

Is the Torah Only for Jews? The Relationship of Jew and Non-Jew in God's Covenant A response by Russ Resnik

The terms "Messianic Jew" and "Messianic Judaism" have been used ever more broadly over the past quarter century, so that today they apply to widely diverse groups and individuals. As an organization bringing together a good number of such groups, the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) set out three years ago to develop a definition of what we mean by these terms.

A basic and expanded statement "Defining Messianic Judaism" was approved by the UMJC delegates this past summer. As General Secretary of the UMJC, I developed a commentary on the official statement, to explore its implications and to continue the discussion among our leadership. Tim Hegg recently offered a 67-page response online, and in a shorter version through First Fruits of Zion. His paper "Is the Torah Only for Jews?" responds to both documents, and gives them equal weight, but it is important to note their different standing within our organization. My commentary is not an official UMJC document. In this paper, I am speaking on my own, as author of the commentary, and an interpreter of our delegate-approved definition statement. Both documents can be found in their entirety here at www.umjc.org/faq.

When I first saw the 67-page response to our statements offered at TorahResource.com, I felt like the old Jewish mother in the story. She is sitting with the other yentas at a nursing home, all bragging about their sons. This mother boasts, "My son spends \$150 an hour just to talk to a psychiatrist!" All the old ladies are impressed. "And he goes three times a week." Even more impressed. "And what does he talk about all this time? ME!"

Despite the honor of eliciting a 67-page paper, however, I will have to keep my response brief. I cannot cover its entire thesis, but will address some of the issues which it raises. I will begin by clearing up some preliminary points, then focus on the theme of circumcision, which will go a long way toward answering the question, Is the Torah only for Jews?

1. Preliminary Clarifications

1.1 First, the title of the paper is misleading: "Is the Torah only for Jews?"

We must assume that the author is using the term "the Jews" in the way that it is normally used both in Scripture and ordinary speech, to speak of the religious-national group claiming descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Normally this term is synonymous with "Israel" (as a people, not as the land), both in ordinary usage and in Scripture. (Thus, Paul repeatedly calls himself both a Jew and an Israelite; compare also Matthew 2:2, 6; 27:37, 42; Acts 2:5, 22, 36; 21:27-28.) Hegg allows for some ambiguity here, however, because it has always been possible for non-Jews to become part of Israel, as we will discuss below. These members of Israel have an equal share in Torah with native-born Jews.

In my commentary, as Tim Hegg notes, I specifically say that the Torah has universal scope and application. So it is not the case that the Torah is only for Jews. Nevertheless, many aspects of the Torah are given specifically to Israel, that is to the historic Jewish people, including outsiders who become part of this people, not to the entire body of believers. These aspects are defined within the text of Torah itself as God-given identity markers, covenant signs, for Israel.

1.2 The second clarification is related to this one. Hegg suggests "that the threat of a diminished Jewish identity fuels the current debate among Messianics..." (p. 7), implying throughout that this is an unworthy motive for "the need for clear, Jewish identity precludes the Torah being equally the possession of

all." Such a stance, however, begs the question. If aspects of Torah *are* given as markers of Jewish identity, and if Jewish identity matters to God, then it is legitimate for us to maintain Jewish identity, and to define Messianic Judaism in a way that strengthens it.

The Torah repeatedly emphasizes the distinct identity and continuity of Israel. In Balaam's vision, for example, Israel is called "a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9, JPS). Deuteronomy 4:6-8 attributes Israel's distinctiveness among the nations to its possession of Torah.

Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

Israel, as we shall see, comprises the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, plus those who have joined themselves to them through circumcision. It is not a multi-national spiritual entity, but a recognizable people group among the nations of the world, tracing its physical descent from the patriarchs. It is this group that God promises to preserve and uphold throughout history.

*Thus says the LORD,
Who gives the sun for a light by day,
The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night,
Who disturbs the sea,
And its waves roar
(The LORD of hosts is His name):
"If those ordinances depart
From before Me, says the LORD,
Then the seed of Israel shall also cease
From being a nation before Me forever" (Jeremiah 31:35-36).*

Unless one advocates some form of replacement theology, it is clear that Jeremiah is portraying a continuing Jewish identity as God-given, important, and to be preserved.

- 1.3 Finally, Hegg faults me for describing Messianic Judaism as a "Jewish people movement for Yeshua." I use this phrase to draw the contrast with a believers' movement for Torah. Such a movement may be a legitimate and biblical expression, but reflects a different vision from Messianic Judaism as we understand it.

The UMJC sees Messianic Judaism as a Jewish congregational movement committed to Yeshua as Messiah. This movement embraces many non-Jewish members, but remains vitally connected to Jewish life and tradition. Hegg seems to picture Messianic Judaism as a Jewish-Gentile believers movement for Torah or for Jewish roots. We do not necessarily oppose such a movement, but are called to foster a Jewish movement for Messiah because Scripture gives the warrant for an ongoing Jewish identity. Hegg sees this identity as simply a matter of "ethnicity," which is superseded first by the universality of Torah, and second by the coming of Messiah in whom there is no longer Jew nor Greek.

Our definition, in contrast, builds upon Scriptures such as those cited above, to see Jewish identity as God-given, and as contributing to the divine plan of redemption for all peoples. A distinctly Jewish presence within the body of Messiah is essential to God's plan for all humankind. To understand this difference of vision, we need to briefly review the biblical theme of circumcision.

2. Circumcision.

2.1. Within the Torah itself.

Hegg's paper refers to circumcision numerous times as it explores the question of the Torah's universality, but it does not provide a unified understanding of the biblical teaching. If we trace this theme through Scripture, it will clarify a number of issues being raised here.

Let us begin with a key passage for this discussion, one which Hegg cites repeatedly, Exodus 12:37-49. I will quote this passage in its entirety (from the New King James Version), because it touches on a number of key issues.

- 37 *Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.*
- 38 *A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds – a great deal of livestock.*
- 39 *And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.*
- 40 *Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.*
- 41 *And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years – on that very same day – it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.*
- 42 *It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.*
- 43 *And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner (ben nechar) shall eat it.*
- 44 *“But every man’s servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it.*
- 45 *“A sojourner (toshav) and a hired servant shall not eat it.*
- 46 *“In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones.*
- 47 *“All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.*
- 48 *“And when a stranger (ger) dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.*
- 49 *“One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”*

A mixed multitude (v. 38; *erev rav* in Hebrew) goes up from Egypt with the Israelites. Hegg emphasizes this fact: “Israel, whom God redeemed from Egypt, was comprised of both native born and *gerim*, ‘sojourners’...” and “it is the same mixed multitude that stands at the foot of Mt. Sinai and accepts the covenant of the Torah” (p. 33). The essential point that this passage is making, however, is that when a member of this mixed multitude desires to partake of the distinctive covenant meal of Israel, the Passover, *he must be circumcised*. Through this act, he is now incorporated into the people of Israel and may participate in all of the prerogatives of Israel. Without it, he remains an outsider.

It is within this context of circumcision that the Torah first states, “One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.” It is clear in the context that this instruction does not apply to the uncircumcised stranger within Israel. The law regarding Passover for the native born is that he *must* eat it, but the law regarding Passover for the uncircumcised stranger is that he *must not* eat it. Rather, the Torah is teaching that there is one law for the native-born and for the *circumcised* stranger who has now become part of the people of Israel.

Hegg seems to recognize this fact in his discussion of Passover on pp. 46-47, but fails to apply it consistently throughout the paper. Through circumcision, the stranger is incorporated into the people of Israel. Hegg, however, states, "Note carefully that there is no change of ethnic status." He uses the terms "ethnic" and "ethnicity" repeatedly, and faults the UMJC for "return[ing] to an identity based squarely upon ethnic status." But these terms do not appear at all in the UMJC defining statement, or in my commentary. Despite his frequent and critical use of these terms, Hegg never defines them, which greatly confuses his line of argumentation. He apparently uses the terms to mean something akin to the modern concept of "race." He is right to note that incorporation into Israel, and hence into the obligations of Torah, was never limited to race, and that Messianic Jews would be wrong if they held to some sort of racial self-definition.

A more biblical understanding of "ethnic," however, would see it as describing membership in a "people" or "nation." The word is based on the Greek *ethnos*, used in the New Covenant Scriptures to parallel the Hebrew *goy*, which means simply people or nation. In this sense, circumcision *does* result in a change in ethnic status. The stranger, the member of the mixed multitude, is now incorporated into the people of Israel, and subject to all the obligations and privileges, the same Torah, as the rest of Israel.

Circumcision as the requirement for inclusion in the household of Israel is not just rabbinic, as Hegg seems to argue (pp. 23f.), but is Torah, established when circumcision was first given to Abraham. He is to circumcise himself, his offspring, and his servants, every man in his household. Incorporation into the covenant, as Hegg correctly observes, is not based on tribal identity alone. Rather, the entire household of Abraham, native-born and foreigners, is to be circumcised. Any male who is not circumcised "shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant" (Gen. 17:14).

At the same time, it would be a mistake to disregard the tribal identity altogether. It is the line of Abraham that is brought into covenant, and the covenant is passed on down this line. Outsiders can enter in, through faith and circumcision, but the core people group is the physical line of Abraham. The household of God is the household of Abraham, which includes all those born into it, plus those joined to it through circumcision. This same pattern prevails at the Exodus, and throughout biblical history, until a dramatic change comes with the arrival of Messiah Yeshua. But even after the appearance of Messiah, within the Jewish world, the same pattern prevails. The Jewish household, the physical descendants of Abraham, remains the core, but outsiders can enter in through faith and circumcision.

This reality is highlighted in Joshua chapter five. The Torah states in a number of passages that the same law applies to the native-born and to the sojourner. Before these laws go into full effect within the Land of Israel, however, all the Israelites, both native-born and sojourners, all those who have crossed the Jordan with Joshua, must be circumcised. The connection between the fullness of Torah and circumcision is clear. Circumcision marks the boundary between those who have the fullness of Torah and those who have the more general connection to Torah common to all nations.

Thus, Hegg's distinction between a sociological and a religious meaning of *ger* is overstated. The term often has both significations. Exodus 12 is the first passage in Torah that speaks of the *ger* as a non-Israelite who joins with the people of Israel. It states clearly and unequivocally that he must be circumcised to do so. Then he is under the same Torah as the native-born Israelite. Afterwards, the *ger* is explicitly included in a number of Torah regulations and there is no reason to expect that he somehow became exempt from the law of circumcision. A *ger* in the Torah is normally a stranger who has become a member of the household of Israel through faith sealed by circumcision. The picture is completed in Joshua 5, where all the males who are to enter the Land of Israel undergo circumcision. Yes, at least before the coming of Messiah, "Torah is equally the possession of all

covenant members," as Hegg states in his conclusion, and one seals his a covenant membership through circumcision.

This is the meaning of my claim (which claim Hegg labels as "pure nonsense") that Scripture "sets a precedent for a ritual of conversion." Apparently, he is still thinking racially and cannot conceive of a ritual "by which a non-Jew becomes a Jew." This is not a matter of race, however, but of peoplehood. Through circumcision, a member of any people can become part of Israel, part of the Jewish people. Note that I word my claim rather carefully. Scripture does not *provide* a ritual of conversion, but sets a *precedent* for such a ritual. It does provide circumcision as the sign that one from the nations has joined the holy nation Israel. More elaborate rituals for the same transaction come later.

Thus, in the days before Messiah, different aspects, or degrees, of Torah applied to different groups. Much of its teaching was and is of universal application. Portions of its teaching, however, applied specifically to Israel, and within those portions, some applied only to males, and some even more narrowly only to Levites and to priests. But Gentiles could access the full Torah of the Jewish people through conversion marked by circumcision.

2.2 Circumcision in the Apostolic Writings

This picture changes with the coming of Messiah. Circumcision and Torah observance will remain linked, but access to the God of Israel will no longer be available only through incorporation into the people of Israel. Rather, it becomes available directly through the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua of Nazareth. In other words, circumcision and all that it implies will no longer be a requirement for incorporation into the people of God. At the same time, circumcision and full Torah observance remain linked, even within the Body of Messiah.

The discussion in Acts 15 centers on this issue. The interpretation of this text illustrates the clash of visions between Messianic Judaism as a Yeshua movement within the Jewish community, and Messianic Judaism as a Jewish roots movement. It is seems significant that Hegg leaves chapter 15 entirely out of his overview of the Book of Acts (pp. 51-57), for it certainly will not support his claim of equal Torah observance expected of all believers, Jewish and Gentile.

In Acts 15 the Jerusalem Council is considering whether Gentile believers are required to be circumcised and "to keep the law of Moses" (15:5). Note the same linkage between circumcision and full Torah observance here that we have traced in the Torah itself. Ya'akov's response to this question is that Gentiles are not required to accept circumcision and all it implies, but only to keep some basic laws of diet and morality, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (15:21).

Some who advocate a Jewish roots movement believe that Ya'akov is saying that Gentiles should be accepted "as is" because they will still hear the teachings of Torah every week and gradually become more observant. In this view, circumcision and Torah obedience cannot be required for salvation, but they (or at least Torah obedience) are still the ideal, and can be instilled in Gentile believers through a gradual process of connection with the synagogue. Thus, Ariel Berkowitz writes in *Take Hold: Embracing Our Divine Inheritance With Israel* (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 1998, p. 94),

In other words, the Jewish elders were telling the non-Jewish believers that, as they participated in the holy community and in the synagogue on a weekly basis, they would grow in their understanding of the Torah. Thus, in their wisdom, they knew the reality of Yeshua's teaching that "My sheep know My voice and follow Me." The Torah is the voice of Yeshua, and these young lambs would hear and follow.

The context, however, suggests that Ya'akov is saying something quite different. He is arguing that the Davidic dynasty – “the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down” – has been “rebuilt” through the appearing of Messiah. This is why the Gentiles are now seeking the Lord, *as Gentiles*, just as the prophet Amos foretold (15:16-17). Gentiles coming to know the God of Israel directly, apart from Torah observance, is a sign that the Messiah has come.

Ya'akov says that Moses has been preached “throughout many generations,” but only now that Messiah has appeared is there a great ingathering of Gentiles. His emphasis is not that Moses is currently being read in the synagogues and available to the Gentile believers, but that Moses has been read in the synagogues for generations, without bringing the glorious changes, foretold by the prophets, that are now evident with the appearing of Messiah. Why would Ya'akov emphasize the generations-long study of Moses if his point were to encourage present-day Gentiles to come under his influence? Instead, he is contrasting this long and venerable tradition with the new conditions that prevail with Messiah's appearing.

Indeed, even Jews throughout those same generations found seeking salvation through obedience to Torah to be “a yoke ... which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (15:10). Now, with the presence of Messiah and the gift of the Spirit of God, a new day has come.

This interpretation is sustained when we read the letter that the Jerusalem elders sent out to “the brethren who are of the Gentiles” (15:23-29). This letter explicitly repeats the ruling of the Jerusalem council that Gentiles are to “abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” Then it concludes with no mention of hearing Moses in the synagogue, which concluded the original decision. The letter simply says: “If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” That's it; no encouragement or even mention of participation in the synagogue at all. There is certainly no evidence that “the Jewish elders were telling the non-Jewish believers that, as they participated in the holy community and in the synagogue on a weekly basis, they would grow in their understanding of the Torah,” as in the quotation above.

Despite differing interpretations of Acts 15:21, one point is undeniably clear. Torah applies to Gentiles differently than it applies to Jews, even within the body of believers. Ya'akov is certainly not anti-Torah, but he gives Torah a different weight among Jews than among Gentiles. The Jerusalem elders reiterate the contrast between Jewish and Gentile observance within the believing community in Acts 21:20-25. The Hegg article misses this biblical distinction when it applies all of Torah automatically to all believers.

The frequently cited ordinance that “You shall have the same law for the stranger and for the native-born...” permitted Gentiles to participate in the life and worship of Israel, including circumcision. Only through such participation could one draw near to the God of Israel in the days before Messiah came. Now that Messiah has come, however, Gentiles have direct access to the God of Israel without becoming part of Israel, that is, being circumcised. Therefore, the Jerusalem Council specifically exempted the Gentile believers from the “same law” that would have applied to them if they sought to approach God through connection with Israel. “Therefore,” Ya'akov says, “I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19-20) – certainly not the same law that applied to the Jewish believers.

The letter to the Galatians builds upon this truth. Rav Shaul writes to the Gentiles: “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Messiah will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law” (5:2-3). However one interprets this passage, it is clear that uncircumcised Gentiles are not obligated to keep Torah in the way that the circumcision, including Jewish believers, are.

The letter to the Galatians, in conjunction with Acts 15, establishes two points contra Tim Hegg. First, believers in Messiah, as believers, are not automatically given the full “possession” of Torah. Second, Jewish believers, even within the Body of Messiah, maintain a relationship with Torah. Hence the emphasis in my commentary on maintaining a distinct Jewish identity based on Torah is not just a psychological identity quest, but a response to Scripture itself. As a corollary, our call for a Jewish movement for Messiah, rather than for a believers movement for Torah, is a biblical calling.

In his comments on Romans, Hegg writes, “In no place is there found the picture of separate identities within an ethereal or spiritual unity. Paul’s letters are addressed to actual congregations made up of Jew and Gentile who were to find their identity, not in their ethnicity, but in their singular faith in God through His Messiah, Yeshua” (p. 57). Apparently, Hegg is still using ethnicity in the modern sense as a racial or demographic group. Nevertheless, a separate Jewish identity does remain significant in Romans, perhaps not in individual terms, but certainly in corporate terms.

In Romans, Paul states that Jews and Greeks are all under sin (3:9), equally in need of God’s gift of salvation in Messiah, that God is the God of Jews and Gentiles alike (3:29-30), and that “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him” (10:12). Yet he continually speaks of the two categories of Jew and Gentile, even when speaking of believers, including himself. And he recognizes a distinct calling for the Jewish people, beginning in 3:1-2, with the question, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” In 9:4-5, he continues this discussion of the Jewish distinctive: “Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service (or order of worship), and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Messiah came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.” And in 11:28-29, “Concerning the gospel [the Jews are] enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

Toward the end of Romans, Paul turns his attention to the Messianic Jewish community of Jerusalem. He is bringing an offering from the congregations of Achaia and Macedonia, which he identifies not as “made up of Jew and Gentile” as Hegg claims, but simply as Gentiles. As such they have a particular obligation to their Jewish brothers. “For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things” (15:25-26). There is much that could be said about this passage, but I am simply making the point that Paul continues to recognize distinct Jewish and Gentile identities within the Body of Messiah, and to see this distinction as a way in which God can be glorified.

I could cite more examples from Paul’s writings, but the point is clear: In the body of Messiah, Jews and Gentiles are one and enjoy the same access to God through his grace. At the same time, they maintain distinct callings. Hence it is legitimate for us to foster a distinct movement for Messiah among the Jewish people. As I write in my commentary: “God is glorified when Jews practice their unique calling and traditions even as they honor Gentile believers as brothers and sisters in Messiah. God is glorified when Gentile believers serve him as representatives of all the nations alongside a remnant of the priestly nation Israel.”

3. Conclusion

The preceding discussion establishes three points that are relevant to the question, “Is the Torah only for Jews?”

- 3.1 The question itself skews the issue because it does not define the term “Jew.” It assumes that this is a strictly ethnic or racial category that can be entered only by birth. Hegg repeatedly denies the existence of “any formal ritual of conversion” in the Tanach, but overlooks the fact that circumcision provides a conversion by which a non-Israelite becomes part of Israel. His “ethnicity” does not change in a racial sense, but he becomes part of the new ethnos—nation or people—of Israel, when before he was an outsider. This change can be understood as a form of conversion.
- 3.2 The Torah is for all humanity, but it does contain aspects that apply directly only to those who are part of the covenant community marked by circumcision. This community or household is Israel, known today as the Jewish people, a distinct, but not impermeable group. Non-Jews have always been able to gain access into it through faith and circumcision. But the Torah clearly distinguishes between the requirements and privileges of the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and exempts the latter from many of its teachings.
- 3.3 This same circumcised-uncircumcised distinction is carried into the New Covenant community. In Messiah, non-Jews are incorporated into the people of God apart from circumcision (Romans 3:29-30; 4:9-12; Galatians 5:6; 6:15), but they do not come into the full obligation and privilege of the Mosaic legislation (Acts 15:22-29; 21:20-25; Galatians 5:3). In the New Covenant, Jews and Gentiles share the same access to God through his Spirit and are brothers and sisters in Messiah, yet retain distinctive callings. God is glorified in this distinction just as he is in the ongoing distinction between male and female, who are also one in Messiah.

The issue with which we are dealing, of course, is not circumcision, but the relationship of Jews and non-Jews to Torah. Circumcision is so central to this discussion that it becomes in the New Covenant writings virtually a synonym with Israel or Jewishness. The New Covenant, particularly in the writings of Paul, makes it clear that circumcision does not impart some sort of superiority before God. But it would be a mistake to conclude from this, as much Christian theology has done over the centuries, that circumcision is now meaningless and irrelevant before God.

Near the end of his paper Hegg makes this claim:

Finally, the dilemma faced by this definition of Messianic Judaism is clearly the “Gentile problem.” While the Messianics recognize that the believing Gentile must be received as a covenant member, they also realize that they cannot expect to have a viable and living relationship with the unbelieving Jewish community and openly accept their Gentile brothers into their congregations as well. This forces them to accept the unbiblical “ritual of conversion” in order to “change” Gentiles into Jews.

This statement misconstrues our entire self-definition, and reveals why Hegg misinterprets much of it. Most Messianic Jewish congregations have many Gentile members who are fully incorporated into the life of the community. Gentiles within Messianic Jewish congregations enjoy the Torah way of life along with their Jewish brothers and sisters. We display the brotherhood in Messiah of which Scripture speaks.

No, the “Gentile problem” is not our dilemma; rather, this is the dilemma that I address in my commentary:

Messiah models identification with Israel, yet we have often allowed our differences with rabbinic authority or with Jewish customs to alienate us from Israel’s continuing story, as in the manner of Christian supersessionism. Messianic Judaism properly understood, however, is a decisive counter to supersessionism; it embodies the truth that God has revealed himself and his purposes within the story of the Jewish people and does not need to set them aside to bring humankind to its destination. Jews should remain Jews when they believe in Messiah, not in some technical or token sense, but in practice and outlook, in family life and community involvement.

Torah has shaped and preserved the Jewish people even through the twenty centuries following the appearance of Messiah. Our Gentile brothers and sisters who love the Torah should understand and support this unique calling to establish a testimony for Yeshua *within* Israel, in continuity with the Jewish life and tradition that arise from Torah.