

"Think not that I come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17

Jewish Heritage Revival

One Heritage United by Messiah



"And When he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice"
John 10:4

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Understanding Messianic Judaism

Throughout history certain dates and times are forever etched in our memories. For many, dates such as December 7, 1941 is a day that lives in infamy. That date is remembered as America's entry into World War II with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Likewise, November 22, 1963 is equally as memorable to those who lived during that time. Many remembered exactly what they were doing or where they were when they heard the news that President Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas.

A more recent date is September 11, 2001, otherwise known as 9/11. A date etched into many minds when our life as a nation would change. Never before had there been an attack on American soil in such magnitude by a predominantly stealth enemy. Radical Islam revealed itself in such a way that ultimately attacked our way of life.

However, of all the dates that need to be remembered of the last 100 years, there are two, that may appear to be insignificant to many, are extremely important and central to Adonai's redemptive time line. The first is May 14, 1948, when after nearly 2,000 years of dispersion among the nations, the Jewish people supernaturally reclaimed their ancestral homeland. The second date is June 7, 1967, which commemorates the liberation of Jerusalem from the Jordanians. This date recognizes for the first time since Babylonian captivity that Jerusalem was in Jewish control. Not even in the first century was Jerusalem controlled by the Jewish people. In this case it was under Roman control.

These two modern events prove conclusively and without doubt that Adonai is restoring Israel. He is demonstrating too, that He governs all history. He alone determines the rise and fall of empires, and the course of all nations. Israel's reestablishment is no accident, but rather proof to the nations that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is true to His own Word. His Word is accurate, reliable and relevant. This restoration not only transcends a physical Jewish return to Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel), but also signifies a spiritual restoration to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Messianic Judaism is an outward evidence of this great end-time restoration. Today, more than at any time since the first century, Jewish people are once again embracing the Messiahship of Yeshua. Today, Jewish believers are not abandoning their ancestral heritage, calling and lifestyle, but embracing it. Like the Jewish believers of the first century they are zealous for Torah.

To some, the idea of a person who is Jewish and believes in Yeshua is a contradiction. The thought process goes like this...You can't be Jewish and believe in Yeshua (Jesus), you're either a Christian or a Jew, you can't be both.

This way of thinking is primarily a product of the way we have been taught and trained over the centuries. Church history has greatly influenced this mindset. Although the climate is improving, the influence of “you can’t be both” still remains.

History and Scripture record that faith in Yeshua is inherently Jewish. Yeshua was a Jew. He ministered in a Jewish land and among Jewish people. He was the most prolific Torah teacher ever to walk the face of the earth. The very first followers of Yeshua were all Jewish, including His 12 talmadim. The anticipation of the coming of Messiah was not borne out of the Gentile nations, but from the pages of the Hebrew scriptures. The first century Messianic Jew saw in Yeshua the fulfillment of those things spoken of by the Prophets.

“For among the first things I passed on to you was what I also received, namely this: the Messiah died for our sins, in accordance with what the Tanakh says; and he was buried; and he was raised on the third day, in accordance with what the Tanakh says; and he was seen by Kefa, then by the Twelve; and afterwards he was seen by more than five hundred brothers at one time, the majority of whom are still alive, though some have died.” 1 Corinthians 15:3 – 6

Being Jewish and believing in Yeshua wasn’t the issue then. It couldn’t be anything else but that.

The most pressing issue of debate during the first century centered around the inclusion of Gentiles. Was Yeshua the Messiah for the Gentiles also? Must a Gentile be circumcised? Must a Gentile believer first undergo ritual conversion? Adonai has miraculously shown the Messianic Jewish community that Yeshua was the Messiah for both the Jew and Gentile:

“Therefore, we hold the view that a person comes to be considered righteous by God on the ground of trusting, which has nothing to do with legalistic observance of Torah commands. Or is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is indeed the God of the Gentiles; because, as you will admit, God is one. Therefore, he will consider righteous the circumcised on the ground of trusting and the uncircumcised through that same trusting. Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah.” Romans 3:28 – 31

Today, we are faced with one of the greatest paradoxes in history, whereby it is now a foreign concept for a Jewish person to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel. However, this end time revival known as Messianic Judaism is restoring what appeared to be lost. Many Jewish believers readily affirm that through their belief and profession of Yeshua as Messiah has encouraged a greater appreciation for Adonai, Torah, Israel and their Jewish heritage. In the past, such a profession would warrant being ostracized by the Jewish community or forced assimilation into a non-Jewish culture.

Through Messianic congregations, Jewish believers are able to maintain their Jewishness, enabling them to convey their beliefs and values to their children. Likewise, non-Jews who profess faith in Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel become part of a Messianic congregation. They gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for their spiritual roots.

Our intention with this article isn’t simply to define the term Messianic Judaism. If that were the case, we could accomplish that in one paragraph and save a lot of time. The purpose of this article is to provide you, our reader with a comprehensive understanding of Messianic Judaism as it continues to develop today. We will include several definitions, historical perspective (past and present) and scriptural support of this movement.

Definition 1:	A biblically based movement of people who as committed Jews believe in Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah of Israel, for whom the Tenach spoke.
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This first definition describes a movement of people. The Jewish nation is comprised of people in a general sense and a family in an expanded sense...a community, thus leading us to our next definition.

Definition 2:	A movement of Jewish congregations, committed to Yeshua the Messiah, that embraces the covenantal responsibility of a Jewish lifestyle and identity rooted in Torah, expressed in tradition, renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant
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It was Yeshua himself who said:

**"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete."
Matthew 5:17**

Jewish identity is rooted in Torah. Yes there have been other influences, such as the Talmud and Hellenism that have influenced the Jewish identity, but it is Torah that truly makes the Jewish identity real. Furthermore, it is Yeshua who conveyed and taught Torah from its intended purpose. These other influences mentioned previously, have added more layers of observance than were originally intended. One need look no further than Shabbat for which we wrote an extensive article.

The next logical progression of this movement is within a congregational setting. The Jewish nation first began as a family when they entered the land of Egypt, however, when they left some 430 years later, they left as a nation of more than two million people. When Adonai conveys His message to the Jewish nation, it is as a congregation. The promises, the responsibilities, the covenants are to a people as a nation, not individually.

**"I am speaking the truth as one who belongs to the Messiah, I do not lie; and also bearing witness is my conscience, governed by the Ruach HaKodesh, my grief is so great, the pain in my heart so constant, that I could wish myself actually under God's curse and separated from the Messiah, if it would help my brothers, my own flesh and blood, the people of Isra'el! They were made God's children, the Sh'khinah has been with them, the covenants are theirs, likewise the giving of the Torah, the Temple service and the promises; the Patriarchs are theirs; and from them, as far as his physical descent is concerned, came the Messiah, who is over all. Praised be Adonai for ever!
Amen. Romans 9:1 - 5**

Sha'ul writes to the congregation in Rome, regarding the position of his fellow Israelites...his brothers, regarding what has been entrusted to us, yet do not recognize Yeshua as Messiah, the Son of God. All that is mentioned above, is given to Israel as a nation, for the express purpose of being a light to the nations:

"He said to me, "You are my servant, Isra'el, through whom I will show my glory." But I said, "I have toiled in vain, spent my strength for nothing, futility." Yet my cause is with Adonai, my reward is with my God. So now Adonai says he formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Ya`akov back to him, to have Isra'el gathered to him, so that I will be honored in the sight of Adonai, my God having become my strength he has said, "It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya`akov and restore the offspring of Isra'el. I will also make you a light to the nations, so my salvation can spread to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:3 - 6

Adonai chose Israel, through His covenant with Abraham to convey His message of Messiah for the reconciliation of Israel and the nations to Himself. No other nation or religion can make this claim. No other nation has been given such a responsibility. Yet, when people think of one who is chosen, they equate it with privilege. A first born son is chosen to be the leader of the family as part of a succession plan. What does this do to the other siblings. Usually, feelings of envy, jealousy or anger will become present, in that those who are not chosen feel slighted or rejected. Those not chosen are viewing this selection as one who is favored over the others. Yet, on the other hand, the one who has been chosen may convey a feeling of pride towards the others, but may also look at their selection as one of great responsibility. The chosen one may consider their selection to be of burden, in that they are now responsible for everyone, while prior to succession, they lived their own life and were content.

The responsibility that Adonai has placed on Ya'akov is no different than the succession plan provided above. The nation of Israel was chosen to be a servant for Adonai and convey His salvation to the nations. Sha'ul is aware of this calling and the order in which it was intended:

"For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God's powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile. For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust as the Tanakh puts it, "But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust." Romans 1:16 – 17

Definition 3:	A term used to define Jewish people in Yeshua. Maintaining a lifestyle and form of worship that identifies Jewish customs and traditions while believing Yeshua is the promised Messiah of scriptures. Part of the universal body of Messiah that expresses itself in relation to a Jewish heritage.
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There is an enormous divide within the Messianic community (Church and Messianic Judaism), founded primarily on misunderstanding that is lacking in context of scripture. Separation of a Jewish identity from the Messianic Community is an entire article for another day. For the purpose of this article Messianic Judaism recognizes a heritage that is biblically based and thus continues to follow these principles and traditions, not only as one who is Jewish, but also as one who believes in Yeshua. Separating one from the other is impossible. To be Jewish is not just a "religion" but is also a birthright. To deny a Jewish person their identity when they come to believe in Yeshua is denying who they are. It would be similar to say that now you are a believer in Yeshua, you are no longer an American citizen. When put in a context that is relevant to others, outside of the Jewish community, it is easier to understand the false premise that has been taught for hundreds of years.

Definition 4:	Not a new movement, but a resurgence / rebirth of an old movement. The first movement was of the apostles / talmadim and comprised a community of Jewish and non-Jewish believers during the first three centuries of this age, after Yeshua's resurrection. The latest stage of the development of authentic biblical Judaism is the same biblical Judaism that was followed by Moses, David, the Prophets and brought to fulfillment by Yeshua.
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To summarize the above definitions:

A congregation comprised of both Jewish and non-Jewish believers with an emphasis on Jewish ministry. It is of, for, to and by Jewish believers, yet includes the non-Jewish believer who has decided to come alongside Israel, is grafted into the olive tree of Israel and fully participates in the ministry. This movement is not to the exclusion of the non-Jewish believer, but to their inclusion in that they have embraced the vision of what Messianic Judaism is...a movement where you can be Jewish and believe that Yeshua is the promised Messiah of Israel, and yet, not have to give up your Jewish identity. You don't have to assimilate into a church.

Is Messianic Judaism Biblical?

You will probably receive different answers, depending on who you ask. From the definitions provided above we have expressed that a Messianic Jew is a person who has come to believe and accepted that Yeshua is the Messiah spoken of in the Tenach. Unfortunately, this view is not accepted throughout the Messianic community. There are many views regarding the Jewish person in relation to their decision regarding Yeshua. These views include:

1. In becoming a believer in Yeshua, you are now a Christian and are part of the Church.

This view draws its foundation from the premise of "Replacement Theology" that teaches the Church has replaced Israel. It minimizes the Jewish identity of the believer and emphasizes the new creation of the Church as being central. In essence there is no Jewish identity. Everything Jewish has been done away with...it is "old testament" - we are now living under the "new testament". To deny the Jewishness of Adonai's redemption is in essence denying Yeshua, a Jew, from the tribe of Judah. Separation of the two is impossible, as stated earlier.

One need only take a journey through the book of Acts as evidence of the Jewishness of this movement.

- At the beginning of the book of Acts, we see Yeshua teaching His talmadim of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3 - 8) In Luke's account 24:44 He provides the source of the material for the teaching that is taking place. - "Yeshua said to them, "This is what I meant when I was still with you and told you that everything written about me in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled."
- Acts 2 - As instructed, the talmadim are waiting for Shavuot, a Jewish feast, where they would be receiving the Ruach Ha Kodesh (Holy Spirit), empowering them to convey the truth and New Covenant through Yeshua.
- We witness Sha'ul's pattern when traveling to a city. He first would go to the synagogue and speak with regards to Yeshua as Messiah. He would use the same Jewish scripture that Yeshua used to convey this truth. (Acts 13:14 - 15; 14:1; 17:1 - 2; 18:4; 19:8 - 9)
- The main issue at the council held in Jerusalem in Acts 15 dealt with the issue of gentiles coming to faith in

the Jewish Messiah. Should they be circumcised and become Jewish was the question at hand. This was a very Jewish problem of the day.

In order to truly understand what is happening in Acts, one must view and understand through a Jewish mindset, in that the context is Jewish. Unlike today, the issues have changed 180 degrees. Today, it is the Jewish person who becomes a believer in Messiah that must be "assimilated" into the church, in contrast with two thousand years ago whereby the challenge was bringing the non-Jewish believer coming to believe in Messiah into the community.

Other positions include:

2. "Covenant Theology" is built upon Calvinism and states:

- Israel and the church are one and the same throughout history
- A covenant of grace has been partially revealed in all the covenants that Adonai has made
- Since its birth, the church is the only covenant people, because all covenants, prophecies and promises are fulfilled in the New Covenant.
- Jewish people are grafted into the church
- Jewish people, individually and as a nation have neither purpose or significance regarding the plans of Adonai.

3. "Dispensational Theology" is based on the following:

- The Jewish people through Israel and the church are separate and distinct from each other. Their promises and destinies are also separate and distinct.
- Israel as a people and nation have been set aside by Adonai during the "church age" and therefore not part of the picture. Adonai will deal with them again after the church age is complete and the rapture has removed the church from the tribulation.
- As a nation and a people the kingdom of David will be restored during the Millennium.
- Jewish people who come to believe in Messiah during the church age become part of the church and no longer receive the promises of national Israel.

4. "Dual Covenant Theology" is based on the following:

- Salvation for the Jewish people is found through Adonai's covenant with Abraham.
- Salvation for gentile people is found through the New Covenant and Jesus.
- The two remain separate from each other.

Whether prominent or subtle, the influence of these theologies can still be felt within the "Church" today. There are so many errors in these views. You may also notice an overlapping of ideas between these theologies mentioned above. The primary theme between them is the diminished position of the Jewish people in contrast to an elevated position of the church. The primary origin of this position comes from the council of Nicea in 325 CE, where Constantine instigates Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman Empire. This view was not his own but is attributed to Origen and promoted by Eusebius.

Rather than expand upon these theologies, I encourage people to obtain a copy of "The Church and the Jews" by Dan Gruber. His book will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of these false teachings.

Without doubt, to be a believer in Yeshua and maintain your Jewish identity is fully supported by scriptures. What does Sha'ul say:

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, the tribe of Benjamin." Romans 11:1

As a believer, Sha'ul continues to identify himself as an Israelite. Just because he is now a believer, doesn't change the fact that he is still Jewish. If he still considers himself to be an Israelite, why is it that others continue not to recognize this truth? (a rhetorical question)

What is the difference between a Hebrew Christian and a Messianic Jew?

The term Hebrew Christian or Jewish Christian identifies a believer in Yeshua who is of Jewish birth. It gained notoriety in the 19th century when these believers embraced the heritage of their people, gaining a greater appreciation of the traditions found in Torah in relation to Yeshua. In so doing, these believers desired to convey some sort of Jewish identity. With the founding of the Hebrew Christian Alliance in 1866, its members were proud of their heritage and wanted to convey it from a New Covenant perspective. The greatest challenge for these Jewish believers came from within the church, where they had assimilated as a place of worship, in that the Messianic Synagogue was still many years from happening. They were trailblazers in having to confront firsthand the anti-Jewish attitude from within the church structure that they had become involved. Their challenge was one of balancing their desire to live a Jewish lifestyle in relation to the New Covenant writings and their relationship with the Church.

Messianic Jew is a term that can be traced back to the early 20th century. The issue at the time was "how Jewish of an identity to convey?" It was not a unifying topic of discussion. The Hebrew Christian Alliance conveyed an unfavorable position regarding this identifier by stating:

"It does not describe any movement of Jews in the direction of recognizing our Lord Jesus as the Messiah, but an agitation on the part of some Hebrew Christian brethren who have much to learn as to the true character of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To venture into such compromises [as keeping Jewish traditions] would not only prove weakness, but our whole Christian testimony would be endangered."

Being Jewish and a believer in the Jewish Messiah was not a positive demonstration of one's lifestyle at this time, dating back to the late 19th / early 20th century. Just as strongholds were turned upside down when Gentile believers came to faith in the Jewish Messiah, during the first century, the same was true within the church setting for Jewish people coming to believe in the "Christian Savior" - How do we handle them?

From a non-Jewish perspective, being a Jewish believer conveys a weakness in one's faith, by keeping these traditions that appear to be denounced in some translations of the New Covenant writings. It conveys being legalistic, because being Jewish relates directly to the law and the often misused and misunderstood statement written by Sha'ul to believers in Rome - **"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."** Romans 6:14 - KJV. However Sha'ul wasn't speaking negatively regarding Torah, but rather its misinterpretation of Torah as is done by believers with Romans 6:14. The Complete Jewish Bible provides the following translation of Sha'ul's statement - **"For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace."**

The defining element that distinguishes between the two is the Messianic Synagogue. A Messianic Jewish believer has come to embrace the heritage of their upbringing and continued to do so in the setting of a Messianic Synagogue. A Hebrew Christian is comfortable in the Church environment and has chosen to assimilate. The importance of displaying an outward image of their Jewishness as believers is not as important. There are many possible explanations from a personal perspective that we will not expand upon for this article. Needless to say, there are reasons that one would choose one path over another, and with any decisions we make in life, our experiences as children tend to influence these decisions.

If you are looking for the richness of the Jewish heritage of Messiah, you will not find it in a Church setting.

If you are looking for the richness of Yeshua in a traditional Jewish synagogue, you will not find it there either.

There is only one place that you will truly find both the richness of the Jewish heritage and Yeshua - A Messianic Jewish Synagogue.

We will offer articles that will present the Brith Hadoshah in relation to the Tenach and address issues regarding application. We will address these issues from a Jewish and non-Jewish believer's perspective.

Whether you are a Jewish believer, non-Jewish believer or a non-believer, one thing is certain, people have questions.

What applies? What is relevant for today? What did Yeshua teach? What does Torah say?

We will continue to expand on this article with companion pieces that further expand your understanding of Messianic Judaism.