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*From Jerusalem to Jerusalem: Essential Contours of the Modern
Messianic Movement*

Abstract

The modern messianic movement is only beginning to be noticed and is often met with confusion by Gentile believers. In an effort to promote better understanding and positive engagement with a view toward mutual collaboration between Jew and Gentile within the modern Church, this paper outlines the essential contours of the movement. Additionally, it appeals to a missiological model that offers a framework to aid the Gentile believer in understanding the movement. As a result of this awareness, this author hopes to see concrete engagement on the part of Gentiles with this expanding work of God among Jewish people.

Key Words: Messianic Movement, Jew, Gentile, Jewish Believers, Jewish-Christian

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Introduction

While on a trip to Ireland, a Messianic Jew asked a local Irishman, “What will it take to end the problems here?” The Irishman replied, “When the Jews come preaching Jesus.” So, taking the man at his word, the Messianic Jew planned a return trip to do just that. While on this second evangelistic trip he was handing out tracts when another local Irishman inquired, “Who are you?” The response was, “We are Jews who believe in Jesus.” The Irishman, befuddled at the idea finally stammered out, “Huh, Jews for Jesus.” After a brief silence, the Irishman’s clarity returned and he followed up by asking, “So, are you a *Catholic Jew* or a *Protestant Jew*?”¹

In an effort to ameliorate similar myopia, this essay outlines the major contours of the modern Messianic movement with several goals in mind. The movement is rapidly growing and basic awareness is needed among Gentile believers so the Church can positively engage and participate in what God is doing among Jewish people worldwide.² As such we will first address the identity of those comprising the movement. Second, we will consider a missiological model with which to understand the various expressions of the movement. Third, we will survey the diverse theological perspectives held within the movement since it is not unlike the rest of the Church.³ Finally, we will consider the potential positive impact Messianic Jews may bring to our world. At the end of the essay numerous resources will be provided along with a chart outlining “eight typologies” of Messianic Jews. It is my hope that the reader will not only praise God for this exciting, worldwide work that is flourishing among Jewish people, but will also seek out concrete ways in which to participate in this unique expansion of the Church.

At the outset I should note that I am not Jewish (so far as I know) and thus represent an outsider’s voice with regard to the movement. While this carries certain limitations with it, I also have an advantage not necessarily enjoyed by Jewish believers. For one, while I would not dispute that insiders know themselves best, it is commonly known that insiders tend to lack the ability to recognize certain dynamics that characterize the group. Because cultural rules are inherently learned, insiders are blind to certain elements of their existence and unable to appreciate how outsiders understand them.⁴

Second, I represent an insider’s voice with regard to Gentiles. While a representative from the Messianic movement could say similar things (and some have), the points raised here may be received differently because I say them as a Gentile. Additionally, the Messianic Jewish conversation at this stage (from my perspective) is largely an internal dialogue, insiders addressing fellow insiders. The

implication to be drawn which motivates this essay, is that for the Church to be an effective global witness, the Messianic movement cannot remain a solo act but needs the harmony of Gentile believers.⁵ This coming together depends on *both Jewish and Gentile believers*.

Finally, to avoid being arbitrary I depend on the writings of Messianic Jewish believers for the identification of the essential contours mentioned herein. Additionally, I draw on the many presentations I had the privilege of attending during the 2015 International Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism in Jerusalem.

A Community Struggling for Acceptance: “...they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb 11:13, ESV)

Who are Messianic Jews? The mere challenge of deciding what to call a Jewish person who believes in Jesus is evidence of the difficulty of providing a definition. David H. Stern, a foundational voice in the modern Messianic Movement, discusses nine different titles!⁶ They are, with his evaluation, as follows:

Jewish Believer	Vague: believer in what?
Messianic Believer	Vague: Jewish or Gentile?
Hebrew Christian	An older term emphasizing ethnicity.
Jewish Christian	Neutral: emphasizes ethnicity, but is typically associated with Western notions of Christian identity; sometimes used by scholars to refer to Jewish believers between the 1st - 4th centuries CE.
Christian Jew	Similar to Jewish Christian but not used by scholars.
Fulfilled Jew	Vague: implies that a Jew “completes or fulfills his Old Testament faith.”
Biblical Jew	Negative: indicates that one reads and follows the Old and New Testaments but implies rejection of Rabbinic traditions which some believing Jews do not do.
Jew for Jesus	Confusing: it derives from a ministry by this name that was founded in 1970.
Messianic Jew	Refers to “Jews who follow Jesus and maintain a loyalty to their Jewish Heritage.”

This list may be supplemented with a further title, “Jewish believers in Jesus,” which is advocated by Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*.⁷ For our purposes, “Messianic Jew” is equivalent to “Jewish believer in Jesus.”

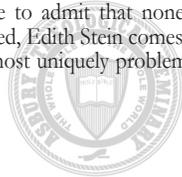
The reader might wonder why the title “Christian” is not simply adopted. One problem from the perspective of a Messianic Jew is that it implies conversion *from Judaism to Christianity*, i.e. two distinct religions. Ample research has now documented that the hard lines with which we distinguish between Judaism and Christianity did not exist in antiquity and did not develop until much later in history.⁸ As Samuel Sandmel so aptly notes, “If it had not happened that the name Christianity became attached to this religion, its essential Jewish nature would not require pointing out.”⁹ Another reason “Christian” is avoided is that the NT does not use this term as a self-designation¹⁰ by believers. Even if it did, it still would not imply that its followers comprised a separate religion.

It must be stressed that avoidance of the title “Christian” is not intended to divide believers into two qualitatively different groups.¹¹ Rather, it (1) seeks to avoid association with “Western” notions attached to the modern understanding of the title¹² and (2) cognizant of this historical development it honors the fact that the church was originally Jewish and that the Gentiles were ingrafted, not the other way around (Rom 11:17-21).¹³

No matter the title, and more to the point, Messianic Jews are generally rejected by the two groups *to which they claim allegiance*, i.e. the Jewish people and the Church. Sadly, if history is our guide, Jews and Christians have been in general agreement on this point: one cannot remain Jewish and believe in Jesus.¹⁴

A modern case study will illustrate the point. Edith Stein, a Jew who died in 1942 at Auschwitz during the holocaust, had come to faith in Jesus twenty years prior via the Catholic Church.¹⁵ In 1987 Pope John Paul II beatified her and then in 1998 canonized her.¹⁶ David Novak, a Conservative Jewish Rabbi and theologian, says of her in response to these events,

Jews have been able to dismiss most modern Jewish converts to Christianity as people motivated by social or professional ambition, self-hatred, ignorance, or mental imbalance. But anyone who knew Edith Stein or who knows anything about her life would have to admit that none of these categories applies to her. Indeed, Edith Stein comes across as *sui generis*. She might be the most uniquely problematic Jew for us since Saul of Tarsus.¹⁷



He continues, asserting the common dichotomy also shared by many Christians and which *the Messianic Jewish community now challenges*,

Edith Stein represents our impasse. She cannot be a bridge between Jews and Catholics because in this world one cannot be simultaneously both a faithful Jew and a faithful Catholic. Since the Jewish and Catholic communities are *mutually exclusive*, and both Jews and Catholics derive their identities from God's covenant with their communities, *no member of one community can also be a member in good standing of the other.*¹⁸

However one evaluates Novak's ultimatum, it reflects the unspoken expectation that Jews must first become Gentile before coming to Jesus. This is a stunning reversal of the Jerusalem Council wherein Jewish believers met to determine whether Gentile believers had to become Jewish to experience salvation in Jesus (Acts 15). But lest one miss what was taken for granted, at this early stage *it was completely normal for an ethnically Jewish person to believe in Jesus and still live as a Jew*. There was, in fact, no predominantly Gentile form of the faith to which to "convert."

Thus, the modern Messianic Jewish community represents a significant challenge to the false dichotomy constructed between Judaism and Christianity. Accordingly, it is the goal of the organization called *Toward Jerusalem Council II* to remedy this problem. In their words,

...one day there will be a second Council of Jerusalem that will be . . . the inverse of the first Council described in Acts 15. Whereas the first Council was made up of Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus), who decided not to impose on the Gentiles the requirements of the Jewish law, so the second Council would be made up of Gentile church leaders, who would recognize and welcome the Jewish believers in Yeshua without requiring them to abandon their Jewish identity and practice.¹⁹

Lest I give the impression that all Jewish believers in Jesus share this vision, both Stan Telchin²⁰ and Baruch Maoz²¹ who are ethnically Jewish and identify as Christians from the Reformed tradition believe the modern Messianic movement to be a disingenuous modern construct which threatens the unity of the church. They appeal to texts like Gal 3:27-28 and Eph 2:15. Coincidentally, this same pushback is raised by the Jewish community (even using the same NT texts!), which judges Messianic Jews to be deceitful.²²

Telchin, Maoz, and Novak raise a poignant question: is it legitimate to construct a modern Messianic Jewish identity? Even, Richard Harvey observes that

not only does the movement lack “a theological tradition” but it also must “construct a new social and religious identity.”²³ The question is one of authenticity with real world implications. For example, if a non practicing, ethnically Jewish person comes to faith in Jesus, should he or she adopt a Jewish mode of life in the Messianic Jewish movement? Or, does he or she continue to live an “assimilated”²⁴ life since that was reality before his or her expression of faith in Jesus? Is it incumbent upon a Jewish person to live as a Jew when he or she chooses to follow Jesus?²⁵

The question is further muddled by defining what it means to live as a Jew. For, Jewish identity is not arbitrary, it is founded upon divine revelation which is why answering this question is critical to the Jewish believer. While it would be admitted by any Jewish group (e.g., Orthodox, Reform, or Conservative) that Jewish identity is adapted in some way to a modern context, it is nonetheless founded upon (an interpretation of) Torah. Yet, this now requires defining “Torah,” the standard used to define Jewish identity. Since *this* is debated among Jewish groups, it should be no surprise that agreement is lacking among Messianic Jewish groups too.

Messianic Jews in general acknowledge that the Messianic Jewish identity is a modern construct, but this is not sufficient reason to call it illegitimate. Stern, for example, reframes the question by denying that Messianic Jewish identity is ultimately a symptom of a “psychological problem” or an identity crisis.²⁶ Rather, it is due to *historical developments* that no continuous Messianic Jewish identity exists. It follows then that *there used to be one and it is perfectly legitimate to reconstruct it now.*

Second, *all* conversions imply an associated life change, i.e. a cultural change. While one’s American, Asian or African cultural identity does not cease upon coming to faith in Jesus neither does it remain the same. Indeed, it is the perennial challenge of believers to determine how to live first as a follower of Jesus within a given culture (i.e. live counter-culturally) and only then as a member of larger society (i.e. live like the surrounding culture). To frame it a different way, if both Christians and Jews expect their converts to change their behavior in accord with the accepted values of their faith tradition, then why should it be a problem for Messianic Jews?

So, who are Messianic Jews? It should be evident at this point that the answer involves diversity. The following illustration shows the continuum of possibilities:²⁷



of local non-believers since C5/6 believers may be perceived as a deceitful threat if found out.

If one compares this illustration with the previous one, certain similarities will be readily evident. Because of this, some point to Messianic Jews as exemplars of the C5 category. That is, Messianic Jews are thought to legitimate C5 Muslims on the assumption that if it is acceptable for the former, it must be for the latter. The following table provides some examples:

	C5 “Messianic Muslim”	C5 “Messianic Jew”
Language	<i>Isa</i> (Jesus)	<i>Yeshua</i> (Jesus)
Attend	Mosque/create an “Isa Mosque”	Synagogue/create “messianic Synagogue”
Worship	Muslim manner of expression including Ramadan, abstinence from pork & alcohol	Jewish manner of expression including Jewish feasts, kosher, and Sabbath
Scriptures & Beliefs	Reinterpreted in light of <i>Isa</i> , rejected if not possible to reinterpret	Reinterpreted in light of <i>Yeshua</i> , rabbinic teaching viewed as authoritative

Now that I have offered the model as an aid, I hasten to define its limitation. That is, I do not see Messianic Jews as equivalent to an “insider movement” and they should not be used as justification for establishing the legitimacy of insider movements. As Timothy Tennent has rightly noted, a key difference between Muslim believers and Jewish believers is one of identity and he rightly objects that Jewish believers “found Jesus within Jewish, religious identity” in a way that Muslim believers never can.³³ That is, the religious culture of a Jewish believer in Jesus is not at odds with following Jesus in quite the same way as the religious culture of a Muslim believer.

Space does not permit a full working out of the differences between Muslim and Jewish believers in this regard, and the reader may disagree, but it is important to point out the limitations of the C-Spectrum as applied to Messianic Jews here. Nevertheless, the value of this spectrum lies in helping the reader to identify differences among various expressions of Messianic Judaism as well as to

“place” various groups with which he or she may interact whether or not there is agreement with the “orthodoxy” of a given category.

A Community of Theological Diversity

The diversity of Messianic Jewish identity can in part be explained by its theological diversity. For example, one’s “theological” view of Torah, i.e. *whether* it is binding or *how* it is binding, has a direct impact on how one lives as a Messianic Jew. This fact is also reflected in Orthodox, Reformed, and Conservative Judaism each of which adhere to different views of Torah.³⁴ Because the Messianic Jewish community is in process of defining itself, this theological diversity is a necessary side effect of a live discussion.

Due to space constraints the following is a mere cursory survey related to views regarding the observance of Torah. Because my intent is to present the diversity of the movement and not to adjudicate the “correct” view(s), no comment will be made along these lines. The individuals listed below represent significant voices in the formation of Messianic Jewish Theology and are surveyed by Richard Harvey in *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*.³⁵

Since I am unable to cover the other critical topics of Christology (i.e. Messianic Jewish understanding of Jesus) and Eschatology (especially as it relates to views of the modern State of Israel) I point the reader to Harvey’s book and provide a summary table of his “Eight Typologies” at the end of the article.

Torah

Torah as used here refers to the Mosaic Law. It may also include Rabbinic Tradition depending on the view represented below. Messianic Jews generally agree that the Torah is not applicable to Gentiles (Acts 15) in the same way it is for Jews. Some prefer to speak of a “Messianic” or “New Covenant” Torah which applies to both Jew and Gentile, but in different ways.³⁶ Since the focus here is only on Messianic Jewish self-understanding we will not consider its application to Gentiles. The first table presents a general view of Torah.



Response	Abandon	Adapt	Adopt	Accept
Basis	Jesus fulfills Mosaic Law and renders it obsolete (e.g., Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4; Heb 8:16). Only the universal moral law (10 commandments) applies.	Jewish cultural identity is defined by the Mosaic Law and preserved in Jewish tradition. Observance carries <i>no religious merit</i> with it and is not a requirement.	Jesus and his followers were Law observant. Yet they abandoned and adapted some practices, and placed few requirements on Gentile believers.	Orthodox Torah observance is in effect even through Jesus. All Messianic Jews should follow Rabbinic tradition as people fully identified with Israel.
Intent	Avoidance of legalism and rebuilding the “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14)	Preserve Jewish identity through calendar, circumcision and <i>kasbrut</i> .	Preserve religious validity of Torah although as mediated through Jesus.	Torah observance is the proper response of gratitude to God’s grace.
Proponents	Baruch Maoz, Stan Telchin, Arnold Fruchtenbaum	Gershon Nerel	Daniel Juster David Stern	Mark Kinzer, Hashivenu, Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council

We turn briefly now to his survey of the practical application of Torah with regard to Sabbath, *kasbrut*, and Passover, the most common elements of Jewish identity. The various proponents are grouped accordingly with each individual perspective.

Sabbath

Observing Sabbath is one of the most well known practices of Judaism and for good reason since it is the “sign” of the Mosaic covenant (Ex 31:13-17).³⁷ If Torah is in effect then it should not be surprising to find its observance important to Messianic Jews.



View of Sabbath	Representative	Summary
Full Rejection of Rabbinic Tradition	Baruch Maoz	Reinterpreting Jewish tradition with Christian meaning is not Jewish. Ritual elements of Judaism are fulfilled in Jesus anyway.
	Arnold Fruchtenbaum	Following Jewish tradition often places one in conflict with biblical truth (e.g., prayer said at the lighting of Sabbath candles). Yet, each is free to observe as one desires so long as it is not imposed on others.
	Gershon Nerel	Sabbath has never been annulled but one must follow <i>the</i> Rabbi (Jesus) and not the Rabbis in one's observance.
Modification of Rabbinic Tradition	Barney Kasdan	Ritual is not legalism. Jesus observed Sabbath (e.g., Luke 4:16-21) and Hebrews 4 permits its observance in light of Him. Jesus also corrected Rabbinic tradition from within.
	Daniel Juster	Sabbath is linked to God's covenant with Israel and thus tied to Jewish identity. Rabbinic tradition, which accords with the New Covenant, are to be retained. Focus is always against legalism but toward Jesus.
	John Fischer	Jesus strictly observed Sabbath and did not annul the Torah (Matt 5:17-20; Rom 3:31). His conflict over Sabbath was over specific traditions, not the observance of the day in general. Focus is on the worship of God in Jesus.
Acceptance of Rabbinic Tradition	Mark Kinzer (Mess. Jewish Rabb. Council)	NT disputes over Sabbath are over <i>how</i> to observe, not <i>whether</i> to observe. Rabbinic Tradition is a fence around Torah and accepted, e.g., no buying or selling, restricted travel, prepare food in advance, hand washing, etc.



Kashrut

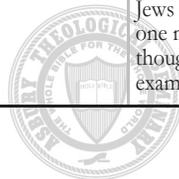
This term means the same as the more commonly known term, “kosher.” It is an English transliteration (not a translation) of the Hebrew verb *כָּשַׁר* (*kasher*), which means “fit” or “appropriate.”³⁸ Modern *kashrut* is based on the Pentateuchal commands related to the dietary laws and is considered to be a significant outward expression of Jewish identity.

View of <i>Kashrut</i>	Representative	Summary
Weakness or Freedom in Messiah	Baruch Maoz	This is simply “weakness” as in Rom 14:14–15:13 (cf. Mark 7:14-19). Messianic Jews seek to be identified as Jewish but “pick and choose” how they observe which is rejected by the Jewish community anyway.
	Arnold Fruchtenbaum	Ritual laws are no longer in effect. However, one must be culturally sensitive when around Jews, but abstinence is not required.
Be Led by the Spirit	Daniel Juster Michael Schiffman	No clear rationale for food laws and such distinctions pertained to the “age of the Temple.” May be beneficial, but still no requirement exists.
Biblical Only - Torah Still Valid	Barney Kasdan	Rabbinic interpretation is rejected (e.g., not mixing dairy and meat in the same meal) in favor of explicit biblical regulations. In Mark 7, Jesus does not annul the food laws, only eating with ritually clean hands. Rabbinic observance is ok if done with proper intent and spirit.
	Gershon Nerel	Jesus upholds Torah, thus motivation should be more than just cultural identification. Food laws were even given to Gentiles (Acts 15:29); not tied to salvation and should not be a source of quarrel (1 Cor. 10:25).
	David Rudolph	Mark 7:19b is directed to Gentiles in the same way as Acts 15:29. Jesus and his followers all observed <i>kashrut</i> , which still applies to Jews today.
Conservative Judaism	Mark Kinzer (Mess. Jewish Rabb. Council)	Torah is normative for Messianic Jews and thus <i>kashrut</i> . Abolishing these equals abolishing the Jewish people. He and the MJRC follow the guidelines of Conservative Judaism on their regulations.

Passover

This celebration is one of the most significant for Jews in general. Moreover, it offers the strongest evidence for legitimizing the reinterpretation of Jewish customs with deeper meaning since the NT itself identifies Jesus as *the* Passover sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7). The greatest difficulty relates to determining which traditions to include or reinterpret since centuries of tradition have shaped the modern day liturgy and it is near impossible to know for certain how Jews of Jesus' day celebrated Passover.

View of Passover	Representative	Summary
No Passover	Baruch Maoz	Passover celebration today is fully Rabbinic and has no connection to Jesus. The <i>Afikomen</i> (hidden <i>matzah</i>) does not represent Jesus.
Optional	Arnold Fruchtenbaum	Grace supersedes Law. If celebrated, it must be done in light of the New Covenant which requires a Messianic <i>haggadah</i> (order of liturgy).
Biblical Passover with Messianic Interpretation	Gershon Nerel	No Rabbinic <i>haggadah</i> allowed even if modified to be Messianic. Focus should be Biblical material alone, focused on Last Supper and celebrated in light of Jesus death and resurrection.
	Daniel Juster	Passover should combine OT and NT elements. Jesus is the Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7). He took the cup and <i>afikoman</i> at the Last Supper. Jew and Gentile should celebrate together as they did in the NT era.
Rabbinic Passover with Messianic Interpretation	Barney Kasdan	Passover represents Jewish redemption in the past (Egypt), present and future (from sin in Jesus). A Trinitarian interpretation of the <i>matzah tash</i> (a three pocket cloth in which pieces of <i>matzah</i> are placed) is followed.
	David Stern	Passover "belongs" to Messianic Jews as much as any other. Thus, one may reinterpret but do so thoughtfully. Jesus himself is our example.



Conclusion

One will observe from this brief survey several recurring questions in each of the three categories. First, what is the motivation for observance? Is it a desire to be culturally sensitive, to preserve Jewish identity, or is it based on the belief that Torah is still incumbent on Jewish believers in Jesus? Or, perhaps it is a blend of all three? Second, what is the authority on which one bases observance? Is it the Hebrew Bible (OT), Jesus, or Rabbinic Tradition reinterpreted? Regardless of the responses offered to these questions, underlying all of them is the attempt to answer the “problem” of the “modern construct” of Messianic Jewish identity. Some reject it outright, others seek to anchor it exclusively in antiquity, and still others find it acceptable to integrate Jewish thought and practice over the last 2,000 years.

Since my goal is provide the reader the means by which to understand the contours of this movement, it is important to mention that Israeli expressions differ somewhat from Diaspora expressions. In the words of Harvey,

The Diaspora nature of much of the movement emphasizes the religious expression of the Judaism as a means of cultural identification, whereas in the Land of Israel the majority of Israeli Messianic Jews do not need to assert their ‘Jewishness’ in such ‘religious’ ways, and *react against the Orthodox influence*.³⁹

Thus, context plays a role in how one expresses Jewish identity. Outside of Israel, one will find greater use of outward markers of Jewish identity among Messianic Jews, whereas within Israel one will find a more relaxed posture.

Finally, it is worth noting that while there is diversity in the Messianic Jewish identity, the following rule of thumb should prove helpful, at least at this point in time. That is, there is a minority at both extremes. Only a small number consider themselves “assimilated” (i.e. not expressing Jewish identity) or aligned with Rabbinic tradition. The majority are located somewhere in between, seeking to live and preserve Jewish identity as followers of Jesus regardless of their motivation.⁴⁰

Conclusion: Messianic Jews and the Future

It is my hope that this survey of the essential contours of the modern Messianic Movement has provided the reader with (1) a basic framework with which to understand the movement, (2) motivation to return to the Jewish roots of the faith, and (3) encouragement to engage in this exciting movement of God among the Jewish people. In conclusion, I highlight several ways that the Messianic Jewish community might be used of God in the near and distant future. In no way

do I imply that these things *will* happen, but I am imagining very real possibilities, Lord willing.

The Palestinian Conflict

This conflict was raised on several occasions at the 2015 International LCJE Conference in Jerusalem and is increasingly on the minds of Messianic Jews, especially those living in Israel. The problem is particularly acute since *there are followers of Jesus on both sides of the conflict*. Regardless of how faithful a Messianic Jew or an Palestinian Christian feels toward their own people, their unity in Jesus obligates them toward a sympathetic posture toward one another. Israelis and Palestinians are both fiercely committed to their people, identity, and land, but for these believers, their unity in Jesus pushes them beyond this deadlock.

There is nonetheless a sense of hopelessness on both sides since they represent minorities among their own people and doubt that their efforts will be noticed. Yet, what if God uses these believers as a tangible expression of His love, forgiveness, and reconciliation? What would the surrounding world say if these “enemies” could stand hand in hand as brothers and sisters in Jesus? On this topic I recommend the jointly authored book, *Through My Enemy’s Eyes: Envisioning Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine*, by Lisa Loden, a Messianic Jew, and Salim J. Munayer, a Palestinian Christian.⁴¹ See also Richard Harvey’s *Towards a Messianic Jewish Theology of Reconciliation: The Strategic Engagement of Messianic Jewish Discourse in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*.⁴² Let us also pray that such a witness might come to fruition.

Jewish-Christian Dialogue

As Jennifer M. Rosner underscores, the atmosphere and actual efforts underway for Jewish-Christian dialogue are at an unprecedented high.⁴³ Numerous books and articles have come out in the last few decades urging for a deeper Jewish understanding of the NT and its major figures, *many of which are written by non-believing Jewish scholars!*⁴⁴ In this environment Messianic Jews may serve as a true bridge between Gentile Christianity and unbelieving Jews.⁴⁵

As we have seen, however, there is a vested interest in both sides against this happening because Gentiles Christians may fear a more Jewish Gospel and unbelieving Jews may fear their people being proselytized. As Rosner puts it, “Messianic Judaism categorically blurs the lines that the dialogue has come to depend upon.”⁴⁶ The way forward, is not to reject the historical developments that have taken place but to critically evaluate them and recognize that we are not bound by them. Is it not time for the Gentile church to repent of its history of anti-Semitism? And is it not equally time for Jews to realize that they do not have to

become Gentile to follow Jesus? *Faith in Jesus the Messiah was originally and legitimately a form of Judaism and there is no reason it should not be as well today.*

Restoration of a Jewish Voice in “Christian” Theology?

For the majority of the history of Christianity, our doctrines, creeds, and theology have been shaped by a nearly exclusively Gentile voice. Messianic believers wonder, what would these and Church History look like today if Jewish believers and their voice had not been silenced through the historical developments of the early centuries? Would Supersessionism have sprung up so easily?⁴⁷ Has the Gentile Church fully reckoned with the fact that modern Christianity was *a form of Judaism in antiquity* and that Gentiles are ingrafted? Indeed, the New Testament is largely authored by Jewish believers making sense of the Hebrew Bible (OT) in light of Jesus the Messiah of Israel. What impact should that have on our ecclesiology and self-understanding as Gentile believers?

Relatedly, the Messianic movement raises questions about our language as a Church. Of course, they prefer using Hebrew terms for Jesus (Yeshua), Paul (Sha’ul), Matthew (Mattityahu), etc, which are largely contextually motivated. But what about referring to Jesus as “Christ”? This is, of course, the Greek transliteration of Χριστός (Christos), which was a translation for the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (mashiach) meaning “anointed one.” But as it is commonly used, it is an “empty set” akin to a last name. In other words, a Gentile who confesses faith in Jesus Christ is actually saying, “I believe in Jesus the Messiah of Israel.”⁴⁸ The heart of rethinking our terminology should not simply be to make it “Jewish friendly” but to express our beliefs as accurately and profoundly as possible.

While the Messianic movement is not advocating a complete overhaul of core doctrines, the community may help us restate them in a richer way that honors their voice and better reflect the origin of our faith. This is specifically true in the areas of Ecclesiology (i.e. the nature of the Church), Christology (i.e. the person, offices, and work of Jesus), and Eschatology (i.e. the “end times”).⁴⁹ This rapprochement is dependent upon two things: (1) Messianic Jews must come to a mature articulation of their views on these issues as Richard Harvey urges,⁵⁰ and (2) the Gentile Church must be willing to dialogue, listen, and learn. If Messianic Jews and the Gentile Church remain perpetually isolated both will fail to fully achieve the mutual Abrahamic blessing promised to us.





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Resources Related to the Messianic Movement

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Schools Offering Degrees or Training in Messianic Judaism

Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies, NY, USA — www.ariel.org
Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, USA & Israel — caspari.com
Denver Seminary, CO, USA — www.denverseminary.edu
HaDavar Messianic Ministries, CA, USA — www.hadavar.org
LAMCS Yeshiva, USA (Certificate Only) — yeshiva.iamcs.org
Israel College of the Bible, Israel (Certificate Only) — www.israelcollege.com
Jewish Roots Institute, KS, USA — www.jewishrootsinstitute.org
King's University, CA, USA — www.tku.edu
Messianic Jewish Bible Institute, USA & International — mjbi.org
Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, CA, USA — www.mjti.org
New School for Jewish Studies, Online (Certificate Only) — www.nsfjs.org
St. Petersburg Seminary and Yeshiva, FL, USA — www.sptseminary.edu
Talbot School of Theology, NY, USA — feinbergcenter.com &
www.talbot.edu

Academic Journals Focused on Messianic Judaism

Borough Park Symposium (Online) — www.boroughparksymposium.com
Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting (Print & Online) —
www.jjmjs.org
Kesher (Online) — www.kesherjournal.com
Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (Print & Online) —
www.lcje.net/Bulletin.html
Messiah Journal (Print & Online) — fhoz.org/messiah/journal
Mishkan (Print & Online) — caspari.com/new/en/mishkan
Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations (Online) —
ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr

Messianic Congregations

Association of Messianic Congregations — www.messianicassociation.org
First Century Foundations — firstcenturyfoundations.com
International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues — www.iamcs.org
International Messianic Jewish Alliance — www.theimja.org
Messianic Jewish Alliance of America — <http://www.mjaa.org>

Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship — www.sbmessianic.net
Union of Messianic Believers — www.messianicbelievers.net
Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations — www.umjc.org

Messianic Literature & Resources for Evangelism

Gospel Research Foundation — www.gospelresearch.org
HaGefen — ha-gefen.org.il
Maoz Web — www.themaozweb.com
Messiah Comes — www.messiah.com.es
Messianic Archive of Jorge Quiñónez — afi.org/jorge.htm
Messianic Jewish Publishers & Resources — messianicjewish.net
One for Israel — www.oneforisrael.org

Ministries

Ariel Ministries — ariel.org
Chosen People Ministries — www.chosenpeople.com
Christian Jew Foundation Ministries — cjfm.org
Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry — www.foi.org
HaDavar Messianic Ministries — www.hadavar.org
Hosting Israeli Travelers — hitinternational.net
Jewish Voice Ministries — www.jewishvoice.org
Jews for Jesus — www.jewsforjesus.org
Life in Messiah — www.lifeinmessiah.org
Ships of Tarshish — www.tarshish.org.il
Toward Jerusalem Council II — tjci.org
Word of Messiah — wordofmessiah.org



Eight Types of Emerging Messianic Judaism⁵¹

	Jewish Christianity	Hebrew Christianity	Israeli National & Restorationist	NT Halakhah
Proponents	Baruch Maoz Stan Telchin	Arnold Fruchtenbaum	Gershon Nerel	David Stern Daniel Juster
Tradition	Reformed	Dispensational (Revised)	None: viewed as an advantage	Charismatic / Evangelical
Christology	Credal	Evangelical	Credal	Credal w/Jewish modification
Torah	NO - fulfilled by Messiah	NO - Mosaic dispensation ended	YES - valid through Jesus	YES - redefined by Jesus
Jewishness	"Assimilated" (i.e. Gentile)	Slight cultural adaption	Israeli, Hebrew speaking	Part of Jewish community
Eschatology	Agnostic Amillennialism	"Messianic" (modified Classic) Dispensationalism	Premillennial & realized eschatology	Historic or Restorationist Premillennialism
Rabbinic Judaism	Anti-rabbinic	Illustrative & confirming NT	Not used	Illustrative & confirming NT
Israel	Loyal: based on national / cultural identity	Loyal: based on theology	Loyal: based on politics + theology	Loyal: based on theology
Harvey's Assessment	Artificial distinction between ethno-cultural & religious Jewishness	Israel & Church = 2 peoples & this is problematic; hermeneutical methods suspect	Theology is unsystematic & implicit; blends politics & religion	Middle ground between Judaism & Christianity; torah positive; bright future



Eight Types of Emerging Messianic Judaism⁵¹

Traditional Judaism & Messiah	Postmissionary Messianic Judaism	Rabbinic Halakhah in light of NT	Messianic Rabbinic Orthodoxy
John Fischer Michael Schiffman Ariel Berkowitz David Freedman	Mark Kinzer Rich Nichol	Joseph Shulam "cut the umbilical cord"	Elazar Brandt Uri Marcus
Undefined; rabbinic?	Postliberal	Rabbinic Judaism & NT	Rabbinic Orthodoxy
Credal w/Jewish modification	Trinity is Hellenistic	Some view him unorthodox	Adoptionist - no trinity/incarnation
YES - informed by Jesus	YES - through it follow Jesus	YES - within Rabbinic tradition	YES - full Torah for <i>all people</i>
Part of Jewish community	Part of Jewish community	Part of Jewish community	"God, land, people, Torah"
Premillennialism	Amillennialism or Jewish Covenantal Theology	?	Premillennialism (Marcus)
Uninspired but halakhic orthopraxy	Inspired	Inspired + Kabbalah	Inspired - controls interpretation
Loyal: based on theology	Loyal: based on politics + theology	Loyal: based on theology	Loyal: <i>All</i> Israel will be saved
May end up as a form of "Messianic Hasidism" or possibly "Orthodox Messianic Jewish"	Theologically creative; departs from the evangelical basis of most of the others	Distances itself from the Gentilisation; midrashic interpretation	Heterodox; adherents will be "Jewish orthodox" or "just Jewish"



End Notes

* This paper is written in honor of Ken and Sarah Norris who have made this research possible on multiple levels.

¹This true story was recounted by a Jewish believer during the International Lausanne Consultation for Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) held in Jerusalem, August 16-21, 2015.

² Although Jewish believers in Jesus can be found throughout history, the 4th century appears to be when the evidence for significant numbers becomes sparse (David Rudolph, “Messianic Judaism in Antiquity and the Modern Era” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*, eds. David Rudolph and Joel Willits [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013], 21-36, here 24). For a short history of the modern movement see Baruch Maoz (*Come Let Us Reason Together: The Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Church*, 3d. ed. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012], 201-6, Appendix B). Despite the signs of rekindling in the 18th–20th centuries, Richard Harvey places the modern rebirth of the movement in the 1960s (*Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* [Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009], xi).

³ Lest the avoidance of creeds be taken as overly shocking, there are Christian groups which take the same stance, e.g., Church of Christ, but perhaps for different reasons.

⁴ This statement applies to *any* group, not just the Messianic Jewish movement.

⁵ I do not mean to imply that no cooperation currently exists between Jew and Gentile in this regard, only that such engagement is ad hoc and the issue is not widely known across the Church in general.

⁶ *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement With an Ancient Past* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2007), 28-9.

⁷ Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007). Isaac Rottenberg also has a helpful discussion of terminology (“Messianic Jews: A Troubling Presence” *First Things* 28 [1992]: 26-32). Daniel Boyarin, although he is reacting specifically to the term “Jewish Christian,” finds the entire discussion to be problematic (“Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to Which Is Appended a Correction of My Border Lines)” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 99 [2009]: 7-36).

⁸ See Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); cf. Rudolph, “Messianic Judaism” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 24-5, esp. n. 14.

⁹ *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* (New York: OUP, 1978), 4.



¹⁰ There are 3 occurrences (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16) and none of which are used by followers of Jesus to describe themselves. The case of 1 Peter is likely a legal charge and the author consistently uses other terminology to refer to his audience. Oddly, the NET liberally use the title “Christian” throughout the NT even when $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\iota\alpha\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ (*Christianos*) is not present. It’s meaning is simply “followers of (the Jewish) Messiah.” See Craig Keener’s discussion of its use and development as a title (*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary 3:1–14:28* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013], 1,847-50). Stern claims (without evidence) that Gentiles coined the term *to describe other Gentiles* (*Messianic Judaism*, 32).

¹¹ Moishe Rosen labels the danger of making Gentiles second class citizens, “ethnolatry” (Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 14).

¹² This is not unlike the “insider movements” around the world wherein believers seek to distance themselves from the Western connotations attached to the title Christian (Timothy C. Tennent, “The Hidden History of Insider Movements” *Christianity Today* [2013]: 28-9).

¹³ Despite the apparent erasure of ethnicity when one is “in Messiah” (Gal 3:28), Paul elsewhere maintains the ethnic distinction, not least in his thesis statement in Romans, “to the Jew especially and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

¹⁴ On the Christian side, e.g., during the “Constantinian Revolution” laws were enacted against Jewish people which had the effect of forcing Jewish believers to assimilate to a Gentile form of the faith (Oskar Skarsaune, “The History of Jewish Believers in the Early Centuries—Perspectives and Framework” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 745-81, here 776-7). At the Council of Nicaea II (787 CE), the eighth canon rejected Jewish believers desiring to live as Jews from communion and church worship, and required the explicit renunciation of Jewish identity at conversion (“The Canons of the Holy and Ecumenical Seventh Council” in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series 14, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry R. Percival [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900], 561). See also the several appendices provided by James Parkes outlining legislation and other matters against Jews and Jewish identity (*The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* [New York: Atheneum, 1969], 371-404).

¹⁵ Robert J. Paradowski, “Edith Stein,” in *Dictionary Of World Biography: The 20Th Century* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3,506-10.

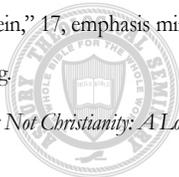
¹⁶ Beatification is the Catholic Church’s official recognition of a person’s entrance to heavenly bliss. Canonization is the official recognition of one’s status as a saint.

¹⁷ David Novak, “Edith Stein, Apostate Saint” *First Things* 96 (1999): 15.

¹⁸ Novak, “Edith Stein,” 17, emphasis mine.

¹⁹ See <http://tjci.org>

²⁰ *Messianic Judaism Is Not Christianity: A Loving Call to Unity* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 2004).



²¹ *Come, Let Us Reason Together: The Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012).

²² David Novak, "When Jews Are Christians" *First Things* 17 (1991): 42-6, here 43.

²³ Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, 2, 278.

²⁴ This term refers to ethnically Jewish believers in Jesus who do not express any Jewish distinctive in the observance of their faith, i.e. they live just like Gentile Christians.

²⁵ For the Messianic Jewish community the answer is a clear "no" for a Gentile since the Jerusalem Council cleared that up.

²⁶ Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 137.

²⁷ The titles and descriptions for this illustration are adapted from Richard Harvey (*Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, 267-77).

²⁸ The "C" stands for "Christ-centered Communities."

²⁹ The word was first coined in the 1970s and refers to the way a given culture lives out the Gospel message in both biblically acceptable and culturally relevant ways. As such it is founded on the belief that the Gospel is supracultural but that God communicates from within human cultures (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Ann. ed. [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012], 430-3); cf. "Contextualization" in A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 225-7. See David J. Hesselgrave for a summary of the issues related to the implementation of contextualization ("Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12 [1995]: 115-9).

³⁰ Phil Parshall, John Travis, and Dean Gilliland, "Danger! New Directions in Contextualization" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34 (1998): 404-17, here 407-8. A similar linear presentation of the C-Spectrum was also developed by Joshua Massey ("God's Amazing Diversity" *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 17 [2000]: 5-14) and a circular or dynamic model was created by Mark S. Williams ("Revisiting the C1-C6 Spectrum in Muslim Contextualization" *Missiology* 39 [2011]: 335-51).

³¹ "Insider movements" describes people who express "obedient faith in Christ" while also remaining "integrated with or inside their natural community" (Rebecca Lewis, "Insider Movements: Retaining Identity and Preserving Community" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th. ed. [Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009], 673-5).

³² E.g., Harley Talman and John Jay Travis, eds, *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus within Diverse Religious Communities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015); Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 193-220; "The Hidden History of Insider Movements" *Christianity Today* (2013): 28-9; "Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques: A Closer Examination of C-5 'High Spectrum' Contextualization" *International*

Journal of Frontier Mission 23 (2006): 101-15; John Travis, Phil Parshall, Herbert Hoefler, and Rebecca Lewis, “Four Responses to Timothy C. Tennent’s Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques: A Closer Examination of C-5 ‘High Spectrum’ Contextualization” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (2006): 124-6.

³³ “Followers of Jesus,” 106.

³⁴ Orthodox Judaism holds the entirety of Written Torah (OT) and Oral Toral (Rabbinic teaching) to be authoritative. In Conservative Judaism the Torah is adapted to modern society by the removal of certain elements deemed offensive or outmoded. In Reform Judaism Torah is revised around ethical or cultural norms and is generally not considered absolute.

³⁵ See especially chapters 6 on theory and 7 on practice (140-222).

³⁶ E.g., Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 156.

³⁷ Circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:11).

³⁸ Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2004), 655-6.

³⁹ Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, 221, emphasis mine.

⁴⁰ Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, 221.

⁴¹ Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2013.

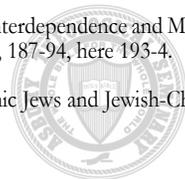
⁴² Herts, UK: The Stables, 2012.

⁴³ “Messianic Jews and Jewish-Christian Dialog” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 145-58.

⁴⁴ E.g., Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 2011); Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006); David Neff, “Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: Why Jewish New Testament Professor Amy-Jill Levine Thinks Jews Should Know More About Jesus, and Christians More About First-Century Judaism” *Christianity Today* (2012): 52-4. Additionally, Ben Witherington III, the Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, is co-authoring a commentary on the Gospel of Luke with Amy-Jill Levine, a non-believing Jewish scholar and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School.

⁴⁵ Craig Keener, “Interdependence and Mutual Blessing in the Church” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 187-94, here 193-4.

⁴⁶ Rosner, “Messianic Jews and Jewish-Christian Dialog” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 145.



⁴⁷ See the recent article by Jim R. Sibley who questions the evidence from Rom 11:15 which is used in support of Supersessionism (“Has the Church Put Israel on the Shelf? The Evidence from Romans 11:15” *JETS* 58 [2015]: 571-82.

⁴⁸ Granted, “Messiah” is the English transliteration for the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (mashiach), but it is not an “empty set” in the same way as “Christ.”

⁴⁹ See chapters 5 (Christology) and 8 (Eschatology) in Harvey (*Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, 96-139, 223-261) and chapter 4 (Theology) in Stern (*Messianic Judaism*, 85-124).

⁵⁰ This is one of the goals of his book, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*.

⁵¹ This table summarizes Richard Harvey’s eight typologies (*Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, 267-77).

