

Congregational Vision And Concept

by Rabbi Shmuel

1. Our reason for existence as a Messianic Jewish congregation is the covenants G-d made with our people. In particular, the Abrahamic covenant implies that Abraham's offspring would serve G-d as a distinct people, with rights to a distinct Land, forever. The Torah, and the Messiah, are the specifics of the terms of that covenant, and the empowerment of that covenant. Since our "constitutional" roots go back to Gen. 12, we are fundamentally a Judaism, not a Christianity.

We are defining Christianity as the predominantly Gentile church, that has been the custodian of the good news of the Jewish Messiah, for the last 1800 years, approximately, and has wedded the message of the Messiah with their indigenous cultures. Christianity, so defined, finds its validating and genuine core in the spiritual principles of the Messiah and His redemption. However, Messianics are part of the people who were given the root promises of redemption. Therefore, our core revelation includes some issues distinct from those of the church at its best. Therefore, our lot is fixed with those who share the Abrahamic promises, that is, the Jewish people.

2. Therefore our task is to:
 - a. transmit this covenantal connection to the next generation of Jews
 - i. by evangelism: leading our children and our surrounding Jewish community to the Messiah and His resurrection power in the Ruakh HaKodesh. Personal relationship and intimacy with the Messiah and the Ruakh is the first task.
 - ii. by educating:
 - (1) communicating the vision of the covenantal torch. L'dor va-dor.
 - (2) imparting the vast wealth of Jewish knowledge which is the substance of the culture of our people.
 - iii. community building: men's khavurah [group], sisterhood, youth group, home groups, counseling, encouraging individuals in their callings and giftings in the Ruakh.
 - b. teach the Gentiles that wish to affiliate with us, and share in the glory, the work, and the suffering, the role of *gerim*, the assimilated foreigners among the people of Israel.
 - c. define how we are to keep the covenants; Abrahamic, Mosiac, Davidic and the New or Renewed. That is, to redefine Judaism with Messiah and the spiritual empowerment of the New Covenant. Torah, the Siddur, halakhah, the Land/exile, Israel and the Gentiles must be re-understood.

To ignore this task, and simply assimilate and follow the Messiah according to the Renewed Covenant only, is a form of cultural suicide, or genocide. It certainly misses the greater glory of the Jewish people's "life from the dead."

There will be many judgment calls involving community and Toraic identity that will be subject to much discussion, and difference of opinion. The rabbi's perspective and passion, and pulpit expression will have a great deal of influence in these definitions. Who I am will determine a lot of what Or HaOlam is, while I am serving here.

- d. communicate to the body of Messiah in the Gentile church world the truth of the above.

Staff Spirituality

If you are on any of the Boards, or on staff, or on the platform, you are participating in a work that draws people to G-d and to the Messiah of Israel. Therefore it is absolutely essential that those who commit themselves to so participate in ministry must themselves be active worshipers of Adoni. This means that

- You are personally committed and consistent to have a regular, daily (or almost daily) times of individual worship, studying the Word of HaShem and lifting your spirit to Him in prayer.
- Those under your spiritual umbrella of authority, particularly family members, receive from you regular, daily (or almost daily) times of spiritual nurture: Bible reading and prayer with your spouse and children. We understand that wives cannot insist that their husbands pray with them,

but they should make themselves available. Husbands should take the role and responsibility of being the כוהן, *cohayn*, priest of the home in leading the family in worship.

Platform Appearance

- Men and women should be dressed up for synagogue worship. Ps 29: 2
 - As worshipers, men should wear a kippah, and a talit, unless the musical instrument they are playing makes the talit a hindrance.
 - The kippah is not specifically scriptural, but seems to be a carry-over from the *meets-ne-fet*, the turban of the cohaneem, the priests of the Temple. It has traditional and identificational value endorsed by the Messiah in Mt. 23: 1 – 2. Moreover, there seems, to at least some people, to be a spiritual value to being under a symbol of the covering of the *kipporah*, the atonement.
 - The talit is explained to us in Nu. 15: 37 - 41.
 - Women should dress modestly.
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Governmental philosophy

The objective of the By-Laws of Or HaOlam is that our body is to be governed by Adoni, through the rabbi and his advisors. This structure is theologically described as a theocracy, although the word is introduced with caution, as it has been tainted with deadly abuse by the Ayatollahs, the Taliban, and cults here in America. We acknowledge that we do not have a true and perfect theocracy, for we only grasp His will "seeing but a poor reflection as in a mirror" 1 Cor 13:12 NIV]. But the term is a useful summary of the focus and intent of the government.

It has been stated by some in high positions of leadership that an effective organization is not possible unless loyalty to the leader is more important to the workers than loyalty to the organization. This very strong statement can be the source of great power, both for good and bad.

- Loyalty to the leader, or rabbi, means loyalty to tell him his faults as necessary. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted." Prov 27:6 NIV That is, prayerful, friendly advice and admonition is welcome. Angry criticism is unfruitful. "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute." Prov 15:18 NASU
- Loyalty to the leader means the realization that the leader will interface with every component of the operation of the congregation eventually, to a greater or lesser extent. Everything that is done, therefore, should be consistent with what is known of his spirit, vision, passion, or *modus operandi*. If you suspect that some proposed idea would be problematic to the leader, even if it is otherwise a good idea for the congregation, then that idea is not good for the congregation, and please share it with Shmuel. This is the particular significance of the statement above, that loyalty to the leader is more important than loyalty to the organization. Discuss the proposed idea with the leader, so that there is harmony in the working of the congregation.
- Diverse ideas and divergent opinions about policy should be freely aired. It is important to dialogue differences, rather than leave seeds of bitterness to fester and ultimately erupt.
- My own style and personality is such that you will have to allow me to lead, somewhat analogous to a dance leader and partner. I will not demand it. If you esteem me to be the man called of the Messiah for the job, we will dance.