

ADVANCED DISCIPLESHIP COURSE: SESSION 2

ISRAEL AND THE MESSIANIC JEWISH PERSPECTIVE Part One

Section 1 The Rise of the Messianic Movement and its Relationship with Modern Israel

The Jerusalem Effect: 1967, the unity of the Holy City has world-wide impact on Jewish self-identity: a new generation of Jewish young people identify strongly with Israel's struggle

American Identity Political Changes of the 1960s: the political crises related to African American racism in the 1960s raise issues of personal identity for American Jews.

Holocaust Education: in the 1970s, the international second generation of Holocaust survivors begin to accept that their own personal identities were shaped by the Holocaust experience of their parents. This is an issue that many are still struggling to understand.

Messianic Congregations begin to emerge out of the failing Hebrew Christian movement in the shadow of these issues and the impetus for Jewish believers to sustain their identity and create a Jewish legacy for the next generation.

The congregations precede a systematic theological vision. Judaism is not systematic in its theology (although much more easily grasped), but Christian theology leading to a substitutionary atonement [some argue a propitiation] incurred by a divine Messiah demands a structural theology. [Minor discourse: the difference between the two types of atonement is a focus on the principle of blood sacrifice as atonement versus the principle of atonement at the Mercy Seat—however, note that both are rooted in understanding Jewish sacrifices.]

Section 2 Some Theological Underpinnings of the Messianic Movement Begin to Emerge

The Irrevocable Calling: Dan Juster's book as a basic primer for these issues (Juster's original text literally needed to be translated out of academic language in order to be accessible)

Basic premise: Christians have ignored the original New Testament approach to Jewish believers: Yeshua's first followers were in continuity with God's prophetic gifting and call to Israel. They saw themselves as the saved remnant of ethnic, national Israel (Romans 11:5).

Foundational principle: The visionary decision of Abraham to follow God and receive His promises is rooted in a blood covenant through a substitutionary atonement of animal sacrifice ("kinship covenant"). Abraham's descendants continue in the covenant as a distinctive ethnic people. The promise of the land is repeatedly stated as an affirmation of the covenant (Genesis 12:3f).

Foundational sacrifice: The miracle child, Isaac (Yitzhak) is bound and laid on the altar at Mt. Moriah (the Akkedah) as the ultimate test of Abraham's faith. The ram becomes a substitution for Isaac and God confirms the covenant more forcefully because of Abraham's obedience. The place of sacrifice will

become the site of the Temple (both for Solomon and his successors). Abraham is the founder of all priestly sacrifices – through the Levitical priesthood. His ultimate act of obedience results in the repudiation of the sin of Adam and Eve; Abraham is functioning as High Priest offering the symbolic representation of the chosen people [all of whom are in Isaac] back to God. The offering of Isaac stopped by the Angel of the Lord, who provides the substitution (the ram caught in the thicket), points ultimately to the coming Messiah who lays down His life for our sins. Isaac after he's restored fully to Abraham becomes a symbol of resurrection, fulfilled in Yeshua. From this time forward, all animal sacrifices made in the Temple are rooted in the efficacy of this sacrifice of Isaac and the nation now becomes the priesthood for humanity.

Foundational calling: The priesthood of Israel Exodus 19:6: "You will be a kingdom of cohanim for Me, a nation set apart." The principle of representational righteousness sees humanity as a whole dependant on the righteousness of a remnant (i.e. the few in intercession: Abraham for Sodom; Moses for Israel). Yeshua is the height of representational righteousness – His individual act of atonement is worthy for the atonement of all humanity.

The history of Jewish sacrifice: 1400 years of sacrifices for Israel and the nations; every minyan (gathering of ten Jewish people) intercedes for the world: as does the nation of Israel specifically at Sukkot (70 bulls) for the nations. All these sacrifices are intercession for the coming of Yeshua and the salvation of humanity and are Israel's participation in His atonement.

The principle of blood sacrifice: Leviticus 17: 11

1. The sin offering: removes objective judgement against the sinner who has violated the Torah.
2. The guilt offering: cleanses away the conscience and its guilt.
3. The burnt offering: an act of complete dedication
4. The fellowship offering: a shared meal with the priest provides the worshipper with a renewed sense of divine fellowship. This is reflected in the Passover Seder.

The High Priest: In each sacrifice, the priests offered themselves and humanity to God. On Yom Kippur, the High Priest became the perfect symbolic representation of Yeshua making atonement for the nation and all those who seek Him. The nation of Israel keeps faith with the covenant, ultimately bringing forth the Messiah, the last sacrifice. Messianic Jews sustain this understanding of the connection between ancient Israel and contemporary practice.

The Appointed Times (The Moedim): The traditional rites of these chosen days sustain us in spiritual power as we prepare within history for God's ultimate salvation of humanity (see the Shehecheyanu prayer). The spiritual legacy of Israel is contained in these days set apart for the people of God to celebrate God's continuing covenant faithfulness. Priestly oversight of the Moedim also fulfills Israel's calling to intercede for the nations. (See Leviticus 16 for Yom Kippur and Leviticus 23 for the other feasts.)

1. The Sabbath (Shabbat): The seventh day is a memorial of creation integrated into the weekly lifecycle for the Jewish individual to proclaim the sovereignty of the Creator. It is both testimony and intercession

for the universal confession of the lordship of God. Sabbath rest is a sign of God's will for the shalom of all nations in Him and a foreshadowing of the age to come in God's kingdom. Yeshua is Sar Shalom (Prince of Peace) and Lord of the Shabbat. It is also a covenant sign for Israel to confirm the covenant that brought them out of Egypt (Exodus 20:1).

2. The Passover (Pesach): The Passover feast (Seder) celebrates and recalls our deliverance from bondage in Egypt. The full story is recounted highlighting the blood on the doorpost to avert judgement from the angel of death. Moses is not the featured savior. In fact, his name is barely mentioned. Instead there is greater emphasis on the sacrificed lamb and this points to our Passover Lamb, Yeshua who liberates all of us from bondage. Many 20th century liberation movements were inspired by this event (see further works by Dan Juster: *Jewish Roots; Israel, the Church and the Last Days*). The added celebration of the Feast of First Fruits (Bikkurim) on the first day of the week leads us into celebration of the resurrection of Messiah.

3. Pentecost (Shavuot): 50 days after Passover, the harvest (culminating after the counting of days) recalls the giving of the Torah from Mt. Sinai and anticipates the Holy Spirit (Ruah Hakodesh) poured out on Yeshua's disciples in Jerusalem. In both events a great harvest of souls comes into the kingdom and anticipates the final great harvest of humanity at the end of the age. The celebration of Torah which is so meaningful to Messianic Jews is frequently lost for Gentiles who have dismissed the significance of the Mosaic covenant. Israel does not live out the Torah by its own efforts but by the power of the Spirit.

4. The Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah): We anticipate the new year one month in advance by the blowing of the shofar in regular services (we also celebrate the first day of each month as the new moon festival recalling God's covenant faithfulness). An extended liturgical celebration with the Akkeda as the featured text for the sermon prepares the heart of Israel in dedication for the new year and ten solemn days climaxing in the rites of Yom Kippur.

5. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): The holiest day of the Jewish calendar when the High Priest made atonement for the nation in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Two singular sacrifices of two goats – one to be released in the wilderness, the other for Temple sacrifice – provide focus on God's atonement power both at the Mercy Seat (even after the Ark of the Covenant is missing) and in the wilderness of the nations. The blood sacrifice receives greatest attention at this time providing full atonement for the people of God – originally a day leading to great celebration after the day of self-denial (fasting). Yeshua is our final sacrifice outlasting the fallen Temple. He has brought His blood once and for all into the Holy Place of Heaven to atone for the sins of Israel and the nations (Hebrews 8,9). During this time, Israel continues to intercede both for their nation and the world.

6. Tabernacles (Sukkot): The final harvest is the leading celebration of the Jewish calendar and takes place largely in the home, similar to Passover. Israel is instructed to recall the journey from Egypt to the Holy Land by dwelling in tents which have no ceiling but are open to the night sky and are a lesson in humility at the time of the year when we might be most tempted to glory in the harvest of material blessings. We are reminded that all our blessings of land and a fruitful life have been rooted in the covenant promises

and fulfillments of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8). Like Passover it is a pilgrim festival to go up to Jerusalem and celebrate for eight days, a picture of the ultimate celebration of God's kingdom yet to come. Yeshua particularly identifies this celebration of the giving of the Holy Spirit (Ruah Hakodesh) and some believe that He was born during this feast.