

Union of Messianic Believers

Restoring a Remnant for Messiah within the House of Israel

UMB

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Special Introductory Issue

Our Vision—and Your Place in It

Vice President Dr. H. Bruce Stokes answers the question: What is the UMB, and why be part of it?



The apostle Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Romans that Israel's hardening toward the Gospel is an act of God for the benefit of the Gentiles. Salvation has come to Gentiles at the expense of Israel. But that does not mean that God has rejected Israel or that the Gentiles can boast of their acceptance. Because, Paul says, ultimately God will save all Israel. In other words, this hardening is a benefit to the Gentile but does not remove hope from Israel. How can this be?

Beyond explaining this mystery, Paul actually

enlists the Gentile believers to assist him in reaching out to restore the remnant of Israel. He explains that the Gentiles will be used by God to bring Israel to faith in the Messiah. This happens when the promises made to Israel are being enjoyed by the Gentiles and that provokes Israel to jealousy. Paul actually wants to use his place as apostle to the Gentiles to enlarge this jealousy. This means that the faith and practice of Gentile Christians must in some way reflect the profound truths of the Torah and the Prophets, so that the unbelieving, or assimilated, or religious Jew will see a righteousness based on faith as the basis of salvation. And that saving faith is in Yeshua, the Messiah.

This then is the purpose of the UMB. Not another Jewish-Gentile group. Certainly we don't need another organization to compete for our time, money, and effort. We are all busy enough. But we do need a channel of communication and a strategy that will allow us to

facilitate the relational unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Messiah and, more importantly, to engage in a ministry of provoking Israel to jealousy so that they will see and desire what is rightfully theirs. After all, the Gospel is to the Jew first, not to reject or remove Israel, but in order that all Israel might be saved. To accomplish this, we must work together as Jews and Gentiles committed to the restoration and salvation of all Israel.

Individuals, families, and congregations who join with the UMB have an opportunity to participate with believers in Israel, America, and around the world from every possible background united by a common theme – demonstrating God's faithfulness through the remnant of Israel. We are united in belief that God is bringing Israel to faith in her Messiah Yeshua, and that the Church is not truly complete without this emerging and authentic expression of Jewish faith in Messiah.

Chanukah begins this year at sundown, Tuesday, December 4, and concludes sundown Wednesday, December 12. See articles on Chanukah inside.

December Dilemma Rabbi Russ Resnik, UMJC Executive Director

When I was ten or so, we lived for a couple of years in an old Spanish-style two-story house surrounded by orange groves. I remember the thrill of having an upstairs bedroom, which was not too common in late 50's Southern California. I also remember the forbidden but enticing sounds of Christmas carols coming through my window –the voices of neighborhood carolers and the mysterious words about the newborn King who had come to ransom captive Israel. My dilemma was that I found these songs most attractive, but I knew I could not even speak of them in my Jewish world.

One Jewish mother wrote a number of years ago about her response to this dilemma:

I've been warned about this time of year. Heaped on my bedside table are the annual crop of parenting magazines advising me to tread lightly across the crags and fissures of the December Dilemma. My non-Christian daughter is sure to feel "left out", the magazines blare. She'll be tense and confused from now until January 1. One expert even suggests that I lighten her load by dangling some "secular" tinsel from my walls.

I suppose there's a grain of logic to what I've read in those glossy pages. But there's also a gaping hole. The most obvious response to the December Dilemma is the one I've never seen mentioned. (Cathy Engel-Marder, Intermountain Jewish News, 12/3/93.)

The mother goes on to outline the "obvious response"—building a positive Jewish identity year-round into the life of her seven-year-old daughter Rachel. Judaism has meaning to Rachel; therefore she is not so easily enticed by the Christmas spirit.

I remember one day when [Rachel] was three or four, as we squeezed our way through a mall crowded with holiday shoppers, how Santa Claus caught her eye. I waited for her to tug at my sleeve, to guide me toward the line of waiting children. Instead, she pulled me down to her height and whispered a secret into my ear. "I'm lucky I celebrate Chanukah," Rachel said. "Santa Claus is make-believe. Judah Maccabee was real."

Now, I understand the December Dilemma myself, because I lived with it as a child. It didn't really disappear when I became a believer in the Messiah, but things changed. After all, the real contrast between Chanukah and Christmas isn't Judah Maccabee ver-

sus Santa Claus. The real contrast is between Judah Maccabee and Yeshua HaMashiach, who not only **was** as real as the Maccabees, but still is real and alive today.

Not too long after my wife, Jane, and I became believers, we went to work at a Bible-based drug rehabilitation program on a 72-acre farm in the Rio Grande valley just south of Albuquerque. Jane was about six months pregnant when we moved there, and we already had two young boys. So, the budding family of four was given a room in the men's dorm, across the hall from a larger room housing recovering drug addicts, ex-convicts, and incorrigible teenagers. This was to be home, at least for the time being.

Meanwhile, we began to fix up a little apartment on the property to be a more permanent dwelling for us. The baby was due in December, and we hoped to have the apartment ready before then, but the work got tied up at various points as such projects tend to do. Soon enough it became apparent that we weren't going to make our deadline.

One of the neighbors had been helping us fix up the place. "Well, don't feel bad about not having it ready for your baby," he said one afternoon as he hopped into his pickup. "Remember, our Lord was born in a stable." With that he smiled, waved, and drove off in a cloud of dust.

Sure enough, when Sarah was born one week before Christmas, we brought her home to our room in the men's dorm. It did resemble a stable in some ways, but we really didn't care too much. On Christmas Eve, the drug program held a pageant for the addicts and ex-convicts, including a living nativity scene. Sarah was enlisted to play the part of the Baby Jesus, and cried through her whole performance. It was realistic and moving, and launched her on a life-long career of drama and public speaking.

All of this did not resolve my December Dilemma, of course, but it did bring a new perspective. Perhaps my childhood attraction to Christmas was really a response to Yeshua beckoning me. And now at Chanukah, when we light the candles for eight nights, to commemorate the rededication of the temple, I'm always reminded of him who once said in the same temple, "I am the light of the world."

Chanukah—Festival of Lights

25 Kislev—3 Tevet (usually falling in the month of December)

“Chanukah” means dedication, and marks the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem in 165 BCE. The temple had been defiled as part of a campaign of suppression against Jewish practices by the imperial Seleucid dynasty ruling Israel at that time. Jews under a family called the Maccabees (or “hammers”) rose up against imperial forces and captured the temple grounds and eventually the whole city of Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

Scriptural basis: The historical events surrounding Chanukah are foretold by the prophet Daniel (chapter 11). Only in the B’rit Chadashah (New Testament) is the holiday itself mentioned (John 10:22), and this is the earliest mention of Chanukah anywhere.

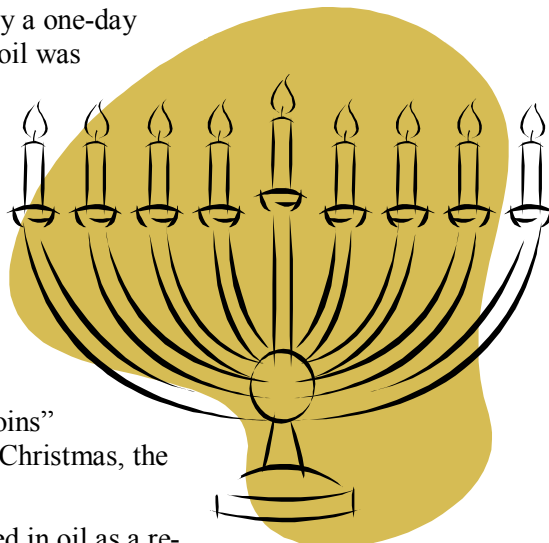
Traditional observance: The main mitzvah (commandment) of Chanukah is kindling lights at sundown for eight days to commemorate the rekindling of the Menorah or candelabrum in the temple after it was re-consecrated. The eight-day duration has two explanations:

- 1) Sukkot, the eight-day Feast of Booths, was delayed during the fighting for the temple, so Chanukah became a sort of catch-up Sukkot;
- 2) When it was time to relight the Menorah, the Maccabees could find only a one-day supply of consecrated oil. Miraculously, it lasted for eight days until new oil was ready.

In any event, the theme of miraculous deliverance sounds throughout the eight days of Chanukah.

Chanukah today:

- A centuries-old custom that is still popular is playing with a dreidel, or top, marked on each side with a different Hebrew letter representing the words, “A great miracle happened there.” Players either win or lose based on which letter the dreidel lands on.
- Families exchange small gifts, including Chanukah gelt, chocolate “coins” wrapped in gold or silver colored foil. Perhaps under the influence of Christmas, the gift-giving aspect of Chanukah is on the rise.
- Jews of Eastern European background eat latkes, potato pancakes, fried in oil as a reminder of the oil of the Menorah that burned eight days. In Israel, latkes are often replaced with sufganiyot, jelly-filled doughnuts fried in oil.



Our Vision, continued from page 1.

You are invited to participate in this goal of the restoration of the remnant of Israel with fellow Jewish and Gentile believers through the network of the UMB. Through individual, family or congregational membership, you will be connected with the International Messianic Jewish Alliance, the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, and Jewish and Gentile believers in churches, congregations and ministries around the world.

The UMB brings together believers who share an active and vital vision of the present work of God in bringing the Jewishness of the Gospel back to the Church and bringing

the Gospel of the Kingdom of the Messiah, in its authentic Jewish context, to the Jew first. By relational communication through newsletters and the internet, by face to face connection at conferences, by praying together for Israel’s restoration, we can bring a greater maturity to the Messianic Jewish movement and equip Christians in their vital role in provoking Israel to faith in Messiah. As Paul says, “*If their ... failure is riches for the Gentiles, what will their fulfillment be... but life from the dead?*” (Romans 11:12, 15).

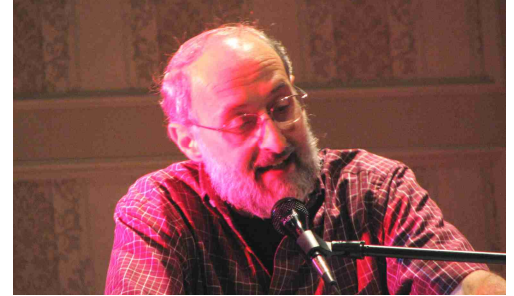
A Word from the Prez Dr. John Fischer

The hills just outside of Jerusalem were the site of an important international conference just before the High Holy Days. It was the conference of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance (IMJA). The IMJA has been in existence since 1925 and is made up of various member national Messianic Jewish alliances from 18 different countries.

The conference of the IMJA convenes every five years and brings together Messianic Jewish leaders literally from around the world. Leaders from Canada, Mexico, England, France, Germany, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, the United States and several countries in South America gathered at this year's conference. Reports were given in Spanish, French, and Russian, as well as English, and we heard tell of some 700 Messianic congregations around the world. Near the end of the conference, your president was elected to serve as the President of the IMJA, a high and humbling honor.

Over the years, the IMJA has been deeply involved in assisting Jewish believers in Yeshua in a wide variety of ways and through some very difficult circumstances. During the Holocaust its efforts resulted in the rescue, settlement, and sup-

port of numerous families and individuals. Later, the IMJA assisted in the education of the children of these Holocaust survivors. Its activities enabled the establishment of a retirement home in Israel which still cares for needy elderly Jewish believers. More recently, the IMJA was directly involved in providing medical care for the children who were victims of the Chernobyl disaster, and it provided food, clothing, and assistance to the Ethiopian Jews kept in camps, unable to emigrate to Israel. Current ventures include cooperation in providing humanitarian aid to needy families in Israel.



As a member of the Union of Messianic Believers (UMB) you are an important part of all these endeavors because of our connection with the IMJA. The UMB is revitalizing our efforts and reinvigorating our activities nationally and internationally. Therefore, you are participating in God's work through the Messianic movement worldwide.

As a member of the UMB

- You share the vision of a restored remnant for Yeshua among the Jewish people.
- You are connected to a worldwide Jewish movement for Messiah.
- You will receive regular updates on issues such as
 - Judaism and Jewish outreach
 - The Biblical holidays and their significance
 - Prophecies regarding Israel and the Church
 - The Bible in its Jewish context
- You will strengthen the Messianic Jewish movement and the unique focus of the UMJC through your prayers, advocacy, and financial support.

To join, just fill out this form and send it with your initial annual dues payment to: UMB 529 Jefferson St. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87108

Family Membership (\$55.00)

Individual Membership (\$40.00)

Congregational membership: We will contact you.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

Home congregation _____

I am (or my family is) Jewish

I am (or my family is) a non-Jewish supporter of the Jewish people.