

# Vision for Multiple Expressions

by Michael Rudolph

Delivered to Ohev Yisrael June 24, 2006

This is the first occasion since my installation two weeks ago that I have had the opportunity to address you on the state of the congregation. Generally it is good. Ministries are functioning, finances appear to be stable, and relationships are improving. In this latter category, the elders and their wives are scheduled for a full day retreat July 16 in order to pray, and with the expectation of returning fully restored in their relationships.

A new Ohev *chavurah* has begun in Maryland, and most of you are aware of the new Serve & Be Served initiative that will help Ohev's leaders assist each of you to grow in the Lord and exercise the gifts He has given you to bless others.

Today I want to speak to you about vision. Several of you have asked me to tell you my vision for Ohev, and several have ask a similar question: "What is Ohev's vision for its future?" I think the people who asked those questions were familiar with the King James rendering of Proverbs 29:18 that says: "*Where there is no vision, the people perish; ....*" And they sure did not want to perish or see Ohev perish.

Now while their motivations for asking the questions were understandable, I think they were mistaken in their understanding of what Proverbs 29:18 really says. The first hint of what that verse of Scripture is really saying comes when you discover (1) that there is more to the verse, and (2) that other Bible translations, for example the NIV and the New King James Version, translate the Hebrew differently; they both say:

*"Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed (or happy in the NKJ) is he who keeps the law."*

Now it turns out that the Hebrew word that the King James translates as "vision" is !AZX (Chazon) – *chet, zion, vav, nun* – that means "heavenly vision" or "divine communication" – not the kind of vision you set as a goal for yourself or for a congregation. Putting it another way, the Scripture is saying:

*"Where God's will is not perceived and acted upon, the people perish."*

There is another Scripture, Jeremiah 23:16, where God warns us about vision that is not from Him; it says:

*"Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD."*

So the question: "What is your vision for Ohev?" is the wrong question. The right question is: "What is God's vision for Ohev?"

-----

Now let me change direction but still talk about vision. Some Ohev members are worried that because Ohev has two expressions – one more traditional and one less traditional – that it necessarily has two conflicting visions. Well, that could be the case, but it does not have to be, and I'll tell you why. God has been known to endorse multiple approaches to keeping His Law, another way of saying “doing His will.”

Take Peter and Paul for example. Peter's ministry was largely to Jews, while Paul's was mainly to Gentiles. The places they ministered in were geographically different, and the congregations they built were no doubt quite different as well. In fact you could say that they ministered in two expressions – one more Jewish and one less Jewish. Sound familiar? Yet both were key apostles with the same vision – God's vision of reaching the world with the gospel of Yeshua.

In the same way, Ohev has two expressions but only one vision – God's vision of ministering to the Jew first and also to the Gentile (Romans 1:16). Ohev's two expressions are not two vision; they are merely two ways of achieving the same end.

-----

Ohev Yisrael calls itself a Messianic Jewish congregation, yet its two expressions seem quite different – differences that are also reflected among Messianic Jewish congregations nationally, and that are the subject of current national debate. Did the fathers of the modern Messianic Jewish movement make a mistake when they invited a wide variation of Jewish practices in their congregations? Some think so but I do not because the arrival of the New Covenant through Yeshua's death and resurrection signaled the beginning of a huge disbursement of His Word throughout the world by Jewish believers accompanied by those of the nations who had also come to faith. That is why, shortly before His death, Yeshua told his disciples:

*"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)*

And we also read in Matthew 24:14:

*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."*

So while God's witness nation Israel (which, by the way, even at Mt. Sinai included Gentiles) started out as a relatively small group of people of the desert with a law and customs derived from that law, they were never meant to remain to themselves, to live among themselves and to bless themselves. Indeed, their destiny was to be a light to the nations – to the utmost parts of the earth – Jew and Gentile together. Not a comfortable commission at all, and not one that would infer that congregations of the New Covenant – even those we call Messianic Jewish – would remain unchanged and uniform in their practices throughout the world. And one would certainly not infer that comfort for the Jewish people was on top of God's to-do list.

So I believe, as in all matters, God must be sought for how each of our congregations ought to be constructed, and we should not suppose that God intends all Messianic Jewish congregations to

look or behave alike or that they be constructed solely for the comfort of either their Jewish or Gentile members.

Now back to “VISION.”

I don't know God's ultimate vision for Ohev, but I am sure that it will be His vision and not ours! If we find that uncertainty uncomfortable, then let's look to our faith for trusting God. Abraham did not know where he was going when he followed God's direction to break camp and move out, but according to Scripture, he did it because he believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Don't we want to be seen by God that way also? Then let's get our eyes off of comfort and on to adventure as God directs our path and Ohev's path.

On your seats you will find a page entitled “Characteristics of a Messianic Jewish Congregation.” It contains my opinion of the distinguishing characteristics of an ideal Messianic Jewish Congregation, and is heavily footnoted with Scripture. While the six characteristics listed are specific, they are also broad enough to accommodate all expressions of Messianic Judaism. Please study them privately and in your *chavurot*, because I will be addressing you on them in the weeks to come.

May God bless Ohev Yisrael congregation with faith and wisdom as it seeks your will in moving forward in the multiple expressions of our Messianic Jewish journey.