

TIKKUN AMERICA

restore

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THE "LIVING EPISTLE" OF LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Equipping the Next Generation

KINGDOM CALLING

Foundations for the Foundation

AN IDENTITY FOR THE REDEEMED

The Day God Exposes Every False Identity

REFLECTIONS ON MESSIANIC JEWISH LIFE

Messianic Judaism and the Road Less Traveled



CONTRIBUTORS

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TROY WALLACE

Troy Wallace is an ordained Messianic Rabbi (2017) and received an honorary Doctor of Theology (2025). Troy is the President of Tikkun International and Director of Partner Relationships for HaTikva Project. He lives in Phoenix, Arizona, with his wife, Jen, and three children.

ERIC TIETELMAN

Pastor Eric Teitelman is a Jewish follower of Yeshua. Eric was born in Chicago and was raised in Bat Yam, Israel, throughout his childhood, and became a Messianic believer in 2002. Eric leads House of David Ministries and is a Hebraic teaching, worship leader, and prophetic minister focused on building the Kingdom of God.



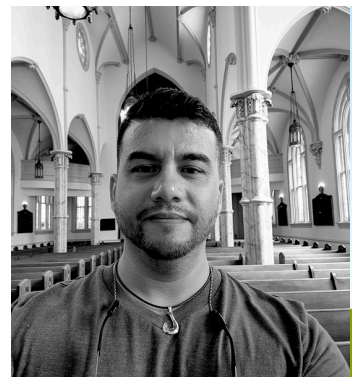
MORGAN KRUPINSKI

Morgan is a worship leader and attends New Jerusalem House of Prayer in Carol Stream, IL. A native New Yorker, he learned of his grandparent's Jewish heritage at 15 and got involved in Messianic Judaism after being radically saved at age 20. He is married to Yudit, a second-generation Jewish believer and graduate of Wheaton College.



JULEON AKANA

Juleon serves as Evangelist-in-Residence and Assistant Ro'eh at Beit Hallel in Ocala, Florida. He and his wife Amanda are pursuing greater ministry within the Tikkun America network. Together, they are passionate about building authentic relationships and walking in the power of the Ruach HaKodesh.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Editor-in-Chief **Benjamin Juster**

Creative Director **Amy Strom**
Senior Editor **Mark Rantz**
Editor **Kathleen Rantz**
Graphic Design **Amy Strom**
Content Manager **Mark Rantz**
Project Manager **Amy Strom**
Advisor **Lorena Juster**



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EDITOR IN CHIEF

BENJAMIN JUSTER

Benjamin is the President of Tikkun America and one of the shaliach leaders on the Tikkun America Apostolic Team. Raised in the Messianic movement and a former Vice President of the UMJCY, Benjamin has a continuing passion for seeing people reach their potential in Yeshua. He holds a Masters degree in Messianic Jewish Studies from MJTI. He served as the Executive Director of Tikkun International before being appointed the President of Tikkun America in January 2020. Benjamin's focus is on planting Messianic congregations, mentoring and releasing emerging leaders, and building unity among churches and ministries to stand with Israel today and in preparation for the end times.



Benjamin and Lorena also help to lead the international teaching ministry Restoration From Zion, affiliated with Tikkun Global.

Benjamin, his wife Lorena, and three children live in Jacksonville, Florida.



Remem bering *Through* Tears



BENJAMIN JUSTER

The Hebrew month of Av occupies a unique place on the Jewish calendar. It is a season marked by reflection, remembrance, and mourning, culminating in the Ninth of Av (Tisha B'Av), the most significant day of collective mourning in Jewish life.

For many believers, mourning is not a subject we naturally gravitate toward. We prefer celebration over lament, victory over sorrow, and healing over pain. Yet Scripture makes it clear that mourning is not an interruption of life; it is part of life in a fallen world.

King Solomon reminds us:

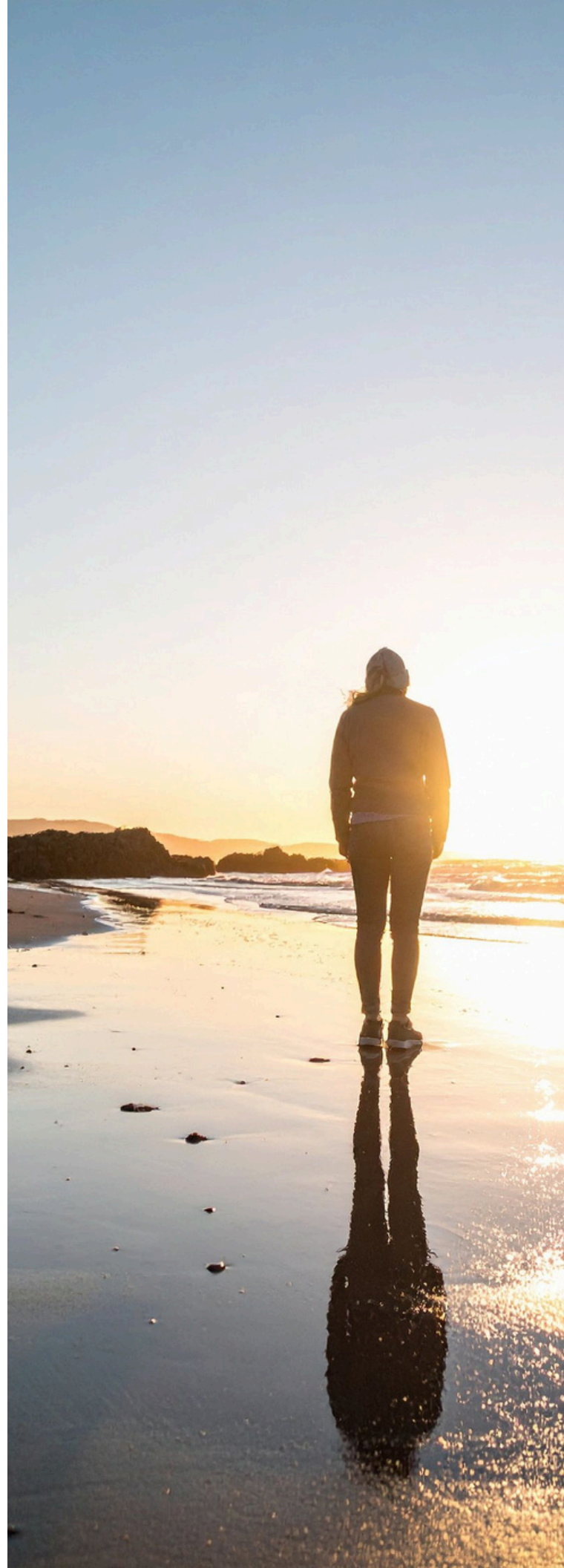
"There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance." (Ecclesiastes 3:4 TLV)

Most of us do not need to be convinced of this truth. Many of us have experienced tragedies and traumas that resulted in seasons of mourning. We have buried parents, spouses, siblings, and friends. Some have grieved broken relationships, lost dreams, financial collapse, illness, betrayal, or sexual abuse—disappointments that altered the course of our lives.

Some of us are walking through that season right now. Others may recognize that while the event itself happened years ago, the grief somehow never completely left us. Life continued moving forward, but a portion of our hearts remained behind.

Not all mourning follows a predictable timetable. Grief is not like climbing a staircase of consistently “getting over it” but more like walking the shoreline of the ocean. Some days the waters are calmer. Other days a wave of grief arrives unexpectedly reminding us that the loss still matters—the anguish crashes on us again.

This should not surprise us. We grieve because we loved. We mourn because something precious was lost.



Learning to Mourn Well

While mourning is unavoidable, Scripture teaches that there are healthy ways to mourn and unhealthy ways to mourn.

One unhealthy response is to avoid grief altogether. We stay busy, distract ourselves, and attempt to move on as quickly as possible. Yet ignored grief rarely disappears. More often, it simply changes form and emerges later as anxiety, anger, isolation, or emotional exhaustion.

Another unhealthy response is becoming permanently anchored in our grief. The loss becomes our primary identity and the defining story of our lives. Mourning, which was intended to be a season, becomes a place where we remain indefinitely.

The Scriptures offer a different path. The Psalms are filled with lament, questions, tears, and honest expressions of sorrow. David prayed: *"How long, Adonai? Will You forget me forever?"* (Psalm 13:2 TLV)

Yet in the same psalm he concludes: *"But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness."* (Psalm 13:6 TLV)

Biblical mourning allows us to be honest about our pain while refusing to surrender our hope. The goal of healthy mourning is not forgetting. The goal is learning to carry our losses without allowing them to carry us.

The Power of Corporate Mourning

The Jewish people understand something that many modern cultures



Corporate mourning creates solidarity. It reminds us that suffering was never meant to be carried alone and that we belong to one another even in seasons of grief.

The same principle can be seen in Holocaust remembrance. Many alive today did not personally experience those horrors, yet Jewish communities throughout the world intentionally preserve the memory through sharing stories, reciting names, visiting memorials, and observing acts of remembrance.

The purpose is not to cultivate bitterness or victimhood but to preserve memory, honor those who suffered, and strengthen the resolve of future generations.

There is wisdom in remembering together.
There is healing in grieving together.
There is strength in standing together.

Mourning and the Messiah

As followers of Yeshua, we recognize another profound dimension of mourning. Our Messiah entered fully into human suffering. Isaiah described Him as: *"A man of pains and acquainted with sickness."* (Isaiah 53:3 TLV)

Yeshua stood outside the tomb of Lazarus and wept, even though He knew resurrection was moments away. He mourned over Jerusalem. He carried the grief of humanity to the cross. He did not stand at a distance from suffering. He entered into it.

For this reason, remembrance occupies an important place within the believer's faith as well.





Each time we come to the Lord's Table, we participate in an act of sacred remembrance. *"Do this in memory of Me."* (Luke 22:19 TLV)

Communion is not simply a celebration of victory. It is also a remembrance of suffering.

We remember His beaten and bruised body.
We remember His shed blood.
We remember the cost of redemption.

Yet the table also points us forward toward resurrection, restoration, and the coming Kingdom. This may be one of the greatest lessons of biblical mourning: remembrance and hope can coexist. We remember what was lost while holding tightly to what God has promised to restore.

Three Practices of Healthy Mourning

1. Give Grief a Voice

The Scriptures never encourage us to pretend that loss does not hurt. Pray honestly. Read the Psalms of lament. Tell your story to trusted friends. Write your prayers in a journal if necessary. Pain that remains hidden often remains unhealed.

2. Refuse to Mourn Alone

One of the great strengths of Jewish life has been the ability to grieve in community. The tradition of *shivah* recognizes that sorrow was never intended to be carried in isolation. Allow others to pray with you, sit with you, and walk with you. Likewise, participate in the collective rhythms of remembrance within your community.

As Paul writes: *"Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep."* (Romans 12:15 TLV)

3. Hold Memory and Hope Together

Healthy mourning neither denies the pain of the past nor allows the past to determine the future.

The Ninth of Av is followed by promises of comfort and restoration. The cross is followed by resurrection. The prophets remind us: *"Those who sow in tears will reap with a song of joy."* (Psalm 126:5 TLV)

Waiting for the Comfort of Zion

The month of Av reminds us that mourning has a sacred place in the life of God's people. Tears are not evidence of weakness. Often, they are evidence of love.

We grieve because people mattered.
We mourn because covenant matters.
We remember because memory matters.

Yet we do not mourn as those without hope. The same God who receives our tears also promises redemption. The same God who scattered Israel also promised restoration. The same Messiah who suffered also rose again.

And one day, the Scriptures tell us: *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more."* (Revelation 21:4 TLV)

Until that day comes, we remember. We mourn. We stand together in solidarity with one another and with our people. And we wait for the comfort of Zion and the restoration of all things.


Benjamin Juster
Editor in Chief





TEARS

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LOVE.

Benjamin Zuster

KINGDOM CALLING

ERIC TIETELMAN

Today, as the Church moves into God's end-time plans upon the earth, there is a great need to break away from the status quo and reestablish the Kingdom principles that Yeshua released to His Body while He was in the world. These include seeking God's rule, obedience, mercy, love, faith, governance, unity, and prayer.

In this article, I will outline what the Kingdom of God is—its foci and its start and finish. I will also point out what may be missing currently and offer some practical suggestions on how the Kingdom can be demonstrated through His Body and His Church.

PERSONAL AND CORPORATE

The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are synonymous, denoting God's sovereign rule and the realm of His authority. This Kingdom is both a present spiritual reality, dwelling in the hearts of believers and His (*Ecclesia*) Church, and a future physical manifestation of Messiah's Second Coming, where it will be fully realized.



The Kingdom of God is wherever and whenever Yeshua rules as King. This means the Kingdom of God can be in your heart, your family, your home, and your Congregation. We can even see God's Kingdom principles applied in our Nations!

It's also important for us to understand that the Kingdom of God has both a personal spiritual focus and a corporate focus. The Lord came first to conquer sin in our hearts before He could ever rule and reign on the earth, hence the coming of the Lamb, and then the Lion. The Kingdom of God is both inwardly personal and outwardly communal. The corporate focus will not be realized fully until Yeshua Himself comes back to the earth to establish a millennial reign and an eternal Kingdom

In Yeshua's time on the earth, Israel was looking for such a King. But He made clear to the apostles when they questioned Him on this subject that it was not the time for this, and we would receive the power we needed from the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom (Acts 1:7-8). Yet we know Kingdom principles have been given to the Body and the Church that are not currently being fully utilized the way they were from the Church's beginning.

THE CALL OF THE FAMILY AND ITS PRIESTLY ROLE

To use these Kingdom principles optimally, we must first understand that God's foundation for His Kingdom was instituted with the nation of Israel, even before Yeshua was born into the world. The foundation did not begin with Yeshua's coming to the earth. As God established His Family Covenants,

He made a promise to Abram about becoming a great nation and later, the father to many Nations. He even changed his name to Abraham (see Genesis 17:4-5) and changed Jacob's name to Israel (see Genesis 32:28).

God had a larger purpose in mind in choosing them: ***"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"*** (Gen. 12:2-3 ESV, bold emphasis added). This is not just a promise to Israel but to all of God's children.

Then later, under the leadership of Moses, God made a divine covenant with the tribes of Israel, the firstborn called to the Family. Through that covenant, they became a single nation, and God became their King. Thus, Israel is portrayed in the Bible as an inspired picture of the Kingdom of God on earth. God spoke to the people of Israel through Moses: ***"And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"*** (Exod. 19:6 ESV, bold emphasis added).

God Himself became King of Israel, and this is where the "Kingdom of God" was born. Becoming a priestly Kingdom meant that Israel's role as a nation was to serve all other Nations and to be their example of God's rule in every area of society. This will be realized when the Jewish people are ultimately restored to faith and join with God's children from the Nations in their destiny as one Family in God.





Today, two thousand years later, the Kingdom of God is coming back to the Land and people of Israel, and the Circle of Love is moving back toward Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

THE KING OF KINGS

The arrival of Yeshua fulfilled God's promise to establish His Kingdom, beginning with Israel and extending to the Gentiles. Yeshua's resurrection in a physical body underscores the tangible nature of the Kingdom, contradicting notions of just an eternal, ethereal existence in Heaven. The Kingdom of God is not a distant, otherworldly destination but a present and future reality where Heaven invades earth.

The Kingdom message extends beyond the idea of "just going to Heaven" after death. Instead, it emphasizes the restoration and unification of heaven and earth through God's redemptive plan that will be realized in the Millennium age and beyond. The Kingdom of God integrates both God's reign and His people, as seen in Scriptures emphasizing the Body's role as a "Royal Priesthood" and "Holy Nation" (see Revelation 5:9-10; 1 Peter 2:9).

Yeshua begins His ministry with this proclamation: *"Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!"* (Matt. 4:17 ESV). Matthew also recorded that Yeshua was going throughout Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom. Yeshua taught His disciples to pray for the coming of the Kingdom: *"Pray, then, in this way: 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'"* (Matt. 6:9-10 NASB).



He emphasized the priority of God's Kingdom to His disciples by teaching that the Kingdom is worth more than any other earthly reward: *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"* (Matt. 6:33 ESV). Altogether, the phrase "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven" is found almost one hundred times in the New Testament.

WHAT HE GAVE US

Yeshua not only taught us all about the Kingdom and its principles; He proclaimed it through the Great News of the Gospel. He lovingly lays down His life to a death on a cross and picks it up again to defeat the curse of sin and death: *"In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"* (Rom. 8:4).

Yeshua paid the price once and for all so that we may be free from sin's curse, knowing God personally for ourselves, to live an abundant life of love and obedience, where peace, joy, humility, and Kingdom authority would rule and reign in our hearts. These are the personal promises of the Kingdom for our souls and spirits. They belong to the Beloved through Yeshua, but we must learn to fight for them more effectively.

This is the challenge, the walk, the sanctified life we are called toward: that we would now make preparations for His coming (Revelation 19:7). We must learn how to walk more effectively in the Spirit so we do not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16),

to overcome and outsmart the evil one through the trials and tribulations in our lives, and to pray for and encourage others to do the same. While we may struggle with life's trials, we are all called to overcome and to find victory in every battle.

WHAT HE GAVE HIS ECCLESIA

The *Ecclesia's* (Church's) central mission, outlined in the Great Commission, is to preach the Gospel, make disciples, and prepare humanity for the Kingdom of God. While the message of salvation is often emphasized, the announcement of God's Kingdom, which Yeshua proclaimed as "at hand," remains *underrepresented*.

The Church functions as the instrument of advancing the Kingdom, equipped with God's love and the Gospel's power to save, heal, and transform lives through the leadership of Yeshua and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This mission involves heralding the Good News, calling for repentance, and equipping believers to mature in faith to do the works of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12–13). Preaching motivates, while teaching nurtures discipleship, equipping the *Ecclesia* to fulfill its purpose in *advancing* God's Kingdom on earth.

Ultimately, the Great Commission extends beyond salvation to encompass the entire mission of the Church—proclaiming the *Gospel of the Kingdom* and preparing God's people for Messiah's return and eternal reign.

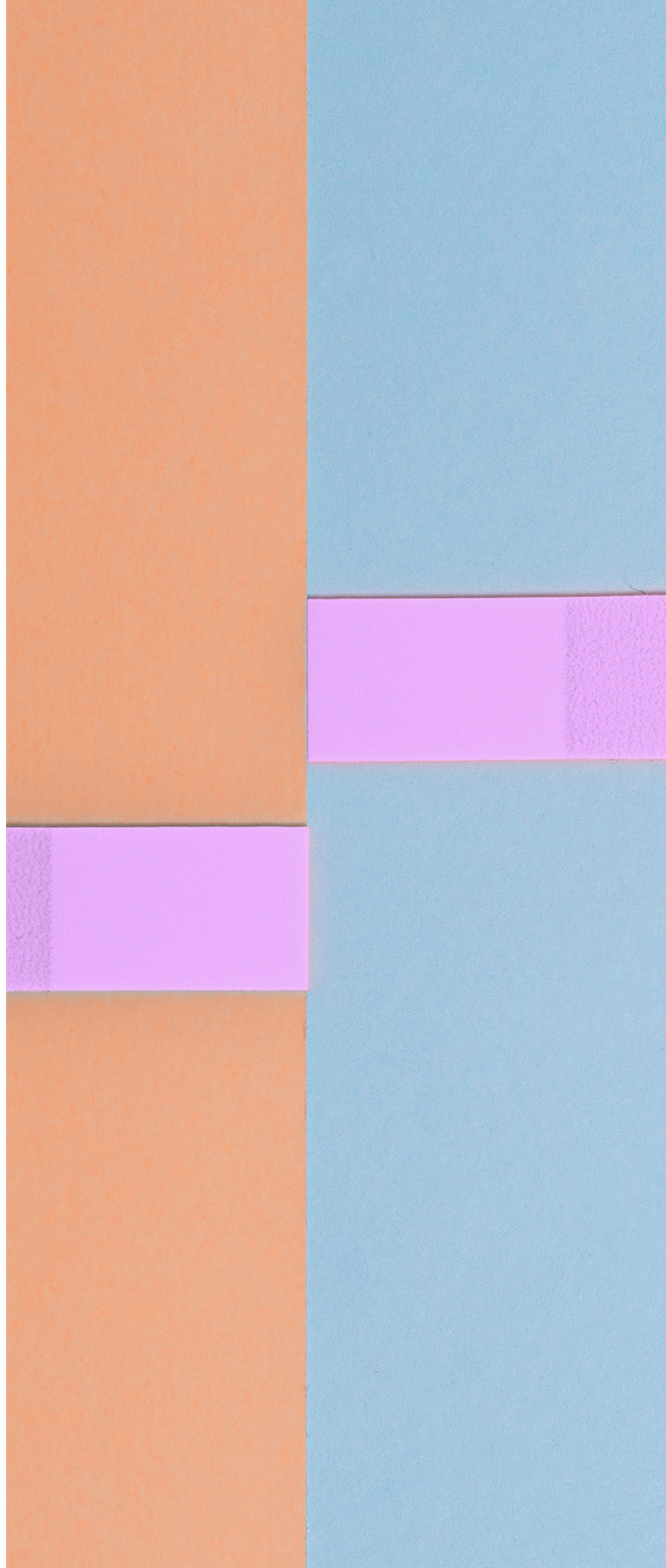


WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

So, just where are we going wrong with such division in the Ecclesia (Church), losing honor and respect, and its place of greater influence in the world? The thought here is not to point the finger in judgment or condemnation but rather to point out what's missing and what needs to change, and/or be added back to improve the functioning of the Body and the Church so the Kingdom of God may flourish once again.

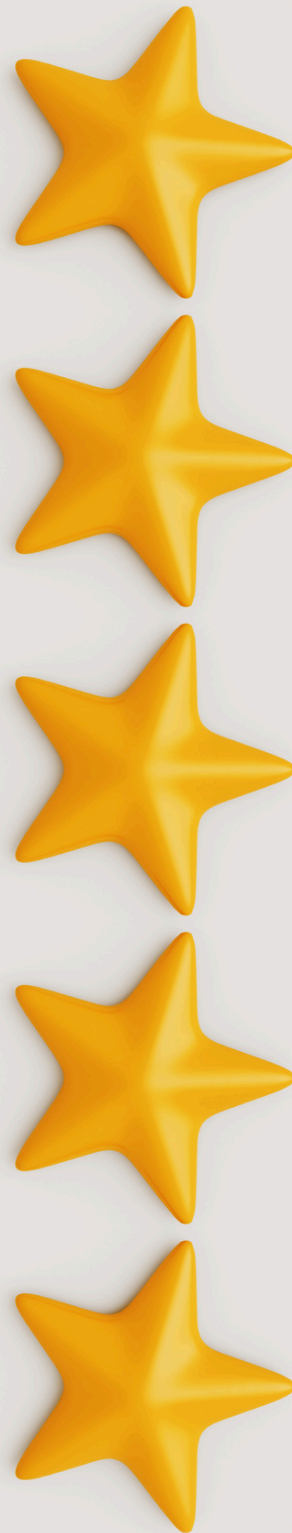
For this to happen, first, we need to recognize that the current model of the Church has shifted away from its biblical foundations and principles. God gave gifts to the Body for leadership known as “the fivefold”—apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching—to equip the Body to proclaim the Kingdom of God (see Ephesians 4:11-13). Yet the Greco/Roman model most of the Church currently operates with has too great a focus on just a couple of these gifts—pastoral and teaching, with some evangelism—leaving most of the works of the ministry to the leadership, as opposed to the Body. The result is the creation of an inward focus within the four walls of the Church, as opposed to an outward focus to reach and affect the world around us.

Using an analogy of an engine, if we built an engine to operate on five cylinders but use only two, the engine is blocked from running at its full potential and capacity. The two cylinders take on way too much of the work and become strained.



Somehow, some way, this needs correction to get away from the pride and ego of the titling of the touchier fivefold gifts currently holding the Body back, so all cylinders can be functional, which will be much healthier and more productive for the Ecclesia. Those who operate with apostolic and prophetic gifting could do so with more humility undergirding the Body instead of being over it, which may help the rest of the Body more readily embrace and support these leadership gifts. This can especially affect the regional areas of the Church where healthier leadership is needed to unite communities and where we can begin to take back ground that has been lost through prayer and ministry.

There is a really good video teaching in The Romans 911 Project on this subject that truly brings the fivefold gifts focus back down to the earth. Second, non-biblical religion, meaning any religious belief that is not rooted in the teachings and Scriptures of the Bible, has to go! It is this very spirit that Yeshua forewarned us about that has turned off current generations to the Truth: *"Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod!"* (Mark 8:15 ISV). In other words, be careful, because Satan is in both religion and in the world, and we need to watch these influences so they will not infringe on the freedom that Yeshua brought in the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:1).



Third—and fundamental to everything else we do, in addition to worship, both personal and corporate prayer must be reprioritized in the Ecclesia (Church). Prayer provides the fuel and guidance to every type of ministry. Leadership must lead by example through prayer. Just as Yeshua proclaimed, *“My house will be a house of prayer”* (Luke 19:46).

In the first article of this series, it was revealed how God’s desire for us to have much greater intimacy with Him. He wants us to dedicate our quiet times into His presence and also into His Word and to empower our focus on Spirit and Truth that the Lord released to us through the New Covenant.

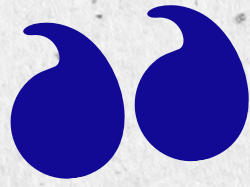
Imagine for a moment, Congregation leadership meeting regularly for prayer and fellowship in every town and suburb, encouraging one another and establishing community prayer gatherings on a regular basis. Imagine church doors opening daily, or even virtual meetings for the local saints to engage in early-morning worship and prayer, moving into deeper places of repentance and joy. Imagine the Holy Spirit leading us into worship and intercession to more effectively challenge the strongholds in each of our areas.

Beloved, this is not rocket science! It’s all quite achievable if we can only get away from one of the current Church’s greatest flaws—the building of our own kingdoms, rather than the building of *His*, especially in the Protestant Church. Local Churches are essential, but they need to unite and work together in their communities and regions for a breakthrough to come more fully.

When Yeshua spoke to the *Ecclesia* in the Book of Revelation, He spoke to cities and regions. Plus, the Ecclesia has operated too much with worldly principles, focusing on numbers and money rather than Kingdom principles.

Beloved, these are things worth praying for and fighting for. First, changes must occur within us to break free from the complacency of merely sitting in the pews and getting involved in the game. Second, we must *pray* for these reforms within ourselves and in the way the Ecclesia (Church) functions, so that the Kingdom may arise and prevail.





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ERIC TIETELMAN

The “Living Epistle” of Leadership Transition



TROY WALLACE

Successful leadership development and transition in the Messianic Jewish community, like every other part of the body of Messiah and in the global Synagogue, is an existential issue. As the pioneering generations reach the denouement of their era as day-to-day leaders after decades of vigorous and faithful service, we have a responsibility to engage with the upcoming generations of future leaders today.

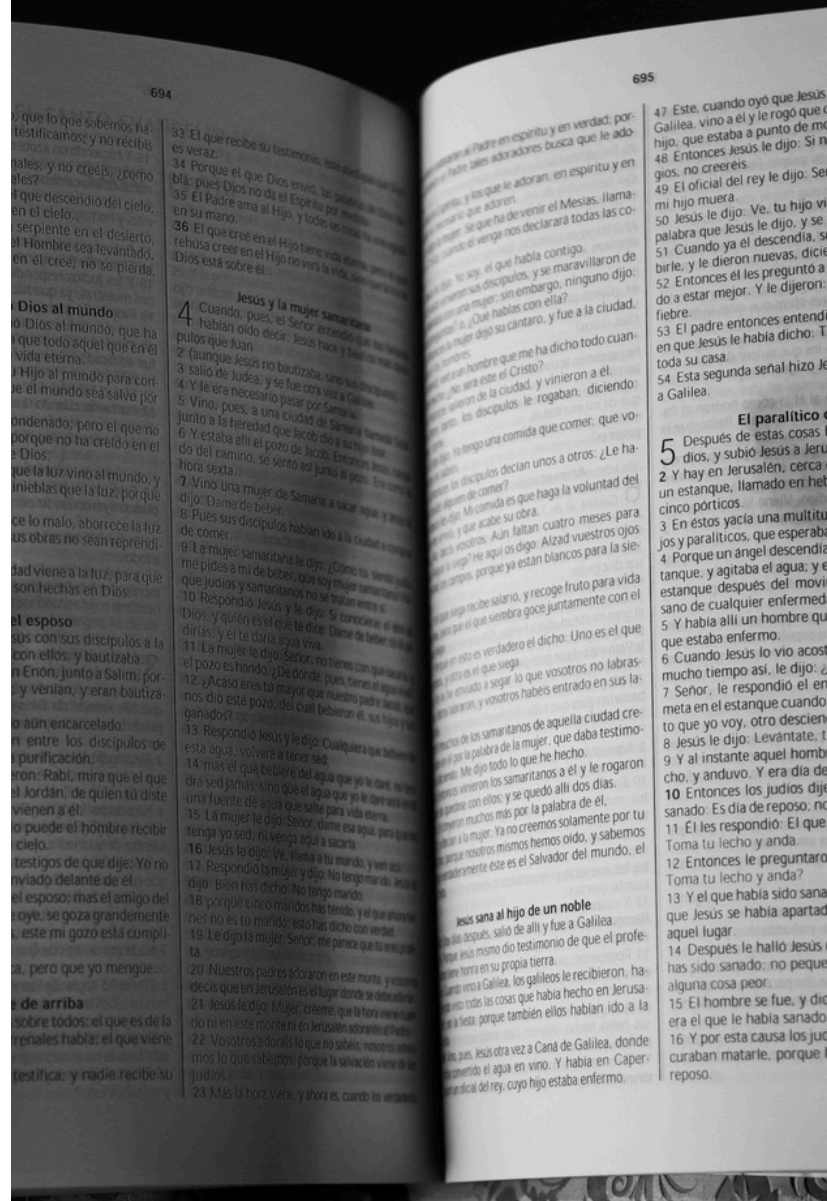
Many of the best concepts in Jewish and Christian life, from the rabbinic emphasis on the unbroken chain of teaching back to Sinai to the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession, are expressions of the same conviction: that what is entrusted to us is not ours to keep, only to pass along to those who will carry it forward.

Tikkun America, and the multitude of ministries affiliated with the Tikkun Global family, has had some success in passing leadership on from the founding generations; however, there is still more work for us to do. This is the first of two articles addressing leadership development and transitions. The next article (published out of order-see last month's issue) will present a four-step, multi-year roadmap intended to serve as a springboard for congregations and ministries to engage the next generations of leaders that we may embody **לדור ודור** (l'dor v'dor - "to generation and generation").

No Manual Exists

There is no instruction manual for leadership transitions explicitly derived from the text of the Scriptures. The whole of the Bible offers three instructive verses on the subject, tucked into Numbers 8:24-26, where God tells the Levites to serve from age twenty-five to fifty and then at fifty to cease their work to support those who will continue the work of the Levitical priesthood. It is a slim foundation on which to build a system or practice of leadership transition, and, understandably, few leaders in the Messianic Jewish community have set their sights on stepping back into a support or coach role at age fifty.

Transitions of leadership are necessary in congregations and in organizations so that the work of **מלכות השמים** (malchut hashamayim - "the Kingdom of Heaven") may continue in future generations. That transitions happen by design — whether they are marked by grace or conflict, by continuity or rupture — matters enormously.





The absence of a prescribed method does not mean the process is arbitrary. Rather, the process is often highly relational and variable, and the quality of the transition reflects the intentionality of the leadership development process.

The Purpose of Leadership

The Torah uses a three-word Hebrew phrase eleven times — **חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם** (chukat olam l'dorotechem – “an everlasting ordinance throughout your generations”) — when instructing the children of Israel about how to transmit the ways of Torah to the next generation. The first is in Exodus 12, where Adonai commands the commemoration of Passover as an everlasting ordinance. The charge is not simply to observe the ordinance, but to transmit it to ensure that what God has commanded us to do and to remember can be carried forward by those who succeed us.

This is the purpose of the priesthood: the Levitical structure — built out over Leviticus and Numbers — exists not only as a vocation or leadership system but as the mechanism by which a people remain faithful over time. Leadership, in this view, is not primarily about authority or vision or even competence, though these are all certainly important and necessary. It is about transmission: ensuring that the things He commands us to preserve are preserved, and that future generations have the skill, knowledge, and will to carry them forward.

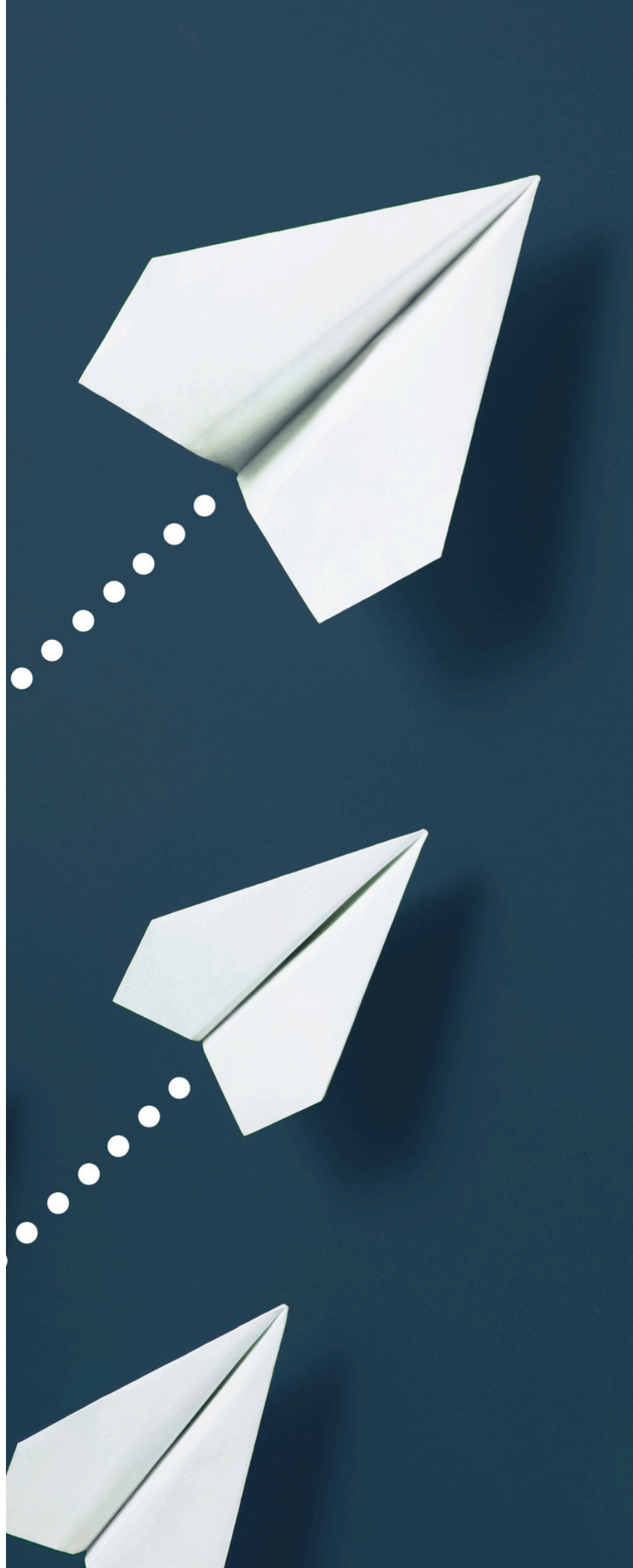
The Biblical Record of Leadership Transitions

The biblical record of leadership transitions is not one of obvious successes. Moses and Joshua represent the most orderly succession — though it required nearly forty years of preparation on Joshua's part and was ultimately resolved by Moses' death. David's succession was turbulent, shaped by the ambitions of his sons and the rivalries of those around him. Paul's development of Timothy as a leader culminated, in practical terms, with Paul sending his protégé to serve somewhere else entirely — a model that is more about sending than transition.

None of these, or others in the Text, is easily reducible to a formula for successful leadership transition, and all of them are not likely ones that we want to reproduce in their entirety, given the weaknesses in all of them. What they do share that we can duplicate is a common orientation: faithful leaders investing in the people who will carry the work forward, even when the process is incomplete, imperfect, or cut short. We must do likewise and make the commitment now to the future generation of leaders, despite the lack of a well-developed template for how to see leaders identified, trained, and released across all areas of service.

Being “Living Epistles” of Leadership Transition

Writing two letters to the ekklesia at Corinth during periods of leadership that were marked by significant challenges, Rav Shaul (Apostle Paul)



declines to prove his own leadership credentials. Instead, he points to the congregation itself: *"You are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read by all"* (2 Corinthians 3:2). The people and the future leaders, shaped by the ministry of those who have been leading, are the evidence of Shaul's leadership, and it is not a fixed letter, but a "living epistle". He is saying that the work of the Lord in Corinth, since he founded it and with others currently leading it, is a work that is in development and that is organic and dynamic.

In order that our heritage and necessary purpose as a Messianic Jewish community endures, we, as current leaders, must become "living epistles" in the context of leadership transitions. As Paul instructed Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, we, too, must take all that we have received from leaders who shaped us and pass it on *"to faithful people who will be able to teach others also."*

From Paul to Timothy to others who teach others, Paul's goal is for four generations of leaders serving together so that the community might continue long after his role as the first leader. The outcome of our pursuit of how to do it must be relational, flexible, and intuitive, and may vary widely from one congregation or ministry to another, but we must commit to it.

There is no manual. But there is a model that will work for you and your community — and it is written not in ink, but in the lives of communities that have learned, through long faithfulness, what leadership is for. We can and must be "living epistles" as we seek to see His work continue until He appears! In a second article (in last month's issue), we presented a simple leadership development roadmap with principles that can help us to see successful leadership transition within Tikkun America congregations and affiliated organizations.



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must be
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TROY WALLACE



A Reflection of Messianic Jewish Life

MORGAN KRUPINSKI



I often find myself in tension. A recent experience brought this tension again to mind. Going Passover shopping at "the Kosher Jewel," grabbing expensive Seder matzah, a few boxes of kosher for Passover treats, and then practicing for a youth-led worship night that is sponsored by the local high school's Christian club the following evening.

This is the practical reality of a Messianic Jew living in a community with a large Jewish and predominantly religious presence. This tension is not for the faint of heart. Think about what Yeshua warned us about.

"Just as the world hated me, they will hate you." (John 15:18) Yeshua even says to his disciples that they will be thrown out of the synagogues. (John 16:2)



My love and desire for a deeper connection with the wider Jewish world is in direct conflict with my open belief in Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel. My belief in Yeshua is a major stumbling block. It is seen as a betrayal of the people of Israel.

For Jewish believers outside of religious Jewish communities, the tension is there but expressed in different ways. It shows up at tense family Seders. It is felt by the side comments from extended family or the off-handed remark at a Jewish event. However, the tension and heartbreak are magnified to an even greater extent when we live amongst our own people and bump into each other in the kosher grocery aisles.

This anguish is not novel. Paul writes about it too.

"I am speaking the truth in [Messiah] —I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from [Messiah] for the sake of my brothers,[a] my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the [Messiah] , who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." (Rom 9:1-5 ESV)



This is not a woe is me topic. It is just a fact and reminder that living out our calling amongst our own people as Messianic Jews is a profound challenge, as well as a high and honorable calling. Being upfront and honest about your belief while appreciating and respecting the religious life and dimensions of the Jewish people is a path few take. It is often not taken because it is hard.

There is another option, however. It is much easier. Slowly assimilate into the wider church culture. Maybe light a Menorah or enjoy bagels. This is an easier and more frequent path. Maybe it is even rejecting your connection to the Jewish people and hiding it because of societal pressures. This is part and parcel of my own family's history during the 1930s and 40s. A connection masked by outward Christian identity and hidden Jewish sentimentality at home.

Yeshua was clear and direct when it came to criticizing the religious leaders of His time. The Pharisees were leading the people astray. Religious hypocrisy was called out in harsh terms. There was a clear conflict. He also wept over Jerusalem as His people rejected Him. Yet, he did not break from being enmeshed with the people of Israel.

Yeshua was faithful to the Torah and the customs of His people. Consider how He blesses the bread in His meal with the disciples in Luke 24. Although common for us, blessing food before eating is distinctly a rabbinic custom, developed near the time of Yeshua.

The Torah only requires a blessing after the meal. This shows the depth of Yeshua's identification with His people. If Yeshua Himself engaged with Jewish custom post-resurrection, are we not to reconsider our own faithfulness to Jewish identity?

Paul echoes Yeshua in his tension with his own people as well. Paul is ridiculed and thrown out of the Synagogues where he preaches Yeshua. He realizes that they are enemies of the Gospel, yet still deeply beloved by God. Their calling is still valid.

As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. (Rom 11:28-32 ESV)

The plight of Messianic Jews living amongst the wider Jewish community will not be solved by simply giving up, severing all ties, and retreating into the Church. It is solved and supported by pressing into the community with Messiah's love. It is supported by being a vocal supporter of the Jewish people, volunteering at Jewish events, and making inroads and real relationships with Jewish people.



Our call is strengthened by finding ways to participate in the community in thoughtful ways while being upfront with our faith in a respectful, non-aggressive manner. It is sharpened by respecting Jewish practice, even if we theologically disagree. These actions will lead to an openness from others that few imagine is possible. Our call is refined when the body of Messiah embraces the identities God has created us in.

It is hard. And costly. And it might even cost us our lives. As I write this, I think of Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky of blessed memory. Yaron was an active member within the Messianic community, and Sarah came from a strong Jewish background. Both were killed in an act of antisemitic violence outside the Jewish Museum in our nation's capital. The attacker didn't know or care about their faith or non-faith in Yeshua. They were killed for being Jewish. Their outward identification and presence at a Jewish event were the cause of their targeting.

May their lives, courage, and conviction to shine in their community convict us as well.





Our call is strengthened by finding ways to participate in the community in thoughtful ways while being upfront with our faith in a respectful, non-aggressive manner.



MORGAN KRUPINSKI

JULEON
AKANA

An Identity for the Redeemed

You know what?
You're right ... Proclaiming the Gospel isn't for everyone.

It's not for people who are afraid of hearing the word no.

It's not for people who doubt whether the Gospel is actually good news.

It's not for people who assume, "Someone else will do it."

It's not for an elite, special class of "believers" while the rest of us simply attend services, study Torah, and cheer them on from a distance.

You're right ... Evangelism isn't for those people.





Because biblical evangelism has never been a spiritual hobby for a gifted few. It has always been the calling of a people who have encountered the Living Word. Somewhere along the way, we've convinced ourselves that evangelism belongs to the extrovert, the street preacher, the missionary, or the person with "the gift." We have quietly excused ourselves by saying, ... "That's just not my calling."

But Paul would challenge that assumption.

Romans isn't merely a theological masterpiece explaining salvation. It is a missionary letter written by a man consumed with proclaiming Israel's Messiah to the nations. Every argument Paul makes—from the guilt of the Gentile to the accountability of Israel—is building toward one unavoidable conclusion: That the Gospel must be proclaimed! Yet before Paul tells us what to proclaim, he teaches us how to see the people we're proclaiming it to. That's where many of us have gotten evangelism wrong.

For Paul, the Good News is inextricably attached to his identity in Yeshua (Zehut b'Yeshua). The truth of this matter is found in the written word and the Messiah of Israel.

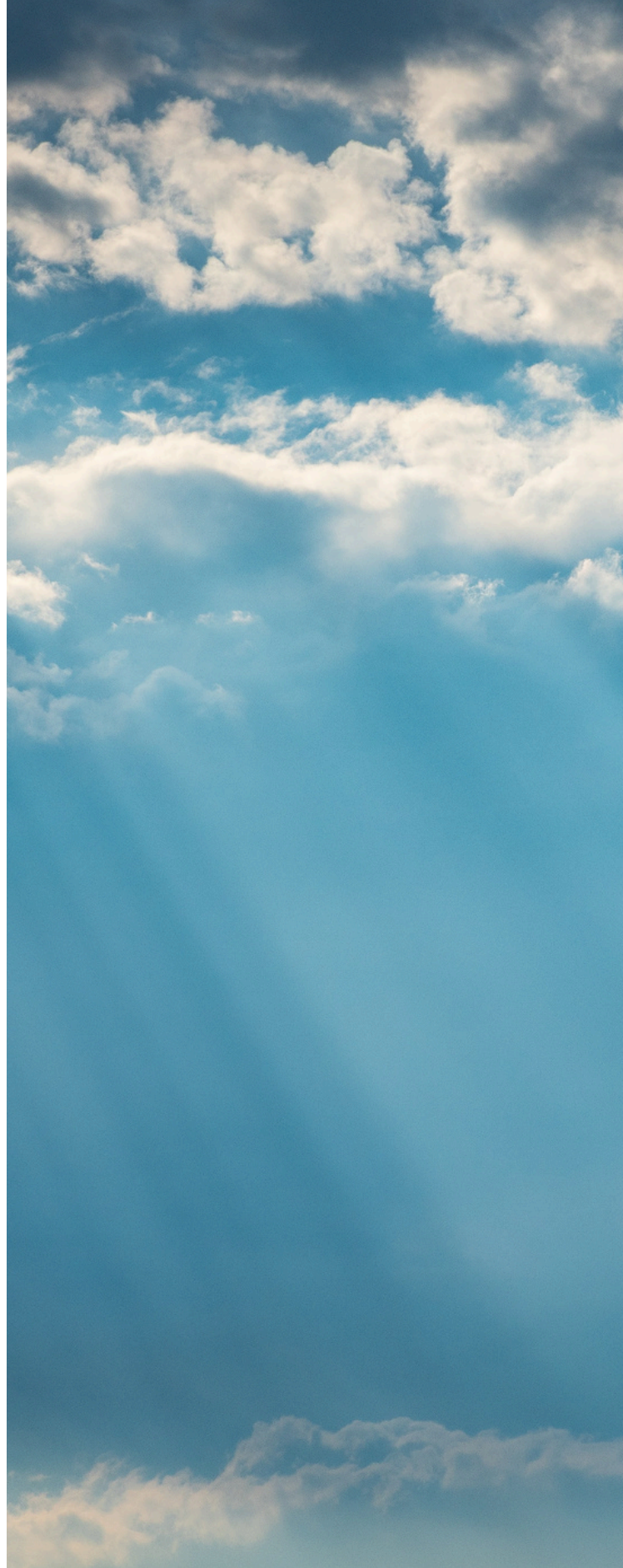
When Paul taught in the synagogues, he understood covenant order, and when he entered other teaching spaces as an emissary, he welcomed pagans into a Jewish story. We have to learn from Paul to apply his worldview in our modern world.

Yes, it is difficult to approach someone with the Good News, yet we often approach people as though God has been absent from their lives until we arrive, as though our conversation is God's first attempt to reach them.

Paul says otherwise. According to Romans 1 and 2, God has never stopped speaking. He has spoken through creation and conscience. Through the law written on the human heart, he spoke through Israel to be a light to the *goyim* (the nations). He spoke through the Torah and the Prophets, and for the nations, God says, you have no excuse, because my presence is embedded in the world and even in the stars of the sky.

The house has a builder who perpetually proclaims His majesty. He is always speaking to every generation. So then, our task isn't to bring God where He has been absent. Our task is to introduce people to the God who has already been pursuing them—and then reveal that every witness, every longing, every whisper of truth finds its fulfillment in Yeshua, Israel's Jewish Messiah.

Imagine for a moment that you are standing before God's throne. The Righteous Judge is not only in front of you, but His presence becomes all-encompassing. Everything that was dimly lit in the world becomes clear to you now, the one who testified to God's presence and power, not only as a believer in Yeshua but as a witness.





You do not have anything previously held onto in the old order of things, the olam hazeh (this world), but you have now entered olam haba (the world to come). There is no longer any ministry credentials, no degree, no titles, and everything is exposed, just as Hebrews 4:13 states,

"No creature is hidden from Him, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Just you and God. Every secret thing, thought, or motive. This is where Paul speaks into this moment, as an emissary of the Gospel (Besorah). Paul states, not timidly or softly, but as a man of God, confident in who he is. He knows his own purpose and understands the weight of His purpose; He says:

"On the day when God judges the secrets of men through Messiah Yeshua according to my Gospel."

My Gospel! What a statement. Not because Paul invented it. Not because Paul owns it. Not because Paul improved it, but because God entrusted and revealed it to him. God commissioned him to proclaim it. And Paul says there is something at the center of this Besorah most people don't want to hear ... That there is a day coming when God will expose every false identity. Paul is not talking to the pagan or the atheist; instead, he is talking to those who think judgment belongs to somebody else. And if we're honest ... that sounds a lot like us!

We can claim to know the Scriptures; however, Paul is confronting those who knew Torah. They loved Israel and celebrated the feasts and even debated the meaning of God's Word, but then the conversation turned from knowing doctrines and ethics to "What about Yeshua?" Do you know the Messiah of Israel and this Good News?

Yeshua never said, "Blessed are those who have the gift of evangelism." He never limited His mission to a select few. He never told the rest of His disciples to sit back while the "professionals" proclaimed the Kingdom. On the contrary, He called every disciple to be His witnesses. Before He ascended to Heaven, He didn't say, "Some of you will testify." He said, "You will be My witnesses." That wasn't a commission for the gifted; it was an identity for the redeemed.

Yes, the New Covenant recognizes that some are uniquely gifted as evangelists. But the existence of that gift never releases the rest of the Body from the responsibility of bearing witness to the Messiah who has transformed their lives.

And then Yeshua spoke words that should reshape the courage of every believer,

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Think about that ... Those who first heard those words had seen the risen Messiah with their own eyes. We have not, and yet we believe. We have entrusted our lives to the Jewish Messiah whom we know through the testimony of Scripture, the witness of the Spirit, and the faithfulness of those who proclaimed Him before us. If we have been blessed because someone bore witness to us, then how could we remain silent before those who have never heard? The body of Messiah is not merely a community of believers. We are a community of witnesses! The world doesn't need us to win every argument. The world needs us to faithfully testify to the One who conquered death and now calls all people to Himself.



Imagine talking to an atheist. Most Christians immediately jump to proving that God exists.

Paul might ask: Why do you feel guilt? Why do you believe some things are truly wrong? Why does injustice bother you? Why do you long for meaning and purpose unless there is someone who can give it to you? Paul sees those things as evidence because he knows the law is written on the heart. It is evidence that God has already left fingerprints inside everyone.

Now imagine talking to a Jewish person. Paul does not begin with creation. Paul begins with Torah—the promises, prophets, and the covenants because God has already been speaking there as well. The evangelist's job is not to introduce God to a people. The witnesses of Messiah's power and presence are already there, creating a people who will recognize the God who has been pursuing them. That's Romans 2!

Paul is not merely proving guilt. He is removing every false refuge and identity. The pagan says: "I didn't know." Paul says: Creation testified, and your conscience and heart also testify. The Jew says, "I have the Torah." Paul says: Possessing Torah is not the same as obeying it. Notice what Paul is doing. He is taking away every excuse. He does not hate his people. He wants them to see their need for Messiah.

NO EXCUSES!



A physician cannot heal someone who refuses the diagnosis, and Paul is diagnosing humanity.

The Gospel is not: "You are terrible." The Gospel is: "The revelation you received was never meant to save you." Creation can reveal God but not redeem. Likewise, conscience can expose but cannot forgive sin. Similarly, Torah can reveal God's holiness while not removing guilt, and every revelation points beyond itself, toward Messiah. This is why Paul eventually arrives at Romans 3. The purpose of revelation is not self-righteousness.

Many believers today treat Torah as an endpoint, yet Paul never does. Scripture always points toward Yeshua. Through the law, God's holiness is revealed. Torah reveals the justice of God and humanity's failure and then directs us beyond this physical world and the kingdom of Heaven. Instead of asking: "How do I convince people?" Ask: "Where is God already witnessing to this person?" Then help them connect the dots to Yeshua, our Messiah. That's exactly what Paul does in Romans 1–3.

He exposes the inadequacy of every other witness so that the ultimate Witness—Messiah Yeshua—can be clearly seen. We are never introducing someone to a distant and absent God; instead, we are inviting them into a space where the God of Israel has always been present and active. A place where He is **"The God Who Has Already Been Speaking."**





Our task is to *introduce*
people to the God who
has already been
pursuing them.

JULEON AKANA

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