

BEHIND THE WORSHIP - Paul Wilbur

Paul Wilbur: Persistent Messianic Worship



It's difficult to stop Paul Wilbur once he puts his mind to something. When he became a Christian—a shocking conversion given his Jewish background and family's lack of interest in religion—his brother stopped talking to him.

Wilbur's response after years of trying to re-establish their relationship? He bought the house next door.

Today the two ride motorcycles together.

"When our people get saved, they really get saved," Wilbur says. "We're famous for not shutting up."

Wilbur brings that same tenacity to his Messianic worship songs and ministry. From his unexpected conversion 34 years ago as a graduate student at the University of Indiana to his time leading worship for a Messianic congregation in Maryland, Wilbur puts all he has into his songs and ministry. He has scores of albums—many recorded live in Jerusalem—and today, at 60, still travels frequently, speaking and leading worship from Florida to Dubai.

Though he once sang with Amy Grant and Brown Bannister, Wilbur has never deviated from Messianic worship and the sound and style of that genre. He says his most well-received songs are ones he didn't write, including "A Resting Place"—a tune he helped popularize—and "Days of Elijah," a song he introduced in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles in 1998.

"The songs that churches sing are ones I didn't write," Wilbur says. "'Praise Adonai' is another one—it's Paul Balloche's. He wrote 'Praise Yahweh,' but [as a Jew] I can't say that, so I

say 'Praise Adonai.' I actually prefer to sing other people's songs."

Indeed, Wilbur is less concerned about who gets credit for a song than he is that people hear the Christian message.

"There's a new openness in this hour [among Jews] to Yeshua, that He might be the Messiah," Wilbur excitedly says. "I think we might be on the cusp of a new wave in the Jewish community. We've even had a promise from the Israeli government that military bases will soon be open to us."