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**The Messianic Movement – An Ongoing Discussion**  
**(Part Three)**

*It is my hope to recommence efforts to promote the forming of an International Jewish Evangelical Fellowship (IJEf) in which Jewish Christians are encouraged to remain active members of evangelical churches, while forming a corporate witness to our people. To that end, the ensuing discussion is highly relevant.*

Dear Baruch,

I have read with interest your response to the brother who wrote to you on the issues connected to the Messianic Movement. I would have appreciated seeing what he wrote as it makes it easier to judge your own response but I can read between the lines to get his main points of concern. May I express my own thoughts about your response?

I was heartened by all you wrote about your hopes for IJEf, the need to distinguish congregations in Israel from those in the diaspora, the danger of spiritual/Jewish pride among Jewish believers especially influenced by the congregational part of the Messianic Movement, and the need for a clear presentation of a full-orbed gospel by Jewish believers.

But I had my concerns. It seems your correspondent sensed you and he were talking about different things when using the term Messianic Movement (MM). That was certainly my thought when I read the first 2 paragraphs of your first response. You seemed to make little distinction between the MM, Messianic Congregations (MCs) and Messianic Judaism (MJ). It seems to me that the MM is bigger than MCs and MJ. It is undoubtedly difficult to define the M, so may I encourage you to come up with a definition if there is to be clarity in the development of the aims of IJEf, and I pray God will help you do that.

For me, the movement which began in the 1970s, and which encouraged Jewish believers to value their heritage and use Jewish traditions consistent with the Gospel as one way to strengthen their Jewish identity, was a positive development. I believe it has helped thousands of Jewish believers (JBs) in the diaspora to identify more with their people, whereas, as you know, that had previously been discouraged by Gentile Christians, as if it was a sign of going back under law.

I believe that good influence of the MM remains for the majority of Jewish believers who attend evangelical churches (estimated at 90% of JB's). Of course, as the MM developed there has been the formation and growth of MCs, one branch of which advocates MJ, but I do not see MCs and MJ as the MM *per se*. They are the development with which I strongly disagree and seek to counter, as you do. I think that if we do not make this distinction, and fail to speak about the positives of the MM, we will alienate the people we want to help.

I think I agree with your correspondent that the serious errors you describe are not the majority. You may prove that wrong when you have more opportunity to actually encounter JB's and MCs in the USA but my present understanding is that there are many faithful believers associated with the more organized parts of the movement (MCs) but who are poorly grounded in their faith, the result of growing up in a cult-like atmosphere and distrusting the wider evangelical churches. As time goes on I would expect things to get worse: to find more and more confusion in MCs, and more and more people in them who are not truly converted, leading to many congregations becoming Christian sects like the Seventh Day Adventists.

I think what weighs on me heavily is that someone reading what you wrote could jump to the conclusion you see no value in anything of the MM and that, as an Israeli, you don't understand their diaspora situation. I think some reassurance is needed by stating more of how you see IJEF helping them enjoy and express their Jewish heritage, without compromising the gospel or placing their Jewishness centre-stage.

I hope this will be helpful. God bless you dear brother as you fight the good fight.

Paul

My Response:

Thank you for your thoughts. It is extremely helpful to think through issues with thoughtful people and I certainly enjoy thinking through this issue with you. I'm sure I shall benefit from such an endeavor.

Obviously, we agree as to Messianic Judaism and Messianic Congregations, so we need not extend conversation on that issue.

You say of the Messianic Movement, "the movement which began in the 1970s, and which encouraged Jewish believers to value their heritage and use Jewish traditions consistent with the gospel as one way to strengthen their Jewish identity, was a positive development. I believe it has helped thousands of Jewish believers (JBs) in the diaspora to identify more with their people, whereas, as you know, that had previously been discouraged by Gentile Christians, as if it was a sign of going back under law. I believe that good influence of the MM remains for the majority of Jewish believers who attend evangelical churches (estimated at 90% of JB's). Of course, as the MM developed there has been the formation and growth of MCs, one branch of which advocates MJ, but I do not see MCs and MJ as the MM *per se*".

That is the part with which I would like to interact.

The achievements that you attribute to the Messianic Movement were those of the Hebrew Christian Alliance for many years, which Alliance was overrun and supplanted by

the Messianic Movement in the 1970's. The alliance consistently "encouraged Jewish believers to value their heritage and use Jewish traditions consistent with the gospel as one way to strengthen their Jewish identity, was a positive development" and thereby actively "helped thousands of Jewish believers (JBs) in the diaspora to identify more with their people, whereas, as you know, that had previously been discouraged by Gentile Christians, as if it was a sign of going back under law".

On the other hand, the Messianic Movement from its very inception in the 1960's was part of Donald McGovern's so-called "people's movement", aiming at and characterized by distinctly "Messianic" congregations. As a matter of fact, the Messianic Movement has, therefore, created a negative reaction on the part of the majority of Jewish Christians (who are, happily, where we should be — in churches), many of whom now hesitate to affirm or practice their Jewish heritage. Many of the evangelical conservative churches likewise have reacted against the Movement, which is why IJEF failed to win the confidence of their Pastors and of their Jewish congregants.

XXX, for example, as well as the majority of missions to the Jews promote Messianic congregations, and these attract but few Jewish Christians. As a result, the Galatian error, downplaying of the Trinity and other such errors characterize not all but the majority of Messianic congregations and therefore the Messianic Movement at large. Not too long ago, by way of another example, I attended a national US conference in which one of the major issues was how to rid Messianic congregations of the overwhelming number of Gentiles ...

If you read my book on the Movement, you will see that I speak with warmth of my Jewish heritage (which I also maintain with enthusiasm). But the Messianic Movement has disaffected, in many ways, the spread of the true Gospel among my people.

Let's keep this conversion going.

With affection in Christ,

Baruch

### Israel – The Church

Here are sample of features of congregational life in Israel:

"You are invited to a lecture on the topic, 'Is The Russian-Iranian Alliance, establishing itself in Syria laying the foundations for the biblical battle of Gog and Magog'".

"You are invited to a Healing through Creativity course. Be inspired, have fun and draw near to God through a variety of workshops, including painting, mosaic, collage and lots of other things! Booking details follow".

"Archeologists believe they have found the ark of the covenant".

"Archeology, literature and history indicate that the following is what our King Messiah looked like (picture follows)." A response "I do not think he looked like that. He would probably look more like King David. He would also have sidelocks because he kept the Torah's commandments and would not shave the side of his head. He would also not be handsome because Isaiah tells us there was no comeliness in him that would evoke desire, and he would be tired because of his heavy load of work".

"Human morality is false, the product of eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge".

“Just as we are composed of body, soul and spirit, God too is composed of three aspects. God the Father cannot be seen just as our spirit cannot be seen, and that is why he sent his incarnation, which we call Jesus the Messiah, who can be seen”.

“When gentiles are baptized, they lean backwards into the waters. When Jews are baptized, they lean forward. Have you heard of this?” Response: “I’m not sure it matters, so long as the whole body is under water.” Response: “I guess so, but I wonder what it symbolizes”.

“God spoke Hebrew when he created the world and that was the only language that existed until the Tower of Babel. It will also be the language spoken in the thousand-year reign of Messiah”.

“Worship seminars. Come with your guitars, learn how to worship”.

“The righteous who died ever since the creation of the world will enter the Garden of Eden (somewhere on earth, which is why they are described as “those who sleep in the dust”). At a certain moment, what is known as the rapture will take place, following which the righteous who will still be on earth will enter the wedding, probably somewhere in heaven. The righteous in the Garden of Eden will be taken to the wedding a very short while before them. On another matter, you stated, ‘we will be raptured prior to the great tribulation’ – are you sure you’re one of the wise virgins”.

“There are two creation narratives. One describes Adam and his descendants. The other describes an earlier creation of a different race to which Job belonged and during which time the dinosaurs existed. Furthermore, whom did Cain marry?”

“I wonder: are Judas Iscariot and Caiaphas in hell, or have they been saved?”

Need I say any more? Brethren, pray for us.

## Israel -- Society

One of the parties that formed Benjamin Netanyahu’s present coalition Government withdrew from Government at a time when the remaining coalition parties repeatedly failed to reach agreement on important legislative initiatives. Netanyahu’s grip on the reins of his coalition partners weakened further in the light of looming indictments. Elections have been set for April 9. Israel is a parliamentary democracy. Our House of Legislature, the Knesset, has 120 seats. Any party able to form a parliamentary majority forms the Government.

Following each election, the various parties elected to the Knesset are called to make their recommendation to the President as to which party leader should be called upon to form the Government. Traditionally, although not required by law, the President asks the party leader most likely to succeed in forming a Government to do so. The party leader then has 21 days to present his Government to the Knesset and win its approval. An extension of 15 days we be granted, after which, unless a Government is formed, the President may either call for new elections or ask another Member of the Knesset to attempt to form a Government.

Parties and blocs of parties are now jostling for favorable media exposure. New parties spring into existence every time an election is called, and other parties fade into non-existence. Mr. Netanyahu’s bloc seems most likely to win a slim majority, which he is almost certainly to lose if he is indicted. He is, therefore, seeking to erode other right-wing parties support in an effort to garner enough votes to ensure a stable Government in spite of such

an eventuality. The opposition's only chance of unseating him through the ballot box is by uniting. So far, ego has stood in the way of forming the kind of viable alternative bloc that would ensure victory.

As the likelihood of Prime Minister Netanyahu's indictment looms larger, political rivals and parties are positioning themselves for what is likely to be a post-Netanyahu era. Some within the Likud, Netanyahu's party, are vying for roles and for media coverage that will serve as springboards to party leadership. At the same time, fearing the Prime Minister's proven political prowess, they continue to affirm their support for him in public while denouncing him in closed circles.

Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to rise while tensions grow on our borders with Lebanon (Hezbollah, Iran's proxy, its 150,000 rockets and extensive tunnels proximate to the Israeli border), Syria (Iran's increased presence and growing arsenal) and Gaza (its low-grade rockets, tunnels and growing fighting force). Israel is presently engaged in finding and destroying Hezbollah's tunnels into Israel while attacking Iranian and Hezbollah's presence in Syria. It is doing so at increasing risk of growing Russian ire.

The West Bank is also restive, resulting in increased terrorism initiated, funded and commanded by Hamas from Gaza, by no means discouraged by Israeli West Bank settlers attacking Palestinian homes, vehicles and persons, recently resulting in the murder of a Palestinian woman. Iran has strengthened its ties with Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, seeking to ensure that any attack on Hezbollah in Lebanon would be countered from that country, Syria and Gaza at the same time.

### Ministry News

The editorial process of my **translation of the New Testament** continues apace. We completed Ephesians and Galatians, which will be sent to the control groups, and I've reviewed editorial comments on Hebrews and James – encouragingly, far fewer than I expected. We're now editing my translation of Romans.

One of the **challenges facing** us as we edit the translation of Paul's letters is his more abstract, theological, terminology. Paul was forced to forge new terms while enlisting some used by other religions or common in his day but no longer in use. How to translate "in Christ" or "till Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19) without interpreting? How about the term "fulness" (Colossians 1:9, referring to the proto-gnostic idea of descending levels of deity, together forming a purported "fulness")? or the phrase "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3)? -- again translating, not interpreting while, at the same time, aiming at a level of clarity that a young teenager would understand? My editor (understandably) insists on clarity, while it is my role to ensure that our translation intrudes itself as little as possible between the reader and the text by restraining ourselves so that we translate, not explain. We're offering the inspired text, not a commentary thereon. Of necessity, a translation cannot supplant the need for study.

I have completed the **book on church life**, some three weeks earlier than expected. This has been a three-year project, summarizing some 36 years of reading, study, prayer, error, grace, failure, congregational kindness and the mercy of God. The final draft submitted to my publisher consists of 172, 332 words, which summarize 32+ years of reading, study, prayer, thought and pastoral ministry as well as a three-year writing project. I intend now to complete **my series on the Minor Prophets** while continuing **the daily expository devotions**.

I am now to finalize the work commenced earlier on Nahum while translating **my commentary on Galatians** from Hebrew into English.

I'm also drawing to a close with the **daily expository devotions of Galatians**, which will be submitted to a publisher. As I look back, I'm grateful to God for what has been accomplished. Expository devotions have been written on Genesis through to Judges, I Timothy through to Jude, and Galatians. Once the **series on Galatians**, is concluded (my devotions, supplemented by selections from Calvin), I intend to base the **next series on the Gospels**. All too often the Gospels are used for Christian moralizing, whereas they were written primarily as a revelation of our Lord the Messiah. That is the emphasis I would like to make as we go through the Gospels, reflecting on the choices the Gospel writers made in what they narrated, what they did not and how they chose to narrate. The Holy Spirit had a purpose in inspiring four different Gospels, and we ought to take note of what the Spirit is saying to the churches. This will be a learning experience for me, and another opportunity to worship. My hope and prayer is that we shall be able to see and adore the many faceted glories of the Savior.

I remain in search of a **capable webmaster** to manage my website, update it and render it more active than my limited abilities permit.

### Family News

**Eran's** health following the accident has greatly improved. He is now free of the neck brace, the doctors having determined that an operation is unnecessary. His Ankylosing Spondylitis accorded him an advantage, because the extra bone his body creates assisted the healing process.

Antibiotic treatment put **Keith** back onto a relatively even keel, but he once completed the course there was a grievous set-back and he was rushed to the ER. His SIBO is active. It turns out that he is suffering, in addition, from Auto-Brewery Syndrome (ABS), which causes his body to manufacture unbelievable, now life-threatening, levels of alcohol from sugars and carbohydrates, wholly unrelated to drinking. There are grounds to suspect a further complication, but this has not yet been confirmed. We remain lovingly concerned for him and for the family. **Shlomit**, with her part time employment, is the only provider for the household, while coping with Keith's ill health, running the house, bringing up the children and seeking to protect them from the natural emotional consequences of their father's ongoing illness.

We have put **our home in Israel on the market** and supplied our US lawyer with what we hope are all the documents necessary to submit an application for an **immigration visa for Bracha**, short of one. Our marriage certificate was stolen with the rest of our documents during the break-in 3 years ago. We are encountering some difficulty in obtaining official copies from Cyprus, where we were married 50 years ago.

Did I just say, "**married 50 years ago**"?! Yes, we've been married for 50 years now, and give God thanks for his kindness to us through the years. I am grateful to God for my wife, for all she has meant and all she continues to mean to my life and ministry.

We would be grateful if readers of this newsletter, particularly those who have hitherto supported our labors, would consider supporting us in the coming year and inform us of their intention. We have **not yet reached the level of covenanted support** that will enable me to continue writing and are reticent to draw on our limited savings. If you supported us

in 2018 and intend to continue to do so, or if you intend to commence supporting us in 2019, *please do* write to inform us.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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**COME LET US REASON TOGETHER** (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church). Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation, Presbyterian and Reformed.

**JONAH: A PROPHET ON THE RUN** a devotional commentary on the book of Jonah, Shepherd Press.

**MALACHI: A PROPHET IN TIMES OF DISTRESS** a devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. Founders Press.

**COLOSSIANS: The All-Sufficient Savior** a devotional commentary on the book of Colossians. Founders Press.

**The commentaries are suited for personal devotions and group studies**

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Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



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We reserve the right to use personal funds for the purposes of the ministry.