

MORE JEWISH THAN EVER

For the purpose of this lesson, let's say the definition of a Jew is a person who practices the Jewish religion. I suspect most people who say they're Jews would agree to that. I also suspect that they would not agree that today's messianic Jews are truly Jews. . .but that they're actually Christians in disguise.

Real messianic Jews, obviously, would be Judaism's Jews who believe in a messiah. That is, someone chosen by G-d to lead His people out of desperate circumstances. But that wouldn't make Christians, messianic Jews in disguise. There is a big divide, erected by both sides. A man-made divide which can and should be removed.

In truth, all 3 Abrahamic religions, at their core, are messianic. The need and prophesy for a messiah comes from a crucial passage and verse in the earliest portion of G-d's revelation. When humanity became sinful and was rejected by G-d, G-d promised to send someone to claw back at that catastrophe, but at a cost (***Genesis-or Bereisheet 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.***¹).

So, the concept of messiah has been a rich root of hope that has been continued in the scriptures and teachings of the Abrahamic faiths. But that powerful concept evolved into three very different forms. That evolution has been a trial and torment to Jews for the last two thousand years. Jewish believers can, and, I think, should take a stand where they also claw back their birthright to a Judaism that gets ahead of, and nullifies, that torment wrongly heaped upon them for millennia.

This "lesson" will not include anything new, except perspective. An invite a for a fresh look at an old controversy. The same old facts presented in a new, yet Tanakh based framework. An invite for an empowering recalibration of where to stand before G-d, as a faithful Jew.

There is this bright line one can trace from that Genesis 3:15 verse all the way through even the Muslim Koran that makes the basic belief in the existence of a god, shared by most of humanity, into a riveting pilgrimage toward the living G-d. This bright line sees people adopted into their branch of G-d's family, through the agency and people Moses led out of Egypt.

G-d delayed choosing a people to rescue, for himself, out of the fallen mass of humanity until He chose Abram, whose descendants were to bring this blessing to all G-d's families, in all nations (***Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.***). And this, the role of the Jewish Messiah. This Biblical role seems to contrast with the rabbinic interpretation for a political role for the Mashiach to submit all nations on earth to a permanently preeminent Jewish Israel.

The Bible's books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and others, document the rejection of G-d by national Israel and G-d's rejection of Israel as His "people". The context includes prophesy of a restoration of God's shepherding and redeeming of His people in a different way. This is summarized in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, G-d fostering a "new" covenant, detailed in verses 31-34 (***Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know***

me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.)

This new covenant being an internal relationship with G-d for each individual believer. A relationship not established or controlled by any particular nation or religion. But rather an inward, heartfelt, genuine belonging to G-d. This “belonging” relationship coming from a spiritual cleansing that changes everything (verse 18 of the passage Isaiah 1:10-20 ***Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool).***

G-d does not change course, though. He continues course. To the next level. The Torah traces these levels for us. After the creation promise and the choosing of Abraham, his descendants incubated in captivity in Egypt. Then a miracle happened. They became G-d’s people. An event precipitated by applying the blood of a sacrificial lamb on each family home doorway to avoid the destruction of life that came on the Egyptians.

Then, shortly after they left Egypt, G-d gave detailed worship guidelines for His people. Guidelines that continued and emphasized the idea of a blood sacrifice to keep His people pure. This Temple worship continued even through the destruction of Solomon’s temple all the way up to a second and, then, permanent elimination of the Jerusalem Temple and its worship guidelines, by the pagan Romans.

Was this huge event G-d changing course? Telling His people to wander into uncharted waters without any new prophesy to guide them. Trusting that the new rabbinic order would be able to figure out what God was doing and wanting from His people? Or was this still G-d continuing course on to the next level?

The events leading to the Temple destruction in year 70 saw increased persecution of Jews, forcing many to leave Judea. Those Jews following the recent rabbi Yeshua, as mashiach, obviously, were among them. What happened next must be the hand of G-d (the Gamaliel principle²). That messianic movement caught fire in the Roman world and became Christianity. Christianity, like Judaism before it, deviated from that bright line. In turn Islam took root, which has gone on to make its own deviations. These three beliefs spread through, and took over, the world.

I would ask believing Jews to consider that path taken by a significant fraction of their brethren when the Jerusalem temple was destroyed. The Messianic Jews of the first couple centuries after the final destruction of the Temple remained completely Jewish, moving into the Jeremiah covenant. . .until they were gradually squeezed out of existence by a new but progressively pagan-tainted Roman Christianity.

Despite the mortal differences among the three faiths, that bright line of the Messiah links all three. There is a single, although significant recalibration, that believers in each of these beliefs can make, that simultaneously anchors them to their own faith’s roots and makes all the like-minded believers in those three faiths, a family.

Rabbinic Judaism continues to expect a conquering mashiach to force everyone to submit to a national Israel. Yet, in that new covenant, just mentioned, in Jeremiah 31, G-d reaches into the heart and mind of each of His people, individually and equally, through a cleansing forgiveness. This perfectly affirms and confirms the Torah teachings where a blood sacrifice, prefigured in the Passover lamb, was the foundation of Levitical temple altar worship, representing that cleansing atonement for each believer.

G-d had finally prepared the effective priestly sacrifice in the mashiach lamb, consummated around year 35 thereby eliminating the temple and Levitical offerings in year 70. This consummate sacrifice makes each

believer into a living temple whose priest is a unique Jewish rabbi, endowed by G-d with the power of the prophesied Jewish Mashiach to fulfill the role as the Lamb of G-d.

G-d apparently put something of His own Spirit into this human offering. Something that somehow actually made a withdrawal from G-d, atoning for all the sins of all believers. He then showers this same something of Himself into the heart of each believer.

A Jewish messianic believer continues this inward temple worship of historic Israel remaining within the rabbinic Jewish community and synagogue. Changed inwardly, able to practice all the historic traditions and ceremonies with, and from, a redeemed perspective.

Instead of being a disappointment to fellow Jews, now able to be an unwelcome, yet needed, Jewish prod to Christians and Muslims to recognize the scriptural Mashiach. Not as a part of a trinity or as only a prophet, but the bright line that comes through the Torah and through all three volumes of the Word of G-d. Since there is only One G-d with only one message. That message the supreme Abrahamic blessing, at multiple levels, to all G-d's families the world over.

1. Quotes from the Revised Standard Version, copyright © 1971 et al.
2. The Gamaliel principle is the precept that whatever God wills will occur such that no matter what people may do to frustrate such, the outcome is not changed. Multiple references and usages may be encountered on-line. This from the interaction of the Jewish high priest recounted in Acts 5:34-39 as related to events referenced in this paper.