

Summer 2016 / Volume 1 / Number 19  
אריאל



ARIEL  
MINISTRIES

Understanding  
**Psalms**  
**52/142**

**A New Reality  
for Ariel Israel**

**The Dangers of  
Incorrect Translation**

**A Closer Look  
at the Jewish Prayer Shawl**

*The Art of the Messianic Dance*

# Now Available

## YESHUA: THE LIFE OF MESSIAH FROM A MESSIANIC JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum

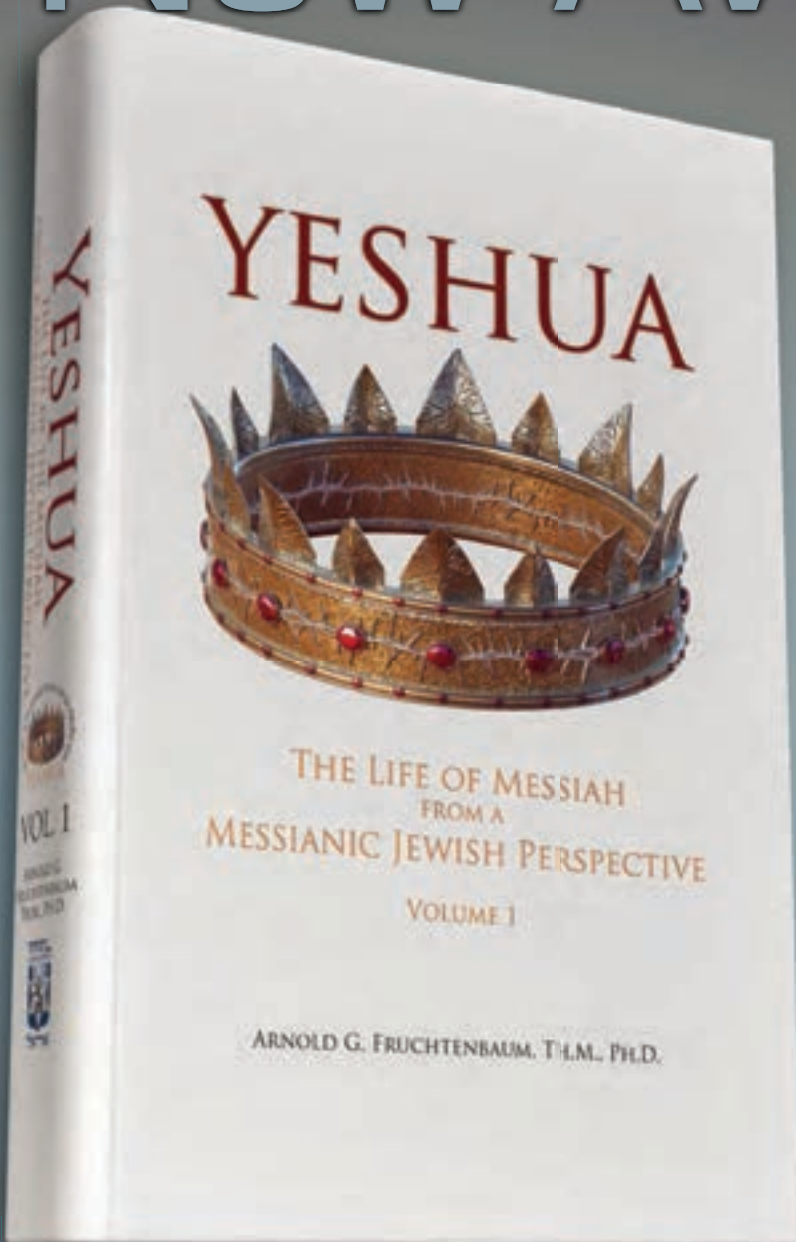
During His ministry to the Jewish people, Yeshua (Jesus) journeyed throughout the land promised to the Jewish patriarchs, presenting Himself to the Jews as their Messiah. He was a Jew living in a Jewish land among the Jewish people, yet, much of the knowledge of this Jewish society, its culture, and traditions has grown dim with the passage of time. In this work, Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum shines a bright light on the life of Yeshua and the land of Israel during the Second Temple period, interpreting the Gospels from a

Messianic Jewish perspective. To achieve this, Dr. Fruchtenbaum has done original research in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek source texts, and has also drawn on the works of other scholars and the writings of the ancient rabbis.

**Price: \$33.00**

**Volume 1 (the first in a series of three volumes)**

**Hardcover: 582 pages**



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# letter from the editor

## Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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Hard to believe that it's been eight years since I first joined the Ariel Ministries family. I remember walking into the home office for the first time, anxious to begin my first assignment, which was writing a story for the newsletter. If you remember the newsletter, then you might be an Arielnik! Little did I know that years later we'd be publishing a full-color magazine with thought-provoking stories, tear-jerking testimonies, and in-depth Bible studies.

Now, I sit here in front of my laptop, staring at the screen and taking stock of those last eight years. So much has happened since, and I have been blessed to sit in the front row, while watching God do some amazing things at Ariel. I've made great friendships along the way – and the people I've met at Camp Shoshanah will be my friends for life. In fact, Camp is where I met my fiancé and soon-to-be husband, Samuel! How wonderful it is to reflect on those last eight years and to see the hand of God in so many different ways. I will miss many things about this ministry – the people, the projects, the passion, the laughter, and even the tears.

As I move on, I pray for those that God has raised up (and will raise up) in this ministry. We are so blessed to be surrounded by creative and passionate people – some of whom are volunteering their time and talents for Ariel. I pray that these creative and passionate people will continue to put forth their effort, which in turn is a blessing to Ariel Ministries. I pray for our editor-in-chief and the wonderful proofreaders she works with – may God give them the strength and endurance to get through each and every project successfully. They are the key people with whom God has richly blessed this ministry. I pray for our wonderful designers, the two men who help put together this magazine. May the Lord continue to bless their artistic hands.

I pray for all of our branches and representatives. We are blessed to have such an amazing team of God-fearing men and women evangelizing, discipling, and teaching the Word of God all over the world. How amazing it is to have believers with a heart for Jewish missions representing Ariel globally! I pray for those who oversee Camp Shoshanah and Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies in upstate New York – may their hard work and sacrifices continue to bless this ministry, and may they be blessed in return for their commitment. I pray for the Home Office – they are the glue that holds this entire ministry together. Without them, we'd fall apart at the seams! God has blessed the Home Office with talented people who are committed to getting the job done. May they always be recognized for their hard work.

And finally, I pray for Arnold and the board of directors. May God instill wisdom in these fine men as they move forward – and may He continue to direct their steps according to His good and perfect will. I will miss each and every one of you. Through good times and tough times, through thick and thin – may each and every one of you continue to do the work of your Messiah Yeshua, spreading the good news all around the world. So long, my friends. Be blessed!

In Him, Emily Glisson



## Ariel Branches & Representatives

### ARIEL BRANCHES



#### Ariel Australia Chris & Lisa Savage

Website: [www.ariel.org.au](http://www.ariel.org.au)  
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Chris & Lisa Savage represent Ariel Ministries in Australia. Based in Victoria, we currently teach the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective to weekly classes. Bi-monthly one day seminars start in July with national teaching engagements commencing in the second half of 2015.



#### Ariel Canada Jacques Isaac and Sharon Gabizon

Website: [www.arielcanada.com](http://www.arielcanada.com)  
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Jacques and Sharon Gabizon represent Ariel Ministries in Canada. Their projects include door-to-door evangelism of Jewish homes in Montreal and translating Ariel's manuscripts into French. Ariel Canada established a messianic congregation in Montreal called Beth Ariel.



#### Ariel India Bakul N. Christian

Email: [bakulchristian@yahoo.co.in](mailto:bakulchristian@yahoo.co.in)

Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife and daughter in Ahmedabad. After a chance meeting with a former New Zealand representative, Bakul became interested in the Jewish perspective of God's Word. Today, Bakul daily seeks the Lord's direction concerning his outreach ministry in India.



#### Ariel Israel Sasha G. & Lilian G.

Email: [sashag@ariel.org](mailto:sashag@ariel.org)

Sasha and Lilian G. represent Ariel Ministries in Israel. The husband and wife team have been representing Ariel Ministries in Israel since October 2009. They are responsible for coordinating the translating the Come & See Discipleship Program into Hebrew and Russian.



#### Ariel China

For safety issues, we must protect the identity of this branch. Please keep them in your prayers.



#### Ariel Germany

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Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife, Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, turned it into a full branch. Today, this branch is led by a team of brothers and sisters.



#### Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

Email: [hungary@ariel.org](mailto:hungary@ariel.org)

Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband and wife team have developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They also host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish people, believers, and to the Hungarian people.



#### Ariel New Zealand Johan Jansen van Vuuren

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The Ariel New Zealand board of Johan van Vuuren, Jason Santiago, and John Cavanagh was appointed in July this year and is working at establishing the New Zealand branch in Auckland as well as organising Arnold's tour through New Zealand in 2015.

### ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



#### Michael & Hannah Gabizon (Hamilton)

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Michael and Hannah Gabizon are missionaries representing Ariel Ministries in Canada. The young couple has actively been involved in teaching and discipling people through God's Word. Their goal is to identify other young people within their sphere of influence who may be interested in becoming involved with Ariel.



#### Chris & Tina Eisbrenner (New York)

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Chris and Tina Eisbrenner are missionaries representing Ariel Ministries in Upstate NY and the New England area. Chris serves as academic dean and professor at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies (ASMJS), and Tina is office manager of ASMJS. Chris is also a field representative for Ariel Ministries, ministering in churches across the US and Canada, teaching the Bible from a Jewish historical and cultural perspective.



#### John Metzger (Pennsylvania)

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John Metzger is a missionary who represents Ariel Ministries in Pennsylvania. He is a teacher and speaker who actively travels throughout the central and eastern part of the U.S., speaking at various churches and conferences. John is also the author of *Discovering the Mystery of the Unity of God* published by Ariel Ministries.



#### Gary & Missy Demers (New York)

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Gary and his wife Missy are the managers and camp facilitators of the Shoshanah campus in upstate New York. Every summer they help host Ariel's Program of Messianic Jewish Studies. For more information about this program, please visit [www.ariel.org](http://www.ariel.org).





# branch & representative news

## United States



Chris & Tina Eisbrenner

Hello everyone,

This is our first representative update, so we would like to start by telling you a little about ourselves.

We live and serve in Keeseville, New York, with Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies (ASMJS). Chris serves as the school administrator, academic dean, and professor, while Tina serves as the office manager of ASMJS. We are also missionaries with Ariel Ministries. Chris serves as a field representative and teaches the Bible from a Jewish perspective in churches throughout the United States.

We like to look at our ministry up here in upstate New York as our "New England Branch," as we seek to get the gospel out and offer Jewish evangelism training in this area of the United States. The school certainly provides a venue to train believers to do that, but we have also partnered with World Mission Outreach this year to begin a work of Jewish evangelism in the Keeseville, Peru, and Plattsburgh areas of northern New York. Chris taught three Jewish evangelism seminars in March and April at local churches, which were a combination of pastors and lay people from six different churches in the area. We will work with World Mission Outreach in the coming year to put that training to practical use in order to reach the Jewish communities up here.

Chris also traveled on the east coast of the US to speak in churches during April and May. Three of the teachings actually were Messianic Jewish Passover Seders. Together we will also be representing Ariel Ministries in June and July at the IFCA International Annual Convention in Springfield, Illinois, and at Messiah Conference in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, which is an international messianic conference of MJAA. So God is blessing us, and we are grateful for our opportunity to serve at Ariel Ministries.

There is much to do for the Lord in all these areas. Dr. Fruchtenbaum needs us to devote full-time work to

running ASMJS. There is work to do as far traveling to market and recruit for the school. We also have to prepare classes, work with the visiting professors, and develop the online school. We have many hours to devote to the important task of recording Dr. Fruchtenbaum's teaching for the online school, as well as other professors, and get all the curriculum and tests online with the learning management software, etc. We are presently on active deputation trying to raise our full support so we can go full-time with Ariel Ministries to concentrate on all these important duties (we are only able to be part-time presently because of the need to work a secular job). Please prayerfully consider joining our monthly support team so we can devote all of our time to our calling at Ariel Ministries and ASMJS. This would be a blessing and encouragement to us, to ASMJS, and to Dr. Fruchtenbaum. Please email us at [chris.eisbrenner@ariel.org](mailto:chris.eisbrenner@ariel.org) or contact Randy at the home office if you would like more information about joining our monthly support team: (210)344-7707.

## New Zealand



Johan Jansen van Vuuren

We thank God for the progress that we have been making in order to get the branch well established again in Auckland, New Zealand. Our new web page went live at the end of last year. This happened after the previous web page suffered sustained attacks, which consistently kept Ariel New Zealand off-line. That said, we have a new web page with which we are really delighted. Feedback from supporters is very helpful, and we appreciate the time taken to provide the evaluation. This month also saw improvements in



# branch & representative news



how we communicate with our supporters as we moved them to a new and secured member's database.

March also saw Ariel New Zealand support a Jewish seminar on evangelism hosted by Calibrate Messiah in Rangiora, just north of Christchurch. The seminar was presented by Scott Brown of Calibrate Messiah. We have been very cognizant as a board that one of the purposes of Ariel is to proclaim the full appeal of Messiah Yeshua to the Jewish people throughout New Zealand. One of the primary mechanisms to achieve this has been through equipping and discipling believers. Many believers in New Zealand host visiting Israelis. Providing them with our free resources is essential, and our offer to do so is open to anyone who needs help for the specific purpose of Jewish evangelism.

We are particularly grateful for a recent opportunity that has come our way via World Mission Outreach through its directors, Henry and Darlene Matarrita.



Henry and Darlene are based in Israel and have had a long association with Ariel, in particular with Jewish evangelism. They have just finished a brief visit to Auckland and to Te Kuiti before heading to Wellington. Their

message is one that challenges believers to share the gospel ... *to the Jew first and also to the Greek* (Rom. 1: 16). There is a very genuine and sincere warmth that you can't help but be drawn to as they explain the person and the work of our Lord and Messiah Yeshua.

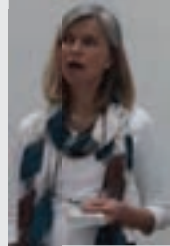
Next year, we would like Henry and Darlene to visit New Zealand again. We see a fantastic opportunity to partner the two ministries together. Our focus would be twofold: equipping the local church to evangelize, and then to disciple. We will expand on this opportunity more as we finalize details.

We earnestly seek your prayers in these times, and we give glory to our God in the mighty name of Jesus in what we have been able to achieve in New Zealand through Him.

## Hungary



Ivan & Rita Nagy



The most important event for Ariel Hungary this year will be our third messianic conference with Arnold Fruchtenbaum. The topics will be:

- The Five Warnings of Hebrews
- The Reign of Immanuel
- The Servant of Jehovah
- The Rapture

We are very excited about this conference.

We had our first Passover demonstration at a local church nearby. Roughly 40 people attended, along with some Jewish unbelievers who are practicing rabbinical Judaism. We hope we were able to use these God-given opportunities to reach the Jewish people with the clear message of Passover.

We are continuing the studies of *The Life of Messiah*, and one of the Passover demonstrations was part of the series in April. We had some new folks who started to



# branch & representative news

attend the studies regularly. One is a friend from Rita's childhood, for whom we have been praying for several years. He attended our Passover demonstration last year. We will finish the series the beginning of June.

I have been writing about different topics on our homepage and sharing it on Facebook. It is my hope to draw the interest of more people toward our ministry.

Our Bible reading groups continue every week with our Jewish friends. One of them told us that she is very thankful, because she better understands what salvation by grace through faith means in comparison to salvation by works.

## United States

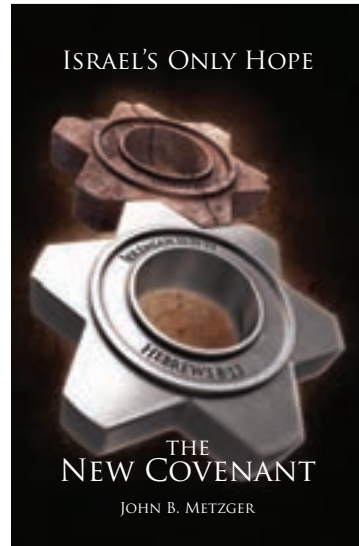


John Metzger

It has been a privilege to work for our LORD with Ariel Ministries over the years. What a life changer for me on my first apprehensive visit to Camp Shoshanah in 1995. Yes, I was nervous about coming to a "Jewish Bible Camp." However, those three weeks changed my life forever. It is second only to my salvation at the age of 14 in 1960.

I love opening the Scriptures and teaching them to believers in local churches. The format can be a Sunday worship service, a Bible or missions conference, or seminars on Jewish evangelism throughout the week or weekend. In order to challenge the listeners, I draw their attention to the Jewish people who live and work around them. Living in Pennsylvania gives me the opportunity to speak in other locations like Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey,

and New York, which are only three or less hours from home.



One of the complete surprises to me is the gifting that God has granted me in writing books based on the Jewish background of Scripture. And now in my study of God's Word, I have written five books. The fourth one made me fall in love with Yeshua all over again. It was a precious study. The book is

called *Israel's Only Hope: The New Covenant*.

As a Gentile, my love for the Jewish people was fast forwarded. Now, I stand absolutely amazed at His grace that He has given to me as a Gentile because of the New Covenant, a Jewish Covenant, that He, in His plan from the beginning of time, would allow me to be a partaker with His Chosen People in His salvation for mankind. To me, it has been absolutely breathtaking. Once again, what a joy it is for me to work for my LORD in Jewish ministries like Ariel. 🙏







# Adjusting to a New Reality...

By Sasha and Lilian Granovsky – Ariel Israel

*The way of the Lord is in the whirlwind and in the storm* (Nah. 1:3b).

That is good to remember when you live in Israel, especially these days when people ask us how we deal with daily terror attacks. We share with them that we are now living in a “new” kind of reality in which we had to re-adjust the way we operate, think, act, and live.

How does it feel to exist in this new reality? Imagine walking along the street and

**examining each face ...**

each figure that walks toward you.

All the while, you are asking yourself the same question:

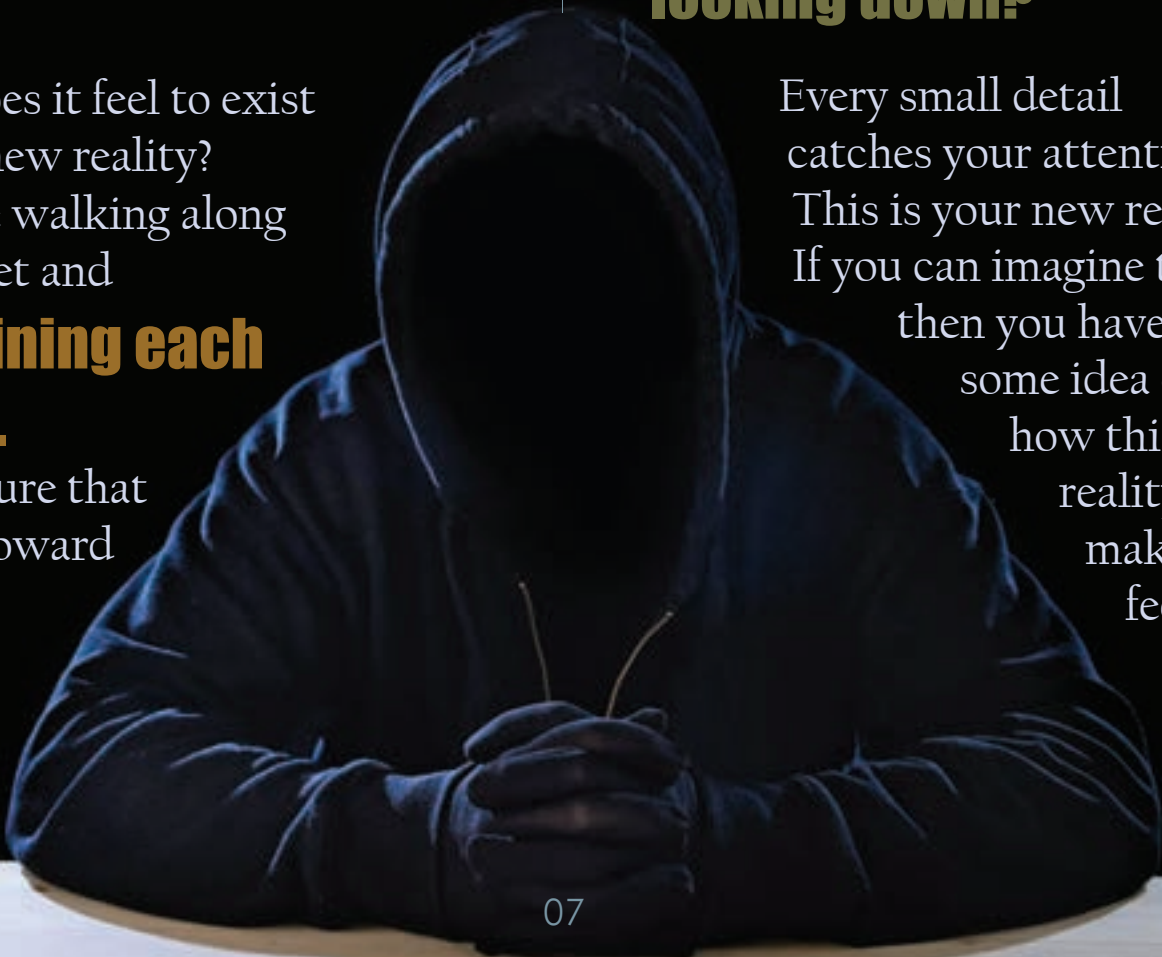
**“Is this person a threat?”**

You examine things like,

**“Why does this person have his hands in his pockets?”** Or,

**“Why is this person wearing a hoodie and looking down?”**

Every small detail catches your attention. This is your new reality. If you can imagine that, then you have some idea of how this new reality makes us feel.





You wait for your bus, train, or carpool, and you struggle with fearful thoughts like,

**“Shall I back up a few good meters behind the stop?”**

(The terrorists’ new tactic is to run over people who wait for their transportation.) You wonder things like,

**“Am I too far behind? What if I miss the bus? What if I witness the incident? Am I brave enough to run after the terrorist? Am I able to shoot him? Will I be able to help those who are wounded, killed, or lying defenseless in a puddle of blood?”**

You walk on the beach, and you hear someone running up behind you. Frightened, you turn immediately to look, fearing the worst-case scenario. Then you start to plan an escape for yourself and your family in case of an emergency. You ask your spouse questions like,

**“What shall we do if we are attacked?” “Is it better to run away or to jump into the sea and swim as quickly as possible?” “Shall we try and strike back?” “Do we each need to have pepper spray on us at all times?”**

These are the questions we ask in our new reality.

You sit at public places like the coffee shop or the cinema, and you suddenly realize that it would be the “perfect” place to shoot, bomb, or stab someone. You send your child to school or to the army, and you think to yourself,

**“Are they safe there? Will I ever see them again?”**

Life in Israel is literally filled with daily life-threatening situations, and living in Israel for more than 25 years has taught us to constantly readjust our lifestyle. Two Gulf wars taught us how to run to the bomb shelters and be ready for the chemo-biological attack from Iraq. Two Lebanon wars taught us to listen to the radio every single hour and pray for our soldiers. The buses that exploded during the Second Intifada almost every single day taught us to be alert, to be united as a nation, and to be with one another during times of tragedies. Two wars on the border of the Gaza strip showed us that where two Jews are gathered together, there are three opinions. Yet, on those days during December 2010 and July-August 2014, we, as a nation, were one-minded and one-hearted.

And now, just this last year, it felt as though the road took another detour. Will it be just a temporary one? Will it be a longer one? Will this detour be our new road?

Witnessing the daily reports of terror attacks, with Jews getting killed in every possible way, I nudge myself to remember God’s presence. I have to remind myself of Him, who always, time after time, has His way in the whirlwind and the storm of life’s road. Yes, life (and life in Israel especially) has its storms.

If Nahum’s words apply to the heavenly sphere, do they also apply to the earthly? Surely they do!



The Director of the heavenly and earthly theaters is One and the same.

*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him. But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, and will pursue His enemies into darkness. (Nah. 1:7-8)*

For us, it might feel like a new reality. The props may need to be rearranged. Habits, actions, and thoughts may need to be altered. However, if I remember that offstage stands the One who is overseeing every single act, every single scene, and every single line, then I will find a way to peacefully and trustfully readjust to this new reality.

We struggle with that new reality daily as we witness new tragedies and terrible pain of those who have lost loved ones and those who grieve. What if this new reality is permanent? Then the loss becomes the new normal, and we must adjust to it. But we are not alone!

And we are not the first ones to walk this difficult path. If we asked Nebuchadnezzar about this new reality, he would reply: *And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants*

*of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What has Thou done?" (Dan. 4:35) David, if asked, would answer: But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases (Ps. 115:3). Paul would add: For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). And finally, Moses would nail it down with this answer: When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you . . . you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice (Deut. 4:30).*

God comforts us in the midst of daily lightning, thunder, rain, and wind. The massive blows, and even little constant irritations, smooth us, humble us, and compel us to submit to His script and His chosen role for our lives.

Though we are aching for normalcy and praying passionately for storms to avoid our houses and asking Him to change the things that we long to be different, we trust that our prayers will make a difference. Yet, at the same time, we learn to accept where we are. We learn to allow Him to meet us in the darkness, to find comfort in His presence, and to see Him as more important than any change in our circumstances. The play is so much more meaningful when the cast cooperates with the Director. 🎭

“...we trust that our prayers will make a difference.”





feature

# Messianic Dance

By Hannah Gabizon



**W**hen we think of the term *worship*, an array of images may come to mind: hymnals to drum sets, or liturgy to contemporary worship songs. One unique component that is found throughout the messianic movement is the integration of dance, known as messianic or Davidic dance.

If this type of dance is foreign to you, then you know how I felt during the summer of 2010 when I was asked to lead the afternoon messianic dance sessions at Ariel Ministries' Camp Shoshanah. Prior to that summer, the only Jewish-style dancing that I was familiar with would have been *Hava Nagillah* at weddings, which required holding your neighbor's hand tightly while running in a big circle and hoping not to fall! Through my preparations for leading the class that summer, messianic dance revealed itself as a powerful form of worship which enabled us to express our praise to the Lord. My prayer is that, through this article, we will develop a greater understanding and appreciation of the meaning and function of messianic dance in worship today.



## Dancing and the Bible

Dance, as a form of worship, is an integral part of Jewish life in the Scriptures. We often see dance as a form of worship to God. For example, when Israel would enjoy a military victory, dance was used as a mode of celebration and thankfulness to God. The Scriptures record how Miriam and the Israelite women went out “with timbrels and with dancing” for God’s victory over the Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea (Ex. 15:20). Jephthah’s daughter, after he won the war, greeted him “with tambourines and with dancing,” (Judg. 11:34).

One of the most memorable occasions involving dance in the Bible is found with King David. Before the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, David recognized the holiness of God and asked himself, “How can the ark of the LORD come to me?” (2 Sam. 6:9). Eventually, when the ark was brought to the city of David, the text stated that, “David danced before the LORD with all his might” (2 Sam. 6:14).

The psalms, which are songs or liturgies used in ancient Israelite culture to lead the people in worship of God, often implement the imagery and command for dance. Dance is a form of worship of God for redeeming us (Ps. 30:11) and is also a result of meditating on His character and His greatness (Ps. 149:3, 150:4). To honor the Lord by dancing before Him is an act of worship that is prevalent in the Bible.

## Dance and History

In rabbinic writings, dance is often connected with festivals and celebration. Ever since the biblical period, dance has been a Jewish expression of worship to God. The Mishnah records how, at the conclusion of the Feast of Sukkot, “men of piety and good works used to dance before [the crowds] with burning torches in

their hands, singing songs and praises” (M. *Sukkah* 5.4). There is record that dance was commonplace in Jewish communities throughout Spain in medieval times. Dances were typically spoken of in reference to Purim, a time of great celebration in the Jewish community for God’s preservation of His people in Persia through Queen Esther. The Encyclopedia Judaica traces forms of dancing at weddings, circumcisions, and bar/bat mitzvahs as early as the 16th century. In the more religious circles, it was expected that men danced solely with men and women only danced with women. Perhaps you remember the famous wedding scene in *Fiddler on the Roof* where a rope divided the men and the women from dancing with one another. The Hasidic movement of the 18th century in Europe was very instrumental in highlighting the act of dance for celebration and worship. According to the Hasidic movement, dance may bring one closer to God as it brings about a wonderful religious experience. The circular form in which Hasidic Jewish style dancing often takes place symbolizes the equality of everybody taking part, since there is neither a beginning nor end and all people can participate.

Today, this style of dance still takes place during times of celebration, especially Simchat Torah. Unfortunately, there is no detailed information about the origins of Israeli folk dance from the 19th and early 20th centuries. During the 1910s and 1920s, those returning to the land of Israel brought different styles from their homeland. One of the most famous was the Romanian style, which was a circular hora dance.<sup>1</sup> According to Raphael Patai, this became extremely popular since it communicated the ideology of the new Zionists: equality and solidarity with one another. In the 1940s, Israeli folk dances began to spread from the kibbutzim to the urban residents. Yemenite dance and Hasidic dance have common characteristics in terms of their passion and also separation between the men and women.



## Dance and the Messianic Movement

In messianic congregations, messianic or “Davidic” dance, in light of David’s worshipful dance, typically takes place during the worship service. The style of dance is often an amalgamation of Israeli folk, Yemenite, and Hasidic dance, and congregants are often welcomed to participate. This style of dance became popular during the re-birth of the messianic movement in the 1960s and ‘70s. Jews who had been introduced to Israeli folk dance through Hebrew school or camps “transposed [some of the steps] into original Messianic Jewish dances” (Harris-Shapiro, 144). Unlike more religious groups, messianic congregations do not generally divide between men and women during dances.

With the significance of dance in biblical and Jewish culture, I was glad to hear that in churches, “various communities of worship are becoming more comfortable with dance and movement within worship” (Webber, 215).

## Benefits

I have been very blessed through my involvement in messianic dance, and I think there are numerous benefits.

First, it is good for personal worship. When the ark was brought to the city of David, “David danced before the Lord with all his might” (2 Sam. 6:14). There are several things I have learned and attempted to implement from this passage. David was dancing before the Lord, and he did not worry about the audience. Instead, it was his love and desire for the Lord that drove his movement in celebration of God’s presence. His wife, Michal, became angry with him soon after, calling him a “vulgar fellow,” (2 Sam. 6:20). This undoubtedly was directed at his intentions. However, he responded that “it was before the

Lord...and I will celebrate before the Lord” (2 Sam. 6:21). For me, it is imperative to engage for the sake of worship alone. Furthermore, David did it with “all of his might.” The phrase “all of his might” only appears twice in the Scriptures (2 Sam. 6:14; 1 Chr. 13:8) both times in reference to this event. I ask myself, “What do I do with all of my might?” The act of dance reminds me that, as much as it is possible, we engage in it in worship of the Lord.

Second, it demonstrated unity between Jews and Gentiles. For believers, dance can be a beautiful picture of how the body of Messiah is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, together worshipping the God of Israel. We read in Ephesians 2 about the great unity that has taken place between Jews and Gentiles.

Third, it allows us to have an appreciation for Jewish history, tradition, and different historical forms of worship.

What a blessing it is to have these past influences still alive today and to use these dances as praise to the God of Israel! 🇲

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[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0005\\_0\\_04849.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0005_0_04849.html)

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<sup>1</sup>In the hora dance, the participants hold hands or join arms for the circular dancing.



God is not as  
interested in *what* He  
puts you through as  
He is in your *response*  
to what He puts you  
through.





# Desperate needs

A Study of Psalms 52 and 142

By Robert Morris

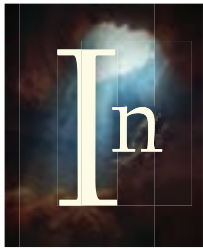
Part 1: Psalm 52:1-9

## I. Introduction

In the book of 1 Samuel, there comes a time when David finds himself in headlong flight from King Saul. The Jewish monarch, driven by unrelenting resentment and jealousy, has been attempting to kill David by indirect means. Saul has, at last, thrown all pretense and secrecy to the winds. He wants David dead, and he wants David dead right now! He does not care how it is done. He does not care who knows about it.



# cover story



his flight, David traveled to the priestly city of Nob, which is 2.5 miles from Jerusalem. There he received provisions, guidance, and weapons from Ahimelech the high priest.

Unfortunately, Ahimelech's innocent help was observed by an Edomite name Doeg, the chief of Saul's herdsmen. Doeg later used this information as an opportunity to gain Saul's favor by falsely accusing Ahimelech of treason, a betrayal that resulted in the murder of all the priests of Nob and their entire families. Only one man escaped and found refuge with David.

David felt personally responsible for the tragedy that had befallen these innocent families. This was a dark time for him, and the most desperate time he had ever faced. Pursued by Saul and betrayed by the opportunist Doeg, David found himself slandered, persecuted, and alone.

However, in the midst of this desperate situation, David learned that God is not as interested in what He puts you through as He is in your response to what He puts you through.

Out of this wretched experience came two psalms that teach us how to respond when caught up in desperate times. The first grave situation that David dealt with was the experience of being slandered.

We begin in Psalm 52 with the superscription.

## II. Desperate Needs

Defamed—Psalm 52:1-9

### I. Superscription

*For the director of music. A maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."*

The director of music is instructed to take particular note of this psalm. He is to note that this is a *maskil*. The term is derived from a word that means "to wisely understand."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the rabbis consider a *maskil* to be a psalm composed with a special effort to teach an essential lesson.<sup>2</sup> In this particular psalm, the lesson deals with the misuse of the tongue.

The example is Doeg the Edomite and his slanderous defamation of David, as well as the house of Ahimelech. Doeg serves as a symbol of all evildoers who misuse the power of speech and who will meet their just punishment. David, on the other hand, represents the righteous, who will be exalted because of their trust in God and because of their correct use of the tongue.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Slanderous tongue—52:1-4

<sup>1</sup>*Why do you boast of evil, you mighty hero?  
Why do you boast all day long,  
you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God?*

<sup>2</sup>*You who practice deceit,  
your tongue plots destruction;  
it is like a sharpened razor.*

<sup>3</sup>*You love evil rather than good,  
falsehood rather than speaking the truth.*

<sup>4</sup>*You love every harmful word,  
you deceitful tongue!*

David begins on a note of sarcasm as he calls Doeg a "mighty man." Doeg's act of treachery was anything but heroic.<sup>4</sup> His exploit consisted of the butchery of defenseless priests, men who had never touched a sword. He had no reason to boast and instead should have been profoundly ashamed for his cowardice.<sup>5</sup>

You will probably notice, if you are reading a version other than the New International Version (NIV), that the last phrase of verse 1 is rendered quite differently. The rendering of the NIV seems to be the best, however. The most recent linguistic evidence from the Septuagint Greek



version and the context all support the NIV's phrase "you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God."<sup>6</sup>

This man, Doeg, and any man who boasts in self-satisfaction over evil may be great in his own eyes, but he is certainly evaluated differently by God. His values are completely distorted. He loves anything that is twisted, perverted, or corrupt. He loves to think, speak, and do evil whenever it is to his own advantage. His falsehood and aggressive words aim at the undoing of others. He stands for whatever is against God's standards of goodness and righteousness.

In the end, David exclaims, "O you deceitful tongue!" as a rebuke of the wicked whose whole being reflects the evil associated with the tongue.<sup>7</sup> David's evaluation is picked up and repeated in the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament). As James 3:6-8 says:

*<sup>6</sup>The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup>but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

However, do not be fooled into thinking that the problem with the tongue is limited to the tiny organ of speech. The problem goes much deeper because this tiny organ of speech simply reflects the character, the heart of each person—the inner man.

In Matthew 15:18-20, Yeshua said it in this manner:

*<sup>18</sup> But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. <sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil*

*thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

*<sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.*

The rabbis also have much to say about the evil hidden in our souls that becomes so obvious through our tongues. Here are but a few of the many rabbinic statements that deal with the evil words that spew out of our hearts through our tongue:

"He who slanders piles up offenses as high as the sky, and deserves to be stoned." (Arakin 15)

"Greater is the sin of the evil tongue than the sin of idolatry." (Midrash Gadol u-Gedolah 18)

"He who slanders, who listens to slander, and who testifies falsely deserves to be thrown to the dogs." (Pesachim 118)

Here is one more insightful story:

Rabban Gamaliel commanded his slave, Tobi, to buy the best edible in the market. The slave brought home a tongue. The next day Rabban Gamaliel commanded him to buy the worst thing in the market, and again Tobi brought home a tongue. When asked for an explanation, the wise slave replied, "There is nothing better than a good tongue and nothing worse than an evil tongue." (Vayyikra Rabbah 33)

Doeg is a slanderer. He is a man who will use his tongue to promote his own evil greed, even if it results in the death of others. David is bearing the full brunt of Doeg's slander, and his heart is being torn apart by it. However, David is a man after God's own heart, and he chooses a proper response to the anguish he feels. His response to this desperate situation is not bitterness or self-pity; his response is to choose to turn to God in trust.



# cover story



his response of trust, of faith in God, is seen in four facets. The first aspect of David's response has already been seen in verses 1-4. David faces the problem head-on rather than to deny it or run from it. He has laid the

problem out eloquently. But what good is this? So what if we recognize and face a moral problem when it crashes into our lives? What good does that do, especially if we are helpless to do anything about it?

This brings us to the second aspect of David's response. He could not do anything about Doeg and Doeg's slander except to place his desperate need into the hands of God. David trusted that God would do what was right. That faith in God's inevitable and righteous judgment is brought out in verse 5.

### 3. God's judgment—52:5

*<sup>5</sup>Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin: He will snatch you up and pluck you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living.*

A righteous God cannot tolerate evil forever. Ultimately—and it may not happen in the lifetime of the righteous—the righteous have the assurance that God will act. In the end, all that is wrong will be made right by our just and loving God. Goodness and righteousness will eventually prevail.<sup>8</sup>

Violent verbs jostle against each other in verse 5<sup>9</sup> such as “bring down,” “snatch up,” “tear from,” and “uproot.” Each suggest a different word picture that portrays the fate of the wicked after they stand before the bar of God's justice:

1. The wicked will be brought down and demolished like a building shaken by a violent earthquake.

2. They will be snatched up like a coal out of a fire, which is useless when cold.
3. The wicked will find themselves like a castaway and a vagabond, homeless and without a family or shelter.
4. They will be like an uprooted tree.

In the end, they will be no more because they are removed from “the land of the living,” as verse 5 says. With their death, evil thoughts, evil speech, and evil acts will cease.<sup>10</sup>

One thousand years later, Yeshua repeated this principle of justice. He put it this way in Matthew 12:34b-37:

*For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of his good store of treasure, and the evil man brings evil things out of his evil store of treasure. But I tell you that men will give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned. (BSB)*

David was very aware of this principle, and he trusted in this principle. He trusted his God; therefore, he could place the fate of Doeg in the hands of his righteous King. David could not make things right, and he could not silence Doeg. Rather, he had to endure the pain of being a genuine victim, but he was never swallowed up and drowned by the circumstances. Because of his trust in God, he learned and grew and flourished in the hothouse of tribulation rather than being destroyed by the troubles of life.

The wisdom that he derived from this painful experience is shared with us in verses 6-9. This is the third aspect of David's response. He chose to learn from the situation. David deals with two types of wisdom in these verses. The negative wisdom is found in verses 6-7; the positive wisdom is found in verses 8-9.



#### 4. Derived wisdom—52:6-9

##### a. Negative—52:6-7

<sup>6</sup>*The righteous will see and fear;  
they will laugh at you, saying,  
<sup>7</sup>“Here now is the man  
who did not make God his stronghold  
but trusted in his great wealth  
and grew strong by destroying others!”*

The reaction of the righteous to God’s judgment is first characterized by awe and terror. Gradually, however, they come to understand the appropriate nature of the sentence and their fear turns into joy. The downfall of the wicked is proper and just. The wicked have simply reaped what they have sown; they are simply suffering curse for curse in kind. David’s former oppressor, Doeg, has become an example of what not to be like.

You may think that you are a mighty man because you have wealth and power and because you can get away with exploitation. However, if you refuse to make God your stronghold, if you place your trust in wealth, if you go up the ladder by stepping on others, in the end God will bring you down.

Please make no mistake. The joy of the righteous here is not malicious or vindictive. This joy is simply the expression of relief and peace that come over a soul when justice is correctly executed.<sup>11</sup> Rejoicing at the calamity of one’s enemy is condemned in the Holy Scriptures. Proverbs 24:17-18 tells us:

<sup>17</sup> *Do not gloat when your enemy falls;  
when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice,  
<sup>18</sup> or the LORD will see and disapprove  
and turn his wrath away from them.*

Spiteful laughter is not the appropriate reaction to the destruction of the wicked. However, the

downfall of the wicked, as proof of the just government of God, will be welcomed with joy by the righteous.<sup>12</sup> Righteousness will triumph over evil. This is the thought that burned itself into David’s heart and helped him through his time of desperate need.

The negative lesson that David learned was this: “I refuse to be like Doeg because I know that it is not worth it.” Doeg and those like him may prosper in the short run, but in the ultimate end, they will be held accountable for their wickedness. David is responding correctly to this struggle, and he is growing into a man of God because of it.

God is not as interested in what He puts you through as He is in your response to what He puts you through. The positive lesson that David learned during this time of desperation is brought out in verses 8-9.

##### b. Positive—52:8-9

<sup>8</sup> *But I am like an olive tree  
flourishing in the house of God;  
I trust in God’s unfailing love  
for ever and ever.*

<sup>9</sup> *For what you have done I will always praise  
you in the presence of your faithful people.  
And I will hope in your name,  
for your name is good.*

Never forget that these words were composed during a period of desperate need. David starts out with that teeny, tiny, but oh so significant word “but.” In contrast to the so-called “mighty man,” there is the godly man. The mighty man trusts in himself, works evil, and hedges himself with ill-gotten gains and power. The LORD uproots him like a tree, makes him a vagabond, and destroys him.<sup>13</sup>

The godly, on the other hand, are compared to a luxuriant, productive olive tree that remains



green throughout its lifetime. The olive tree can live for hundreds of years and is a symbol of long life and usefulness.<sup>14</sup> The roots of this olive tree go deep into rich, moist soil; it will never be uprooted. In contrast to the wicked, who will be removed from his tent, the righteous man is a welcome guest in the house of God—God’s tabernacle, God’s tent.<sup>15</sup> The godly man refuses to trust in himself or his wealth, but instead, he trusts in God.

The wicked curse God for bringing them down, while the response of the godly is praise. They boast in God’s



# SLANDER

deserted, when he was all alone. We will return to this study in the fall issue of our magazine. ❏

righteousness. They know that He is good. This is the fourth lesson that David learned. This is the lesson that David refuses to abandon: God is good.

No matter what our great Shepherd allows to come into our lives, He allows it for our good and because He is good. No matter what comes into your life, be like David, cling to this thought, and never let it go: GOD IS GOOD!

At this point, David has shared with us how to respond when slandered. In Psalm 142, he shares with us how he responded when he was

<sup>1</sup>R. Laird Harris et. al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), pg. 877-878; *Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon*, entry number 7919.

<sup>2</sup>Rabbi Avroham Chaim Feuer, Artscroll Tenach Series, *Tehillim*, vol. 2 (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications Ltd., 1977), pg. 666.

<sup>3</sup>*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), pg. 384.

<sup>4</sup>Abraham Cohen, Ephraim Oratz, *The Soncino Books of the Bible, The Psalms* (United Kingdom: Soncino Press, 1992), pg. 165.

<sup>5</sup>Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1976), pg. 426; Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Book 15: *Psalms 1-72* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), pg. 195.

<sup>6</sup>*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (see footnote 3), vol. 5, pg. 385; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (see footnote 1), vol. 1, pg. 307.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 5, pg. 385.

<sup>8</sup>*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (see footnote 3), vol. 5, pg. 386.

<sup>9</sup>Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Book 15: *Psalms 1-72* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), pg. 195.

<sup>10</sup>*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (see footnote 3), vol. 5, pg. 386.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Soncino Books of the Bible, *The Psalms*, pg. 166

<sup>13</sup>*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pg. 387

<sup>14</sup>*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pg. 387

<sup>15</sup>Abraham Cohen, Ephraim Oratz, *The Soncino Books of the Bible, The Psalms* (United Kingdom: Soncino Press, 1992), pg. 167



# When Theology Changes the Word of God

*A mini case study of the progression of the NIV's translation of Galatians 6:16.*

By Nigel Christensen

Galatians 6:16

This mini case study seeks to show that over the years, a presupposed theology (where the church has now taken on the role of Israel) has guided the translation of the NIV in relation to Galatians 6:16, to the point where the translators have changed the word of God to fit their theology. Just as Seventh Day Adventists have championed the King James Version because of its translation of Acts 7:38, which talks of the “church in the wilderness,” those in the replacement camp use Galatians 6:16 as a key verse to show that Israel and the church are one and the same. However, just as the KJ translation was erroneous, so, too, the treatment of Galatians 6:16 by the various versions of the NIV can be shown to be erroneous. I have included a screen shot of the verse from an interlinear version to show the original Greek as a reference (see figure 1).

3745 [e]	3588 [e]	2583 [e]	3778 [e]	4748 [e]	1515 [e]				
kai	hosoi	tō	kanoni	toutō	stoichēsousin	eirēnē			
<b>16</b> καὶ	ὅσοι	τῷ	κανόνι	τούτῳ	στοιχῆσουσιν	, εἰρήνη			
And	as many as	those who	rule	by this	will walk	peace [be]			
Conj	RelPro-NMP	Art-DMS	N-DMS	DPro-DMS	V-FIA-3P	N-NFS			
1909 [e]	846 [e]	2532 [e]	1656 [e]	2532 [e]	1909 [e]	3588 [e]	2474 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]
ep'	autous	kai	eleos	kai	epi	ton	Israel	tou	Theou
ἐπ'	αὐτοὺς	, καὶ	ἔλεος	; καὶ	ἐπὶ	τὸν	Ἰσραὴλ	τοῦ	Θεοῦ .
upon	them	and	mercy	and	upon	the	Israel	-	of God
Prep	PPro-AM3P	Conj	N-NNS	Conj	Prep	Art-AMS	N-AMS	Art-GMS	N-GMS

Figure 1. Galatians 6:16 screen shot from <http://biblehub.com/interlinear/galatians/6-16.htm> accessed 5th Nov 2015



## feature

The word in question in the Greek is *kai* (circled in red) which precedes the phrase *the Israel of God*. Any decent NT Greek dictionary will show that the primary meaning for *kai* is “and,” which should be applied unless the sentence context requires otherwise. There is no reason to do anything except translate this word to mean “and” in this verse. However, the translators of the 1984 version of the NIV chose to render the word as “even.” So the verse reads, “Peace and mercy on all who follow this rule, even the Israel of God.” (NIV 1984). This choice created ambiguity, allowing proponents of the replacement camp to claim that the “all” and the “Israel of God” were one and the same. I believe that this was a deliberate choice by the translators based on their theological preferences, which will be demonstrated by the subsequent attempts to translate this verse in the various versions of the NIV.

In 1995, a simplified version with gender neutral language appeared, called the NIV Reader’s Version, or NIVrV. There was obviously an issue with using the word “even” because this version (and, in fact, all subsequent versions) did not use it. This alone shows that the choice made by the 1984 NIV translators was seen to be wrong because their choice was never backed up. But the problem of the “and” still remained: What was to be done? They decided to ignore it and removed the word altogether. So the new version reads, “May peace and mercy be given to all who follow this rule. May peace and mercy be given to the Israel that belongs to God.” (NIVrV). This changed the meaning entirely. There is now no ambiguity. The “all” and the “Israel that belong to God” are clearly one and the same.

In 2002, the publishers of the NIV changed their minds again. In the version, called “Today’s New International Version,” or TNIV, they acknowledged that there was a word missing by using dashes. So now the sentence read, “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the

Israel of God.” (TNIV). However, this still retains the same problem. We then come to the 2011 NIV and the biggest concession of all: Whilst retaining the same text as the TNIV, using the dashes to indicate the missing word, the translators added an explanation in a footnote. Beside the word “to,” they place a footnote letter [a]. The footnote reads, “[a] Galatians 6:16 Or rule and to.”

This progression of changes shows clearly that the translators of the various NIV versions knew all along what Galatians 6:16 should really say. But they simply could not bring themselves to translate it that way. Why not? I believe it was because it did not fit their presupposed theology. I have a simple saying that I have developed for myself: If my theology is different from the Word of God, then it is my theology that must change and not the Word of God. I pray that one day the translators of the next NIV will have the same conviction.

And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace *be* upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

(Galatians 6:16, ASV)

**Note:** *The Israel of God* is actually all those Jewish believers who believed by faith in the truth that the Lord reveals to them (as opposed to those, for instance, in Galatia who sought to put all believers back under the law and preach a false gospel). In Scripture, *the Israel of God* is also called *the remnant*. The remnant is always a minority (ever since the nation grew in Egypt), but always present throughout the nation’s past, present, and future. As a group, they are distinct from the church (since they existed before and will continue to exist after the church). However, those alive during the church age are also members of the church.





## Appendix: The Changes to Galatians 6:16 in the Various Versions of the NIV

Verse	Version / Source	Version Comments
<p><sup>16</sup>Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.</p>	<p>NIV 1984  <a href="http://www.biblestudytools.com/galatians/6-16.html">http://www.biblestudytools.com/galatians/6-16.html</a>                      Accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2011</p> <p>This was the first major revision of the NIV following the original 1976 (New Testament) and 1978 (Whole Bible) versions.</p>	<p>The Greek word <i>kai</i> is translated to mean “even,” instead of the more correct “and.”</p>
<p><sup>16</sup>May peace and mercy be given to all who follow this rule. May peace and mercy be given to the Israel that belongs to God.</p>	<p>NIV Reader’s Version 1995                      Children’s Bible, 1995. Ronald Youngblood, ed., <i>Holy Bible: NIV: New International Reader’s Version: New Testament</i>. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.</p> <p><a href="http://www.biblestudytools.com/nirv/galatians/6-16.html">http://www.biblestudytools.com/nirv/galatians/6-16.html</a>                      Accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015</p> <p>“This revision of the New International Version was first proposed by Zondervan publishers in 1991, and a committee of the International Bible Society began work on it in 1992. In it the New International Version was revised down to a third-grade reading level. The New Testament appeared in 1995, and the complete Bible was published in the fall of 1996 as the text for Zondervan’s “Kid’s Bible.” Gender-neutral language was regularly employed in the revision, though this fact was not mentioned in its marketing. When it was discovered, James Dobson and other evangelical leaders publicly opposed the version; and so the IBS published a revision, without the gender-neutral language, in the fall of 1998.”</p>	<p>Here, the Greek word <i>kai</i> is completely left out of the translation, and there is no acknowledgement of this.</p>
<p><sup>16</sup>Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.</p>	<p>Today’s New International Version, 2002. <i>The New Testament: Today’s New International Version</i>. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.  <a href="http://www.biblestudytools.com/tniv/galatians/6.html#">http://www.biblestudytools.com/tniv/galatians/6.html#</a>                      Accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015</p> <p>“ On Jan 28, 2002 the International Bible Society announced the publication of this third <u>gender-neutral</u> revision of the New International Version, and distributed advance review copies at the Christian Booksellers Association annual convention.</p>	<p>Here again the Greek word <i>kai</i> is completely left out, but this time, the translators appear to acknowledge this with the use of the dash.</p>
<p><sup>16</sup>Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to[a] the Israel of God.</p> <p>a. Galatians 6:16 Or, rule and to</p>	<p>NIV 2011  <a href="https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3A16&amp;version=NIV">https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3A16&amp;version=NIV</a>                      Accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015</p> <p>The Revision of 2011. In 2009 the International Bible Society changed its name to Biblica, and in September of that year it announced that yet another revision of the NIV was in the works. The revised edition appeared online at <a href="http://www.biblegateway.com">www.biblegateway.com</a> and <a href="http://www.biblica.com">www.biblica.com</a> in November 2010, and the printed edition was issued in March of 2011, under the name <i>New International Version</i>, without any further designation such as “second edition.” An examination of the text reveals that this new edition of the NIV is actually a minor revision of the TNIV (see above).</p>	<p>The latest version continues this trend of leaving out the word, but using a dash. The fact that the word should be in there is acknowledged in the footnote; they use the word “and,” not “even.”</p>

Footnotes:  
 Acts 19:32, 39 & 41: Here the exact same word is used to describe the crowd of unbelieving idolaters in Ephesus who shout for two hours. Most theologians do not consider these people the church. Therefore, context is essential, and subsequent major translations never use the word “church” for Acts 7:38.

See Appendix  
 Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Remnant of Israel* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2012).  
<http://www.bible-researcher.com/niv.html>  
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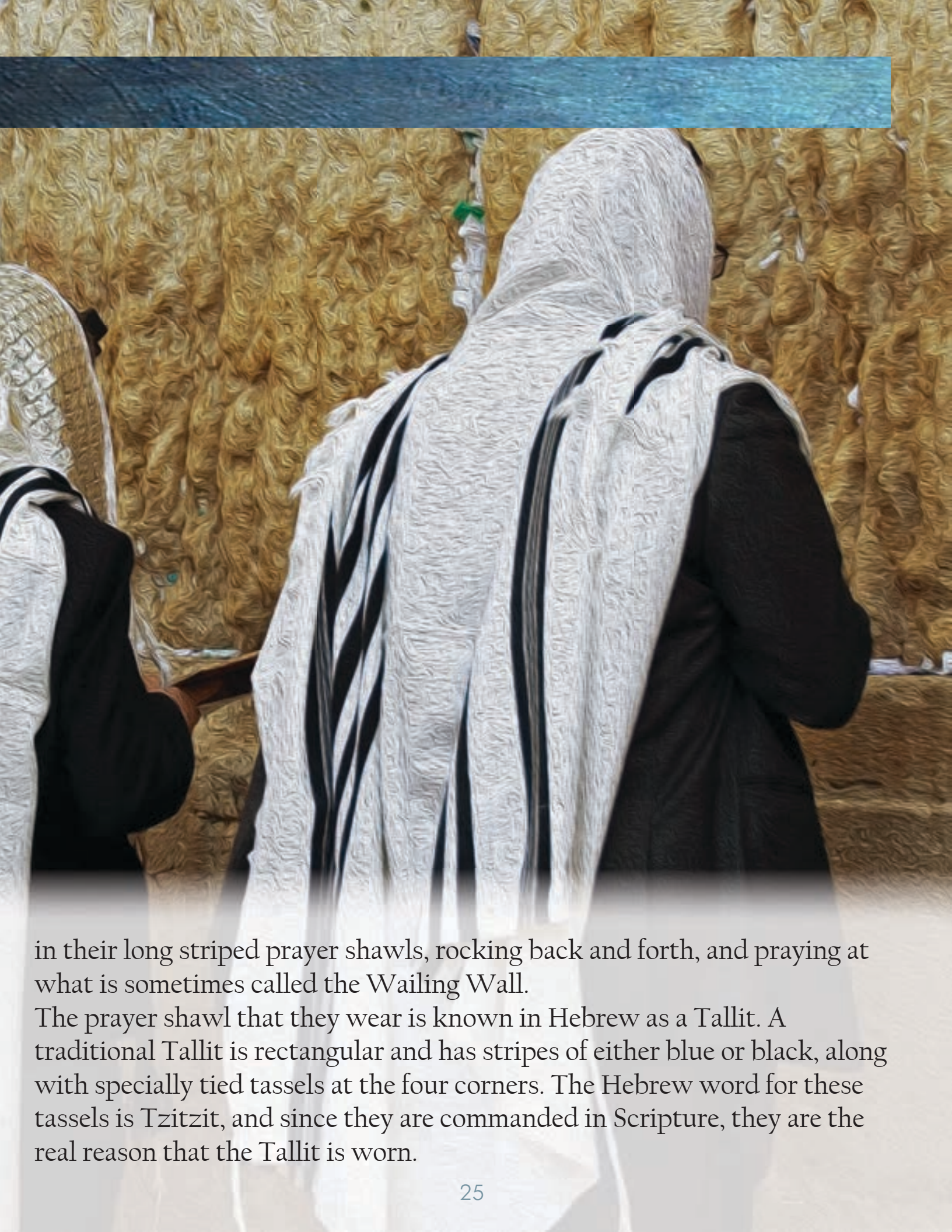


feature

# THE JEWISH PRAYER SHAWL

– by Mottel Baleston

If you have ever visited the most holy site in the Jewish world today, the Kotel, also known as the Western Wall in Jerusalem, or have even seen photos of this place, then you could not help but be impressed by the sight of religious devotion. Dozens of Orthodox Jewish men are wrapped



in their long striped prayer shawls, rocking back and forth, and praying at what is sometimes called the Wailing Wall.

The prayer shawl that they wear is known in Hebrew as a Tallit. A traditional Tallit is rectangular and has stripes of either blue or black, along with specially tied tassels at the four corners. The Hebrew word for these tassels is Tzitzit, and since they are commanded in Scripture, they are the real reason that the Tallit is worn.



In my youth in Brooklyn, we were required to don a *Tallis*, the Yiddish pronunciation of the term *Tallit*, whenever we entered the synagogue sanctuary during the Saturday morning Torah service. For those who arrived without a Tallis, the synagogue had a box of them outside the sanctuary door for use during the service.

As believers in Messiah Yeshua, and for those of us who desire to be familiar with the Jewish context of the New Testament narrative, this is something basic to our understanding of that world. Let us take a look at the core verse in the Mosaic Law which speaks about the Tallit:

*The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you are inclined to play the harlot. (Num. 15:37-39. The command is repeated in summary form in Deut. 22:12.)*

We need to distinguish between two types of Tallit that are worn by Jewish men:

1.) The *Tallit Gadol* is a prayer shawl, which is wrapped around the shoulders. This is supposed to be worn by all Jewish men participating in certain religious activities, such as a Torah service in a synagogue.

2.) The *Tallit Katan* is a light vest that is worn under the outer garment. This vest is worn almost exclusively by Orthodox Jewish men, those who are committed to Mosaic Law observance. The Tallit Katan is worn at all times during waking hours, not just during religious ceremonies.

What both garments have in common is that they have the Tzitzit tied on each of their four corners, which is the focus of the Biblical command.

You may have noticed that I keep stating that the Tallit is a command for men, but have not mentioned women. If asked about this, the standard Orthodox Jewish response is to say that while women are obligated to not transgress the negative commands of Mosaic Law, i.e. the "thou shalt nots," they are not obligated to abide by the positive commands of Torah, the "thou shalls." In recent years, however, the Conservative and Reform branches of Judaism, the centrist and liberal movements respectively, under pressure, have permitted the wearing of any Jewish religious article to both men and women, whether it be the Tallit prayer shawl, the Kippah head covering, or the Tefillin leather Scripture boxes worn on the arm and head.

Going back to the passage in Numbers, the command to wear the tassels was intended to remind the people of Israel that they were a unique possession of the Lord, they were in a covenant relationship to Him, and they were obligated to keep the commands of the Mosaic Law. In modern terms, it would be like going around with a small Bible worn on a string around your neck.

Because the Jewish people were the only ones wearing such tassels on the corners of their garments, they would certainly be reminded of their unique status and obligation. Additionally, the tassels on the four corners are not random, but rather are several inches long, and according to rabbinic tradition, they are tied in a certain specific pattern. The instructions for the intricate pattern results in a total of 613 loops and knots when all four tassels are added up, the same number of commandments, 613, in the Mosaic Law.

The Numbers 15 passage also instructs that within each tassel there was to be a cord of blue. In the ancient world, the color blue as a dye was rare and expensive. While there is some dispute,



the consensus is that the dye was derived from a crushed snail that is native to the Mediterranean Sea. Because of the dispute regarding the origin of the dye, most Jewish authorities directed that the Tzitzit simply be white. In recent years, the snail that produces the dye was rediscovered in the waters off of Israel. Some Orthodox Jews have resumed inserting the blue cord, while some Messianic Jews have used a blue cord in their Tzitzit for years.

As a Jewish man born under the law (Gal. 4:4), Messiah Yeshua lived during the dispensation of Mosaic Law, and He voluntarily subjected Himself to all the provisions of that law. He would have worn the Tallit Katan at all times, with the likelihood that His was of a long robe length, with the Tzitzit tassels below the knee. We see this illustrated in the passage where Yeshua was passing through a crowd and a woman reached out to touch the fringe of His garment:

*Suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the fringe of His garment. For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." (Mt. 9:20)*

Some translations use the word *hem*, but a better rendering is *fringe*, as in the Tzitzit fringe on the four corners of the Tallit that Yeshua was wearing. The woman believed in the Jewish tradition of that day: that if one touched the Tzitzit of a truly holy man, he would be healed.





The next verse gives the result:

*But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well. (Mt. 9:21)*

The woman was healed by her genuine faith that Yeshua was the Holy Son of God, not by a tradition of the Tzitzit, but the passage also shows that Messiah Yeshua wore a Tallit. Again, it must be remembered that He wore it during the time period in which Mosaic Law was the “rule of life” for Jewish believers. Believers today are no longer under the obligation of mandatory Mosaic Law keeping, which came to an end when the dispensation of Mosaic Law concluded at the cross.

This reinforces an additional lesson: Simply because Yeshua did something during the time He was on earth does not mean that action became a commandment for believers today. This has become a disputed and misunderstood issue in parts of the Messianic Movement, as well as the Hebrew Roots movement, segments of which teach a current obligation to keep all of these physical items in Mosaic Law. They pressure the doubtful with the line, “If Jesus did these things, shouldn’t you?” Once it is understood that believers today are not under obligation to the Mosaic Law, this confusion and these disputes are answered.

So that brings us to an interesting point: Messiah Yeshua kept Mosaic Law, as seen in the two passages above. Yet, He cautioned against the misuse of those fringes. Speaking about the Pharisees, He said:

*They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries [Scriptures boxes worn on hand and forehead], broad and they lengthen the tassels of their garments. (Mt. 23:5)*

By making the Tzitzit tassels far longer than needed, the Pharisees’ observance of this commandment would be seen by all. As they walked along, the tassels would have swung in a very noticeable way. That is why Messiah charges them with putting on a religious show for appearance’s sake. Thus, we are reminded of the verse: *Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart* (1 Sam. 16:7).

I dearly value my Jewish heritage and love and practice the culture, just as 1 Corinthians 9:20 allows. There are times I may wear a Tallit at Messianic events. When doing so, I need to ask myself, “Do I ever do things for the mere sake of religious appearance?”

You may not wear Tzitzit, but do you do things for a religious appearance? It’s a sobering question we must ask ourselves. As believers in Messiah Yeshua, we know that He has promised that He will write His word and His will upon hearts that are soft, hearts that are truly yielded to Him (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10, 10:16). Let’s not “lengthen the tassels of our garments” and do things for the sake of religious appearance, but may He find us yielded so He can accomplish His will through our lives.

For a detailed exposition on the Mosaic Law, see Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Faith Alone: The Condition of Our Salvation* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2014).

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