

**Helpful Points to Consider: The Role of Torah and Jewish Tradition
In the Messianic Jewish Community**

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The Torah and the Jewish people are interwoven together and cannot be separated. The Torah, and the way it has been uniquely interpreted and applied over time, defines us as a people. In a play on the famous quote from Ahad Ha'Am,¹ one could even say: *More than the Jews have kept Torah, Torah has kept the Jews.*

For us as Jews, the Torah is more than the stipulations of the covenant between ourselves and God. It is more than just 613 different ways to connect with our Creator. The Torah speaks into the deepest places of our souls and tells us where we came from, who we truly are, and where we are going. It defines our behavior and shapes our interaction with the world around us.

Throughout the millennia we Jews have guarded, preserved, and held tightly to the Torah. Whether through expulsions, pogroms, or even the Holocaust, we have risked our lives for the sake of the Torah. For as it is promised:

*It is a tree of life for those who take hold of it,
all who support it are to be praised.
All its ways are pleasantness,
and all its paths are peace.*

Without the Torah, we would not know what it means to be holy and what God expects of us. Furthermore, without the Torah, there would be no "Prophet greater than Moses"² or the renewal³ and greater realization and internalization of that covenant in and through our Messiah, Yeshua.

In fact, if we are to take the Gospel of John seriously, than for us as Messianic Jews, the Torah is our ultimate symbol of faith, because if Yeshua is the Living Torah (i.e. the Word made flesh which dwells among us)⁴ than the Torah service is not only a sacred re-enactment of the events of Sinai, but also a dramatic re-enactment of the Gospel Message.

The "New Covenant" is not the replacement of, but rather the renewal of, and a greater intensification and internalization of the Torah through the Living Torah, Yeshua the Messiah

¹ Asher Zvi Ginsberg (1856-1927) was a famous Zionist thinker and ideologue who wrote under the pen name, Ahad Ha'Am, and is attributed with the famous quote, "More than the Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews."

² Deuteronomy 18:15

³ Jeremiah 31:30-33.

⁴ John 1:1-5, 14.

(see Jeremiah 31 and John 1). Additionally, the outpouring of the Spirit is not only to spiritually empower and comfort us, but according to Ezekiel 36:27-28 and 37:24-28, enables us to observe the *mitzvot*.

Although there may be emendations to the Sinai covenant as a result of this renewal through Yeshua, those emendations do not do away with the entirety of the Torah. In fact, obligatory observance of the Torah is assumed throughout the New Testament for Jewish followers of Yeshua (as well as the decision of non-obligatory observance for Gentile followers of Yeshua).⁵

The role of Torah and Jewish tradition within the Messianic Jewish community is a discussion that is far more nuanced and complicated than most people are willing to acknowledge. Such a discussion requires a thorough grasp of the biblical text, history, theology, recent scholarship, as well as Jewish tradition itself. Therefore, as we delve head-first into this discussion, rather than try to assume all the answers, I'd rather help establish some important points to consider that will help guide and inform the rest of our conversation.

Jews and Judaism

The Jewish people remain God's covenant-elect people and have an ongoing role in redemptive history.⁶ And as Jewish believers, we are the remnant within our people, prophetically calling them back to HaShem.⁷

Furthermore, the faith of the Jewish people (particularly post-Sinai) has always been Judaism. This was also true for the Jewish followers of Yeshua in the early centuries⁸ (and for a handful of individuals and pockets of communities throughout history).⁹

Additionally, you cannot separate "Jewishness" from "Judaism." Attempts throughout history to do so have primarily resulted in failure. At the previous Borough Park Symposium I argued that "an ethnic Judaism of bagels and lox cannot maintain Jewish identity over time, or over the span of multiple generations."¹⁰ This has been further confirmed by recent Jewish population surveys and studies.¹¹

⁵ A great example for both positions is found in Acts 15. But also refer to Mt. 5:17-20, Acts 21:20, Acts 24:14, etc.

⁶ Ex. 31:17, Deut. 4:32-40, Deut. 5:3, Deut. 7:6-8, Jer. 31:34-36, Rom. 3:1-4, Rom. 11, etc.

⁷ Romans 11:1-5.

⁸ Acts 2:46-47, Acts 21:20, Acts 24:14, etc.

⁹ In the earliest centuries were groups like the Ebionites and Nazarenes, etc. And in more recent history, consider Joseph Rabinowitz and his congregation, Beth Israel-Judea, in Moldova during the 19th century, and figures like Rabbi Daniel Zion, Rabbi Ignác Lichtenstein, Theophilus Lucky, Rabbi Yechiel Zvi Lichtenstein, etc.

¹⁰ Joshua Brumbach, "The Nature of God and the New American Jew: A Response to Akiva Cohen and Jhan Moskowitz." Paper presented at the 2010 Borough Park Symposium, New York, NY.

¹¹ Note: 2000 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), 2002 Report of the Union of Jewish Communities (UJC), etc. This has been a widely published and studied issue.

Centrality of Yeshua

The existence of Messianic Judaism is a realization of a Yeshua-centered Judaism. There is no “Messianic” without the Messiah. Therefore, Yeshua must exist at the center of our Judaism, informing and infusing it with greater meaning and richness. After all, if Yeshua really is the Jewish Messiah, then faith in that Messiah should lead us to become better Jews (in all the different ways that can and should mean).

We also recognize that not only is it possible, but preferable (even obligatory), to be both faithful Jews *and* faithful followers of Messiah. As David Stern once wrote, “we are both 100% Messianic and 100% Jewish.” We don’t have to choose between the two. Yet, as Dr. Stern also cautions, “If we call ourselves Messianic Jews we must intend to back up our words with actions demonstrating that our Jewishness has substance.”¹²

Having a substantive Yeshua-centered Jewish spirituality is also supported by Mark Kinzer, who in discussing the term Messianic Judaism, writes, “it is significant that the term we selected was one which is primarily descriptive in nature, while also containing a strong claim to a unique position within the world of Judaism. Ours is a Judaism that believes that the Messiah has come, and that his name is Yeshua of Nazareth.”¹³

Kinzer goes on to write, “As Messianic Jews, we affirm two truths as central to our faith and identity: (1) God’s irrevocable covenant with the Jewish people, embodied in and guarded by the Torah, and (2) God’s reconciling and revealing work for Israel and the nations in Messiah Yeshua.”¹⁴

The remainder of our discussion hinges on whether or not we accept these above truths to be self-evident, as they are foundational principles not only for a Jewish spirituality, but especially for a Yeshua-believing movement within, and among, our people.

With these assumptions in place we can now delve even further into the discussion of tradition and its role within the Messianic Jewish community.

The Problem with “Biblical Judaism”

If the Jewish people continue to have an ongoing role in redemptive history and the Torah continues to be obligatory for Jews (in whatever that means), than our next question is ... how are we supposed to embody those realities as Messianic Jews?

¹² David H. Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1991), 26.

¹³ Mark Kinzer, *The Nature of Messianic Judaism* (West Hartford: Hashivenu Archives, 2000), 7.

¹⁴ Kinzer, 21.

Whenever we interpret what the Bible says, we are doing ‘theology.’ And when we try to actually live out those principles outlined in the text, we end up forced to consult and establish tradition. Why? Because the Bible is a complicated text, and the differences in time, context, geography, and sometimes limited information, force us to recognize that following our canon is impossible without some form of interpretation and tradition.

I am, of course, in no way arguing against the canon of Scripture being our ultimate authority. Rather, I am simply acknowledging that when we seek to interpret and apply what the Bible says, it does not take long before we realize things get complicated.

Furthermore, we have to ask what we even mean by the term “Biblical”? Are we implying other forms of Judaism are not Biblical? Do we mean that we are the Judaism of the Bible? If so, then which Judaism of the Bible – Pharisaic, Essene, Sadducean, Zealot ...?¹⁵ And is it even possible to be a re-emergence of a form of Judaism which has not existed since Biblical times?

Challenge of Tradition

It may be helpful to think of the Torah as a set of statutes needing regulatory interpretation. Statutes lay out broad-brush policies and establish legal norms, but they still need to be interpreted and applied to a variety of contexts. Hence the body of case law, whereby legal authorities consult not only the original set of statutes, but all their interpretations and applications as well.

If we think of the Torah as the Constitution, then the body of interpretative case law would be the *halachic* codes and responsa. Just as a body of courts were established to interpret and apply the Constitution, so too Jewish courts and *halachic* authorities were established to interpret and apply Torah. As such, just as the United States cannot operate in accordance with the Constitution without the interpretative guidance of the judiciary, so too we as a movement cannot operate in accordance with the Torah without the interpretive guidance of our tradition.

Therefore, you cannot escape tradition. Such an attempt is impossible. Furthermore, there is not a single observance that can be defined as “Jewish” that is not “untainted” by tradition. Whether it is wearing a *Tallis*, blowing a *shofar*, praying liturgy, or saying a *bracha* over wine. Although some of these practices may have origins in the biblical text, or date back to biblical times, how they are observed is entirely tradition.

I already mentioned a *Tallis*. Although people are quick to argue that this is a purely biblical command, all Numbers 15:37-41 tells us is to put *tzitzit* on the corners of our garments and attach a thread of blue. *What does THAT mean?* What are *tzitzit*? What defines a ‘garment’? What

¹⁵ For more on this discussion, see: Kinzer, 7-13.

should it look like? Who should create it? All of this is defined by tradition – what *tzitzit* are, how they should be tied, the stripes, neckband, etc. It’s all tradition.

Another example people are quick to highlight as purely biblical is the shofar. *Really?* This too is all tradition – how it should be made, the sounds (*tekiah, shevarim, teruah* ...) and the protocol for sounding the *shofar*. It is all tradition.

This leaves us with a further question – is it even possible, then, to have a Judaism that is truly *Jewish* (in accord with the sensibilities of the Jewish people) without drawing upon, for example, the *Siddur*, the *Machzor*, or the *Haggadah*?¹⁶ The answer is no.

No matter how hard we try, we cannot escape tradition. In reality, Jewish history and practice did not freeze in time with the resurrection of Yeshua or the destruction of the second Temple. And neither should this be seen as a terrible thing. Rather, Judaism and the Jewish people have evolved over the past two millennia. Furthermore, the few attempts throughout Jewish history to deny the role of tradition have not succeeded over time (a truth eventually realized even by the *Karaites*, for example).¹⁷ For whatever reason, just as God chose the historic Church as the vehicle to preserve Yeshua-faith and believers throughout the past two thousand years, so too God chose Rabbinic Judaism as the vehicle to preserve the Jewish people and our way of life.

However, acknowledgment still leaves room to lovingly correct those elements where we may disagree. One can embrace the tradition and yet engage it in lively debate. This is especially true within Jewish history. There are plenty of examples of renewal movements who have sought to revive and reconstruct the Jewish experience – from the Essenes to the Chassidim – and yet have done so while simultaneously embracing and being a part of that tradition.

Choose Your Own Adventure

When I was in Elementary school the most popular books at the time were the Choose Your Own Adventure series. These books enabled you to choose how you thought the story should go, giving options for actions, characters, and even the choice of which ending you thought best.

But this is not reality. If we continue trying to ignore tradition, and avoid establishing certain normative practices and theology, we encounter a problem. We leave it to the individual to decide. When we leave it to each person to “choose their own adventure,” the result is that everyone has their own interpretation and tradition without any cohesion.

¹⁶ Kinzer, 9.

¹⁷ The *Karaites* were a group of Jews in the 7th – 9th centuries who also advocated a Judaism based solely on the *Tanakh* and opposed the authority of Rabbinic tradition. However, they eventually all but disappeared for the same reasons we are wrestling with tradition today. For more on this, see: Jacob Neusner, *An Introduction to Judaism* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 284.

Only in our modern, Western culture do we find this lone-ranger mentality when it comes to spirituality and how to interpret and apply Scripture. Although we want to praise individual discernment and maturity, we must also balance it with collective intellect and historic continuity. Leaving it up to each individual to decide what the Bible means and how it should be applied, results in, for example, congregations around the country with few, if any Jewish members in them, who blow shofars-at-will, use *Tallits* as tablecloths and banners, and often suffer from identity crises. The reason for all the confusion within our movement is largely because there have been no parameters.

We should also consider how arrogant it is to assume that after a few thousand years, only now have we come along with all the correct answers. This is a little ridiculous. To outright reject tradition (whether Jewish or Christian) makes an assumption that all those previous generations of people were idiots and have nothing valuable to contribute to our current understanding and practice.

It would be much more honest to consider that many generations of individuals and communities have wrestled with the Biblical text, its meaning, and how to apply it to their own circumstances. Therefore, it would be much wiser to learn from them, and use their collective wisdom as models for how to apply the Bible to our own lives and circumstances. Otherwise, it becomes a “choose your own adventure” with each person “doing what seems right in their own eyes.”

Continuity

Leaving these decisions up to each individual also undermines Jewish continuity. What we consider “Jewish” has always been defined by the community itself. So when we decide we are going to make up our own rules, we should not be surprised when our wider Jewish community does not recognize it as being Jewish.¹⁸

Just recently I was asked to give a eulogy for the father of one of our members at a very large and prestigious synagogue in Beverly Hills. The fact that I was able to participate and then speak from a perspective defined by our tradition elicited a very positive and respected response. People were moved by what I had to say, but also because it clearly established my identity as still being part of our people – both in word and deed.

Although there are exceptions, by remaining Jews, familiar with our tradition, and living a lifestyle consistent with that message, my wife and I have repeatedly experienced very positive results with family and friends. After all, the biggest fear within our Jewish community towards faith in Yeshua is that one who makes such a decision stops being Jewish. This emotional response is first and foremost on most people’s minds. Consider the usual arguments why you

¹⁸ The most obvious exception to this would be historic consensus against faith in Yeshua. However, even here there is a better way to live out and express our faiths that maintain Jewish continuity.

cannot believe in Yeshua as a Jew ... Because of the Holocaust ... pogroms ... anti-Semitism, etc.¹⁹ They are often emotional responses rather than theological. So when we practice a lifestyle consistent with, and recognizably Jewish, it breaks down the stereotypes that faith in Yeshua equals the abandonment of Jewish life. Furthermore, it establishes us as being within the boundaries of our people and faith. But this only happens when we embrace and find value within our tradition.

Role of Tradition for Yeshua and Paul

So the real issue is not whether we can escape tradition, because that is a given. Rather, the real question becomes how are we to engage with our tradition in light of Yeshua and the New Testament?

The best examples for how to navigate our tradition come from the New Testament itself.

Judaism teaches that when the Messiah comes, one of his roles will be to clarify ambiguities within halachic matters. Interestingly, this is exactly what Yeshua does in the Sermon on the Mount – which serves as a parallel to, and a sort of "re-giving" of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Through halachic formulas known from the Second Temple period, Yeshua sets out to clarify and set straight popular misconceptions of specific *mitzvot*.

Before dealing with each specific issue, Yeshua usually begins with the phrase, *"You have heard that our fathers were told..."* This is was a halachic formula whereby a Sage would state a particular halachic understanding, and then clarify its proper interpretation. This phrase is actually paralleled in a similar way within the Dead Sea Scrolls, in a text known as 4QMMT – *"Miksat Ma'aseh Torah" (Some rulings pertaining to the Torah)*. The text introduces disagreements between the Qumran community and their opponents (namely the Sadducees) with the phrase: *"You say ... but we think/say."*

Yeshua uses this same traditional formula, known from the Second Temple period, to clarify and give the proper understanding to certain interpretations of Torah commands, which is also a fulfillment of one of the expectations Messiah would do within Jewish tradition. This is a clear example of Yeshua not only affirming, but adhering to, standard traditional practice.

Additionally, in Matthew 23:23, Yeshua addresses a specific group of Pharisees, and reprimands them for violating certain ethical considerations in halachic matters:

You pay your tithes of mint, dill, and cumin; but you have neglected the weightier matters of the Torah - justice, mercy, and trust. These are the things you should have attended to

¹⁹ Sadly, for much of history this has actually been the reality. In ages past, faith in Yeshua DID mean the abandonment of Jewish life and identity.

without neglecting the others! Blind guides! - straining out a gnat, meanwhile swallowing a camel.

Yeshua does not criticize them for adherence to halachic minutiae, but for their hypocrisy. For in their striving to be oh-so-extra-pious, they missed the mark. What is particularly important for our discussion is that these additional tithes of "mint, dill, and cumin" are not actually required by *mitzvah de-oraita* (commanded directly in the Torah), but are rather supplemental/additional tithes known later from the Talmud (i.e. from tradition). Yeshua does not berate this practice ... in fact he says, "*You should have done these things without neglecting the others.*" Yeshua's reprimand was an issue of weightier matters within Torah. Yeshua was establishing ethical considerations and priorities within the halachic process which take precedence over other matters of halachah ... especially when those details are matters of tradition, and not found within the Torah itself. This is something we should also be careful to consider.

Yeshua did not criticize the traditions of the fathers except when necessary, and only where they conflict with the Tanakh. For example, in Matthew 23:1-2 Yeshua instructs the crowds "to be careful to do" all that the Torah-teachers and the Pharisees say, because they "sit in the seat of Moses." But he also teaches us, "not to do as they do!" – For our righteousness must *exceed* theirs in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Mathew 5:20).

In his paper, Baruch Maoz claims that although "Paul never spoke of Jewishness as a thing of the past" he also claims that "Judaism was no longer his religion."²⁰ This is an incorrect interpretation of Pauline literature. Furthermore, the New Testament and recent scholarship²¹ all paint a completely different picture. Paul himself claims not only Jewish cultural identity, but always refers to himself in the present tense as a Pharisee,²² who continues to observe Torah,²³ attend synagogue regularly "as was his custom,"²⁴ and encourages circumcision for those who are Jewish²⁵ - all of which are matters of religious observance. Paul remained a devout Jew. Where he is challenged, and where there is often confusion, is in regard to his expectations of non-Jewish followers of Yeshua.²⁶

Therefore, Paul shares a similar view of tradition as Yeshua. He not only upholds it when necessary, but even subjects himself to its enforcement. In Acts 23:1-5 Paul is brought before the *Sanhedrin*. During the interrogation, a command is issued for Paul to be physically struck, after which, Paul responds with a strong rebuke. When it is made known to Paul that it was the High

²⁰ Baruch Maoz, "The Role of Torah and Jewish Tradition in the Messianic Jewish Community." Paper presented at the third Borough Park Symposium, October 22, 2012 in New York, NY.

²¹ In fact, there is a whole new arena within Pauline studies called the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), which advocates understanding Paul within his Jewish context.

²² Acts 23:6, Acts 26:5, Philippians 3:5-6, etc.

²³ Acts 21:20-26, Acts 25:8, Philippians 3:5-6, etc.

²⁴ Acts 13:1, 13:14, 13:42-44, 14:1,17:2, 17:10, 17:17, 19:8, etc.

²⁵ Acts 16:1-5.

²⁶ Who are not obligated to the same religious obligations of Jewish observance, but share in the blessings.

Priest himself who commanded him to be struck, and the one whom Paul is insulting, Paul quickly apologizes and states: “I didn’t know, brothers, that he was the High Priest; for it says in the Torah, ‘you are not to speak disparagingly of a ruler of your people.’”²⁷

Lastly, in Acts 28, Paul convenes a meeting with the local Jewish leaders. In his address to them he clearly argues, “I have done nothing against either our people or the traditions of our fathers.”²⁸ This would also support his statement in Philippians 3:6 where he states that even in regards to the strictest observance of the Torah, he was “blameless.”²⁹

Thoughts about Halachah

If Messianic Judaism claims to be a Judaism, than it behooves us to consider the place of *halachah* in our midst. We have already established that Messianic Judaism is more than just a “Biblical Judaism.”³⁰ To make such a claim denies the history of the Jewish people over the last two-thousand years, and the fact that other forms of Judaism are also “Biblical.”³¹ Such a perspective also fails to acknowledge the role Rabbinic Judaism has played in determining Jewish life, teaching and practice, as well as the preservation of us as a people throughout history.

As we proceed with discussing the role of tradition in the Messianic Jewish community, we must first understand *halachah* for what it is and what it is not. What has been lost in the strictest forms of Orthodox Judaism in recent years is the fluidity of the *halachic* structure and the innovation out of which it was birthed. Gordon Tucker, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, points out:

The body of Jewish law is not uniform in texture, but is rather composed of materials which fall into two main categories, usually referred to as *de-oraita* (biblically ordained) and *de-rabbanan* (rabbinically developed). That which is *de-oraita* can be considered to be the very core of the system, which holds it in place and provides a frame of reference. It therefore must be treated as inviolable. Tampering with that which is *de-oraita* is tantamount to destroying the core of the Jewish pattern of life as it has existed for millennia . . . The much greater (that is, in terms of volume) overlay which is *de-rabbanan*, on the other hand, comes with procedures for change and development. What is *de-rabbanan* can develop, is in fact meant to develop, as the conditions of the Jewish community change. That is what ensures the vibrancy and the continuity of the *halakha* as the coordinate system which roots all Jewish communities.³²

²⁷ Acts 23:5

²⁸ Acts 28:17

²⁹ Also see: Acts 25:8.

³⁰ A term popularly used around the Messianic Jewish Movement, see footnote below.

³¹ For a much deeper discussion on this point, see: Mark Kinzer, *The Nature of Messianic Judaism* (West Hartford: Hashivenu Archives, 2000), specifically pages 6-10.

³² Gordon Tucker, “Final Report of the Commission for the Study of the Ordination of Women as Rabbis.” *The Ordination of Women as Rabbis*, ed. Simon Greenberg. (New York: JTS Press, 1988), 13-14.

The myth that rabbinic tradition trumps the Bible is false. In fact, halachic development recognizes, as Tucker puts it, the “inviolability” of the Torah and places precedence on Biblical commands over rabbinic commands, and even acknowledges the difference in the blessings that we recite over them.³³

Furthermore, Jewish law was never meant to be static, but rather to be reinterpreted in every generation. Rabbi Wayne Dosick describes *halachah* as “ever-developing” and “ever-evolving.”³⁴

Halachah is derived out of evolving case law which is based upon prior precedent (much like our own American legal system).³⁵ As such, it is developed by wrestling with texts, the practicalities of daily life, and the teachings of previous generations in order to decide *halachic* matters. It is a process. A process that is not set in stone and not without inerrancy.³⁶ However, while engaging with rabbinic texts and deciding *halachah*, Tucker guides, “Development in the domain of *de-rabbanan* must not be abrupt or discontinuous, [but] must be rooted in traditional exegetical methodologies, and above all, must be ratified by the community of the committed and informed.”³⁷

This must also be true for us. We as Messianic Jews are obligated to engage in knowledgeable discussion with Jewish law and contribute our own unique voice. At times we may interpret it differently, especially in light of New Testament understanding. Yet that does not mean we can just “do as we see fit.” We have a responsibility to ourselves and the larger Jewish world to engage our tradition through a knowledgeable and informed process.

Conclusion

According to *Pirkei Avot* (2:21), “Rabbi Tarfon would say, ‘You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.’”

If the Messianic Jewish community is to evolve and mature, we must take seriously the role of Torah and tradition in our midst. As Jews, we are interconnected to the Torah in a deep and powerful way. And as Jews who have put our trust in Yeshua, this is an even greater reality, as Yeshua is the Living Torah, the Word made flesh which dwells in our midst; and the Gospel message is the greater renewal and internalization of the promise of Jeremiah 31.

³³ For commands directly from the Torah we use the longer formula, “*asher kidshanu b’mitzvotav*” verses the shorter blessing, which is used for rabbinically derived mitzvot – like *Kiddush* or *HaMotzi*.

³⁴ Wayne Dosick, *Living Judaism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 95.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Dosick, 104.

³⁶ *Ibid.* Dosick, 93-94.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Tucker, 14.

It is impossible to take Torah seriously without considering the role of tradition, which plays a bigger part than we realize. The answer is to be engaged. The point is not to always agree on everything, but to see our tradition as a collection of complex conversations between individuals and generations. There are things you will agree with, things you will not, and others that will challenge you. But the only way to understand and be involved is to participate in the conversation. We must add our own voice to the ongoing dialog.

As Messianic Jews, we have our own unique voice to add to the collection of voices of our people over the generations. But to do so, we must develop a love and admiration for our tradition and its accompanying body of literature. As mentioned earlier, it is not about always being “right,” or agreeing with every single thing. The answer is to engage rather than disengage. We must dig deeper and swim in the conversation.

The question of the role of Torah and Jewish tradition within the Messianic Jewish community is a question that should be seriously wrestled with. There are no simple answers. But we need to also recognize that what we Jews are seeking today is really the same thing we have always sought – to simultaneously connect with G-d and to find our place within thirty centuries of Jewish history. And that cannot be done without Torah and wrestling with our tradition.

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