

“Traveling Together on the Road to Redemption -
The Messianic Jewish Contribution to a Revitalized World”
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There was a king who had three sons. On his deathbed he ordered his attendant to bring a small chest which had been sitting on the king's dresser. In that chest were three pieces of parchment, each with what appeared to be a map. The king explained in low tones that actually these were three pieces composing one map and that if followed carefully, the map would lead his three heirs to a cave filled with fabulous treasure. He gave one portion of the map to his Eldest Son, one to the Middle Son and one to his Youngest. Later that day the boys discussed which route they would take to begin their journey. An argument broke out and so, each set out on his own.

Our tale will weave through this paper and will function as an imperfect metaphor for our subject. Eldest and Youngest Brothers represent the Jewish people and the Church respectively. Middle Brother -- the one who looks most like his Eldest sibling, and whose opportunity to join the company will come last -- represents modern Messianic Judaism. Our point is simple: The road map to the consummation of the world, bringing fabulous blessing for men and women, boys and girls everywhere will only occur when the king's sons are fully and finally

united. Don't press the details of the story too hard. The revelation in Torah and tradition revolves around Israel and the nations -- two brothers. But that's the way it is with fairy tales!

There are five parts to this story. In Part I, we will consider the Jewish people's journey toward redemption. In Part II, we will look at the Church's journey. In Part III we will unite these two, demonstrating how God intends Israel and the nations to walk together. In Part IV, we will outline Messianic Judaism's contribution to the journey. Finally, in Part V, we will look more closely at some practical dimensions of the Messianic Jewish journey as it relates to both the Jewish people and the Church. Two appendices follow. The first is a pamphlet entitled "Welcome to Congregation Ruach Israel." It models some of the perspectives outlined in this paper. The second is a liturgy for a joint service called "Echad - A Celebration of Unity," which can be incorporated into the liturgical calendar of Messianic Jewish synagogues and churches with whom they have relationship.

It is my hope that this brief treatment of a vast subject will generate some light as we Messianic Jewish leaders seek to navigate the exciting, confusing, challenging road God has laid out for us.

Part I

Israel on the Road to Redemption

In his unique and important book of Jewish theology, *The Body of Faith*, modern Orthodox Jewish philosopher Michael Wyschogrod writes:

And therefore Jewish theology arises out of the existence of the Jewish people. The Divine presence and created order had to become embodied in a people of flesh and blood. In a universe of pure light the Divine would have appeared in totally illuminated and illuminating form. It would have been spirit and idea, speaking to the highest in man but having nothing to say to the lowest in him...His desire was to make human existence in the created order of finitude possible and even more amazing, was his decision to enter the finite world so that the men who reside in it have a relationship with their Creator. (Wyschogrod, 10)

Israel is a community of flesh and blood. The great Jewish thinker Franz Rosensweig (1886 – 1929) made a similar point several decades earlier:

Rozensweig tells us that the Jewish community is rooted in blood which means simply that a Jew is someone who is born a Jew... This kind of community stands in marked contrast to Christian community, which is constituted through acts of spirit,,, the central difference between the Jews and all other communities -- Christian and heathen -- determines how this Jewish people and their homeland differ from all the other peoples and their homeland.(Samuelson, 250)

As modern Western people the “scandal of particularity” -- the idea that God would choose Jewish flesh over other flesh -- makes people uncomfortable. How many of us as congregational leaders have been accused of showing favoritism to the Jewish members of our synagogues? Against the backdrop of the evils of apartheid in South Africa, the recent ethnic cleansing of Central Europe, and the

treatment black people have received in our own country, have not our consciences at times felt twinges of guilt because in our synagogues we have favored one particular kind of person over another?

Yet, the scandal of particularity for which Jews have been hated for centuries is surely a cross we must bear. The Israel of flesh has been called into special relationship with her God. This certainly does not mean that all Jews are in fine standing with their Creator. It does mean that the road we walk hand-in-hand with our brothers -- cannot be traversed at the expense of our passion for the very nature of Jewish peoplehood. Messianic Jewish synagogues are not churches because we are principally aggregates of small portions of Israel's body. Some Gentiles may choose to share in that experience. But the Israel of flesh is the Israel to which we belong.

Michael Wyschogrod is careful to assure his readers that he does not believe in the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. However, he comes perilously close to this notion because he believes that the Jewish people are, in a sense, an incarnation of God's very presence in this world – like the Mishkan, the Tabernacle long ago. Christians, too, are the body of the Lord Yeshua. But we Jews share the uniquely corporeal status. The life of flesh is messy and difficult to manage. It is tied to pleasing God in the small things of life – like how and when we wash our hands or when we have sex with our spouses. But this is the life of Israel. And God calls it holy.

The fleshly nature of Israel privileges trans-generational relationships. So, Dor L'dor – meaning “(from) generation to generation” is far more than a slogan. It is the controlling dynamic of Jewish existence. It is the glue which allows a weather-beaten people to remain intact. The glue of the Church has a different formula. It is “Brother and sister.” There is a proper application of the brother and sister relationship within Jewish space and Messianic Jewish experience. But we Messianic Jews are first and foremost part of Israel and so, the foundational dynamic of our ongoing life is fleshly, earthly in the highest sense. We are Israel -- Israel of the Spirit -- but still Israel.

What else characterizes Eldest Brother as he follows his portion of the treasure map? Mark Kinzer comments:

As a holy people, the most important aspect of Israel's national tradition is its dialogue with and about Torah, its way of national holiness. Throughout its historical journey Israel has carried the Torah, subjecting it to continuous interpretation and reinterpretation, and then subjecting the interpretation to its own interpretation and reinterpretation. This cross-generational conversation about the meaning of Torah is as fundamental to Judaism as the Torah itself. From the rabbinic perspective, it is Torah." (Kinzer, 17)

Christian theologian Paul Van Buren comments further on the centrality of Torah for the Jewish people:

How do you live by grace alone? How do you live as a faithful and cooperative servant of the God who gives everything, beginning with life itself, out of his pure generosity? How do you bear witness to this sort of God? Israel's answer is, you live by Torah. You study it, you meditate

upon it, you practice it, you bind it on your forehead and wrists, and you nail it to your doorway. You saturate yourself in Torah so that your life becomes Torah-shaped. For Torah is God's gracious gift to Israel; therefore to live by Torah is Israel's thankful and joyful response to God's generosity.(Van Buren, 211)

The dialogue with Torah is like the system of veins and arteries in the body, carrying nutrients to all extremities, nourishing the whole. Surely we are speaking in idealized terms here. Most American Jews today feel they have better things to do than to spend time studying Torah! But the journey of the Jewish people over centuries past and until the days of Messiah's return will be energized by the holy dialogue we call Torah.

The road to the king's treasure trove will be characterized by more than the Jewish people have come to experience and understand to date. The Church has much to offer. Youngest Brother's third of the treasure map is indispensable and we Messianic Jews bring our portion of the map as well. What else can we learn about Eldest Brother and the portion of the map he bears?

Along the road Israel must wear special protective clothing. It is the royal clothing of a unique priesthood. Van Buren comments:

So long as the Jewish people exist in this world, then, the world should know that God has not abandoned his creation. An attempt to destroy God's holy people, therefore, is an attempt to have a world without God. The evil of the Nazi "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" is thrown into sharpest focus by recalling the election of the Jewish people as a Kingdom of priests. The rabbinic passage last cited is preceded by the

following words: "He who hates Israel is as if he hated God,... and he who helps Israel is as if he helped God." (Van Buren, 166)

In the New Covenant Scriptures the apostle Peter quotes a key biblical passage in Tanakh about Israel's priesthood and applies it to all believers (I Peter 2: 9-10). Seen through a supercessionist lens the old priesthood of fleshly Israel has been set aside -- traded in for a newer model. However, we Messianic Jews understand this is not the case. Peter's use of the passage as it applies to the Gentiles has a secondary, though important meaning. At the very least it reminds us that the destiny of a holy people from among the nations is inexorably connected with that of the Jewish people. In Yeshua this joint community shares his mediatorial role between God and humanity.

The Jewish consciousness of its unique vocation as a priestly people is central to its self understanding. It helps validate Jewish pain through centuries of rejection by the nations. It tells us we are special when the world says we are the problem.

This brief discussion of some of the key dimensions of Eldest Brother's map would not be complete without some discussion of Yeshua's place in the Jewish experience despite her unawareness of that Presence. Eldest Brother may not know it, but Yeshua walks beside him along the road:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... He is the light that enlightens every man coming into the world.” These breathtaking words found in the prologue of the Gospel of John remind us of something crucial about Messiah Yeshua. He is not merely sitting in local space alongside Adonai. Rather his presence fills the entire universe. Thus, he must be present in Israel. But how? Can he be present if Israel does not yet acknowledge his presence?

The answer must be an emphatic "yes." The Messiah must be seen as present at Yavneh, in the Yeshivot of Europe, in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and at Golds Meir's kitchen table. God's presence is not limited to those who are aware of his presence. He is the all in all. Both the pre-incarnate and resurrected Messiah Yeshua in some mysterious sense, shares this quality.

Yeshua is with the Jewish people now. His presence may not be understood or appreciated for many and varied reasons. But, as a people whose historic experience of suffering and national resurrection approximate his own, it would be foolish to deny Messiah's presence among the Jewish people.

Messiah Yeshua is helping our people travel the road to redemption. And he is bringing partners -- the Church and the segment of Israel we represent, the Messianic Jews. We now turn our attention to the Church and the piece of the treasure map Youngest Brother carries.

Part II

The Church – Prophetic Outsiders or Institutional Presence?

Anabaptist scholar John Howard Yoder doesn't seem to think much of the historic institutional Church. To him the fourth century represents the "Constantinian Deformation of Christianity." (Cartwright, 45) Not a very complimentary picture. Yoder claims if it were not for the institutionalization of Christianity, the great schism between the Jewish people and the Church need never have occurred. We will not debate the merits of his argument about the great schism at this point but will merely allow his negative view of the institutional Church to stand as an example of a kind of thinking shared by many American Christians. It is a view which conceives of the ideal Church as a community of outsiders, a prophetic population which resists institutionalization and speaks with the pure voice of the Savior to a sinful world.

So what is the Church? A spiritual community of the truly saved or an imperfect institution which sometimes makes big mistakes?

The question is a vitally important one for us as Messianic Jews. As we travel the road to the King's riches, we must know whose hand to take along the way. Among the King's children, who is the Youngest Brother? Are Lutherans, Catholics and even Russian Orthodox part of that community -- not as individuals, but as historic communities making up the larger historic community

of the Christian Church? Though I would like to affirm that Messianic Jews are not related in any way to these bodies (with all of their anti-Semitism and stuffiness), I believe we must affirm that these are part of the Church. We must affirm our connection with them.

For one thing, Anabaptist Christians (represented by Baptists, Pentecostals, independent Charismatic and others) are not always such saints. I learned this the hard way during a dramatic episode in the history of our synagogue. People I thought were my true friends -- lay leaders among us whom I had married and comforted and tried to love for many years as their rabbi -- turned with a vengeance against me when they felt I had petted their ideological fur in the wrong direction. I learned at that time that "true believers" are much harder to recognize than I had previously thought.

Second, though we may acknowledge the mistakes of the historic visible Church -- and those mistakes have been grave at times -- we must not undervalue the positive contributions the historic Church has made to Western civilization. This includes Anabaptists, but is certainly not limited to them. The Church has turned the pagan West into a haven for millions throughout the centuries. Endemic anti-Semitism notwithstanding, the world is a far better place because of the Church. And how we wish that Europe today would embrace its spiritual heritage! A neo-Pagan united Europe will not be good for Jews nor anybody else.

Third, the Roman Catholic Church -- an institution if there ever was one -- has been the first Christian denomination to forcefully and unequivocally turn from its supercessionist past and create documents such as *Nostra Aetate*. These documents represent a complete reversal of the policies of earlier centuries.

Fourth, the canon of Scripture and our fuller understanding of Messiah Yeshua as truly human and yet, in a mysterious sense, an expression of deity, arose among the people who later formed the institutional Church. Youngest Brother's map included vital information. The books of the New Covenant we Messianic Jews accept as canonical were recognized as "making the hands unclean" i.e. accepted as uniquely holy by the Church. As in the case of the Tanakh, the process of selection included social, political and personal dynamics, but the end result was God-breathed. Thank God for Youngest Brother! No one could possibly find the King's treasure without his portion of the map.

Until Messiah separates the wheat from the chaff and the sheep from the goats at the end of the age, we'd best speak of the Church not just as the "true believers" but as a historic community. Catholics are Christians. Lutherans are Christians. Serbian Orthodox are Christians. We should leave the question, "Who are a true believers?" to God when we are talking in macro-terms about the relationship of the Jewish people to the Church. At an individual level we may come to all kinds of conclusions regarding which Christian is a true Christian

and who is not, but that is not our primary concern today as we consider the road traveled by the king's sons.

Before leaving the subject we should note that part of our struggle as Messianic Jews is that the larger Jewish community often shares a very dim view of the historic Church. Here is Professor Paula Fredrickson opening salvo in her essay on the Christian roots of anti-Judaism:

By the fourth century, the Church recognized and patronized by the Roman emperor was an international gentile community hostile to diversity both within and without. Christians outside the officially sanctioned Church were persecuted as heretics, pagan non participants increasingly became the object of legal harassment, Jews, though permitted their peculiar worship, were universally condemned as enemies of the prophets and murderers of Christ.(Fredriksen, 8)

To be fair to Professor Fredriksen it is understandable that in a book about anti-Semitism her definition of the Church would have a negative cast. And we certainly cannot dispute her basic facts here. However, a much more balanced understanding of the Christian Church is necessary if we Messianic Jews are to fulfill our God-ordained destiny.

Without burying our heads in the sand and ignoring the history of anti-Judaism, we do well to adopt Wyschogrod's more generous approach to the historic Christian Church. We will fill out this picture later.

We are now ready to consider more deeply how Israel and the Church are to walk together along the road toward the consummation of all creation.

Part III

Israel and The Church; A Partnership Made in Heaven

Eldest Brother looked up and saw Youngest Brother approaching him. They met, embraced and began to talk about how they might help each other find the King's treasure. Each produced his section of the map and they spent a good while trying to figure out how their pieces fit together.

How are the Jewish people and the Church to walk together in search of the great treasure of final redemption for our troubled world. Michael Wyschogrod offers perceptive comments about how this relationship began back in the first century. To some Messianic Jewish leaders his thoughts will be quite familiar. But, coming from a renowned Orthodox Jewish scholar they have a fresh and reaffirming ring:

We are now in a position to understand Paul's view of what the Christ event had done for Gentiles. With the coming of Christ, a gentile who was willing to obey the Noachide laws and who had faith in Jesus as the Messiah became an associate member of the House of Israel. I use the phrase "associate member" because it is the only expression I can think of to characterize the new understanding of the gentile Christian. He was more than a *Ger Toshav*. A *Ger Toshav* was a righteous person who pleases God and had a portion in the world to come but he was not a Jew. A *Ger Tzedek* was no longer a gentile as a result of circumcision and willingness to accept the Torah, he has become a Jew, a new birth to all intents and purposes. Prior to Paul there were therefore members (*Ger Tzedek*) and nonmembers (*Ger Toshav*). For Paul, the Christ event had made possible a new category: Gentiles who were not circumcised and not obedient to the Torah but who were still not excluded from the House of Israel. Because of their obedience to the Noachide Laws and their faith in Christ, they assumed the status of adopted sons, not to be confused

with the natural sons who remained the root that sustains the branches (Rom. 11:18). But the Gentiles in Christ have been grafted into the tree, even if it is as a grafting of a new branch into an old tree. They had become members of the household of Israel, something which prior to Christ could be achieved only by full conversion to Judaism.(Soulen, 191)

We do not see this Church as completely separate from Israel. As Michael Wyschogrod points out, the apostolic history demands a more integrated understanding. Later, we will explore how this relationship might work itself out in its particulars.

The Church and Israel are not separate but neither are they completely analogous. God's hand in history reveals a different picture. Mark Kinzer notes:

Despite appearances, Judaism and Messianic faith, Israel and the *ecclesia* are not really analogous entities, members of common sets of categories (i.e. the category of "religion" and the category of "religious-community"). Israel is a holy nation, and Judaism is its way of national holiness as prescribed in the Torah. It sees itself as a priestly people chosen and called for a special purpose, but not as an exclusive community of salvation. On the other hand, the *ecclesia* is a multinational community with no ethnic or genealogical membership restrictions. It is also a missionary body, viewing itself as a community of eschatological salvation. Given these differences in kind and not just in quality, there is nothing inherently contradictory about Messianic Judaism operating both as a particular expression of the Jewish way of national holiness and as one of the two fundamental expressions of Messianic faith within the *ecclesia*. (Kinzer, 43)

How else might we characterize the joint venture of Israel and the Church?

Franz Rozenzweig was the first Jewish philosopher to articulate an understanding of the Christian Church which was positive and redemptive in its own right. Maimonides and others made room for Christianity as a "tolerated

other," but Rozensweig saw a reciprocal and complementary relationship between the Jewish people and the community of Jesus. Samuel Bergman explains:

Despite Rozensweig's disclaimer, the fact remains that his concept of Christianity is something new in the history of Jewish thought precisely because, to him Christianity is not a partial truth which will ultimately be superseded when the truth of Judaism is universally accepted. Both have equally important roles to perform in the divine economy...In history their vocations differ. Judaism is the fire or the eternal life, Christianity is the rays emanating from the fire.

Christianity, too, is eternal. Unaware of the Jewish origin of its task, it pursues its mission to the Gentiles -- the eternal rays radiating from the fire, pointing, like the beams across into all directions.,,, the religious meaning of Jewish existence is to bear witness to redemption in a world as yet unredeemed, to anticipate redemption that still is to come to the others.{Bergman, 214}

Rozensweig's important book *The Star of Redemption* uses the physical properties of the star in the heavens as a metaphor for the relationship of the walk between Eldest and Youngest Brothers. The churning inner core of the star represents Israel, endlessly replenishing its own energy, it's static force. The rays of the star represent the Church with its outward look -- its mission to others. Both are important and complementary.

R. Kendall Soulen, in his groundbreaking book the *God of Israel and Christian Theology* fills out Rozensweig's picture. He sees the positive relationship of the Church and the Jewish people as having its roots in the heart of God long before any human disobedience to his will. He refers to the relationship as" an economy

of mutual blessing," by which final consummation of the world order will be reached.

Construed in this way, the canon's overarching plot revolves chiefly not around an "economy of redemption" contingent on sin, but rather around an antecedent economy of consummation based on the Lord's blessing. Through the economy of consummation, the Lord blesses the human family and brings it to fullness of life through the providential care and management of the households of creation...God's work as consummator, it seems, consistently presupposes and entails economies of mutual blessing between those who are different. (Soulén, 115-6)

What does this economy of mutual blessing actually look like? Israel demonstrates God's faithfulness to all creation. The weekly Sabbath reminds men and angels that for reasons hidden in the heart of God, planet earth is at the center of his concern. Israel shares its ethics with the world and in the West, where those ethics have taken hold, blessing upon blessing has been poured down. And, of course, Israel gives birth to Messiah Yehsua, the one through whom God mediates both creation and consummation.

The Church clarifies the ways of God for the many nations under the sun. Demonic forces come against Israel and the Church. There is much struggle, but in the end, goodness wins because Messiah's kingdom will finally be established. Rozenzweig imagined that in the final summing up of all things, even Judaism and Christianity would disappear. The apocalyptic visions of Zechariah and the Book of Revelation suggest, however, that even on the renewed earth, Israel and

the nations maintain a level of uniqueness and complementarity (Zech. 14, Rev. 21-2).

Positive new directions among Jewish and Christian theologians and philosophers are certainly clearing the air after centuries of mutual suspicion, hatred, and pain. But, there is something missing in all of this. For those of us who believe that the tomb was empty and who affirm Yeshua as not only the savior of the nations, but the redeemer of Israel-- the picture we have painted thus far is incomplete. A key link in the chain is missing. The keystone of the bridge has not been laid.

How do we Messianic Jews fit into God's plan for restoring all creation to its proper order?

Part IV

Messianic Judaism – The Surprise of the Late 20th Century

It didn't take long for the two Brothers to start fighting and scrapping as they walked along the road. Both had different ideas about which way to travel and tempers flared. So, when Middle Brother -- who, though smaller, was the spittin' image of his oldest sibling -- appeared, Eldest Brother and Youngest Brother were already black and blue. And they were not so sure Middle Brother's presence would help the situation.

In the daily Shacharit liturgy we pray this wonderful portion. It is a response to the reminder that we are participants in an eternal covenant:

"We are fortunate -- how good is our portion, how pleasant our fortune, and how beautiful our heritage! We are fortunate for we come early and stay late, evening and morning, and proclaim twice each day "Hear O Israel Adonai is our God, the one and only."

If all Israel has the obligation to pray this prayer with passion and joy, Messianic Jews can pray it even more exuberantly. We are doubly- covenanted people. We are sons and daughters of Abraham and we are participants in the resurrection life of the true Messiah of Israel, Yeshua. Do you want to stand up and cheer? Go ahead. We have time for some cheering. Would it be audacious for me to say that we are among the most privileged human beings to walk this earth? If our convictions about the eternal covenant with Israel and the resurrection of Messiah are true, then whatever ordinariness we may feel, whatever struggles, whatever perplexing identity confusion we face -- the fact remains we are truly privileged people. Of course, with great privilege comes great responsibility.

So, who exactly are Messianic Jews and what are we responsible to do? Simply put, Messianic Jews are people who fit the following three criteria:

- We have been born Jewish or have converted to Judaism.
- We believe in Yeshua and seek to live in accordance with his values as taught in Scripture and mediated by his Spirit.
- We seek to live in continuity with Torah as it evolves through the historic Jewish experience.

It is this last quality which distinguishes Messianic Jews from other Jewish people who may have an affinity for or belief in Jesus. Michael Novak's comments on the practice of some of Yeshua's earliest Jewish followers help us sense the necessity of such distinctions in today's world:

The key Jewish problem with Christian acceptance of the law has been that it seems partial and selective. In fact, one of the reasons the reading of the Ten Commandments is no longer a feature of the daily Jewish liturgy (although they are still read within the full cycle of scripture readings in the synagogue) has to do with the "charges of the sectarians" (*minim*). These charges are that "only the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai." Even though the meaning of "sectarians" is often unclear, it seems that in this Talmudic discussion the rabbis had the Jewish Christians in mind. The rabbis offer this diminution of the full range of the binding norms of the Torah as the prime reason for the rejection of the Christianity of these Jewish Christians as an acceptable form of Judaism itself. For Christians, of course, their treatment of the Torah is not a diminution of God's law in so much as it is an indication that the Old Law was only a temporal preparation for the full law of God revealed in the New Law of the New Covenant. At this point anyway, there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between what Jews see as partialness and what Christians see as fulfillment. (Novak, 121)

In some ways our path may be different even from some of our ancient forebearers. We certainly do not judge their actions. Perhaps at a time when Jewish survival was not at stake, when no normative Jewish practice had crystallized and turf war polemics were the order of the day, Jewish believers

were justified in dismissing a broader halachah. But, not so in our day. Being a real-time Jew in real-time history demands participation in the life of Israel as it has developed over centuries. There certainly are competing forms of Judaism today, but all must take their place within the matrix of key identity markers – God, Israel and Torah. So, a “Messianic congregation” which resists purchasing a Torah scroll because of the scroll’s centrality among “Rabbinic Jews” should not be considered a genuine Messianic Jewish house of worship. Nor is a congregation which may own a Torah scroll, but which sees its value primarily as a Jewish prop helpful for evangelism. No. The scroll is a living symbol which we see, touch, parade, and read.

We are talking here about the deep structure of Messianic Judaism. Yet, among many in our congregations – and even among some leaders – the Grand Canyon-wide difference between viewing our communities as “churches of an ancient kind” and “synagogues of a unique kind” is not well understood.

How many of us have heard this comment from a sincere visitor to one of our Shabbat services? Smiling broadly, the middle aged church lady extends her hand and says, “I just love your church.” We smile back, but inwardly cringe. But despite the visceral reaction, some of us are unclear about the distinctions. An example:

Not long ago I was leaving a phone message for a friend. His phone message was warm and inviting: “You’ve reached Congregation _____, a congregation where Jews and Gentiles worship the Messiah together.” Now, it is certainly true that our congregations are homes to Jewish and non-Jewish people. This is a statement of fact and we recognize that some of our congregations might not exist at all if it were not for the kind and generous Gentiles in our midst who have helped us along the way. But, by design a synagogue is not intended as a home for Gentiles! This is true for Reform synagogues (which often have many non-Jews in attendance), Orthodox synagogues and Messianic synagogues. My friend’s phone message is appropriate for a church – that embodiment of a multi-national community celebrating Messiah Jesus – but not for a synagogue.

Our uniqueness lies not in our appeal to all who seek to get back to their Jewish roots, but in our role as the Middle Brother, who brings truth and reconciliation to his siblings.

As mentioned earlier, we welcome the new day of good relations among Jews and Christians. But, this simply does not go far enough. The relationship will not be settled on earth as it is in heaven until a deeper unity emerges. The final steps to a reconstituted world of blessing for all cannot come about until the normalization occurs. Herein lies the special role of the Messianic Jewish community.

Birth-order books tell us that middle siblings often function as peacemakers at home. This fits God's intention for Middle Brother as he travels the road to untold treasure. On the road to final consummation of all creation, Messianic Jews help Eldest Brother to find Messiah woven into the richest fabric of the Jewish experience. To do this is our privilege and joy. Our Nazarene forebearers had a different role to play than we. History is moving on because the God of history is at work.

While walking with Eldest Brother, what do we show him from our portion of the King's map? Michael Wyschogrod is perceptive here. He asks the question, "If the good news for Gentiles is their entrée into the community of Israel without the necessary condition of fidelity to the specifics of Torah observance, what good is Jesus for Israel from the perspective of the Apostle Paul?"

What has he done for Jews? They obviously don't need to be added to the family that is Israel since they already are that family. For a long time it was thought that with the coming of Christ, the Law ceased to be relevant to Jews. We now know this is not so. What difference had Jesus made to the Jews? (Soulén, 191-2)

Wyschogrod goes on to suggest that before Jesus, Jews lived in a state of insecurity, not knowing whether God's judgment or mercy would dominate life's landscape. But, with the coming of Yeshua the situation has changed dramatically:

It is this situation that is radically changed by Christ, in Paul's' view. For Paul, Jesus means *Midas Harachamim*, God's aspect of mercy. Where previously God's aspects of justice and mercy alternated, with Israel sometimes receiving what it deserved and at other times the recipient of God's mercy, with the Christ event and with faith in Christ, God's aspect of mercy becomes the permanent and exclusive mode of his relationship to Israel. There is no longer any alternation between mercy and justice. Now only mercy is applicable and therefore the curse which is attached to disobedience to the Torah becomes inoperative because the curse, as punishment, is possible only when the justice of God is operative. Jesus on the cross was the lightning rod which drew all punishment to itself, thereby protecting all others (Gal. 3: 23). Once and for all the terrible danger of living under the law is lifted because God's *Midas Hadin*, his aspect of justice, has permanently yielded to his mercy. (Soulén, 197)

In our "no fault" Western culture, most people -- including most Jews -- spend little time worrying about the possibility of facing God's judgment. This is a terrible blind spot -- a modern arrogance which can have disastrous consequences. Still, many Jewish people would like to follow God if they believed there was good reason to do so. As we travel the road with Eldest Brother, we can tell our people about God's mercy in Yeshua. In light of history -- since Jews could not be faithful Jews and also join the Church -- we need not conclude that all Jews are eternally lost without conscious knowledge of Jesus. Such need not be part of our message. But, we Messianic Jews have the obligation to help people find love where it may be found. And that love and mercy and confidence in ultimate goodness can be found in Yeshua the Messiah as nowhere else.

Middle Brother loved both his siblings but at that moment he was angry.

Youngest Brother had inflicted far more damage than had Eldest Brother during their argument along the road. Youngest Brother was big for his age -- powerful --

and once he started slugging, he just wouldn't stop. Before giving advice, Middle Brother had to remind himself that he really loved Youngest Brother too.

In our desire to reconnect with our Jewish people, we face a serious danger. We can lose our love for the Church. The danger lurks not only in the realm of our emotions, but in the way it can affect the way we walk toward final redemption. Though we may not like some of the ways Youngest Brother acts, we belong to him and have much to learn from him. Like what?

The Church – this gentile body which has made life difficult for Jews has been God's instrument for preserving the testimony of Yeshua in our world. The martyrs even to this day are tortured and killed because of this testimony – thousands upon thousands in Sudan, for example. We dare not ignore these truths.

Further, the Canon of New Covenant Scripture was preserved by the Gentile Church. Messianic Jews trust that this canon bears the divine stamp. To believe otherwise would make us guilty of Marcionism in reverse. He and his misguided followers sought to sever the Church from the Torah and prophets – and was foiled at Nicea and Chalcedon. We must not seek to sever the Jewish people from the New Covenant Scriptures. The Church preserved these books and we

are grateful. Without them, there would be no clear testimony of Yeshua in the world.

Teachings articulated by the great Church councils can be viewed negatively as oppressive measures designed by an Imperial body to marginalize Pagans, Jews and creative thinkers in the Church. This conclusion would be justifiable to a degree but, there is another side to the story. It is better to view the major pronouncements of the Church Councils as truly redemptive. Consider the understanding of the nature of Messiah. Though couched in Greek philosophical terminology, the basic idea was this: Christ was in some sense God – uncreated and eternal and at the same time, fully a human being. How this all works is a great mystery, but this is the testimony of his earliest (Jewish) biographers and this is the essential truth. In recent years, insights from the Dead Sea texts, the Pseudapigrapha and other early Jewish sources have brought these ideas into Jewish space. In a wonderful chapter called “Jesus in the Creeds – Wisdom Theology in Greek Dress,” Fredrick Holmgren writes:

Jesus viewed as the Wisdom of God sets him in the context of the Hebrew-Jewish tradition, traditions out of which the New Testament came into being. Wisdom is the striking image whose varied expressions convey the wonder of the early Christian response to Jesus. The figure offered Christians (we would say, “Jews who followed the Messiah!” - Nichol) exalted language with which they could express their conviction that in meeting Jesus, they had met God. (Holmgren, 180-1)

After all, the people who wrote things like, “In the beginning was the Word and the word was with God and was God...” were passionately monotheistic Jews!

The world they lived in made room for such pronouncements. Essentially, the Church got this right and Messianic Jews owe a great debt of gratitude for her efforts. Again, we know that the charge of deicide against our Jewish people is a twisted misapplication of a high Christology, but it is not the Church's essential understanding of Yeshua which is at fault here. Judging the Church in this way would be similar to evaluating the United States largely by our treatment of the native Americans. Nicea and Chalcedon are not perfect, but Messianic Jews should celebrate the high Christology articulated by the Church while seeking to reframe it in a Jewish context.

Going further, Western civilization could not ever have risen to its lofty heights without the Church. Let there be no mistake here. The Pagan world was far more debased and cruel than the Christian world and our sensitivity to the harsh reality of Christian anti-Semitism, needless religious wars and other missteps, must not blur our perceptions here. If Jewish talk show hosts such as Michael Medved and Dennis Prager and Orthodox rabbis such as Daniel Lapen can see this, we should be able to see it as well.

Prager reports that there has been an effort to remove the cross from the seal of Los Angeles County. Prager wrote in his newsletter why he is opposed to this ACLU-backed effort:

"I am asked why, as a Jew, I have led this fight to keep the cross on the county seal...Third and most important, I fear the removal of the Judeo-

Christian foundation of our society. This is the real battle of our time, indeed, the Civil War of our time...

In 1834, ninety-nine years before Adolph Hitler and the Nazis came to power, the great German poet Heinrich Heine, a secular Jew, predicted what would happen if Christianity ever weakened in Germany:

A drama will be enacted in Germany compared to which the French Revolution will seem like a harmless walk in the park. Christianity restrained the marshal ardor of the Germans for a time, but it did not destroy it; once the restraining guard is shattered, savagery will rise again...the mad fury of the berserk of which Nordic poets sing and speak.

That is what this American, this Jew and millions of others believe is at stake in the Left's attempt to impose a redesign of the Los Angeles County seal and thereby redesign America.

Contemporary mainstream Jews are beginning to appreciate the historic Church.

Should not we Messianic Jews?. Note Whychogrod's panoramic perspective:

Gradually something emerges which is to have the profoundest effect: the Church. The Church transcends national boundaries, substituting a community of faith for one based on language and soil. In the Church the vocabulary of Israel is used -- covenant, election, suffering servant, and redemption -- and the book that Israel bears as the word of God is for the first time heard by a people that is not the seed of Abraham. Can anything but joy fill the heart of Israel as it observes the mysterious way in which the God of Israel begins to be heard by the nations? Is it not the faith of Israel that, in the fullness of time, the God of the patriarchs will become the God of all peoples and, if this is not just an idle dream, must Israel not be ready to perceive signs of this even in the travail of history? (Soulén, 183)

Now, from a position of deep appreciation for the sometimes-noble, sometimes-bully, sometimes-hypersensitive Youngest Brother, we can proceed to open our folded portion of the map so that the way to the treasure trove can become clear.

First, along the road to redemption, the Jewish – gentile distinction even within Messiah must remain in tact. The Church should learn this truth and embrace its implications. Writing about a relationship which I like to call “the irreducible dyad of human existence,” Terrance Donaldson comments:

Paul’s “no distinction” statements are by no means global assertions. He does not believe that the traditional, Torah-based distinctions between Jew and Gentile are completely irrelevant or have been totally obliterated, Jews simply being absorbed into a larger, undifferentiated humanity with no ongoing significance. The statements in question are as specific and limited in their applicability as are statements about works and faith. In the contexts of both Romans 3:22 and 10:12 the issue is that of entrance requirements into the community of salvation, and the point being argued is that Torah observance is not to be imposed on Gentiles as a condition of membership. But when this is not the issue, *Paul’s language betrays at many turns the fact that the Jew-Gentile distinction continues to play a fundamental role in his system of convictions.* (Kinzer, 34) (italics added)

This insight has profound implications for how the Church should see itself with respect to Jewish followers of Jesus from now to eternity. We will discuss the practical outworkings later. For now, let us briefly consider a grossly misunderstood rubric: “the one new man” of the Book of Ephesians. I refer you to the Marcus Barth treatment of the subject found in Mark Kinzer’s pamphlet *The Nature of Messianic Judaism*. In summary Barth says:

Ephesians 2:15 proclaims that the people of God is different than a syncretistic mixture of Jewish and Gentile elements. The members of the Church are not so equalized, leveled down or straitjacketed in a uniform as to form a *genus tertium* that would be different than Jews and Gentiles. Rather, the Church consists of both Jews and Gentiles reconciled to one another by the Messiah who has come and died for both. The “one new man” is by origin and constitution a community of several persons. He is

not an individual, or a conglomeration of identical individuals. He is an organic body consisting of distinct members, not an amalgamation; a social structure, not a shapeless mass, a continuous mutual encounter, exchange, bewildering or joyful surprise of free persons, not a boring equalitarian collective. (Kinzer, 33)

Kinzer calls the resulting relationship binitarian ecclesiology, a relationship in which we affirm God's desire that Jews be Jews living in Jewish space and Gentiles be Gentiles, enjoying the presence of God through sacrament and song, fellowship and delight in local churches. As with any broad statement of truth, there necessarily will be exceptions. Gentiles will remain in Messianic synagogues (ideally as converts) and Jewish people in Churches (converts to Christianity). But the great truths of God pertaining to Israel and the families of the earth will bear the best fruit when the over-arching implications of biblical teaching are manifest in the earth.

There is a relational "sweet spot" we seek which will enable the king's sons to walk together. On the one hand, the Church must not under-identify with the nation of Israel, the Jewish people. On the other, the Church must not over-identify, thus imagining itself to take the place of Eldest Brother. Here is a classic example of over-identification from an ancient but still beloved hymn by the Eastern Church's John of Damascus:

" Come ye faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness!
God has brought his Israel into joy from sadness,
Loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yolk Jacob's sons and daughters,
led them without moistened foot through the Red Sea waters." (Lindbeck, 47)

With un-self-conscious ease the Church became Israel - "His Israel"! Surely this is not what God had in mind with the inauguration of the Kingdom in Yeshua.

How can we help Youngest Brother see things correctly? We wish the following insights by Wyschogrod and Kinzer could be read yearly in every Church on the inhabited earth:

For Paul the Christ event had made possible a new category: Gentiles who were not circumcised and not obedient to the Torah, but who were still not excluded from the house of Israel. Because of their obedience to the Noachide laws and their faith in Christ, they assumed the status of adopted sons, *not to be confused with the natural sons who remained the root which sustains the branches Rom. (11:18)*. (emphasis mine) But the Gentiles in Christ have been grafted into the tree even if it is as a grafting of a new branch into an old tree. They have become members of the household of Israel, something which prior to Christ could be achieved only by full conversion to Judaism. (Soulen, 191)

So then, what specific things does Youngest brother (the Church) need to hear from Middle Brother?

First and foremost, the Church must help Jews remain Jews.

This will be difficult because churches like having Jews of the domesticated variety in their midst. Why? In part because the existence of the Jewish people, despite their unwillingness to embrace Jesus, has always been a source of insecurity in the Church. "Jesus fulfilled so many prophecies. Why don't the Jews see this obvious fact?" At the level of collective psychology converted Jews salve

the self-doubt embedded in the soul of the Church. A Jewish convert to Christianity reassures Christians they are on the right spiritual track.

Many Christians enjoy having a few Jews in the church because these bring some knowledge of Passover, a touch of Hebrew language and occasional nuggets of Jewish insight from the Bible. Gradually but inevitably, Jewish church members and their families will adapt to the culture of the Christian assembly. Within a generation very little Jewishness will be left to offer.

If Youngest Brother is to walk the road of redemption successfully, he must look carefully at the whole map and see the larger picture. Churches must insist that Jewish followers of Messiah remain Jews, even if this means their having a very peripheral role in the Christian congregation. More on this later.

Secondly, the Church should explore the Jewish roots of its faith and, without abandoning its traditions, bring a measure of this new awareness into its corporate life. Christians should:

- Learn about the Jewish holy days.
- Come together with synagogues or the larger Jewish community on some special days -- like Yom Ha Shoah.
- Instruct seminarians in the Jewish milieu of Jesus and the Jewish movement he started.
- Stand with the Jewish community in causes of social justice, relief of poverty and other issues.

- Stand with the nation of Israel – an imperfect Jewish state surrounded by far more imperfect states that are committed to her destruction.
- Support Messianic Jews in our efforts to create legitimate Jewish space where Messiah Yeshua takes his place as the “diamond in the gold setting of our Jewishness.”

Christians should not:

- Appropriate time-honored symbols of Jewish life like shofarim, menorahs, tallitot for church worship.
- Call church members “spiritual Jews.” The term tends to obscure a sound ecclesiology in which unity and distinctiveness of Jew and Gentile in Messiah are to be celebrated.
- Keep Jewish holidays. The Church liturgical calendar is rich and varied. If churches host a Passover-type meal, it should be called just that – and should not be celebrated on Passover. Doing otherwise is an unintended trivialization of the Jewish experience. Of course, it would be appropriate to attend as guests a Seder at the home of Jewish people or at synagogue Seders. This would not have the same negative symbolic meaning as Gentile Christians actually conducting a Seder. Christians may want to develop uniquely Christian services in limited ways paralleling the Jewish service. But great care should be taken to make sure that a respectful distance is maintained in liturgical content.
- Enact programs designed to evangelize Jews. This weakens the Jewish community, creating fear and pessimism regarding the Risen One. Churches telling Jews that Jesus will make you kosher if you put your kids in Awana Club and Boy’s Brigade – the idea just doesn’t wash. It’s time for the Church to see reality here.

As the Brothers walked and talked, the air grew easier to breathe. They strolled in natural order with Middle Brother between Eldest and Youngest Brothers.

There was a sense of renewed love and appreciation in the air – and laughter. Gradually it became clear: the treasure was not the only issue, but the journey itself- and the relationship. Aha! It became clear. Their father the king had intended that his boys discover each other – to help each other and to love each other, for this was his treasure.

The Middle sibling is often the peacemaker of the family. Messianic Judaism represents God's strategy for promoting the unity intended for Israel and the nations. Here are some of the key dynamics of this vitally important role.

First, we must consider the issue of primary and secondary identity. Beyond appreciation of the Jewish people and the Church, the Messianic Jewish community is ontologically part of both. To claim exclusive identity with the Jewish people will not do, for the clear message of Scripture demands that Jews who follow Yeshua are part of universal communion of believers. For this reason we partake of the body of Messiah according to local custom. We also embrace the canon of Scripture as established by the Church and embrace the Church's lofty understanding of Yeshua himself. The greater Jewish world might be willing to welcome a strictly human Yeshua – one like the legendary Honi the Circle Drawer or a Hillel. But for Messianic Jews, this understanding would fall far short of reality. The Risen One is no mere sage or wonder worker!

On the other hand, the Messianic Jew is a member of the household of Israel, obligated to Torah and identity with the Jewish experience, not only as we lived it in Bible times, but throughout our history.

In practical terms how do these dual families of origin meet? We offer the following as a starting point: Messianic Jews are primarily sons and daughters of Abraham, members of the covenant of Jacob and secondarily, though importantly, related to the worldwide community of the followers of the Messiah. We offer three reasons for this ordering of our identities:¹

1. The covenant with Abraham precedes historically the renewed covenant in Messiah. The later is actually dependent on the former.
2. The apostolic witness confirms this orientation. Isolated comments in the epistles may seem to suggest otherwise, but the deeper contours of the relationship between Jews (like Paul) and Gentiles have become increasingly clear to modern scholars.
3. The necessity of the hour demands this outlook. The Church is roughly 1.5 billion souls strong. However, there remain a mere 13 to 14 million Jews left in the world. The challenges of the post Holocaust world demand that every Messianic Jew grab hold of his Jewishness and hold tight with all his or her might.

¹ This model works at the level of corporate human relationships. Just as a woman cannot be equally loyal to her husband and father and a synagogue member cannot be equally loyal and deeply committed to two shuls, a Messianic Jew must choose his primary community. We suggest the Jewish world is that community for the reasons stated.

When viewed along the vertical axis of our relationship with God and his with the Body of the Messiah, the community of the Lamb, the picture is more complicated. The Jewish origins of even the early Gentile Church and the profound unity of the Spirit ushered in by Yeshua, is not so easily parsed as “Israel and the Church.” Believers in Yeshua truly are brothers and sisters in a profound sense. However, at the level of community formation, the binitarian ecclesiology we have argued for is the most reflective of God’s will for Israel and those from among the nations who embrace Yeshua.

A number of implications flow from this sense of primary “social” or “ecclesiological” identity. Among these is the fact that Messianic Judaism cannot fulfill her role as living example of coherence between the risen Messiah and the Jewish people without cultivating a positive outlook toward other forms of Judaism. Kinzer comments:

Thus while affirming clearly and distinctly who we are and what we believe, our name (Messianic Judaism) also speaks about our relationship to the wider Jewish world. We cannot deny the legitimacy of other forms of Judaism, for without them we would have no Judaism. The Jewish way of life we live derives from these other forms of Judaism and we must be grateful to them for handing it on to us. At the same time, we have something crucial to pass on to them. We have a message about the Messiah whom many of them await and who has come to give them access to unexpected treasures. (Kinzer, 7)

This, we believe is the only posture which will allow the Jewish world to see Jesus’ Jewish followers as anything but phony usurpers. Only in spirit and truth can we – must we - share the love of Messiah with our people. It is the only posture which will allow a right relationship with the Church because Messianic Jews who march to redemption in this fashion are in a position to help the grafted branches of the olive tree find their place in larger Israel. We are the link. We are the keystone of the bridge. We, the Middle Brother, are God’s intended instrument of reconciliation between Eldest and Youngest Brothers.

Excursus - How do Church Jews Fit Into The Picture?

As mentioned earlier, Church Jews will not remain Jews for long – not past one generation. But there are many of them. In fact, it would be safe to say that by far, the larger number of Jewish people who embrace Yeshua are in churches. A mere fraction belong to Messianic Jewish synagogues. Some single mega-churches in America may have more Jews than any existing Messianic Jewish synagogue. Messianic Jewish leaders are uncomfortable with these realities. We have chosen a difficult path by standing for ongoing Jewish life in Messiah and we wish the thousands of Church Jews would see life as we do and would make an exodus from Sunday to Saturday. Perhaps in the future this will occur but in the meantime we must ask the question, how do we relate to this reality? How should we encounter this large group of landsmen?

Of course we should help Church Jews understand that the best place to build community is Messianic Judaism. Despite our small numbers and limited financial resources, we offer the only hope for the children of Church Jews. This is a powerful motivation for some. But, many are not convinced. They enjoy their Church lives. They appreciate all the wonderful programs. They find the preaching relevant and accessible. In the high Church the sacraments are offered as no mere symbol, but as essential, life-giving spiritual nourishment. The rhythm of Church life fits that of modern American culture much more easily than synagogue life. Everyone knows that kid's soccer practice is Saturday morning.

So, what should we do? Do we relate only to those who are ready to leave First Baptist? Or, might there be a redemptive strategy by which we can serve God's intentions for the Jewish people another way?

Michael Wyschogrod wrote a letter to Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the Archbishop of Paris – who was himself the son of Polish Jewish parents forced to hide their son among kind Catholic people during the Holocaust. Unlike many other converts to Christianity, Cardinal Lustiger has forcefully asserted his Jewishness:

In becoming a Christian, I did not intend to cease being the Jew I was then. I was not running away from the Jewish condition. I have that from my parents and I can never lose it. I have it from God and he will never let me lose it. (Soulén, 204).

Wyschogrod, rather than disputing this claim, affirms it and states its key implication: The Cardinal certainly is a Jew – and therefore is obligated to the mitzvot just like any other Jew:

Now, the point is that once someone is a Jew, he always remains a Jew. Once someone has come under the yoke of the commandments, there is no escaping this yoke. So baptism, from the Jewish point of view, does not make eating pork into a neutral act. In fact, nothing that a Jew can do enables him to escape the yoke of the commandments. This proves like nothing else that a Jew who has converted to Christianity remains a Jew, albeit someone who has done something he should not have done...Because you are a Jew, you are obligated like all Jews to obey the mitzvot (e.g. tefillin (phylacteries), in the morning, Kashrut, Sabbath, etc.) Like all other Jews you are not perfect. You have violated some of the

commandments of the Torah and you should repent of these violations. If, in your conscience, your conversion to Christianity is in accordance with God's wishes and therefore not a sin, then you have no reason to repent of this particular act. But in any case, from the Jewish point of view you are obligated to live in accordance with the mitzvot just like any other Jew. (Soulén, 206-7)

If we accept Wyschogrod's evaluation of the status of the good Cardinal, we gain some insight into a fresh, new approach to Church Jews. I suggest the following:

We should encourage Church Jews to observe the developing halachah of the Messianic Jewish community even when they show little interest in leaving the church and making the Jewish world their primary community. In other words, rather than allow our sense of disappointment to cause us to dismiss the church Jews, we should embrace them on their own terms, not signifying that they have made a good or even logical choice by maintaining membership in a church, but helping them to grow as Jews to the extent they are able.

This approach invites a positive response on the part of these wayward brethren. If approached properly they are more likely to see the impossibility of their situation. In time that still, small voice can whisper the truth: the pattern of life Ha Shem intends for his "segulah" – his uniquely covenanted people – can only be lived out in Jewish space. As the joy of Messianic Jewish spirituality grows in their hearts, they might find it infectious as have many of us. Even if many Church Jews don't land in our synagogues, we will have performed many mitzvot by helping them along the way.

Sometimes all it takes is one sermon with anti-Semitic overtones to get Church Jews thinking: “Should I really be here?” Some will answer correctly. We must not imagine that all Church Jews are self-hating Jews. Many have a strong Jewish *neshamah*. It is merely caked with ice. Sometimes the frigid layers come from bad experiences in the Jewish world. Sometimes assimilated Jews just don’t know any better, but once the strings of their souls are gently stroked, the music of Ahavat Yisrael can sound.

There is one danger in all this, not to the Church Jew, but to the members of our Messianic Jewish synagogues. Bringing the children of Church Jews into our Hebrew schools can be destabilizing because children won’t understand why their new friends go to church on Sunday and still eat ham. And bringing adult church Jews into our worlds – with all the theological imprinting they likely have received --can be unsettling to our people. Wyschogrod, as a representative of Modern Orthodox Judaism is in a much more secure place than we. His community will not in any way be threatened by the presence of a few Church Jews. But, Messianic Jewish congregations are far less stable and secure. Still, the benefits of a positive and principled approach – one rooted in great truths about the very nature of Jewish identity (that in a real sense can’t be shaken off), will ultimately strengthen Messianic Judaism. After all, our mandate before God includes helping wayward Jews become better Jews. We ourselves will likely become better Jews in the process.

On the road to the king's treasure, Middle Brother must help both his siblings walk in peace – in a covenant of mutual blessing. The discussion of the redemptive role Messianic Jews can play in the lives of Church Jews leads naturally to further thoughts on ways Youngest Brother – the Church - can walk with Eldest Brother, the Jewish people.

Wyschogrod comments:

Had the Church believed that it was God's will that the seed of Abraham not disappear from the world, she would have insisted on Jews retaining their separateness, even in the Church. The fact that Paul asserts that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28) does not rule out such a special role for the children of ancient Israel in the Church. (Soulén, 184)

This insight suggests that it is time for the Church to make T'shuvah and recalibrate its demands on its Jewish members. Eldest and Youngest Brothers will not be able to walk in a covenant of mutual blessing toward the cave housing the king's riches (consummation of creation) until the Church not merely allows its Jewish members to live Jewish lives, but demands they do so, not as a matter of "supporting their freedom in Christ to keep Jewish customs," but as the Church's privilege of helping Jewish believers fulfill their covenantal responsibilities as Jews. Only when this begins to happen can the Jewish people relax in the presence of Jesus. Until that day, he is simply too threatening to the very survival of the Jewish people.

In this respect Christian theologian Paul Van Buren has the right idea:

What makes Israel to be Israel is the covenant -- and therefore ultimately its election -- and nothing else. What makes Israel special for the Church is that election, and nothing else. The election of Israel is the foundation on which the Church's election stands, and consequently the mission of Israel defines the proper mission of the Church to Israel. To serve Israel as Israel will therefore mean to serve it as God's select witness in the world. This service can only consist of helping Israel to be what it is in the covenant by God's election and so to help perform its mission. This service can only consist of helping Israel to be Israel, to be itself as it is defined by its election. (Van Buren, 333)

The practical outworkings of this re-alignment of communal identification and loyalty will not be easy. But once Eldest, Youngest and Middle Brothers find out who they truly are, the path will become clearer day by day.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to identify key markers, highlighting the unique beauty of both the Jewish people and the Church. Then, I have endeavored to show the nature of their intended relationship. Finally, I have sought to show the fabulously important role the Messianic Jewish community is destined to play in facilitating the healing of the worst schism – the most demonically-inspired relational breakdown in history -- that of the community of Israel and the Church.

The king watched his boys from heaven. He winced as he watched his Eldest and Youngest fight endlessly. He was troubled by both their treatment of his Middle son. But he noticed that despite all, the boys were still walking together on the way to receiving their inheritance. A somewhat repressed smile crossed his lips. He said to himself, "I think the boys are going to make it. I think they will be all right."

Kayn y'hi ratzon!

About the Appendices

Appendix 1 – “Welcome to Ruach Israel” – a brochure designed to tastefully and gently suggest to gentile visitors that they should recognize that our synagogue is Jewish space, where the local church is the natural home for non-Jews who embrace Yeshua.

Appendix 2 – “Echad – A Celebration of Unity” – This is a first attempt at a service in which the beauty of a binitarian ecclesiology can be enjoyed by a Messianic Jewish synagogue and a local church worshipping together in Messiah Yeshua. In this liturgy, the Church members affirm and celebrate the Jewishness of the Messianic Jews and the Messianic Jews affirm and celebrate the holiness and unique calling of the Church as an associate people of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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Welcome to Congregation

Ruach Israel!

During the next few

minutes before the service

begins, we'd like to

introduce you to

Congregation Ruach

Israel and Messianic

Judaism...

Messianic Judaism is a modern expression of a very old faith – the Judaism of Yeshua's (Jesus') earliest followers. We know

from the Bible and other sources that they shared a deep sense of Israel's special relationship with God. They followed the Messiah as faithful Jews.

So do we.

We also seek to live within the Jewish community, to observe the Torah, and to encourage one another every day to live out {our unique identity}. Like his earliest Jewish followers, we live with a deep consciousness of the fact that Yeshua is our Messiah – the One who brings us into the very life of his resurrection.

Now, about our congregation...

Ruach Israel is a synagogue and not a church. This can seem a bit confusing at first because we share with the Christian community a belief in Yeshua. But, as an expression of Jewish life, seeking continuity with the religious tradition of our people, we are a synagogue. (In contrast, we normally expect a church to be all-embracing in its identity, even in cases where most of its members share the same ethnic background).

Though we are not ourselves a church (as the term is usually understood), we do have a deep appreciation for the Christian community in its many denominations. We share a sense of spiritual brotherhood in Yeshua. In fact, we see the unity of church and synagogue as central to God's plan for our world.

As a Jewish institution, Ruach Israel especially welcomes Jewish people and interfaith couples and their families to share

in our congregational life. If you are not Jewish, we want you to know we are pleased you chose to visit our service today. If you are a member of a local church, we hope your visit will enhance your appreciation of the Jewish roots of your Christian faith. If you are not Jewish and are unaffiliated, we encourage you to find a church that can become your spiritual home. Just as all Jews need a synagogue in which to learn and grow, so all Gentile believers in Yeshua need a nurturing community in which they can discover with others the full meaning of their faith and live according to its teaching.

How to Enter In

For a visitor unaccustomed to a Jewish service, the Hebrew prayers and liturgy can make participating somewhat

challenging. Relax! Follow the English text and simply join in as best you can.

By the conclusion of the service we hope you will have encountered the living God and shared in the wonder of his faithfulness to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Here is a guide to the most important elements of the service:

Pesukei D'zimra – These are songs of praise which help prepare our hearts and minds to draw closer to God as the service progresses.

Sh'ma – This ancient declaration of the Jewish people's commitment to our covenant with God is read with eyes closed and covered with a hand. This helps us focus deeply on the

eternal agreement into which God and we have entered long ago at Mount Sinai.

God of Israel and the Messiah Yeshua, who will reign from Jerusalem.

Amidah – Individually, yet corporately, we talk to God according to the topical outline of this ancient, priestly prayer.

The section chanted responsively is called the Kedushah. It comes directly from the prophet Isaiah's lofty vision of God seated on his throne, surrounded by adoring angels and the righteous people who live in his presence.

Kaddish – This prayer is recited by mourners who are enjoined to praise God even in the midst of their sadness.

Aleinu – We stand, bow, and acknowledge the greatness of God We confidently express our hope that one day all evil will disappear from the world and every person will bow before the

Appendix II

“Echad - A Celebration of Unity”

From the beginning God has had a master plan for the way he desired Israel (the Jewish people) and the nations to relate. That relationship has been called “an economy of mutual blessing.” Instead of seeking to dominate, eliminate or surpass “the other,” this relationship centers around working together as God’s partners to bring his truth and goodness to the world.

But which communities are best suited to represent Israel and the nations in this holy endeavor? We answer, “ the Messianic Jews and the Church” It is this segment of the Jewish people and this segment of the nations of the world which have been united by God’s Spirit. It is these two groups which go before all the rest of mankind, celebrating his goodness as epitomized in the risen Messiah – the Son of Man, the one-man Israel, the coming King - Yeshua.

These two communities are not the same. Jewish people are a unique people. They are the people of the Torah. They are the people to whom belongs Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel. The Church is related to Israel, but its members are not called to commitment to the specifics of the Torah. And they are from many lands. But, despite the different callings, they are united. It is this unity of spirit and purpose we seek to celebrate in the sacred service, Echad – A Celebration

of Unity. Come, let us rejoice in our distinctiveness and our commonality. Come let us sing to our God, whose plan for mankind's ultimate redemption is mediated through the Jewish people and those who bend the knee to God from among the peoples of the world – the Church.

Preparation – Two congregations shall gather for this celebration – one Messianic Jewish, one Christian. Members take their places on each side of the sanctuary with Pastor and Rabbi in the center, between the two groups. An ensemble of musicians composed of members of both congregations has prepared the music in advance. The service begins.

Rabbi and Pastor (or Priest) ² read responsively:	The Introduction to the service. See above.
Rabbi says	Genesis 12: 1-3 in Hebrew and English
Minister or Priest says	The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth. From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles. ³
Entire Congregation	And Yeshua – Jesus – said, “If I be lifted up...”
Musicians	One song proposed by Messianic Jewish synagogue, one by the Church
Messianic Jews and Christians read responsively to each other	<p>MJ – “Shalom Aleychem. We greet you in the name of our Messiah!</p> <p>C – Aleychem Sholem, we greet you! In his name!</p> <p>MJ – We are your elder brother</p> <p>C- and we, are the younger</p> <p>MJ – We honor your saints and martyrs.</p> <p>C- We honor your prophets and sages</p> <p>MJ – We honor your love for beauty</p>

² This service is intended to be enjoyed by any Christian congregation. Biblically-centered Catholic or Anglican clergy fit this description.

³ From the Order for Daily Morning Prayer in the Anglican Service Book, 1991.

	<p>C- We honor your love for truth</p> <p>MJ – we honor your ministry among the peoples</p> <p>C – we honor your commitment to Torah</p> <p>MJ - /we honor your love for Jesus.</p> <p>C- We honor your love for Yeshua</p> <p>TOGETHER – We honor our God and Savior who has joined us together with an inseparable bond of unity, both now and forever. AMEN!</p>
Rabbi and Minister or Priest	<p>R - “For he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one “</p> <p>M,P – Not a oneness of uniformity, but of distinctiveness – two communities, united forever in joy, in peace, in purpose. As it is said, “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.”</p> <p>Congregation: AMEN</p>
Messianic Jewish reader	Psalm 100 beginning in Hebrew and continuing English
Christian reader	Psalm 2
15 minute sermon	“What Jews and Christians need to hear from each other”

delivered by Rabbi or Pastor or Priest	or... a related topic
Sharing of light.	Rabbi says Baruchah for light "...bore moree ha eish" Synagogue members light their candles, cross the room and share the light with one or more members of the Church When all the candles are lit, the Pastor or Priest shall "And there shall no longer be any night and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them, and they shall reign forever and ever." ⁴
Musicians	Hlne Ma Tov, singing and dancing
Synagogue together	The Aaronic Benediction in Hebrew
Church together	The Aaronic Benediction in Greek (or Latin)
All together	The Aaronic Benediction in English
The covenant meal	Not communion, but beginning with Boree P'ri Hagefen and Ha Motzi, challah, wine and other light fare.

⁴ Revelation 22:5 NASB

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