

BOROUGH PARK SYMPOSIUM
 “A retrospective look at our movement”
 10/22/12

I. INTRO: PERSONAL NOTE:

I am honored to share a personal perspective on the Messianic Jewish Movement (*henceforth abbreviated as MJM*) as I have experienced it. I recognize that there are many in this audience who share similar experiences and personal history in the MJM. I am pleased that many in the audience know my family first hand—either my parents, my sister and her family or have known me for quite a few years.

I’d like to illustrate the development of the MJM from its inception using my family’s story because my family had been part of it from those early days.

Although our family story spans 3 countries—Israel, Canada and the US, most of my comments will address the MJM in the US because that is where I have spent the bulk of my adult life.

II. OUR BEGINNINGS AS HEBREW CHRISTIANS—ROAD TO ASSIMILATION

A. HISTORY OF PERSECUTION IN ISRAEL

Our commitment to Yeshua in the Israel of 1950’s-1960’s came with a stiff price. When my savta (grandmother) discovered that my parents embraced a faith in Yeshua, she asked them: “Why didn’t you wait till I died?” My Uncle Sh’muel, who had been a practicing attorney was interested in exploring ways to have my sister, Nechama and I placed in a different home. Once the family found out that we were believers, we were persona non-grata in our uncle and aunt’s Seder.

Now, 50 years later, our family has finally begun to connect with us. Our cousins invited my sister and my nephew to participate in family events such as weddings and Seders.

In 1963, my father received a letter from Yad LeAchim, warning him to “cease and desist from his missionary activity,” which amounted to the translation of sermons given by visiting expatriates in our congregation in Yaffo. Our family stayed away from Shabbat services till my father determined that it was more important to “obey God, rather than men,” (Acts 4:19). That event illustrated the atmosphere of fear under which we lived, with the constant question on our mind: “What would happen if ‘they’ would find out that we were believers.” That blanket of fear was especially noticeable during the Eichman Trial years (1961-1962). We were a despised, beleaguered, persecuted little community.

The MJ community in Israel continues to pay a stiff price for their commitment to Yeshua but with a major difference: The MJ’s in Israel are no longer hidden. The Israeli public has become well aware of its existence. Israeli media (TV, newspapers, etc.) presented the MJ community, sometimes with fairness /accuracy. The MJ’s have become integrated into Israeli society.

B. ASSIMILIATION IN ISRAEL AND NORTH AMERICA

In our time in Israel, the prevailing mindset for the believers was based on Hebrews 13:12-13.

And so Yeshua also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.
 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore

It played itself out in our praxis: our worship services were essentially an Evangelical Christian service in

Hebrew—we sang Christian hymns in Hebrew; we were taught the GoodNews of Yeshua with a 4-spiritual-laws approach on flannel board.

I did not become bar-mitzvah, because my father felt it would be inconsistent with our faith. On the 3rd floor of our apartment building, our neighbor Mr. Rivlin prepared boys for their Bat Mitzvah. I heard the blessings for the Haftarah but the sounds could have been in Chinese for all their impact on me.

Our identification as Jews was no different than the secular majority of Israelis who defined their Jewish identity by the following statement: “I am Jewish because I am an Israeli.” It was basically an **ethnic heritage**, with little connection to our God-given calling as Jews.

The picture was no different when we emigrated to Canada and after 3 years to the US. We were associated with Christian churches, faithfully attending services twice a week but had absolutely no connection to the Jewish community. Furthermore, there were no discernible differences in our spiritual lives between ourselves and fellow church members. We did not celebrate any of the holidays and we did not set foot in a synagogue until I was in my late 20’s.

There were positive aspects to our upbringing: we became grounded in our faith and committed to the Word of God. We learned the meaning of persevering under fire.

In retrospect, was difficult not to become insulated from the heart and soul of all that is good in rabbinic Judaism. We were taught to do so, both in Israel and in North America and most Jewish believers followed suit. However, after 30 + year of being part of the MJ movement, I realize that the instruction of the writer of Hebrews needs to be a last resort, rather than one of the beginning steps in our relationship with fellow Jews.

II. THE TRANSFORMATION:

A. THE BEGINNING OF THE CHANGE:

The transformation in my father’s appearance over 30 years provides a snap shot of what was happening among Jewish believers. When we were in NYC while my father was training with Moishe Rosen, he was clean shaven, wore a white shirt and dark tie, and engaged in street preaching from a platform bearing the American flag.

During the mid 1970’s, he he began to sport a short beard and wore a denim jacket with the emblem, *Jews For Jesus* on it. By the 1980’s, he could pass for one of the Chassidic rebbes.

In the summer of 1970, I attended a conference of the Fellowship of Christian Testimony to the Jews. Sid Lawrence, a rabbi from B’nei Brith was invited to address a gathering of the Fellowship of Christian Testimony to the Jews. Asked about his opinion about Hebrew Christianity, he responded with one word, *na’arishkeit*, child’s play. The picture he was attempting to draw of us was analogous to little girls putting on lipstick and wearing their mother’s high heels or boys seeking to get behind the wheel of their father’s car and pretending to drive. Moishe Rosen who was in attendance, found that answer unacceptable. This prodded him to take an aggressive approach in conveying the GoodNews of Yeshua. Over time, this resulted in the formulation of the Jews for Jesus’ mission statement: “We exist to make the messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide.”¹

I realize that there is a great deal of controversy surrounding that mission statement. However, for me, it represents the beginning of a decisive transformation for us, until then, a small and marginalized community of Jewish believers. We began to exercise holy chutzpah. This was true in NA and as well

¹ <http://www.jewsforjesus.org/about>, accessed on Oct. 1, 2012.

became realized in Israel. MJ's were engaging publicly in ways we could not have dreamed of when I was a child in Israel.

B. THE LATE 1960'S AND 1970'S—THE HEADY YEARS:

Books have been written about the “glory years” of the MJM and most of us in this room were part of it, in one form or another.² I will not seek to duplicate that material. Rather, I would like to approach it from a personal perspective. For me, the onset of the MJM, was a time of re-discovery—finally coming to terms with the dynamic tension involved in being part of two communities: a dedicated follower of Yeshua and a committed Jew. For the first time, my Jewish identity felt like a comfortable slipper.

This was a time of great ferment. In retrospect, I realize that like all new wines, much sediment accumulated. We have seen a great deal of confusion and heterodoxy typical of the aftermath of revival movements. God was doing amazing work in drawing Jewish young people into the Kingdom, but at the same time, there was much spiritual counterfeit, especially in the fringes of our movement. My father's stock description of our movement in the early years was, “The MJM is still in diapers.”

I firmly believe that God has been at work, sifting out the sediment in our movement and bringing it through the process of maturation. It has been happening as the rush of the early years has slowed down.³

III. THE MATURATION OF THE MOVEMENT:

A. GOD HAS BEEN AT WORK THROUGH THE LEANER YEARS

Indeed, God has been at work through the leaner years. Those of us who have been involved in ministry to our people have not always been able to see that and consequently, the desire to recapture the glory years has been a strong one over the last 20 years. I have seen it take two radically different approaches: the strong emphasis on **the need for charismatic expression** in our congregations and the commitment to be more **firmly embedded within the Jewish community**.

Do we need to set these two emphases, the need for charismatic expression and the need for identification with our community, as polar opposites? I believe that it cannot be a case of “either, or,” but a more Jewish “both, and.” We must place a high value on the need for the Ruach HaKodesh to be active in our congregations. The expression will differ from congregation to congregation but we humbly recognize the imperative for the power of God to be at work in our midst.

By the same token, our Jewish identification must be clearly visible and authentic. The early followers of Yeshua were clearly identified as Jews—for them that was not a window dressing but part and parcel of their life. We need to emulate their example.

IV. REASONS FOR DISCOURAGEMENT AND FOR HOPE:

² What follows is a limited listing of some of the books which address this history:

David A. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology and Polity*, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982.

Michael Schiffman, *Return from Exile: The Re-Emergence of the Messianic Congregational Movement*, Columbus: OH, Teshuvah Publication Co, 1990.

Carol Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journey through Religious Change in America*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.

Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, NY: Cassell, 2000.

³ This was true with some notable exceptions, such as the ministry among the Jews of the FSU.

A. DISCOURAGEMENT COMES FROM TIME TO TIME:

How we identify ourselves (e.g. more charismatically or more Jewishly) is a crucial question that does not yield to simple answers. However, I believe that underlying this question is a greater one—do we see our movement as a success or a failure? How do we thrive under the pervasive sense of discouragement that comes over us from time to time?

There are some discouraging factors. What follows is a limited list.

After almost 40 years in existence, we comprise less than one percent of the Jewish community.⁴

The believing community with which we identify is comprised of a large amount of those who adhere to Replacement Theology.

The majority of Jewish followers of Yeshua choose to be part of church rather than identify with us. We recognize that each Jewish believer needs to be responsive to the Lord's personal call on his or her life. Yet, the fact that a large majority chooses to be part of the Church at large, conveys a basic continuation of the assimilation of many of the Jewish believers of previous generations. It also conveys a lack of concern about the survival of Klal Israel and a lack of understanding of the preciousness of our election as a Jewish nation.

Why do so many of our fellow Jewish believers choose to distance themselves from us and from any semblance of Jewish life? There is a plethora of reasons and I will address some of those later on.

Our movement in the US, is largely comprised of Gentile Believers. Some of them have a Ruth-like call to join themselves to us. We value them as precious members of our movement who have been called to come alongside and present the message of One Messiah. However, many others connect with us because of felt need to grasp the "Hebraic Roots of the Faith," but they remain in that frame of mind. There seem to be precious little interest in what our God-given vision is about—the restoration of Israel (Rom. 11:12,15).

B. REASONS FOR HOPE:

In a message given at Yeshuat Tsion several years ago, Mitch Glaser made an observation that was both profound and yet simple at the same time: **"We know how the book ends."** His point was that regardless of current appearances, we know that history is moving irrevocably towards God's plan to restore Israel and bring a world-wide revival. Yes, we are facing a period of trouble for Israel, as the sages called it *chevlei ha-mashiach*, (birth pangs of Messiah) but what keeps us going is the bedrock conviction that God is at work to bring about his good, sovereign plans for our people.

There are visible reasons for hope.

Profound interest has been developing among Jewish scholars during the past few years, with three significant works on topics relating to MJ this past year alone.⁵ Some of this scholarly development can be

⁴ The numbers are difficult if not impossible to nail down. According to the 1990 Council of Jewish Federation census [http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1992_14_WJP.pdf], there are 2 million Jews who identify themselves as believing in Jesus. I believe that those include Jews who are minimally committed as believers. More conservative estimates put the number of Jewish believers in the US at 50,000 and in Israel at 15,000.

⁵ Amy-Jill Levine and Mark Z. Brettler, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Shmuley Boteach, *Kosher Jesus*, New York: Gefen Publishing House, 2012.

Needless to say, Boteach's book stirred tremendous controversy in the Jewish community. The most severe critic has been respected rabbinic scholar [Chabad] and counter-missionary [Dr. J. Immanuel](#)

seen as a “Jewish Reclamation of Jesus” of sorts—i.e. that endeavor to strip away the layers of Hellenistic accretions that have obscured who the Jewish Yeshua is.⁶ Even Rav Shaul, who had often been portrayed as the arch-villain, is being given a fresh coat of Jewish varnish.⁷

Over the past 10 years, a number of academic institutions have been established which grant graduate level degrees in MJ studies. I represent one of those—Denver Seminary’s M Div in Biblical Studies with emphasis on MJ. There are others, including The King’s University which now grants D Min degees in MJ studies. Accompanying that development has been the rise in the number of Messianic Jewish scholars with Ph. D degrees, in related fields.

That gives us much hope for several reasons.

We are positioning ourselves to present a clearer voice to the larger Jewish community which places a great deal of value on credentials and scholarship.

This is also an effective statement to the rest of the Body of Messiah, especially to Christian institutions of higher learning, that our movement is expressing a credible move of God. Our trained young people are able to go into positions of influence, countering the heterodoxy that is peddled by fringe elements of our movement. More importantly, they are able to present a Biblically-sound message to those under their influence.

III. SOME OF THE REMAINING CHALLENGES:

A. HOW DO WE CONNECT WITH FELLOW JB’S

This is a formidable challenge. As stated previously, a majority of fellow Jewish believers are detached from any semblance of Jewish life. That does not only mean being disconnected from the MJM but as well, detached from the Jewish community at large.

There are many reasons.

Some come to faith in Yeshua out of a sense of antipathy to all things Jewish. They find the “pearl of great price” and have no desire to go back to what they consider a dysfunctional community and a distastful familiar setting.

Some were raised with a minimum of Jewish identification and they find it much more comfortable to be embedded in a church setting. The challenge of integrating their commitment to Yeshua and a weakened Jewish identity seems simplified—it is unipolar, with the Jewish heritage hidden in a corner.

For others is a matter of parental choices. They may wrestle with the question: “Where do I bring my children: to a smaller MJ congregation or to a mega church, where there are lavish facilities and dedicated staff? Or, they may express the issues slightly differently:

“I want my kids to play soccer, baseball, football, hockey and lacrosse... and all the games are on Saturday mornings.”

Schochet has labeled the book heretical and has issued the following ban:

"I have never read a book, let alone one authored by a purported frum Jew, that does more to enhance the evangelical missionary message and agenda than the aforementioned book."

<http://jewishisrael.ning.com/profiles/blogs/kosher-jesus-judging-a-book-by-its-cover>, accessed October 7, 2012.

Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: the Story of the Jewish Christ*, New York: The New Press, 2012.

Also by Boyarin: *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*; *Border Lines: the partition of Judaeo-Christianity*

⁶ The title of Donald A. Hagner’s book, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An analysis & a critique of the modern Jewish study of Jesus*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997.

⁷ Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian: The original message of a misunderstood apostle*, New York:Harper one, 2009.

Fortunately, some of our fellow Jewish believers who are in churches have had their hearts sensitized by what it means to be “Jewish.” Their hearts are touched at different points of the yearly cycle as they remember their childhood. Sometimes they ask for our assistance in processing grief Jewishly or in training their children for Bar or Bat Mitzvah. I have been privileged to interact with fellow Jewish believers on a number of these life cycle events. These provide us with opportunities to offer our assistance. Sometimes, the Lord draws them into a fuller understanding and appreciation of their heritage and brings them into a Messianic Jewish context.

This is an area of great need for us. We need our fellow Jewish believers to come alongside us and participate in the building of God’s work among our people. We need to invest time in reaching out to them. We need to pray that God will bring about healing to those who are feel antipathy towards our people, or perhaps, even total indifference to their God given heritage.

The Lord may call many individual Jews to be part of solid churches for a variety of reasons. However, nowhere in Scripture do I see that it is God’s counsel for a majority of fellow Jewish Believers to become assimilated. That clearly flies in the face of the prophetic passages that require a living, ethnic entity known as Israel in order for God’s plans to unfold.

One example, although somewhat controversial, of a Jew who believed in Yeshua and insisted on a public Jewish identity was Cardinal Lustiger. Aaron Lustiger, a Polish Jew, converted to Catholicism as a 13 year old boy and through it, escaped the Holocaust. He came into the priesthood, became the Archbishop of Paris and eventually was elevated to the post of Cardinal.

Although he was severely criticized by Jewish leaders in the US and in Israel, he was well accepted by the French Jewish community. Lustiger was a vocal supporter of Israel, despite the Vatican’s officially neutral position towards Israel, for which he won Jewish support. He was also active in promoting Jewish-Catholic relationships, especially in regards to Sho’ah events. The Cardinal was instrumental in seeing to the Carmelitan convent in Auschwitz becoming inactive.

On becoming Archbishop of Paris, Lustiger said:

"I was born Jewish and so I remain, even if that is unacceptable for many. For me, the vocation of Israel is bringing light to the goyim. That is my hope and I believe that Christianity is the means for achieving it."⁸

Our hearts grieve for our fellow Jewish believers in Yeshua. While they have become followers of the Jewish Messiah, they have done so with the **needless jettisoning of their calling as Jews**. Their assimilation fulfills the long-term accusation of us by the larger Jewish community—“You believe in Jesus and you are lost to your people.”

B. URGENCY, VALUE AND LIMITS OF IDENTIFICATION WITH OUR PEOPLE

How do we put into practice the need to more strongly identify with our people ? As we all know, Yeshua was part and parcel of the Jewish community of his day, as were the early disciples. I believe that we need to emulate their pattern, while recognizing that there are some potential pitfalls. I am eager to hear the chochmah the Lord has given our presenters during the conference on this subject but I would like to offer some reflections.

Our culture values honors intellectual prowess.

God has been raising wise men and women in our movement who are equipped to engage our people on the highest intellectual levels. That is a dramatic move during the past 30 years. Our scholarly credentials have earned us the right to be heard by the Jewish scholarly community.

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Marie_Lustiger, accessed on October 10, 2012.

However, we must keep this dramatic intellectual progress in perspective. While our scholarship provides us the platform from which we can communicate our message, having sobriety and humility is absolutely essential. What brings individual Jews to know Messiah is not our intellectual prowess or even our superb connections within the Jewish community. *We can be drawn away from a simple dependence on the supernatural power of God, at work in us who are the communicators and in the perception of the listeners.*

That is not a theoretical danger. All of us are aware of the siren call to return to the fullness of Jewish orthopraxis and turn away from Yeshua. All of us know individuals who professed Yeshua, even engaged in serving him and at some point walked away from him, seduced by one siren call or another.

All of us experience rejection from our fellow Jews and that rejection can function as a low-grade fever. We may feel insecure about our identity as Jews and may feel the need to buttress that sense of identity. At some point we must come to the bedrock conviction that our Jewish identity rests securely on our individual calling by God to be part of our people.

A deep engagement with our people is an absolute must but it carries with it additional risks, one of which is the temptation to make the GoodNews more palatable for our fellow Jews. That is a precipice that we want to avoid assiduously, knowing that the power of God comes through that rough-edged message of salvation. Consequently, we choose to anchor ourselves in a message that appears as gross foolishness to the twenty first century mind as it did to that of the first century.

Yeshua's message appears to be out of step with a pluralistic society, obsessed with moral authority of each individual to determine what is truth.⁹ Yeshua called Nicodemus, a rabbi of rabbis, to come in repentance. He died an ignoble death and the means of his execution has been the symbol of our suffering for millennia.

Yet, we remember his words to the first century disciples:

John 8:31-32 Yeshua said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

C. UNITY: CHESED FOR TIMES WHEN BUNIONS GET STEPPED ON:

I am seeing significant movement towards unity despite a past often characterized by fractiousness. The LCJE conference this past March proved to me to be a wonderful example of that movement. One of the presenters there made the following statement: "Time is short, we are all on Yeshua's team. Let's work together !!" That sentiment was echoed by others present. A number of representatives of MJ academic programs gathered together to discuss the establishment of a MJ academic consortium, through which students would be able to take advantage of the strengths of the various institutions. I also heard about the collaborative endeavor to reach young Israelis in India.

The attitude that was portrayed at the conference was a refreshing "kingdom mindset"—a desire to advance the Lord's cause rather than a provincial, territorial approach to sharing resources. **Much prayer has gone up before the throne for the unification of our movement.** It is inspiring to see that beginning to come about.

Yet, like other aspects of our spiritual life, unity requires our on-going engagement. It is a cooperative

⁹ A vivid example of that pluralism is a synagogue in Denver is named "Judaism as you like it."

venture, involving the work of the Spirit and our committed efforts. Rav Shaul defines that collaboration:

Eph. 4:1-3 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love [NIV]. Make every effort to preserve the unity the Spirit gives through the binding power of Shalom [JNT].

We all have passionately held thought out positions on a number of hot button topics extant in our movement. We come from a culture that values plurality of opinion. We can't paper over the differences. Nor can we stiff arm each other to come to our respective points of view. We have often tried that in times past, unsuccessfully.

There have been times when our differences spilled over into the larger Jewish community and the Body of Messiah.

“Being completely humble” is based on our grasp that there is one Righteous Judge, who has all the facts. We often learn that reality through the school of hard knocks. Our unity is not at all costs—ignoring significant issues. However, over time, I believe that the number of issues for which we are willing to die shrinks as we recognize that we are fellow learners with our brothers and sisters. Part of the picture is our need to learn to **set aside our magnifying glass and no longer look to micro-analyze others's short comings.**

What does it mean to “bear with one another in love”? The NLT is helpful here: “making allowances for each other because of your love.”

Peter adds an additional insight:

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins,” (I Pet. 4:8).

For me it boils down to a simple, earthy metaphor—how do we respond when our bunions get stepped on because of comments that were delivered in an offhanded, but insensitive manner?

Yes, it is only possible for us to be truly united as the Spirit draws us together. It is a miracle that comes about by the power of God in our lives, transcending our natural tendencies towards divisiveness. The Spirit brings it about through the bond of Shalom—somehow we find ourselves tied together by that power, sometimes despite ourselves.

Yet, we are called upon to play a major role in this on-going, developing unity. “Make every effort” translates the Greek verb *spoudazontes* which conveys the sense of **eagerness/readiness** and the **expenditure** of ‘intense effort and motivation.’¹⁰ What does that look like? It implies that we learn to be people of chesed: covenant, committed loyal love, as well as mercy, kindness, despite inclination to do otherwise.

It is so easy to accentuate the negatives and observe the specks in our brother or sister's eyes. If we do that, we typically miss the larger picture of what God is doing in our midst. Perhaps a wiser approach is to observe and affirm positive developments that are taking place with others in our movement. BHS, God is at work with the collection of clay pots known as the MJM.

How do we relate to each other on those points of divergence?

¹⁰ *Spoudazontes* (spoudazontes) is the present participle of *spoudazo* (spoudazō). The present tense conveys on-going activity, Louw & Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., New York: United Bible Societies, 1999, accessed through <http://www.accordancebible.com/>, October, 14, 2012.

We learn to sit and learn from each other, even from those with whom we disagree vociferously. I have observed over the years how God has taken us, when we were full of ourselves, and brought us into humbling situations. For that we can say, Todah, Adon.

Ultimately, we remind ourselves that our movement has been spawned and nurtured by the Almighty. We know that He operates out of the divine counsel of his will. We make our highest priority to depend on him to establish HIS counsel, and that He will fashion what that looks like for each of us.

For us as a movement, an increasing commitment to unity is perhaps the strongest indicator of growing maturity. Scripture is very emphatic that disunity is indicative of spiritual immaturity.¹¹

Most of all, a commitment to unity suggests that we are serious about lining up with the Lord's priorities.

Our Messiah prayed and continues to pray for unity:

John 17:11 Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so **that they may be one** as we are one.

John 17:20-23 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **that all of them may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, **that they may be one** as we are one: I in them and you in me. **May they be brought to complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The phrase “that they may be one” appears 3x in his prayer. That conveys the supreme priority which the Lord gives the need for unity. The additional expanded phrase, “may they be brought to complete unity” expresses the reality that this is an on-going process.¹² It will be completed when we see the Lord. In the meantime, we need to emulate Yeshua in this prayer and urgently seek Him for increased unity in our movement.

D. THE PRIMACY OF OUR MESSIAH: YESHUA + NOTHING:

Is it possible to place Yeshua backstage instead of center stage ?

I believe that all of us can relate seasons in their life when that was the case. It does not take much for us to see ourselves drifting from a wholehearted devotion to the Lord. The Torah reminds us that because the Lord is the source of our life we do not want to drift from him:

“...love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him [i.e. cleave to him like glue]. For the LORD is your life,” (Deut. 30:20)

Why do we drift and lose our focus on Messiah ? We all face the temptation to help God when He seems to be slow in delivering. We become *impatient with the Lord and seek to find quick fixes*. We worship him in his temple and then, to cover our bases, we come home and worship the teraphim (the household

¹¹ “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly [carnal/fleshly] —mere infants in Messiah.... You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?” (1Cor. 3:1,3).

¹² The Greek verb for “brought to completion,” is a paraphrastic form of the verb *teleioo* (*teleiow*), with the verb itself expressed as a perfect participle. The perfect tense implies past action with on-going consequences. Also, the preposition *eis* (*ei:ß*) associated with the accusative conveys a sense of purpose and direction. *Ibid.*, October, 14, 2012.

gods). It is easy to look for solutions in which God is absent.

The Ruach may guide us into new ways of doing things. However, the bottom line for us must be the basic concern: Where is the Lord in all our new endeavors ? Do we sense His presence as we engage in doing His work ? Are we interested in our ventures being Peniel, the place where we encounter God, or is that a distraction that keeps us from doing what we desire ?

It is so easy to ignore the fact that Messianic Judaism is first and foremost about Messiah. Rav Shaul, a Torah observant Jew, made a radical statement about what was the ultimate priority in his life:

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Messiah my Lord.... I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Messiah” (Phil. 3:8)

That needs to be the plumbob in our lives: where are we today in our relationship with the Lord as contrasted to 5 years ago ?

There is a basic programmatic statement given to us about our priorities:

Phil. 2:9 ¶ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and **every tongue confess** that Messiah Yeshua is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We all long to see the power of God displayed in our movement in a greater measure.

We want to see a strengthened MJM, to see more Jewish people come into the Kingdom of God, to see these new talmidim properly established and brought to maturity, to see these same people embrace their God-given calling as Jews.

We want to see the **power of God displayed through the moving of his Ruach**. It behooves us to remember that the major **goal of the Spirit is to bring glory to Yeshua**. The recipe is simple but it operates on God's time.

Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth (Hos. 6:3).