

CHAPTER 1

THE VISION OF MODERN BIBLICAL MESSIANIC JUDAISM



Paul's devotion to his people:

Romans 9:3, "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Messiah for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel."

Romans 10:1 states, "Brothers my hearts desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved."

Who is a Jew? Birth, Belief and Behavior

- **Birth:**

According to Rabbinical Halacha (living out God's Torah), a Jew must be born to a Jewish mother. The reason is historical: for centuries, due to the closeness of the mother/child bond, they reared the children as Jews. There is never doubt about the mother's part in the conception, but the father can be in doubt! Genesis (B'resheet) 17:11 states, "You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come, every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised . . ." (Paul uses the word "birth" in Philippians 3:3-5 *Complete Jewish Bible, translated by David H. Stern*). Note: Genesis (B'resheet) 17:14 states, "Any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people." For Messianic Jews, we accept that if either parent is Jewish, this defines children as Jewish by birth! In Biblical times Jewish lineage was traced through the father.

Belief-Behavior:

Raphael Patai, in The Jewish Mind¹, writes "What a child comes to feel about group identity and to know about the group, with which it identifies itself, will depend on its environmental conditioning; it has nothing to do with biological parentage. Children of Jewish parents, in the great majority of cases, grow up as Jews, but not because of their genetic antecedents. They become Jews if the parents, being Jews, wish to transmit to them the cultural heritage of Judaism and succeed in doing so. What matters is the feeling of belongingness, which usually translates into the desire to pass the same feeling onto one's own children. Herein lies the secret of Jewish survival."

¹ Rapael Patai, *The Jewish Mind*, pp. 17-18

The Essentials

- Belief in God: Genesis (B'eresheet) 15:6
- Following God's law that defines Jewish lifestyles and practice (Deuteronomy (D'varim) 6:1-8, Acts 24:14-16).
- Circumcision of the heart — a true Jew (Romans 2:28-29).

Birth should be followed by belief and behavior.

God warns the Jewish person that he/she will be cut off from his people for denying his birthright by not following God's instructions.

The Biblical Role of the Gentile

The divine calling of the Gentile as the “righteous remnant from the Nations.”

David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, said, “A Jew is anybody who, given the burdens Jews must bear, is willing to call himself one.” The point: a Gentile in a Messianic Jewish congregation is a divine calling.

- **Birth**

A Gentile does *not* become a Jew by adopting a Jewish lifestyle and practice, so:
By birth he/she is Gentile.

By belief in Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah, he/she becomes joint heirs with the commonwealth of Israel.

- **A Messianic believer's (Gentile) statement of faith (Ruth [Rut] 1:16-17)**

Ruth (Rut) was born a Moabitess.

By belief and behavior she became part of the commonwealth of Israel and was considered Jewish.

When Ruth (Rut), a foreigner, adopted the lifestyle and practice of Israel, she was rewarded (Ruth [Rut] 2:10-12).

Had Ruth (Rut) claimed to be Jewish, or was a Jew, the entire point of this prophetic book would be missed.

- **Ruth (Rut) is the Biblical model for all Gentiles** who put their trust in the God of Israel (Yeshua).

A Jew by birth following the God-given identity of Israel is expected, however, a Gentile, taking upon himself the Biblical faith of Israel, demonstrates:

1. The oneness in Messiah.
2. Provokes Jews to jealousy.
3. The fulfillment of the divine calling of Israel as “a light unto the nations.”

Examples: Romans 11 and Ephesians 2 and 3.

- **The blessings due the Messianic believer:**

1. Numbers (B'midbar) 15:15
2. Leviticus (Vayikra) 19:33-34
3. Ezekiel (Yechezk'el) 47:21-23
4. Isaiah (Yesha'yahu) 56:6-7
5. Ephesians 2:11-19 (fellow citizens)

- **Messianic Judaism Defined:**

A movement among Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Yeshua, who believe that it is proper and desirable for Jewish followers of Yeshua to recognize and identify with their Jewish heritage. This Jewish lifestyle (both Jew and non-Jew) is to be maintained only as it is consistent with the whole of Biblical teachings. We understand that practicing this lifestyle is voluntary and is not a prerequisite for salvation. Salvation is obtained only through faith in Messiah Yeshua.

A righteous remnant of the Nations — Romans 11 and Ephesians 2 and 3

(Class discussion)

