

## APPENDIX E

# Prejudice, Insecurity, and Myths About Messianic Judaism

---

**H**ow is it that one can be a Jewish Buddhist, a Jewish New Ager, or even a Jewish atheist, but one cannot be a Jewish believer in Jesus the Messiah? Rabbi Harris-Shapiro notes:

Under Messianic Jewish scrutiny, the American Jewish reasoning that accepts secular Jews but not Christian Jews as Jews, practicing Christian spouses of Jews as members of liberal synagogues but not Messianic Jews as members of liberal synagogues can appear fragile, fuzzy even self-contradictory.<sup>1</sup>

In my opinion, there is only one explanation for this double standard—prejudice. Prejudice is rooted in the emotions and is essentially irrational and self-contradictory.

### *Disagreement and Prejudice are not the Same*

It is one thing for a segment of the Jewish community to disagree with Messianic Jews over the Messiahship/divinity of Jesus; it is quite another for that group to harbor prejudice. The distinction between disagreement and prejudice is an important one. Prejudice goes beyond disagreement. According to Webster's dictionary, "prejudice" is:

1. A bias for or against something formed without sufficient basis.
2. Irrational intolerance of or hostility toward members of a certain race, religion, or group.<sup>2</sup>

Those who are intolerant of Messianic Judaism, or simply oppose it without understanding it, reveal their prejudice. People can learn to disagree without crossing the line of prejudice. Opinions should be based on knowledge.

### *Knowledge About Messianic Judaism*

As previously mentioned, a number of academic studies on the Messianic Jewish community are available (see Appendix D). Additionally, *Messianic Judaism* by Dan Cohn-Sherbok is also a valuable scholarly work, the result of extensive research. However, the best way to learn about Messianic Judaism is to visit several congregations in your area.

### *Human Relationships are the Key*

Even after recognizing that a stereotype has no basis in fact, the lens of prejudice may still exist. Human relationships are key in breaking the bonds of prejudice. Even after many white southerners realized that their prejudice against blacks was unjust, their feelings remained unchanged. Often, their feelings prevailed until the white person developed a relationship with a black person and realized that both whites and blacks are part of the same human race. By developing relationships with Messianic Jews, Jews who don't believe that Yeshua is the Messiah may overcome their prejudice.

### *The Insecurity of Anti-Jesus Judaism*

Behind prejudice, concerns about Messianic Judaism are often rooted in the insecurity of anti-Jesus Judaism. American Jews have largely adopted a negative definition of what it means to be Jewish. When it comes right down to it, what makes many Jewish is that they are not Christian.<sup>3</sup>

A group easily assimilable into the Christianized culture of the United States, as well as a group internally pluralistic in religious and ethnic practice, the Jewish community needs a sense of "who we are not" to maintain its group cohesion and integrity. The one surety for even the most inactive Jew is that "Jews are not Christians."<sup>4</sup>

Dennis Prager concurs that Jewishness for many Jews means being different from Christianity:

A lifetime of work in Jewish life has convinced me that many Jew's beliefs are shaped more by reactions to Christianity rather than anything related to Judaism. Many Jews have adopted important beliefs and attitudes solely

because these beliefs are the opposite of what they believe Christianity and Christians believe.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, rejection of Messianic Judaism is often motivated by insecurity about one's own Jewishness and the corresponding need for Jewish validation. For such people, the removal of the "Jesus boundary line," through the growing acceptance of Messianic Judaism, means the diminishment of a clear sense of Jewishness in their lives. Consequently, they are defensive about the subject of Messianic Judaism.

### *Myths About Messianic Judaism*

One of the results of this prejudice-insecurity is the spread of myths about Messianic Judaism. Intermarried couples who begin to explore Messianic Judaism are likely, at some point, to encounter this unfortunate reality.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, to help alleviate any concerns, I would like to address each one of these myths and offer a thoughtful response. The chief myths about Messianic Judaism are as follows:

- Messianic Judaism is a missionary scheme.
- Messianic Judaism is philo-Judaic Christianity.
- Messianic Jews are not Jews.
- Messianic Judaism is not Judaism.

#### **Myth #1: Messianic Judaism is a missionary scheme**

Some say that Messianic Jewish congregations put on a veneer of religious Jewish practice in order to lure Jewish people into a belief in Jesus.<sup>7</sup> It is suggested that Messianic Jews substitute Christian terms with Hebrew equivalents in order to mask true Christian identity.<sup>8</sup> A related argument is that Messianic synagogues misuse Jewish rituals when they attach New Covenant meanings to them.<sup>9</sup>

Often, those who have never visited a Messianic synagogue or taken the time to discuss their concerns about Messianic Judaism with a Messianic rabbi protest the most. Those who do take the time to do their homework discover that the allegations of deception are false. Indeed, the culture of a Messianic congregation is based on a sincere love for Torah and traditional Jewish heritage. Messianic rabbis, like their traditional counterparts, recognize the dangers of assimilation and work hard to convey Jewish identity to the next generation of Messianic Jewish families. One Messianic Jewish leader has written:

There is absolutely no truth that Messianic congregations are merely for marketing. The men who lead these congregations have sacrificed quite a bit to do so. They endure ongoing criticism for the stand they have taken—from both the Jewish and Christian communities. . . . Messianic rabbis have deep convictions concerning their heritage. When we celebrate the Sabbath and other holidays, we do so with great joy, excitement and devotion to God. Our goal is not to see our Jewish members funneled into churches, but to see more and more Jewish believers who have assimilated into Gentile culture return to their Jewish roots—just the opposite of what we are accused of doing.<sup>10</sup>

Messianic Jewish use of Hebrew expressions (even for New Testament terms) is in keeping with this spirit of resisting assimilation pressures in order to preserve Jewish identity. In addition, it must be remembered that Jesus and the Apostles were Jews and taught in Hebrew. New Testament teaching was originally Hebraic. Messianic Judaism, therefore, sees the use of Hebraic New Covenant terminology, such as the name “Yeshua” instead of “Jesus,” as a restoration of something that is historically accurate.<sup>11</sup> It links Messianic Jewish families to their first century roots. Shoshanah Feher observed in her doctoral research that “restoring the original” is a central focus of Messianic Judaism:

Believers use the early church as a governing metaphor to reconcile Jewish with Christian symbols and to create a sense of historical community. Messianic Judaism has combed the past in order to create a new form of tradition (see also Morgan 1983). They make use of early texts, reading the Gospels and other first-century works, as well as tracing Jewish Christians through the centuries, in order to establish a symbolic social cohesion with roots in antiquity (see also Gusfield 1975; Hobsbawm 1983). . . . Messianic Jews use ritual to create a sense of continuity.”<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, some Christian terms and symbols may be offensive to Messianic Jews and therefore are avoided in a Messianic synagogue. For example, almost all Jews are raised with a natural aversion to the term “Christ” as well as to the emblem of the cross<sup>13</sup> (since they are reminders of religious persecution). This feeling doesn’t automatically change when one becomes a Messianic Jew. Substituting the Hebraic

term “Messiah” for Christ and taking down crosses or covering them up (if a church building is used for *Shabbat* services), then, is not primarily for visitors but for the Messianic Jewish families themselves. The fact that Jewish visitors may have the same sensitivities only adds to the importance of the matter.

Finally, the fact that Messianic Jews inculcate some Jewish traditions with New Covenant meaning only supports the argument that Messianic Jews are up-front about their beliefs. It is natural that Jews would use Jewish ritual to express their devotion to God. Even Orthodox Jews believe that some Jewish ritual will be modified when the Messiah comes.<sup>14</sup> Messianic Jews agree and have made the necessary changes since, in their view, the Messiah has already come. The Messianic Jewish community is no different from the Reform and Reconstructionist communities that also engage in ritual formation to express the distinct values of their own branches of Judaism. Rabbi Harris-Shapiro concurs:

Messianics are not the only ones to legitimate their Jewishness with religious ritual. Because ethnicity has been wrapped in a religious container, one of the only ways to express Jewish ethnicity is through religious language. . . . This would explain the use of Jewish ritual by groups who transform the meaning of the very rituals they use. The presence of the ritual confirms the Jewish ethnic orientation of the group, but the original meaning of the ritual has been altered to express the core values, not of traditional Judaism, but of the group utilizing the ritual. Even small portions of the ritual or liturgy are sufficient to give the value expressed a “Jewish flavor.” . . . Liberal Jewish seders regularly transform the meaning of the traditional service from emphasizing the saving acts of God to the courage of humanity, as in the Reconstructionist Haggadah, which sharply elevates the role of humanity in the Passover story (Kaplan et al. 1941). Other holidays, such as Hanukkah, also reflect prevailing American values or secular Zionist achievements rather than a rabbinic religious message. . . . Just as Jewish religious forms express Jewish ethnicity or secular values in a number of transformed rituals, so too when Messianic believers sought to express ethnic continuity, they chose to infuse forms of Jewish life with new, Christological meaning.<sup>15</sup>

**Myth #2: Messianic Judaism is philo-Judaic Christianity**

Sometimes Messianic Judaism is compared to philo-Judaic Christian groups (churches that observe Jewish customs such as the Sabbath).<sup>16</sup> The argument is that Messianic Judaism is just another Christian group that does Jewish things but is not Jewish.<sup>17</sup> Such a statement represents an ignorance of Messianic Judaism. To begin with, the Messianic Jewish movement is largely comprised of Jewish people and led by Jewish people.

. . . the name Messianic Judaism implies that our movement is fundamentally among Jews and for Jews. It may include non-Jews, but it is oriented toward the Jewish people, and those non-Jews within it have a supportive role.<sup>18</sup>

This is a key distinction. Philo-Judaic groups are almost entirely non-Jewish in leadership and membership. Second, Messianic Jewish families are integrally connected to Jewish community life, even more so than most Jews. They often attend traditional Jewish synagogues, join Jewish Community Centers, take classes at Jewish colleges, work for Jewish organizations, support Jewish causes, shop at Jewish bookstores, and *shmooze* (pass the time talking) at Jewish delicatessens. Philo-Judaic Christian groups, on the other hand, generally do not involve themselves deeply in the Jewish community. Third, Messianic Judaism, by definition, claims to be a Judaism. It is a restoration of Nazarene Judaism in a twenty-first century context that seeks to enter into conversation with the traditions of our people. Philo-Judaic Christian groups do not make such a claim. They typically regard themselves as part of a religion that is separate and distinct from Judaism, albeit, one with Jewish roots. Finally, Messianic Judaism stands in agreement with Rabbinic Judaism that God's covenant faithfulness to Israel endures to this day. Messianic Jews see themselves as being under this covenant. In contrast, most philo-Judaic Christian groups are adherents of replacement theology and believe that God abandoned the Jewish people and made Christians the new people of God.

**Myth #3: Messianic Jews are not Jews**

Sometimes it is said that Messianic Jews are no longer Jews because they believe in Jesus. There are several problems with this statement. First, it is historically inaccurate. Tens of thousands of first century Jews believed that Jesus was the Messiah and were accepted as Jews

by the Jewish world.<sup>19</sup> Second, the view that Messianic Jews are no longer Jews may be based on insecurity. Jews who are insecure about their own identity may feel the need to exclude others from the Jewish community in order to enhance their own sense of Jewishness. This explains why it is often non-traditional Jews who make this statement.<sup>20</sup> Third, Orthodox Jews commonly acknowledge that Messianic Jews are Jews. Professor Michael Wyschograd is one such Orthodox rabbi who has written in support of this view. In his letter to a Jewish Christian friend, he writes:

So I return to your claim that you remain a Jew in spite of having become a Christian. Is this a claim I can accept? Of course, I can. . . . Now the point is that once someone is a Jew, he always remains a Jew. . . . According to authentic Jewish teaching as I understand it, a Jew remains a Jew no matter what religion he adopts and this basic truth cannot be changed for political or prudential reasons.<sup>21</sup>

Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok concurs:

. . . Jewish law provides a clear basis for determining the status of a convert to another faith. According to the *halakhah*, it is technically impossible for a person born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism through the traditional procedure to change his status. . . . In the view of the medieval scholar Nahmanides, this attitude is based on the fact that the covenant between God and Israel was made 'with him that standeth here with us today before the Lord our God and also with him that is not with us here today' (Deuteronomy 29:14). For an individual who is born a Jew, Jewish identity is thus not a matter of choice: that person remains a Jew regardless of his religious beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

David Novak, Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto, sums up the Orthodox position in his essay "When Jews are Christians":

The important thing to remember when dealing with the issue of the Jewish Christians is that according to normative Judaism, they are still Jews. . . . No one who accepts the authority of normative Judaism can rule that Jewish Christians are not Jews.<sup>23</sup>

The Orthodox view makes sense. In the Hebrew Bible, the Prophets rebuke Israel again and again for worshipping foreign gods but there is never an indication that the people are no longer Jews. The conclusion that Messianic Jews are Jews is also supported by the rulings of Rabbi Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin and Rav Yosef Caro.<sup>24</sup>

As noted in Appendix D, many *Hasidim* believe that the Lubavitcher *rebbe* is the Messiah and the Creator of the Universe. Are they no longer Jews? Many second century Jews, including Rabbi Akiba, believed that Bar Kochba was the Messiah. Were they no longer Jews? And what of those Jews in the seventeenth century who believed that Sabbatai Sevi was the Messiah? Did they abandon their identity as Jews? Likewise, it is irrational to argue that Jews who believe Jesus is the Messiah are no longer Jews. The fact is that Jesus is the most famous Jew who ever lived. It is because of Yeshua ben Yosef (Jesus son of Joseph) that hundreds of millions of people on the earth worship the God of Israel and embrace the Scriptures of Israel as their own.<sup>25</sup> If one of the key roles of Messiah is to be a light to the nations, I can think of no other Jew as well qualified as Yeshua to be the Messiah. If you can be a Jewish Buddhist, or a Jewish atheist, you can certainly be a Jew who believes that Jesus is the Messiah.

#### Myth #4: Messianic Judaism is not Judaism

Sometimes it is stated that Messianic Judaism is not a legitimate form of Judaism. The assumption here is that Rabbinic Judaism is the only form of normative Judaism. However, this was not the case two thousand years ago and it is not the case today. Philip Alexander, Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Manchester, explains:

Rabbinic Judaism cannot easily be equated with normative Judaism before the third century C.E., and even then only in Palestine. The reason for this is that it was not until the third century that a majority of the Jews of Palestine accepted the authority of the Rabbinate.<sup>26</sup>

Today, authentic Rabbinic Judaism is anything but normative. Only six percent of American Jews are Orthodox.<sup>27</sup> The other ninety-four percent have rejected even the most basic tenets of Rabbinic Judaism. Based on the 1989 National Survey of American Jews, Steven Cohen has noted:

If at one time Orthodoxy could successfully lay claim to near-exclusive authenticity among the laity, recent years

have seen an evaporation of the potency of that claim. Respondents today resoundingly reject Orthodoxy's assertion of primary authenticity. Just 18 percent agree with the statement "Part of me feels that Orthodox Jews are the most authentic Jews around," and even fewer (13 percent) agree with a parallel statement about Hasidic Jews (Note that the statements include the qualifier "part of me feels . . ." so as to elicit the broadest possible concurrence. Without the qualifier, it is likely that even fewer would have agreed.)<sup>28</sup>

If nonconformity to Rabbinic Judaism is the basis for Messianic Judaism's illegitimacy, then the same must hold true for every non-Orthodox form of Judaism, including Conservative and Reform. This is, in fact, the official position of Orthodox Judaism. All modern, non-Orthodox expressions of Judaism are considered illegitimate. Professor Cohn-Sherbok explains:

According to traditionalists, there is only one legitimate form of the faith: Orthodox Judaism. Any deviation from *Torah*-observant Judaism as practiced by Jews through the centuries is heresy, no matter what its practitioners believe. In this connection it should be noted that this is true, not only of Messianic Judaism, but of all the non-Orthodox Jewish movements which currently exist in the modern world. Hence, not only is Messianic Judaism an illegitimate interpretation of Judaism, so too is Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism, and Humanistic Judaism. The Orthodox model thus not only excludes Messianic Judaism from the circle of authentic Judaism, but also excludes all other branches of Judaism in contemporary society.<sup>29</sup>

The irrationality of the Orthodox view is evident when one considers that Messianic Judaism has its origins in Second Temple Judaism and actually predates the formation of Rabbinic Judaism.<sup>30</sup> Into the second century, the Nazarene sect of Judaism was widely accepted in the Jewish world as an authentic expression of Judaism.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, it can be argued that Messianic Judaism is more within the boundaries of *Torah*, the foundational document of Judaism, than other non-traditional forms of Judaism (see Appendix D).<sup>32</sup> Take Reconstructionist Judaism as an example. Reconstructionist Judaism formally removed God from Judaism,<sup>33</sup> claiming that the *Torah*



is not the Word of God and Israel is not the Chosen People.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, Messianic Judaism proclaims the existence of the King of the Universe, upholds all Scripture as the Word of God, and affirms that Israel is God's instrument of blessing in the world. On these grounds, Messianic Judaism is arguably more in line with the central teachings of Judaism (biblically and historically) than Reconstructionist Judaism. If Reconstructionist Judaism and other non-faith expressions of Judaism are legitimate, then so is Messianic Judaism.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, there is a growing acceptance of Messianic Judaism in the American Jewish community (see Appendix D). The "pluralist" view, as represented by Rabbi Cohn-Sherbok and Rabbi Wine, anticipates a day to come when the mainstream Jewish community will more broadly recognize Messianic Judaism as an integral and vibrant expression of modern Judaism.

All of the above myths about Messianic Judaism ultimately stem from prejudice, insecurity, and *lashon ha-ra* (negative comments or rumors). As stated earlier, prejudice is irrational and rooted in the emotions. Over time, a person's views may change, especially if they are held them up to scrutiny or meet a Messianic Jew who shatters their stereotype. If you are an intermarried couple or a child of intermarriage, and would like to explore the Messianic Jewish option, don't let prejudice stand in your way. Visit a Messianic Jewish congregation and see for yourself what it's like. You may find it to be a good fit for your family.

## Endnotes

### Introduction

1. Phillips, "Children of Intermarriage: How 'Jewish'?", 81. See Chenkin, Kaplan, and Massarik 15.
2. Hevesy.
3. Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach, *Working With Interfaith Couples: A Jewish Perspective—A Guide for Facilitators*, 109–110.
4. Goodman-Malamuth and Margolis 72.
5. Samuelson 92; Wasserman 2; Brown, "Six Success Strategies for Intermarried Couples," 4.
6. From personal correspondence.
7. Yeshua is Jesus' original Hebrew name. See Barnstone 457–467.
8. Cohn-Sherbok xii.

### Chapter One

1. 1.5 million people are intermarried (Keysar, Kosmin, and Scheckner 48) and 1.5 million adults are the children of intermarriage (Mayer, Kosmin, and Keysar 5). Since two thirds of the offspring of intermarriage intermarry, a significant overlap exists between these two groups (Grossman 214). In addition, there are also 664,000 children under the age of 18 who are children of intermarriage (Keysar, Kosmin, and Scheckner 48).
2. Mayer, Kosmin, and Keysar 6.
3. Abrams 9. See Fishkoff 76.
4. Wertheimer 107.
5. Abrams 107.
6. Abrams 108. See Winer, Seltzer, and Schwager 131, 141.
7. Lazerwitz, et al. 101.
8. Lazerwitz, et al. 102.
9. Silverstein 45.
10. Jewish Outreach Institute 2.
11. Abrams 109–110.
12. Schneider 230.
13. Keysar, Kosmin, and Scheckner 49.
14. Abrams 111–112. See Mayer, *Children of Intermarriage*, 24, 29.
15. Mayer, "Will the Grandchildren of Intermarriage be Jews? The Chances are Greater than You Think," 78.
16. Sacks, *Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren?*, 2.

**Appendix D**

1. For example, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the "single most influential halakhic decisor of the second half of the twentieth century," referred to Conservative and Reform rabbis as "deniers, sectarians, heretics, evil-doers, enticers [to sin] and corrupters" (Kellner 88). In 1945, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, Mordecai Kaplan, was denounced by Conservative rabbis and excommunicated by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis (of which he was not a member) for "expressing atheism, heresy and disbelief in the basic tenets of Judaism." They also burned the Reconstructionist prayer book (Raphael 184).
2. Berkman 2.
3. Rottenberg, "Those Troublesome Messianic Jews," 114–115. Though the opposition is strong, Messianic Jewish participation in the Jewish-Christian dialogue is growing, as evidenced by the recent exchange in Princeton Theological Review: Charry, "The Other Side of the Story," 24–29; Kinbar 30–37; Charry, "Response to Carl Kinbar," 38–39. See also Rottenberg, *Jewish Christians in an Age of Christian-Jewish Dialogue*; Glasser 105–117; Finto 189–193; Freedman 86; Kung 584–600.
4. Mayer, Kosmin, and Keysar 58.
5. Mayer, Kosmin, and Keysar 58; cf. 60, 67.
6. DellaPergola, "New Data on Demography and Identification Among Jews in the U.S.," 86.
7. Berkman 1.
8. Berkman 2.
9. Cohn-Sherbok 209–210.
10. Cohn-Sherbok 212.
11. Cohn-Sherbok 212–213.
12. Werthheimer 79.
13. Mayer, Kosmin, and Keysar 6.
14. Harris-Shapiro 168.
15. Prager, "A New Approach to Jews-for-Jesus," 29.
16. Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, 2, 14–15.
17. Prager, "A New Approach to Jews-for-Jesus," 28.
18. According to Orthodox *halakhah*, Messianic Jews are Jews who have lost certain communal privileges due to apostasy. See Wyschogrod, "Letter to a Friend," 167–168; Harris-Shapiro 179–181; Cohn-Sherbok 200–201, 206.
19. October 24, 1999. Used with permission of the writer.
20. Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, 26.

21. Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, 89.
22. Berger, "The Rebbe, the Jews, and the Messiah," 24.
23. Grossman 226.
24. Berger, "The Rebbe, the Jews, and the Messiah," 25.
25. Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, 130–131.
26. Berger, "The Rebbe, the Jews, and the Messiah," 23–24, 149.
27. Wyschogrod, "Letter to a Friend," 166–168, 171.
28. See Novak 100.
29. Wyschogrod, "Response to the Respondents," 237.
30. Wyschogrod, "Response to the Respondents," 237.
31. Wyschogrod, "Response to the Respondents," 239.
32. See Rosenblum, "The ultimate Jewish pluralists."
33. Lockshin 137.
34. Samuelson 92; Wasserman 2.
35. Grossman 223.
36. Lockshin 144–146.
37. Kellner 88.
38. Kellner 89, n. 3; Keller 3–14; repr. in Bulka 253.

**Appendix E**

1. Harris-Shapiro 17.
2. Webber 552. See Rupert 3–15.
3. For example, Reform Jewish *responsa* on Messianic Jews is stricter than Orthodox Jewish *halakhah*. See Jacob, *Contemporary American Reform Responsa*, 109–112; Cohn-Sherbok 206.
4. Harris-Shapiro 2.
5. Prager, *The Prager Perspective*.
6. Notably, *lashon ha-ra* about Messianic Judaism has made its way into literature on intermarriage, a testimony of the growing appeal of Messianic Judaism among intermarried couples. Silverstein addresses the Messianic Jewish option on page 2 of his book *Preserving the Jewish Family: After Intermarriage Has Occurred*; see Abrams 81.
7. For a thorough response to this argument, see Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections*, 9–15.
8. Cohn-Sherbok 182.
9. Silverstein 1–4; Cohn-Sherbok 182.
10. Cantor 164.
11. The recent New Testament translation by Barnstone uses "Yeshua" instead of "Jesus," as well as other Hebrew/Aramaic equivalents of

the Greek. No one, however, accuses Barnstone of being deceptive. Barnstone, like modern Messianic Jews, simply recognized the importance of restoring the authentic Jewishness of Jesus as depicted in the New Testament (Barnstone 9–27).

12. Feher 112.

13. By “emblem of the cross,” I mean the *physical sign* of the cross that is worn or displayed by Christians. Messianic Jewish sensitivity regarding this emblem is akin to the feelings many blacks have regarding the Confederate flag. In both cases, the emblem is viewed by one party as inspirational and by the other as a symbol of persecution. Messianic Jews, of course, remember that Yeshua laid down his life for our sins by means of crucifixion, and that he taught his followers to crucify selfish desires.

14. Chayoun 96–98.

15. Harris-Shapiro 174–175.

16. Jacob, *Contemporary American Reform Responsa*, 109–110.

17. Cohn-Sherbok 167.

18. Kinzer, *The Nature of Messianic Judaism*, 5. See UMJC Theology Committee, “Defining Messianic Judaism: Addendum 2. A model for Gentile participation in Messianic Judaism,” 2–4.

19. Harris-Shapiro 18. See Katz 43–76; Schiffman, “At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism,” 154; Boyarin 1–41.

20. “In a *responsum* about the status of a ‘completed Jew’ in the Jewish community, the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted an even stricter stance than the Orthodox . . .” (Cohn-Sherbok 206). In full acknowledgement of the unorthodox position taken, the Reform *responsum* claims to “disagree with the *Talmud* and later tradition” (Jacob, *Contemporary American Reform Responsa*, 109–112).

21. Wyschogrod, “Letter to a Friend,” 167–168.

22. Cohn-Sherbok 192. See *Encyclopedia Judaica* I, 212.

23. Novak 97.

24. Harris-Shapiro 180.

25. *Dabru 'Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity* was endorsed by over 150 rabbis and Jewish scholars. Its first declaration states: “Jews and Christians worship the same God. Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshipers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, creator of heaven and earth . . . as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel” (Neuhaus 200).

26. Alexander 3.

27. Hyman 47.

28. Cohen, *Content or Continuity*, 31.

29. Cohn-Sherbok 205. *USA Today* reported in 1997: “A group of Orthodox rabbis declared on Monday that other branches of Judaism ‘are not Judaism at all,’ challenging the religious practices of millions of American Jews. . . . The 600-member Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, the oldest organization of rabbis in the USA, condemned the more liberal Conservative and Reform branches for condoning assimilation and intermarriage” (Sciaber 3A); Wertheimer xii–xiii.

30. Chilton and Neusner 1–18.

31. Harris-Shapiro 18.

32. Cohn-Sherbok 212.

33. One faculty member of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College put it succinctly: “Although religion is paramount in the Reconstructionist definition of Jewish civilization, conspicuously absent from our definition of Judaism is any mention of God. This is no accident” (Alpert and Staub 18).

34. McClain 182.

35. The consistency issue is not limited to Reconstructionist Judaism, “If Conservative Jews deny the belief in *Torah MiSinai*, Reform Jews reject the authority of the Law, Reconstructionist Jews adopt a non-theistic interpretation of the faith, and Humanistic Jews cease to use the Word ‘God’ in their liturgy, why should Messianic Jews alone be universally vilified?” (Cohn-Sherbok 209).



# Growing Your *Olive Tree* Marriage

A Guide for Couples from Two Traditions

David J. Rudolph



Lederer Books  
a division of  
Messianic Jewish Publishers