

Building a Bridge Between the Church and the Synagogue

☒ Tevye, the papa in the play/movie *Fiddler on the Roof* was surveying his sad situation—four unmarried daughters, a dry cow, a lame horse, Russian pogroms—he looked up to God and said,

“God it’s nice that you chose me to be one of your chosen people, but would you mind choosing someone else for a change?!”

Obviously, Tevye thought being chosen meant he wouldn’t have to suffer anymore. But God chose the Jews for something else. Through the Jewish people, he planned to teach the non-Jewish world about himself. Moses said to his people:

Look, I have taught you laws and rulings, just as Adonai my God ordered me ... Therefore, observe them ... for then all peoples [nations/gentiles] will see you as having wisdom and understanding. When they hear of all these laws, they will ask, “What great nation is there that has laws and rulings as just as this entire Torah which I am setting before you today?” (Deut. 4:5-8, Complete Jewish Bible, CJB).

Implied here is that the non-Jews would be envious of biblically Jewish ways. Yeshua’s (Jesus’) “marching orders” to his sh’likhim (apostles) were,

“Go and make people from all nations into talmidim (disciples)” (Matthew 28:19, CJB).

With the “Great Commission,” Yeshua instructed his Jewish followers to teach Gentiles about God and his salvation ... and even more.

A talmid (singular for talmidim) is a student of a rabbi,

learning how to live an observant life, following in his rabbi's ways. It's clear from the way Yeshua taught and lived with his followers that he practiced this rabbinical method of training. So when he sent out his sh'likhim to make talmidim, he was telling them to teach about salvation and the entire Tanach ("Old" Testament). He, like Moses before him, wanted Gentiles to learn the ways of God, the ways of Torah. We in Messianic Judaism are called to do the same.

I can't tell you how excited Christians get when they see the connection between Passover, the Last Supper, and the Lord's Supper, or "Communion." People say their eyes are being opened.

Moreover, each biblical holiday can be meaningful and relevant to Christians. I don't have room to explain all this here (that's why we publish books on the subject, like God's Appointed Times), but these special days are a gold mine of riches for Gentiles. And there's even more.

The Torah, the Five Books of Moses, is filled with principles and instructions about life for individuals, families, congregations and nations. If understood and practiced, life just becomes better. That's what Rabbi Saul (the Apostle Paul) meant when he wrote to Timothy saying:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17, CJB). The only Scripture Paul and Timothy knew was the Tanakh, the "Older" Testament.

This is to say that Messianic Judaism is accomplishing what God had in mind-non-Jews are learning his ways. And Messianic Judaism offers something vital to Jewish people, as well.

It would be untrue to say that Jews understand a lot about God today. Most of our people have not read the Bible. This is

due, in part, to the fact that traditional Judaism has been unappealing to many of my people. Nowadays, you're as likely to find a Jew in an Ashram or at a Unitarian Church or a Baha'i meeting as you are to find one in a synagogue.

Messianic Judaism is poised to be the most popular form of Judaism around today. Jewish people are attracted to Messianic synagogues by the unique teaching of the rabbis, by the moving of God's Spirit in the congregations, by the love and warmth of the members, by the singing and dancing of the worshipers, and I shouldn't forget the food (even though most synagogues have sumptuous spreads, too). Messianic Judaism can bring Jewish people back to the teachings of the Torah as explained by the greatest "rabbi" of all—Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah.

Messianic Judaism helps Christians restore the richness of their Jewish roots. Rabbi Saul/Apostle Paul said that gentile believers were "grafted in" (Romans 11:16-24) and had become part of the Community of Israel (Eph. 2:11-22). In other words, all the wonderful teachings and practices Moses taught his people are available to grafted-in non-Jews, today.

What's more is that Messianic Judaism, as it grows in acceptance by the Jewish community as another "branch" of Judaism, enables our people to receive the message of the Messiah, have better biblical interpretation, and live more sanctified lives.

This, then, will enable our people to fulfill the purpose God had for us chosen people—to tell the world about Him and His ways.

Messianic Judaism has a lot to offer both Christians and Jews and is thus a true bridge between the Church and the Synagogue.

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