

A Messianic Gentile In A Messianic Jewish Congregation by Don Daly

What is a Messianic Gentile?! That seems like such a strange term. Perhaps the meaning of the term will become clearer as we attempt to clarify the meaning of "Messianic Jewish". It is generally understood that being Jewish means being a descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and it implies being a follower of Judaism and its practices. In another sense, it is applied to anyone who has joined himself to the people of Israel through ritual conversion, including circumcision for men. The term "Messianic" (i.e. "of Messiah or Christ") refers to anyone, Jew or gentile, who has chosen to follow the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). Scripturally, the term "gentile" refers to someone who was born of non-Jewish parents and who did not identify himself with Israel through ritual conversion and circumcision. Thus, a "Messianic gentile" could be applied to anyone who was born of non-Jewish parents and who is a follower of Yeshua.

Most Messianic gentiles have chosen to worship the Lord in a setting that is largely devoid of any Jewish [culture]- - -the traditional church. There is, however a small but growing group of gentiles who have left the gentilized form of Christianity to join with their Jewish brothers who worship the Messiah of Israel in an original Jewish way. They have found that in returning to the Jewish roots of their faith they have achieved a deeper understanding and a more fulfilling expression of their faith. Many of these gentiles live out their faith in a Jewish context, celebrating in their own homes the Jewish holidays as fulfilled by Yeshua. They often keep Biblical kashrut (Kosher laws) and other customs freely and without legalism, as a way to worship the Lord.

We see in the New Covenant that Messianic gentiles have met every requirement to be accepted as full spiritual partners with their Jewish brethren in the Messianic faith. "Do not lose sight of the fact that you were born 'gentiles'..., utterstrangers to God's chosen community, Israel; and you had no knowledge of, or right to, the promised agreements [covenants] ... But now, through the blood of the Messiah, you are with us inside the circle of God's love (Eph. 2:11-13, Phillips). Furthermore, Acts 15:23-29 makes it clear that in order to become a child of God, a gentile does not need to undergo conversion rites to Judaism. In fact, Rav Shaul (Paul) takes it one step further - - - Messianic gentiles should remain as they are and not seek to become part of Israel in the flesh. (I Cor.7:18-24)

We who are gentile participants in the Messianic Jewish faith are not second class citizens, but are equal partners with our Jewish brethren. As equal partners, however, we must share the vision of a culturally Jewish expression of faith and an outreach that reaches the Jew first, as well as the unsaved gentile. After all, there is an abundance of places of worship where the faith is expressed in a culturally gentile context. Those who are uncomfortable in a Messianic Jewish context can fellowship there.

In summary, although it is improper and inaccurate to claim a Jewish lineage if we are gentiles, it is good to share how we too have come to faith because of our relationship with the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua. When unbelieving Jewish people hear of our zealotness for the Jewishness of our faith, and our excitement over the Jewish Messiah, it can provoke them to jealousy. We trust that they will see that Yeshua is not the "gentile god," but the "Redeemer of Israel."