

1. Jewish Outreach to Christian Churches

2. Shalom in Fearful Times

~ A Two-Part Message ~

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My message to Ohev in February made the point that the Gospel, explained from a Jewish perspective, is different than the typical Christian emphasis of merely confessing Yeshua as Lord in order to have eternal life. While that is true enough, we have seen that the *Besorah* – the Gospel – is much wider than that, and that its explanation begins all the way back with the fall of Adam, and progresses toward Yeshua, through each and every one of the covenants that God made with Israel – a nation of priests – whose purpose and duty it is to bring knowledge of God to the Gentile nations of the world. The Jewish approach is not limited to an appeal to personal salvation, but to the Kingdom of God on earth, hastening the return of Yeshua, and to maintaining a personal and loving relationship with God through the *Ruach HaKodesh*. To encourage our learning how to present the *Besorah* in this Jewish way, I asked our *chavurah* leaders to devote one or two of their meetings to teaching it and practicing it. Please, *chavurah* leaders, let me know when you have done it.

Now we know from Scripture that the Jewish people are a key in God's timetable for Yeshua to return, and His plan for mankind to be redeemed. In Luke 13:35, we read Yeshua declaring:

"See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

So helping the Jewish people discover their Messiah and be able to invite Him back is very important, and yet, like most Messianic Jewish congregations, Ohev does little toward that end. Let's not beat up on ourselves unduly though. The Jewish people are largely resistant to even considering Yeshua, least of all from us Messianic Jews who have been branded "dangerous deceivers" and "traitors" to Judaism. So, over the years, I, like most congregational leaders, have sought the Lord for how to be more effective and, like most congregational leaders have been waiting for an answer.

Over the last few months I believe I have received some direction from God on this matter, and my urging that we be prepared to share the Gospel in a Jewish way is part of it. But I would now like to tell you something else I believe I received from God and, as before, it is something in which we can all participate.

I was reminded of my early years at Beth Messiah in nearby Maryland, and a ministry led principally by Manny Brotman, of blessed memory; the ministry was called "Messianic Jewish Movement International," and one of its key activities was to hold "Sharing Yeshua with the Jewish People" seminars in Christian churches. The idea was that most Christians encounter Jewish people in the normal course of their work and travels, and Jews are not as put off hearing about Jesus from Gentiles as they tend to be when Messianic Jews talk about Him. The approach was for the Gentile Christian, with exhibiting biblical knowledge and respect for Judaism, be

able to intelligently show that “Yeshua” (they were taught to use His Hebrew name) is the one who is prophesied in the “Jewish Bible” – the *Tanakh*. The seminars reviewed the major Messianic prophecies, and taught about Jewish aversions to certain Christian words and concepts.

Manny went to be with the Lord in 1999, and that is the only reason I can think of that the seminars were discontinued since they were bearing fruit. Individual Christians and whole churches were getting involved in Jewish witness, and Messianic Jews were regularly sought after to provide both testimonies and supplemental teaching for Jewish seekers. Some Jews who accepted Yeshua joined Messianic Jewish congregations, and others joined Christian churches.

There were several things that could have been improved in the seminars but, after all, Manny was one of the first (if not the first) to conduct them. Jews for Jesus also regularly spoke at churches to energize them for Jewish witness but, to the best of my knowledge, did not have the same approach and curriculum as Manny.

The seminars were several hours long – even a whole day long – and were very well presented, but they were light on the component of teaching churches the Jewish roots of the Christian faith for their own sake, and they were light on follow-through for those Jews who responded to the Gospel. It was assumed that Jews who came to know Yeshua as Messiah would join Messianic Jewish congregations and be nurtured there. Also, according to my memory, there was no instruction given to the churches about their responsibility to disciple Jewish persons in their Jewish identities and covenantal responsibilities, should they choose to remain at the church that was instrumental in bringing them to faith. That was not on anyone’s radar at the time, and it was unfortunate because so many of the Jews who came to faith were married to Christians and, for reasons of family harmony, remained within the Church. The result was that many new Jewish believers became “Christianized” and assimilated, never knowing the importance of their own Jewish identity.

When I started to think about this some months ago, the thought occurred to me that we still need Christian help in reaching Jews, and that resuming Manny’s approach of offering seminars in churches is still valid. What is more, it can be done by Messianic Jewish congregations, that can add the additional training that Manny’s seminar lacked. When the local Tikkun leaders met last week, I presented the idea to them and it was well received. Not only that, but Troy Wallace from El Shaddai, who had recently returned from Israel and had attended a meeting of the Tikkun International Board, said that a variation of the idea had surfaced there by our *shaliach*, Dan Juster, who also experienced Manny’s ministry. When I see things come together like that, I begin to suspect that God is behind it.

We here at Ohev have been praying and searching for direction and opportunity for more Jewish outreach, and now this idea has surfaced. Maybe it’s God. Let’s test it. Many of you here have contact with leaders of churches in the area, and can sound them out about their willingness to receive some of us – myself included – to visit them and conduct three kinds of seminars.

The first kind would be called “Embracing Our Jewish Connection.” This seminar would teach the church about (1) the history of why the Church and Synagogue went their separate ways; (2)

the grafting of their born-again members into the Jewish-owned, Romans 11 olive tree; (3) about how their members are citizens in a Commonwealth of Israel; (4) about God's ongoing plan for the Jewish people that they be a nation of priests to the nations of the world; (5) why, therefore, replacement theology is wrong; and (6) how members of the Church are to relate to the Commandments of God in the New Covenant, including the Sabbath and other appointed times.

The second kind of seminar would be called "Sharing Messiah with the Jewish People." It would teach about (1) the history of Judaism's Messianic hope and its connection to key Messianic prophecies, (2) about how the *Besorot* (the Gospels) are Jewish writings about Jewish matters; (3) a little about the early Jewish believers, and life in the First Century; (4) about the Roman occupation, the destruction of the Second Temple and the Bar Kochba revolt; (5) about the many persecutions of the Jews, and why Jews are often put off by Jesus; (6) Jewish aversion to certain words, symbols, and concepts; and (7) how to respond with love and knowledge to common Jewish objections.

The third kind of seminar would be called "Serving Jewish Families within the Christian Church." It would (1) offer logical reasons for why some Jewish families – particularly mixed marriage families – might choose a Christian church home over a Messianic Jewish congregation; (2) explain the special calling of a Jewish believer to maintain his or her Jewish and Messianic identity; (3) explain the importance of a Jew fulfilling Jewish covenantal responsibilities such as raising his or her children as Jews, maintaining a Jewish home, walking in *Torah*-observance, and embracing priestly service as a member of Israel; and (4) explain why a Christian church with Jewish congregants has an obligation to disciple them into their identity as Jews, and not cause them to assimilate.

Think of how win-win this can be from every perspective. Christians become educated about their connection to Israel and their biblical Jewish roots, including aspects of *Torah*, and they begin to embrace them in ways they have not previously. At the same time, they are educated about Jews both in their midst and in the Jewish community, and they are newly motivated to be an effective witness to Jews for Yeshua. Whatever success these Christians have in their Jewish witness becomes our success as well, as we will have legitimately reached them with the Gospel through our new Christian friends. Through our efforts and with our Christian friends' new-found knowledge, they will be better able to understand the special needs of their Jewish members, and they will be able to make wise decisions whether to try to disciple them in their Jewish identity themselves, or encourage them to join a Messianic Jewish congregation. In the process, Ohev develops positive relationships with many churches, becomes known as a Messianic Jewish resource, and acquires new Jewish members who are referred to us. Does it get any better than that?

Now if you think this will be difficult to pull off, believe me it will not be if you, the members of Ohev, become active recruiters to the hundreds of churches within driving distance from us. When you run out of churches you are familiar with, pick one church a week at random and either call or just drop in; if anyone shows an interest, take their name and tell them I'll call them; I will also post a master list of churches you report to me that you approached, so that we don't duplicate. As for planning the three seminars – leave that to me. You get the churches, and I'll construct the seminars; I have already made arrangements to acquire recordings of one of

Manny's seminars along with the written materials he used. I'll teach the first seminars, and I'll teach any of you how to teach seminars if you want to learn. Remember though – the success of this will depend on the sheer effort of your contacting those churches. So let's do it. *****

New Subject!

These are fearful times. We are conducting a war in two countries, trying to keep one rogue nation from acquiring nuclear weapons and another from using ones they already have, and trying to broker peace between Israel and entities sworn to destroy her and build their capital in Jerusalem. Meanwhile our economy has gone south, too many of us are out of work, we have a new national health plan that few people understand and no one knows how to pay for, and men are marrying men, and women are marrying women. On top of that, recently, every few weeks there seems to be a major earthquake, a volcanic eruption, a record snow, a damaging flood, or a tsunami. That's the world and the nation. As for this local region, being in the shadow of the Capitol, we are ever-aware of the potential for a terrorist attack, and here at Ohev we are waiting to learn society's judgment of our brother CD who committed a grievous crime little more than a year ago.

All of these have the potential to shake us and cause us to fear if we let it. I say it that way because, according to Scripture, we don't have to let it. 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

What we are seeing that is so unsettling is what God has told us would happen. It's that we're actually seeing it and experiencing it instead of just reading about it. Just look at these predictive Scriptures of the end-times and see if you don't recognize them in what is going on around you:

2 Timothy 3:1-5: *"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power."*

Matthew 24:6-8: *"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."*

1 Timothy 4:1-3: *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."*

2 Peter 2:1-3: *"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the*

Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”

Luke 21:24-26: *“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.”*

Zechariah 12:3: *“And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”*

These prophecies are not given to us to evoke fear, but to assure us that God is in control. Fear and insecurity are the opposite of faith. They rob us of the joy and *shalom* that God wants us to have even while going through such perilous times. Are we believers or are we unbelievers? If we are believers, let's benefit by our faith and embrace what God has given us to believe!

Hebrews 13:6: *“The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”*

Psalms 27:1: *“The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?”*

Proverbs 3:5-6: *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”*

Philippians 4:6-7: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Messiah Yeshua.”*

1 Peter 5:6-7: *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”*

Psalms 42:5: *“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”*

Luke 12:22-26: *“Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?”*

Romans 8:26-28: *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”*

Philippians 4:13: *“I can do all things through Messiah who strengthens me.”*

Psalms 34:4: *“I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears.”*

Those are but a few of the Scriptures that exhort us to place our trust in God and not be afraid. Hear this though. God does not promise us immunity from suffering. I know that some of us have been taught that God will rapture believers before the great tribulation. I don't believe that. I see much more evidence in Scripture that believers will acquire inner strength through faith and the Holy Spirit, so they can be godly witnesses in the midst of tribulation. The elders have recently become aware that some in our community believe they have received from God that there is soon to be a disruptive event of some kind that will affect the Washington, D.C. area, and they have begun to make preparations that include storing food and purchasing gasoline. The elders cannot affirm that word, but there is a reality of potential danger in living near the Nation's Capital as we do, and making preparation against several days' loss of infrastructure service is not unreasonable even in the absence of a prophetic warning.

We ought not to be afraid but, if we are, we should stop everything we're doing and meditate on Psalm 23 because that's what it's for. Let's recite it together now.

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.”