

A New Covenant Jewish Vision

by
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This article is a transcript of the second half of the message I delivered to Ohev on December 12. Please consider its content prayerfully, since I believe it was prophetically inspired.

Part II: The Vision

I believe that a Messianic Jewish congregation such as Ohev should structure itself today to be a model for how we expect all Jewish congregations to be in the future, when Romans 11:26 is fulfilled, and all Israel is saved. Romans 11:25-27 states:

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **And so all Israel will be saved**, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’”

I believe that God has spoken to me about what it will be like in that day. What I believe will happen is that Jews throughout the world will repent, call for Yeshua’s return, and seek for how to lead New Covenant *Torah-observant* lives in the context of what they understand to be Jewish ways of living. They will have to adopt some new practices related to their new-found faith in Yeshua but, by and large, they will continue in Jewish life in the ways of their fathers because that is the identity that they will have started with, that is the identity they will know, and that is what they will perceive their continuing identity to be. Please understand that when I speak like this about the future, I am telling you what I believe will happen.

Just like today, not all Jews will be alike. Jews who receive Yeshua amidst synagogue life will undoubtedly reconcile their synagogue to New Covenant realities by making needed changes, but they will, for the most part, continue in their accustomed synagogue practices insofar as they do not offend the supremacy of Scripture and the New Covenant. Why? Because that is the kind of Jewish life they will have known. Secular Jews, on the other hand – those who receive Yeshua amidst an assimilated life – will not want to continue in their God-deficient lifestyle, so they will be looking to re-order their lives among believers. But God will see to it that their deeply preserved knowledge that they are Jews will come to the forefront, and they will be looking for Jewish fellowship to help them fulfill their covenantal Jewish responsibilities. And where will they find such Jewish fellowship? More than likely in one of the newly-awakened synagogues who will by then be glorifying Yeshua in the Holy Spirit and in the context of Jewish life and practice. There will probably also be Jews who will come out of Churches to regain their Jewish identities, and there will be Jews like us, from Messianic Jewish congregations, who will be rejoicing and eager to help our Jewish brothers find their way in New Covenant Jewish practice. And the reason we will be able to do it, is that, by that time, we will have our gotten our own act together to the point that Ohev and all other Messianic Jewish congregations will be God’s example that the others can, and will, follow. Of course, we won’t be calling ourselves Messianic Jewish anymore; we’ll just be Jewish because all Jews will have become believers.

Modeling our congregation today to be like the synagogues of the future is a daunting task because none of us have come from the future to bring back the precise plan; nevertheless, I believe that God is, even now, giving the plan to us, and it is stretching us in uncomfortable ways as I described before. Those of us in Ohev who came to faith from a synagogue background may struggle against making New Covenant changes they don't perceive as being Jewish, and those of us who came to faith from a Christian Church background, may struggle with synagogue culture, and long for Christian Holy Spirit expressions they remember as being so freeing. What we are is experiencing the pains of being pioneers. We are the first of our kind in modern times. I don't believe any of us, as yet, has God's complete plan for how to make a synagogue New Covenant and, at the same time, thoroughly Jewish. But I do believe, if we relax and let God mold us, we will come to that place. One thing I am sure of is that we must be promoters of the Holy Spirit and everything He has to offer us and, at the same time, we must be Jewish in ways that are recognizable by a wide swath of the Jewish world.

In saying this, I do not mean that we should be men-pleasers, looking outside of our congregation for validation of who we are and how we choose to express our faith. It would be nice to be accepted, but the reality is that until all Israel is saved, nothing we do, no matter how Jewish we are, will likely receive the wider Jewish community's approval, and we should not expect it. But some day, perhaps sooner than we think (we see signs of it happening already), the rest of the Jewish world's eyes will be opened, and we should be ready to serve our Jewish brothers when that happens. Meanwhile, we are experiencing rejection but, despite that, we should self-identify as Jewish, and substantially incorporate into our lives, recognizable elements of Jewish culture and practice, insofar as they are coherent with the teachings of Yeshua and the *B'rit Chadasha*.

Until Romans 11:26 is fulfilled, there will always be differences between us and surrounding synagogues because we are New Covenant in our faith and beliefs, and they are not. Although there is no uniform standard of what is Jewish, because of the Jewish community in which we live and our connection to Israel, I believe Ohev should continue to exhibit a mainly *Ashkenaz* style of Jewish expression, and be open to Israeli culture as well.

Ohev has two major biblical affiliations, and we have members who link us to both: (1) we are the Messianic component of the wider Jewish Community by virtue of our Jewish members; (2) we are the Jewish component of the *ekklesia* by virtue of all of our members who follow Yeshua. We must not seek to minimize either. I suppose a congregation can call itself Messianic Jewish solely on the basis of its Jewish expression, but let's be clear – it cannot claim to be part of the Jewish Community without having Jewish members. Also, it cannot claim to be Messianic Jewish, unless its members – and particularly its Jewish members – are believers in Yeshua. Ohev can call itself a Messianic Jewish congregation because it has both – Jewish expression, and Jewish members who believe in Yeshua. Ohev's members who are lacking in biblical knowledge, spiritual maturity, or Jewish knowledge and practice, should earnestly seek to bolster the areas of their deficiencies, and Ohev's leaders stand ready to assist them.

Ohev Yisrael, like most Messianic Jewish congregations, has in it both Jewish and non-Jewish members and leaders. Ohev's leadership should include both Jews and non-Jews, but it's need to be genuinely Jewish should cause it to prefer a Jewish majority in its leadership, and it should

therefore be proactive in training and raising up Jewish members who have leadership potential. That is not something we have emphasized up to now, but we will start to do so. That notwithstanding – hear me clearly – no one – Jew or non-Jew, should be elevated to leadership unless he or she is sufficiently disciplined, is of high moral character, and has the requisite level of spiritual maturity and emotional stability that is needed for the position.

Now as to outreach: For pragmatic reasons, I believe Ohev's outreach emphasis should be toward intermarried couples (i.e. Jews married to non-Jews), and also to secular Jews who need help returning to a *Torah-observant* life. These two groups have needs with which Ohev is peculiarly able to help but, to do so, Ohev's members must themselves be *Torah-observant* in the context of their New Covenant Messianic faith.

I could say more, but I'm going to have to stop now. I hope you like what you heard. If so, you can't sit back and expect it to just happen. If you are able and willing to train or disciple others, you should make your willingness known. If you can profit by being trained or disciplined, don't let pride get in your way; ask for it, and don't refuse it if it is offered. If you are a Jew at Ohev and are not a leader of something or otherwise significantly serving, we don't want that to continue, but you must be qualified beyond being Jewish. If you are a Gentile at Ohev, there is no limit on how far you can go in either leadership or service; Scripture makes it clear that Jews and Gentiles are spiritually equal. But Gentiles, if you see us paying special attention to readying Jews for leadership, rejoice in it with the understanding that that is the way it should be in this kind of a congregation; but know that it does not limit you.

Seeking specifically to raise up Jews at Ohev is justified because Scripture itself distinguishes the Jewish tribes in the last days; Revelation 21:9-14 reads:

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

There are, of course, many specifics to work out on all of this, but if we are all willing to die to self, hear the Holy Spirit, and do things God's way, there will be no limit to how far God can take us.

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