good Friday.” Sunday, the day on which the Romans worshipped the sun, became a holy day for Christians. The special day of worship was changed from the *Shabbat* (Saturday) to Sunday.

Did any elements of Messianic Judaism remain after 325 C.E.? According to some sources, not all Jewish believers in Yeshua renounced their Jewishness to accept a Gentile brand of Messianic faith. Some, according to the writings of Epiphanius (c. 315 to 402 C.E.), continued to live as biblically observant Jews... *“They preach that there is but one God, and His son Jesus Christ. But they are very learned in the Hebrew language; for they, like the Jews, read the whole Law, then the Prophets... They differ from the Jews because they believe in Christ and from the Christians in that they are to this day bound to the Jewish rites, such as circumcision, the Sabbath, and other ceremonies.”*

This, no doubt, was the case in some measure throughout the next 1,400 or so years. We do know that in the 1800’s many Jewish people began to come to faith in Yeshua. As political and economic freedom grew in various countries, Jewish believers could again make their presence known. A “Hebrew Christian” movement became visible, with Jewish people worshipping for the most part in churches.

Beginning in the 1960’s, God began to move in the hearts of various Hebrew Christian leaders such as the late Martin Chernoff of Philadelphia, PA., showing them the distinct calling and destiny of Jewish believers in Yeshua. These leaders began to lead their people in returning to the worship of Messiah in the original, Hebraic, biblical context. They began to have what we call a “Messianic Vision.” These Jewish believers determined to no longer be assimilated into the Gentile culture of the church, but to maintain a Jewish lifestyle as did Yeshua Himself and all the early Jewish believers.



# 1967: A Turning Point!

Messianic Judaism really began to flourish in the year 1967. That was the same year that Jerusalem came back under the control of the Jewish people for the first time in almost 2,000 years. A coincidence? Absolutely not! God's time for the Jewish people had begun. The age of the Gentiles (*Goyim*) was drawing to a close as prophesied in the New Covenant: "... *Yerushalayim will be trampled down by the Goyim until the age of the Goyim has run its course...*" (Luke 21:24).

The spiritual implications of this age of the Gentiles (*Goyim*) drawing to a close are of great significance. The Holy Scriptures tell us that Israel would be blinded spiritually for a period of time according to the plan of God. Following this period, God would once again begin to move among His ancient people. This is what the modern Messianic Jewish movement is all about:

*"For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep."* (Isaiah 29:10)

*"...hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come ... and so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'"* (Romans 11:25-26)

Since 1967 we have seen a tremendous move of the *Ruach Ha Kodesh* among God's Chosen People all over the world. The 1970's saw the beginning of many Messianic Synagogues; the 1980's saw the establishment of Messianic Day Schools, programs to train Messianic Rabbis, books, music, even TV programs; the 1990's saw Messianic festivals and revivals worldwide, including festivals in the former Soviet Union at which an estimated 45,000 Jewish people responded to invitations to receive Yeshua as Messiah. By the year 2000 there were Messianic Synagogues in at least 17 countries around the world, including the U.S., Israel, Russia, France, Argentina, England, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Holland, Brazil, Colombia, Germany, Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland, Ukraine, and more.

Messianic Judaism today is a rapidly growing, highly visible movement. It is also a controversial one. In Israel, the ruling ultra-Orthodox rabbis denounce the movement as heresy. Messianic Jews are presently denied citizenship in the Land of Israel, even though the Law of Return defines anyone who is born of a Jewish mother as Jewish. The rabbis say that a Jew who believes in Yeshua (Jesus) has left his people and has ceased to be a Jew. Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel are challenging the rabbis' definition, since they believe that both the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Holy Scriptures define Messianic Jews as Jews. We wholeheartedly agree!

In the U.S. and other countries, Messianic Jews experience varying degrees of persecution and misunderstanding. Some Christians love us, others mistrust us. Sometimes we are accused of being "divisive" or bringing people "under the Law." Many times we are told that we can't be Jewish and believe in Yeshua (Jesus). Our response should be one of educating and loving, in keeping with the manner in which our Messiah would respond to criticism.

We have found in recent years that more and more born-again believers in Yeshua are excited about their Jewish roots, love the Land and people of Israel, desire to celebrate Passover and other feasts in their congregations, are thrilled when they hear the sound of the *shofar*, and generally are enthusiastic about "things Jewish." This is truly a work of the *Ruach HaKodesh*. God is preparing a people for Himself who have His heart and who bring glory to His Name.



## Messianic Jewish Lifestyle How We Live

While there is great variety in lifestyle among Messianic Jewish believers as among the Jewish population at large, there are some commonalities that we share regardless of congregational size or physical location. First of all, we worship on *Shabbat*, the biblical Sabbath, sundown Friday through sundown Saturday. Some congregations have services only on Friday night, others only on Saturday morning, others on both Friday and Saturday. Some congregations in Israel worship on Saturday evening (*Motza'ei-Shabbat*).

Shabbat is actually the first of the Feasts of Lord outlined in Leviticus chapter 23. These feasts, *moadim* in Hebrew, form the basis of the yearly calendar of most Messianic Jews. (For a deeper analysis of the Feasts of the Lord and their Messianic significance, see our booklet *The Meaning and Importance of the Jewish Holidays*, or check out our website for more in-depth books [www.JewishJewels.org](http://www.JewishJewels.org)). We like to think of these appointed times as parties that God is throwing. Everyone is invited, including non-Jews, but not all choose to attend.

The biblical year begins with the first *moed*, *Pesach*, the Passover, on the fourteenth day of Nissan. This is a major feast for all Messianic Jews, since it is a double celebration of both our physical deliverance from Egypt in bondage as a people, and our spiritual deliverance from the bondage of sin as individuals. Passover for us focuses on the Lamb of God, Yeshua, through whose blood death has passed over us. The feast that begins on the following day, the Feast of *Matzot* (Unleavened Bread) is observed for seven days as a picture of our sanctification, our being unleavened, through our Messiah who is the Unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Truth. The next feast, *Yom HaBikkurim*, Firstfruits, coincides exactly with Yeshua's resurrection, "*But now Messiah is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Cor. 15:20). Some Messianic Jews celebrate the resurrection with a separate, Firstfruits service, while others incorporate it into their Passover Seders when the middle of the three matzahs is brought forth from its hiding place.

Fifty days later, we celebrate *Shavuot*, the Feasts of Weeks, as God's appointed time to give both the Law and the Spirit. Messianic Jews understand that the timing of these two events is not coincidental. When the Lord sent His Spirit to the waiting *talmidim* (disciples) in Jerusalem (see Acts 2), the New Covenant prophesied in Jeremiah chapter 31 was being fulfilled. God's Law would now be written on human hearts through His *Ruach HaKodesh* (Jer. 31:11).

The holy convocation of the first day of the seventh month is *Yom Teruah*. *Yom Teruah*, the Feast of Trumpets, is traditionally known as *Rosh HaShanah*, the head of the year. This feast, occurring on the first of Tishrei, is preceded by a month of soul-searching and repentance, the month of Elul. We, as Messianic Jews, prepare our hearts during this time, waiting for the great shofar sound that will usher in the return of the Messiah Yeshua. He may very well return at *Yom Teruah* since it is the next feast to be fulfilled on God's calendar. (Since Passover and Shavuot, the spring and summer feasts have already been fulfilled.) While we dip apples in honey and eat round challah like traditional Jewish people, wishing each other a sweet new year, we have an assurance that they do not have—that our names are written for eternity in the Lamb's Book of Life. This makes every day, not just once a year, sweet!

*Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, is a holy convocation for Messianic Jews. Most of us fast, along with all of Israel, on that solemn day. However, we do not fast to gain atonement for sin. Our sins have been forgiven through the atoning sacrifice of our High Priest Yeshua. We have received His atonement, by grace, through faith. Messianic Jews fast and pray on *Yom Kippur* for the salvation of our people—that all Israel might be saved.

The month of Tishrei is a very busy month for Messianic Jews. We go from repentance, to redemption, to rejoicing in a few short weeks. The best is saved for last, at least in the Lash household, since our favorite feast of the Lord is *Sukkot* or the Feast of Tabernacles. We celebrate the faithfulness of God, not only in Israel's wilderness wanderings, but in our lives as Messianic Jewish believers. God is so good! We observe this feast by eating our meals in a temporary booth or *sukkah*. When our children were little, we slept in the *sukkah* as well. We wave palm branches, the *lulav*, as prescribed in Leviticus 23:10, and rejoice before the Lord for seven days. Messianic Jews who do not have a *sukkah* outside their home, usually have the opportunity to celebrate in a congregational *sukkah*.

Messianic synagogues are at the center of the Messianic movement. They are places where Jewish believers and non-Jews with Jewish hearts gather to worship, study, teach our children, and celebrate the Feasts of the Lord. Most Messianic synagogues that have existed for a few years have their own Torah scroll. Some have more than one. Hebrew is studied and taught to the children, especially as they approach *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* age. Many Messianic synagogues are affiliated with umbrella organizations such as the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America or the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations.

Most Messianic Jews call our Messiah by His given Hebrew name, Yeshua, meaning "salvation." Why use His Hebrew name? Because He was a Jewish man in a Hebrew culture with a Hebrew name. As Jews, we relate to his Jewishness. He is **ours**. He is not a foreigner! For too long, Yeshua has been estranged from His own people because He has been dressed in totally Gentile garb, unrecognizable as a Jewish Messiah. Messianic Jews put a *talit* (prayer shawl) back on Yeshua and proclaim Him as the Messiah of Israel and the world.

Messianic Jews praise the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as King David did, with singing, lifted hands, numerous musical instruments, hand clapping, and dancing. It is not uncommon to see a group of people, young and old, dancing Israeli-style in the front of the congregation at any given Shabbat service in a Messianic congregation. There is tangible joy—like the joy at a Jewish wedding! We call this type of praise and worship "Davidic." It plays a major role in Messianic Judaism.

Messianic synagogues are not supported by dues, but rather by the free-will offerings of the members. The biblical tithe (10% of one's earnings) is very common as a minimum standard of giving—not because we **have** to, but because love and gratitude to God prompts cheerful giving. (Malachi 3:10; 2 Cor. 9:7)

Messianic Jews usually marry under a *huppah*. While each wedding is unique, the breaking of a wine glass is a common sight at Messianic weddings. Candles are lit on Friday night at most synagogues (and in homes as well), *kiddush* is chanted,

children are blessed with the ancient *Birkat Ha Cohanim* (Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24-26), *Kaddish* is said for departed loved ones, and *Kol Nidre* is chanted on *Erev Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. Israel, especially Jerusalem, is dear to our hearts. Messianic Jews pray for the peace of Jerusalem on a regular basis.

Most Messianic Jews are “biblically kosher.” That means that we eat no shellfish, pork, etc., in obedience to God’s directions in Leviticus chapter 11. However, many of us do not keep “rabbinic kosher” (refraining from mixing milk and meat) which we find no basis for in the Holy Scriptures. Onegs (refreshments, literally “delights”) are a regular part of congregational life.

Messianic synagogues vary in their degree of “tradition.” Some are very traditional, using *siddurs* (prayer books), a large amount of Hebrew in the service, and considerable liturgy. Men wrap *tefillin* (phylacteries: Ex. 13:9,16), wear prayer shawls and *kippot* (traditional male head coverings, and pray at traditional Jewish hours of prayer. Other synagogues are less traditional, with overhead projectors instead of *siddurs*, praise and worship bands on the *bema* (podium), and optional *talit* and *kippah*. Some Messianic services last one hour; others last three.

While practices vary, beliefs are fairly consistent throughout Messianic Judaism. Yeshua is the Messiah. He came over 2,000 years ago as a “lamb” and is coming again as a “lion.” He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. An intimate relationship with Almighty God (*El Shaddai*) is only possible through Him. He is the One that according to the Prophet Yesha’yahu (Isaiah) was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7), was stricken for the transgressions of God’s people (Isaiah 53:8), would justify many (Isaiah 53:11), and would prolong His days (Isaiah 53:10).



## Jews and Gentiles Together

Messianic Judaism is not only for Jewish people. Non-Jews are very much a part of the Messianic Jewish movement. They are true spiritual Jews, fully equal to Jewish believers. This was not always the case. At one time non-Jews could not approach the dwelling place of God. There was a wall in the Temple in Jerusalem that separated them from the people of Israel. Through the *B’rit Hadasha* (the New Covenant sealed by the blood of Messiah) non-Jews have direct access to the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We read the following in the book of Ephesians:

*“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Messiah. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”* (Ephesians 2:11-16)

The New Covenant makes it clear that non-Jews are spiritually grafted into the nation of Israel upon receiving the Jewish Messiah. The Jewish root is their support. (Romans 11:15-28) Throughout the centuries, the majority of Gentile believers have not seen their faith as a “Jewish” faith, but things are changing in these last days. Large numbers of non-Jews are embracing the Jewishness of Jesus. Like Ruth in the Bible, they are saying: *“Your people will be my people, and your God, my God”* (Ruth 1:16). These believers are receiving revelation from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning the Bible as a Jewish book, the Sabbath as the 7th day of the week, and the Feasts of the Lord as appointed times for all God’s people. They love the land of Israel, the Hebrew language, and Jewish culture and traditions. They see themselves as children of Abraham by faith (Gal. 3:29), and actually feel more at home in a Messianic synagogue than in a Christian church.

Gentiles in Messianic Judaism are not required to become Jews. There is no need for a formal conversion to Judaism, because **all** believers, both Jew and non-Jew are part of the people of God, **one** in the *Ruach HaKodesh*. What we are in the “flesh” is not the most important thing to God. The spiritual reality is the crucial one. Of the natural, God’s opinion is quite clear:

*“Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.”* (1 Cor. 7:18-20)

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “calls” non-Jewish believers to be a part of Messianic Judaism. This is a work of the Spirit of God. Jewish believers in Messiah should highly esteem these precious believers who love the Jewish Messiah, the Law of God, the Jewish feasts and festivals, and the Jewish people. Their cleaving to the House of Israel is pleasing to God. (Genesis 12:3)

There are multitudes of believers in the Jewish Messiah who attend churches. Those who have been born-again by the Spirit of God are called the “Body of Christ.” Messianic Jews, while called to still remain part of the Jewish people, are also part of this larger body. We are the “Jewish” part of the Body. We are spiritual *mishpochah* (family). The responsibility of non-Jews before God is to show love and mercy and to live in such a way that Jewish people who don’t know Yeshua see Him in their lives. (Romans 11:11) It is our prayer that more and more Christian churches embrace Messianic Jews as the prophetic people that we are, twice chosen by God to be His witnesses at this time in history.

Historically, there has been misunderstanding concerning the “Jewish” orientation of Messianic believers. Some Gentile Christians have interpreted our Hebraic practices as “bondage” at best, and heresy at worst. Messianic Jews have also been accused of “Judaizing.” This is a false accusation. Judaizing means requiring Gentiles to live or behave like Jews, and asserting that they do not have salvation unless they do so. Salvation is **never** by works of any kind, but by grace through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Yeshua. (Eph. 2:8-9) If a non-Jew in a Messianic Congregation lives or behaves like a Jew, it is because he has chosen to do so as moved by the Spirit of God.

We like the way Dan Juster, a well-known leader in the Messianic movement, refuted Judaizing in one of his writings: “To practice Jewish feasts because they enrich our understanding is not Judaizing. These feasts are illustrations for us. It is no more Judaizing than preaching from the Old Covenant. A Messianic Congregation does not Judaize. A person is not a Judaizer because he adopts Jewish practices as an aid to understanding the finished work of the Messiah. To speak in the Hebrew language rather than the Greek, to say Yeshua instead of Jesus Christ, to feel a bond with the physical Jewish people, to appreciate Jewish practice and culture is not to Judaize.”



## The Messiah in Prophecy

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spoke through the Jewish prophets of old, telling His people that He would one day send a Messiah to redeem them. Moses said: “*The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst...*” (Deuteronomy 18:15), and Zechariah told us: “*Rejoice Greatly O daughter of Zion... Behold, your King is coming to you. He is just and having salvation... riding on a donkey...*” (Zechariah 9:9). The Prophets of old looked forward to the time when the **desire of all nations** (the Messiah) would come (Haggai 2:7).

The *Tanach* is filled with more than 300 prophecies of a coming Messiah. Some prophecies are very clear; others are veiled. When looked at in their entirety, they paint a picture of the Redeemer that God would one day send to His people. The picture is unmistakably a portrait of Yeshua of Nazareth. When Yeshua ministered in the Land of Israel, He declared that He was the One spoken of by the prophets: “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me.*” (John 5:39) (REMEMBER the only Scriptures at that time were what we now call the Old Testament.) Not only did He fulfill every single prediction, Yeshua is the only man in the history of the world whose birth, life, death and resurrection were spoken of in explicit detail in documents available to the public centuries before his birth. Amazing!

Jewish prophets also predicted that there would be one Messiah who would come twice. He would come as both a suffering servant and a ruling king. He would be *Mashiach ben Yosef* **and** *Mashiach ben David*. Messianic Jews believe that Yeshua came the first time to suffer and die for the sins of the world and is coming again to rule and reign on the earth from Jerusalem. He is **both** *Mashiach ben Yosef* and *Mashiach ben David*.

A study of Messianic prophecy is fascinating. We have included a small sample of prophecies and New Covenant fulfillment for your personal study. These prophecies provide convincing evidence of the Messiahship of Yeshua. For example, the Jewish prophet Micah writing in the 8th century B.C.E. prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah chapter 5). Yeshua was. A Messianic prophecy in Psalm 22 states that Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced. This was written **before** crucifixion, a Roman form of execution, came into being. Isaiah, prophesying 700 years before the birth of Yeshua, said that Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles. (Isaiah 42:1-6) Yeshua was given this appellation at His circumcision.

Studying the probability of fulfilled prophecy, Dr. Olinthus Gregory, made the following observation: “Suppose that there were only 50 prophecies in the Old Testament (instead of 333) concerning the first advent of Christ, giving details of the coming Messiah and all meet in the person of Jesus... the probability of chance fulfillment as calculated by mathematicians according to the theory of probabilities is less than 1 in 1,125,000,000,000,000.”

Not only is Yeshua the One that the prophets foretold, He is the Son of God. Does God have a Son? The *Tanach* says He does in Proverbs 30:4. Yeshua is also the Son of Man. He became fully human to make identification with mankind. Yeshua is one with God. He Himself said, “*I and my Father are one,*” (John 14:9) and “*He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.*” (John 14:9) Such radical statements from such an outstanding personage deserve attention and thoughtful consideration. Anyone searching for the truth should pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and ask Him if the proclamations of Yeshua are true. The God of the Bible will gladly answer the questions of a sincere, seeking heart!

## PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT

SUBJECT	OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
A virgin will be with child.	Isaiah 7:14	Matt. 1:18-20
He will be born in Bethlehem.	Micah 5:2	Matt. 2:1
He is the Son of God.	Psalms 2:7, 12	Matt. 3:17
He is a Prophet like Moses.	Deut. 18:15-18	Luke 7:16-17
The King comes riding on a donkey.	Zechariah 9:9	Mark 11:1-10
He will heal the sick.	Isaiah 53:4	Matt. 8:16-17
He will be initially rejected by the nation.	Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11
The Messiah will die before the Temple is destroyed.	Daniel 9:26	Mark 15:37
He will die as atonement for for our sins.	Isaiah 53:6	Matt. 20:28
He will not open his mouth & is like a lamb led to the slaughter.	Isaiah 53:7	Acts 8:30-35
His hands and feet will be pierced.	Psalms 22:16	John 19:18 John 20:25
The Messiah will be resurrected.	Psalms 16:10	Matt. 28:1-10
He will one day be accepted by Israel.	Zech. 12:10	Rev. 1:7

# Yeshua the Messiah

Additional proof of Yeshua's Messiahship is found in who He was as a **person**. He was wiser than King Solomon (Matthew 12:42), consumed with zeal for the God of Israel (John 2:13-17), God's faithful servant who loved Gentiles as well as Jews (Matthew 12:18-21), a master teacher in Israel (Matthew 7:28-29), a loyal friend (John 11:5), a compassionate healer (Acts 10:38), no respecter of persons (Matthew 15:21-28), a thoroughly righteous man (Luke 19:45-48), strong in the face of temptation (Matthew 4:1-11), without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), passionate about Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37), a loyal Jew (Luke 4:16), nonviolent (Luke 6:28-29), understanding human frailty (Matthew 9:12-13), non-condemning (John 8:10-11), forgiving (Mark 16:7), and total love. (John 15:12-13)

Yeshua is the greatest person that ever lived. When He came upon fishermen mending their nets and said, "*Follow Me,*" many left everything they had to follow Yeshua. Magnetic? Awe-inspiring? Dynamic? Irresistible? Yes!—*Ben Elohim*, the Son of God. When we personally got a glimpse of who He was in 1973, we also left all to follow Him. It was, without a doubt, the wisest decision of our lives. We say of Yeshua what some of His contemporaries said of Him:

"*I find no fault in this man.*" (Luke 23:4)

"*No man ever spoke like this man.*" (John 7:46)

"*He has done all things well.*" (Mark 7:37)

"*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*"  
(Matt.16:16)

## Messiah and You

No one can convince another person to become a believer in Yeshua. The reality of Yeshua, His exemplary life and sacrificial death, His deity, and His call to an individual are only known through divine revelation. That is the work of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit). God's Spirit draws men and women, boys and girls, Jews and non-Jews to Yeshua with cords of love (Hosea 11:4). He is the answer to the deepest longings of the human heart. He is the *Sar Shalom*, the Prince of Peace, who brings deep peace in this life and the assurance of peace in the *Olam Haba* (world to come) to all who receive Him. His coming to earth as our *Goel* (Redeemer) was a consummate expression of love: "*Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but humbled Himself, taking on the form of a servant, coming in human appearance. In that form of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient until death, even death by the cross.*" (Philippians 2:4-8)

His death paid the penalty for our sin.

Through Yeshua we can have forgiveness, love, peace, joy and fullness of life.

Messiah will not force Himself into your life. Yeshua waits for an invitation, longing to give you a new life in Him.

If you are ready to invite Yeshua into your heart and make Him Lord of your life, pray with us now:

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

I believe that Yeshua is Your Son, the Messiah that You sent to redeem the world. I open my heart to receive Him by faith, acknowledging that Yeshua died for my sin so that I can have a personal, intimate relationship with You.

In Yeshua's name, Amen.

## A Final Word

If you are Jewish and the *Ruach HaKodesh* has revealed to you that Yeshua is the Messiah, the One who paid the price for your sins, you can receive Him right now by praying the following prayer from your heart:

“God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I believe that Yeshua is the Messiah, the One who made atonement for my sin. I come to you with a repentant heart, asking for your forgiveness. Cleanse me; make me new. Write Your Torah on my heart, so that I might serve You by the power of your Ruach with joy. Amen.”

As soon as you pray to receive Yeshua as your Messiah, thank God for your new life in Him and claim the following promise from the *B'rit Hadasha*: “Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:24)

Before now, you had no right to ask for anything in the name of Yeshua. Now you do! You are a child of God, heir to all the promises of Scripture. Ask big! God is a Giver. He wants you to learn to receive from Him. Ask in faith. Faith is what pleases Him most. Ask wisely. What is the dearest desire of your heart? Express that desire to God. Prayer is simply talking with your Heavenly Abba (Father in Heaven). He will speak to you through His Word, the Holy Scriptures. God loves you! He gave His only Son for you. It is His good pleasure to give you “the kingdom”—righteousness, peace and joy in the *Ruach HaKodesh*.

*Shalom b'shem Yeshua.* (Peace in the Name of Yeshua.)



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