

TIKKUN AMERICA

restore

Issue 54 | Tevet | January 2026

LIFE IN ISRAEL

Living between Quiet and Conflict

THE COST OF LOVE

WHO ARE YOU?

Building His Kingdom - Hand in Hand!

COVENANTAL ZIONISM, MORAL COURAGE, AND THE GOSPEL

CONTRIBUTORS

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RICHARD CLEARY

Richard is married to Sarah Elise and they have three kids — Luke, Hope, and Zechariah. With a team of Elders, he has been leading Kingdom Living Messianic Congregation in Kansas City since 2014. He has his MDiv. from The King's University with a concentration in Messianic Jewish Studies.

PATRICIA JUSTER

Patricia is a graduate of Wheaton College in English Literature and Secondary Education. She has been involved in prophetic and teaching ministry for over 40 years, and, alongside her husband Daniel, leads the equipping ministry Restoration From Zion. Patricia has written two books, The Cry and Refined by Fire.



GUY COHEN

Guy and his wife, Tali, founded and lead Harvest of Asher, a Messianic congregation of Jewish and Gentile believers in Akko, Israel.

AARON ALLSBROOK

Born and raised in Southern California, Rabbi Aaron Allsbrook has known Yeshua his whole life. Currently he serves as Congregational Leader at Ohev Israel . He serves alongside his wife Brooke. They have 4 beautiful children.



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.



Benjamin Juster

Think Different

Apple Computer's "Think Different" campaign was one of the most brilliant advertising slogans of the late 20th century. At a time when personal computers were still seen as intimidating, clinical, and mostly for technical people, Apple reframed the entire conversation. A home computer wasn't just a machine—it was a tool for creativity, exploration, and personal expression. It challenged people to reconsider their assumptions and to imagine a different kind of future.

That simple phrase—*Think Different*—is more than marketing genius. It is a profound biblical invitation.

Scripture consistently teaches that the direction of our lives is shaped by the orientation of our minds. What we dwell on, rehearse, and internalize becomes the seedbed of our actions. Our thought patterns are often the hidden engine behind our successes and failures, our spiritual vitality or lethargy, our emotional resilience or instability.

Yeshua calls us not merely to believe differently, but to think differently.

A Call From Scripture to Renew the Mind

Scripture doesn't simply encourage us to "think good thoughts." It commands us to cultivate a mind formed by truth, hope, and holiness. Rav Sha'ul exhorts: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any virtue, if there is anything worthy of praise—think on these things." (Philippians 4:8)

This is not wishful thinking. It is a disciplined reorientation of the mind toward God's perspective. Rav Sha'ul understood that thought precedes behavior, and belief precedes transformation.

Romans 12:2 adds another layer: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Renewal is not passive. It requires intentionality, attention, and spiritual diligence.

Jewish and Christian thinkers have emphasized this truth for centuries. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "The world we perceive is a reflection of the world we conceive." In other words, your interior world shapes your exterior reality.



Augustine argued that disordered thinking produces disordered living. Dallas Willard wrote that the greatest spiritual battle of our age is the battle for the mind—what fills it, what shapes it, and what it meditates on. More recently, theologian N.T. Wright reminds us that “virtue is formed by the habitual practice of renewed thinking.”

When our thoughts change, everything else can change.

How Wrong Thinking Shapes Our Relationships

Our thinking is not only a personal matter—it impacts the way we see and interact with others. Many of our relational struggles trace back to assumptions, inner narratives, and unspoken conclusions we carry about ourselves or the people around us.

If I assume someone is against me, I will interpret their actions through that lens. If I assume that people cannot change, I will lose patience prematurely. If I assume I am unworthy, I will sabotage intimacy or connection.

Wrong thinking locks relationships in the past, but right thinking opens the future. But biblical thinking is not blind optimism—it does not ignore sin, brokenness, or the need for repair. It acknowledges the reality of the present, yet trusts that God can do the unexpected at any moment. Healthy thinking allows us to engage others with humility and courage, believing that God is at work even when we cannot see evidence yet.





The same resurrection power that raised Messiah from the dead can raise dead relationships, dead hopes, and dead courage.

To “think different” in the Kingdom means we view people not just as they are, but as they can be in the hands of the Redeemer.

Thought Patterns Shape Destiny

Many of us fail not because God hasn’t given us opportunity, but because the filter of our thinking distorts the opportunity. We tell ourselves:

“I’m not capable.”
“This always goes wrong.”
“Nothing ever changes.”
“People never understand me.”

These aren’t just pessimistic statements —they are prophecies we absorb into our identity.

But the New Covenant calls us to “take every thought captive to obey Messiah” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The mind is strategic territory. The enemy wants to plant despairing narratives in the soil of our imagination, but God invites us to cultivate thoughts that align with His truth and His character.

Three Action Steps to Reshape Your Mind

Changing your thought patterns isn’t instant. But it is absolutely possible. Here are three practical steps to begin reshaping your mental habits for greater faith and fruitfulness.

1. Identify and Challenge Your Default Narratives

Most of us live on mental autopilot. We have scripts we recite without realizing it: scripts about ourselves, about others, about God, and about the future.

The first step is awareness.

Take a week and note the recurring thoughts that surface when you're stressed, disappointed, or interacting with difficult relationships. Ask:

- *Is this thought actually true?*
- *Does it align with Scripture?*
- *Is it producing faith or fear?*
- *Would I speak this way to someone I love?*

Often the simple act of naming a false belief is enough to begin loosening its power.

2. Replace Unhealthy Thoughts with Scriptural Truth

The mind cannot live in a vacuum—you cannot simply remove a destructive thought; you must replace it with truth.

For every false narrative, find a counteracting verse and rehearse it deliberately.

Fear → "God is my refuge and strength." (Psalm 46:1)

Discouragement → "I can do all things through Messiah." (Philippians 4:13)

Hopelessness → "With God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

Condemnation → "There is no condemnation for those in Messiah Yeshua." (Romans 8:1)

This is not spiritual denial—it is spiritual reorientation.



3. Practice Hopeful Imagination

Hope is not wishful thinking but a spiritual discipline. It trains the mind to look beyond what is visible and to expect God's redemptive work.

Each day, try this simple exercise: Write down one situation that feels stuck or discouraging. Then write one sentence describing what God *could* do in that situation. Let your imagination stretch into the reality of God's character, not the limits of your current circumstances.

Over time, this nurtures a mindset that is honest about present challenges yet fully open to God's surprising interventions.

Think Different, Live Different

The Apple campaign challenged the world to imagine technology differently. But Yeshua challenges us to imagine everything differently—to see ourselves, others, and the future through the lens of God's truth.

When you think different, you begin to live different.

When you renew your mind, you reshape your reality.

And when you align your thoughts with the heart of God, you open doors for healing, growth, and transformation you never imagined possible.

May the Ruach HaKodesh empower you to cultivate a mind anchored in truth, filled with hope, and ready for the extraordinary possibilities of the Kingdom!



Benjamin Juster
Editor in Chief



When our
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can change.

BENJAMIN JUSTER

Who Are You?

Aaron Allsbrook

One of the greatest songs of the classic rock era was “Who Are You?” by, ironically, The Who. The band repeatedly asks this question, urging the listener with the words, “I really wanna know!” The driven guitar, the aggressive drums, and the repetitive beats of the synthesizer drive home this inquiry with passion. They really want to know who you are. Let’s hope you have a good answer.

Identity is a key issue today. More than ever, people can’t answer this question, or this answer changes. People may have ideas, but they may lack certainty. A solid identity is key to a solid life. We do because of who we are. Our identity grounds us, it guides us, it informs us. It is essential.





Yeshua knew this. It is no coincidence that upon coming out of the Jordan River, God the Father proclaims for all who were present that Yeshua is His Son. He established the identity of this man so all could know exactly who He is and how they are to relate to Him. Is it a surprise that some 40 days later that the enemy questions Yeshua with this, “If you are the Son of God...” And before Yeshua begins to make His way into Jerusalem, He is glorified above Moses and Elijah, and His identity is reconfirmed with His 3 main disciples present to hear, “This is my Son. Listen to Him.” Identity is essential to mission.

Yeshua knew who He was. His identity was inextricably linked in relationship with His Father. This solidity empowered Him to do what He did and say what He said. No one could shake this identity, and even if it was questioned, His works testified to who He knew Himself to be.

There are layers to identity. There are foundational elements and more peripheral ones. Our family, our culture, our place of birth, and our experiences are some of the core components, whereas our job and hobbies do not share such weight. Knowing the different parts of identity and putting them in their proper order of importance strengthens and empowers us to live the life God intends for us, as well as do the things He wants us to do. Think of these words, “For we are His workmanship—created in Messiah Yeshua for good deeds, which God prepared beforehand so we might walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Identity enables.

Within the Messianic community, there are some key identities. We can start with the priority of knowing that we are children of God. Being a child of the Most High puts us in an intimate relationship with the God of the universe and secures us in His love. We build on this. Some of us are Jewish. Some of us are of the nations (Gentiles). We are male. We are female. There is also our cultural background. A good number of us are married. There are also those who are single. Some of us have children. And then we can expand even more: where you were born, what are your key experiences, good or bad, your education, etc. However, when you settle the core components, then the others find their proper order and importance.

God doesn't make mistakes. No one would accuse Him of such, but when we choose to be uncomfortable with different aspects of our identity, particularly the ones we were born into, then we assert this. If there is a level of discomfort of being who we are, the issue is ours, not His. The spirit of the world encourages people to alter themselves to fit the identity they believe they are. While it may appear to be a means of salvation from internal consternation, such physical transformation does not produce the desired results en masse. Running away from God's design will never ground us in confidence and peace. Think of Jonah.

Gentiles seeking to be Jewish, and even Jews seeking to hide or minimize or outright ignore their Jewishness, are just the same. Many within our community have yet to achieve satisfaction in who God made them to be, so they look to change. They think that such a transition will lead to happiness and peace. The key focal point here is that such a mentality is self-focused and not Kingdom-focused.



In the economy of God, everyone was created with a specific part to play. God purposefully designed all to do something special. The more startling point is that if such people don't live this out, God will pass them over and find someone else who will do it (see Esther 4:14). What a terrifying place to be! You may gain what you think your identity is, but in the end, you will lose your efficacy in the Kingdom. Yikes!

God doesn't make mistakes! If you're born Jewish, be Jewish; be proud of it and live out the fullness of the covenant and the promises we have in Yeshua, the King of the Jews. By doing so, we attest to the faithfulness of God to our fathers and their descendants. If you're of the nations, accept it, embrace it! You were made with a purpose. Be proud of who you are! You were made as a witness to your people and other nations that God has welcomed all into His family through Yeshua. You also possess a unique ability to provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom 11:11), not by dressing up like a Jew, but by loving them, honoring them, and blessing them, for through them came the Scriptures and Yeshua (Rom 9:4-5).

Relationship is an indelible part of identity. God doesn't make islands. Mankind is inherently relational (Gen 1:27). Not only is it not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18), it's not good for Jews to be alone or Gentiles to be alone. This togetherness does not preclude our distinctiveness; it reinforces it and celebrates it. Just as a man and woman unite to produce life, so do Jews and Gentiles.





Differences united in love makes fruit for God's glory and for the benefit of man. If we transform "one new man" into "one new Jew" or "one new Gentile," then we erase a core piece of man's identity—relationship.

Let us celebrate our differences because God made each of us on purpose. Know who you are. Be confident in your identity, all its layers, because we were all made to do something special. If we're Jewish or Gentile, male or female, young or old, or any color of the rainbow, let us walk in our identity to testify to the power and goodness of God and help build His Kingdom hand-in-hand!

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AARON
ALLSBROOK





LIFE IN ISRAEL

GUY COHEN

Faith Beyond the Ceasefire

Life in Israel today is often described from the outside as a period following the war, but for those of us who live here, the phrase “after the war” does not reflect the reality we experience every day.

The fighting may have quieted, and a ceasefire may be in place, yet the deeper conflict has not ended at all. In the northern region of Israel, where the Harvest of Asher congregation building stands only twelve miles from the Lebanese border, our people lived for two years under threats, evacuations, rocket fire, and constant uncertainty. The ceasefire has created a kind of quiet, but it is not the quiet of peace. It is the quiet of an enemy who is rebuilding, planning, and preparing. What the world calls peace is, in truth, a temporary pause in an ongoing struggle. Life resumes, but always beneath the shadow of what could return at any moment.

Over these two years, we have learned to live with a rhythm shaped by both faith and vigilance. Each morning we rise, send our children to school, go to work, remaining attentive to any siren that may break the silence, and pray that the day will remain calm. Trusting in the Lord for protection has become a daily necessity, not a poetic phrase. Some families in our fellowship have been unable to return to their homes for months because of the danger along the northern border. Even now, while the world assumes Israel has entered a more peaceful season, we know that everything can change in a matter of seconds. We keep one hand near the shelter and the other firmly held in God’s hand.

The trauma that defined these two years began on the morning of October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched the deadliest attack in Israel’s history.

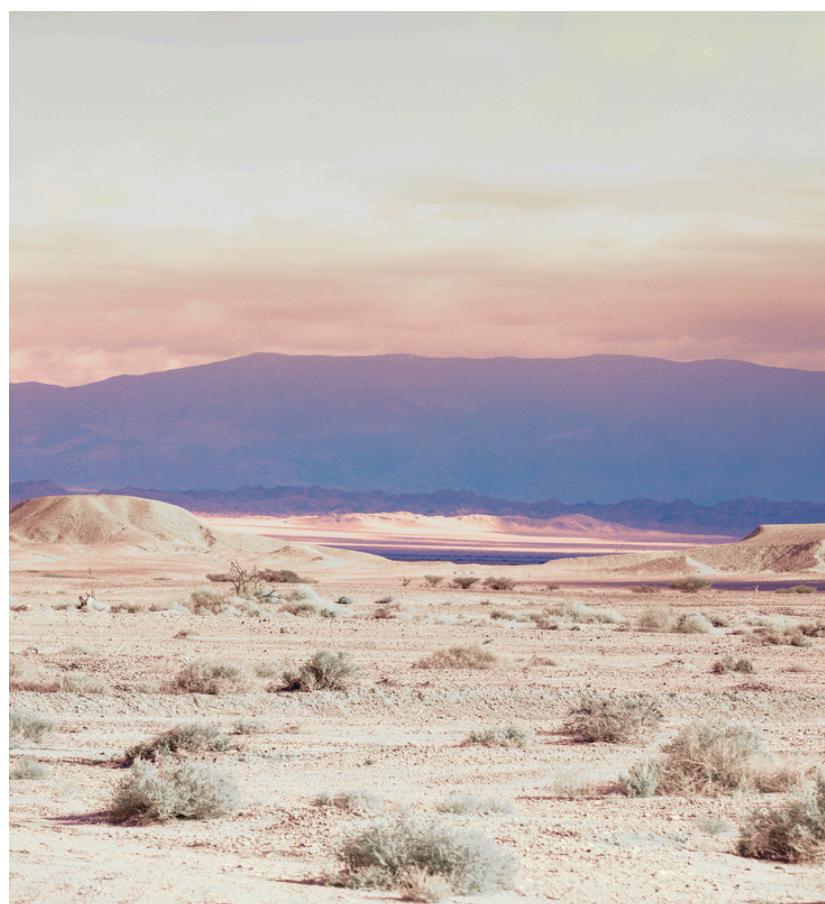
Thousands of terrorists infiltrated communities with the intent to murder and destroy. Twelve hundred Israelis were killed, and hundreds were taken hostage. For our community, this grief was devastatingly personal. My uncle's granddaughter was murdered at the Nova music festival. Two other young women, friends of our children, were also killed that day. Others we knew, close and distant, were lost as well. This was not a national tragedy happening to strangers. It settled into our homes and into our hearts.

As the conflict expanded, Iran increased its involvement. The turning point came when Israel carried out a covert operation in Tehran that resulted in the death of the leader of a terrorist organization inside a building connected to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Iran responded in a wildly disproportionate manner and shifted from using proxies to acting directly. In April 2024, Iran launched a massive wave of missiles and armed drones toward Israel, the first time Iran had attacked openly from its own territory. Several months later, on the first of October, Iran fired another wave of missiles and drones at Israeli cities.

On that very evening, while Iran's missiles were being launched, our family was celebrating our daughter's wedding. We stood beneath the wedding canopy with joy and trembling together. As tension spread across the region, we prayed that the sounds of celebration would not be replaced by the sounds of war.

It became a living reminder that even in the midst of threat, God's faithfulness remains, and that life and love continue to rise in defiance of fear. These events made it clear that Israel was not facing isolated extremists but a coordinated regional campaign driven by Iran itself!

In June 2025, the region entered what later became known as the Twelve-Day War. Although it lasted less than two weeks, its intensity was overwhelming. Israel faced missile attacks from Iran, rocket fire and anti-tank weapons from Lebanon, drones launched from multiple countries, cyber attacks, and the involvement of Iranian-backed militias throughout the Middle East. Our northern region became a front line. Even after the official end of the operation, the sense of danger never truly lifted. The war changed its shape, but it did not end.



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Today, there is a ceasefire, but no sense of closure. Hezbollah has used this pause to rebuild and strengthen its extensive missile and drone capabilities. Hamas is attempting to reorganize. Iran continues to fund, arm, and direct its allies. Attempts to infiltrate, isolated attacks, and drone activity remind us that calm is temporary. Living twelve miles from Lebanon means living face to face with Hezbollah, one of the most heavily armed non-state forces in existence. Its presence is visible from our hills, and its intentions are well known. It works continually to undermine the security of northern Israel and disrupt daily life.



And yet, in the midst of this difficult reality, life continues. Children go to school. People go to work. Families gather for Shabbat meals and celebrations. There is a deep determination among Israelis to continue living even under threat. Within our community, this determination is strengthened by our faith in Yeshua. Our identity as Jewish believers does not separate us from the struggles of our people; it roots us within them. We grieve with our nation, serve our nation, and pray for our nation while holding to the hope that the Messiah gives.

Throughout these two years, Harvest of Asher has expanded its ministry in ways we could not have anticipated. We have supplied soldiers with protective gear, field equipment, clothing, and essential items. We have provided food and financial assistance to families whose loved ones are serving in dangerous areas. We have supported evacuated families by helping them relocate, supplying clothing and basic needs, caring for children, and offering emotional and spiritual support. We have continued our regular ministry of worship, teaching, visitation, prayer, and humanitarian care — even when sirens interrupted our gatherings and rockets fell nearby.

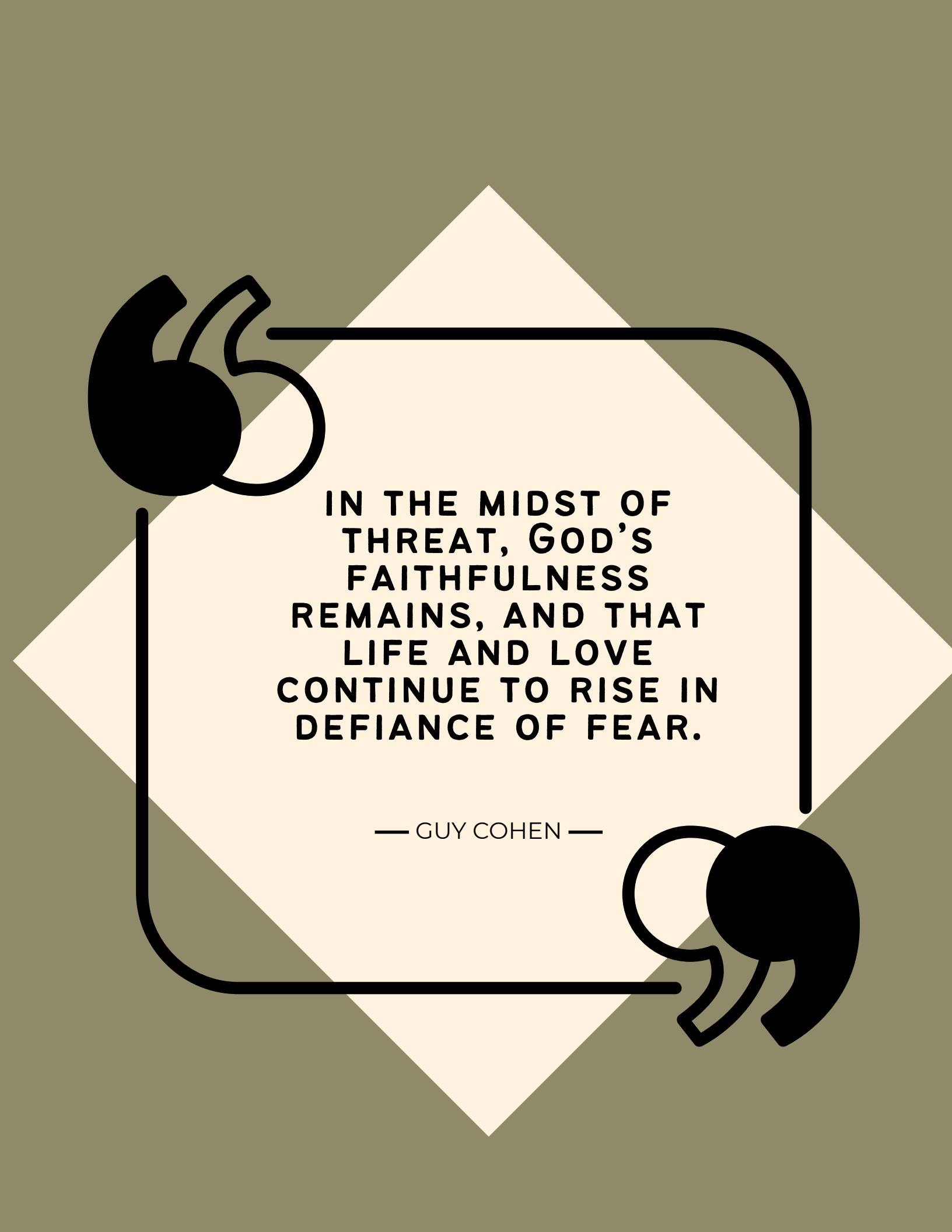
Perhaps the most significant spiritual change during this season has been the openness of people walking through suffering. In shelters, evacuation hotels, military bases, and hospitals, people are asking questions they never asked before. They want to know where God is in all of this. They want to know if hope is real. Hearts that were once closed are now willing to listen, to share, and to receive prayer. In the darkest moments, the light of God has shone the brightest.

These two years have taught us about pain, resilience, vulnerability, courage, and grace. They have shown us that even when the world believes the war is over, we continue to live in a fragile and complex reality. Yet they have also shown us that God is faithful, present, and stronger than fear. We continue to stand, to serve, to support our community and our soldiers, to walk with those who mourn, and to proclaim that the hope found in Yeshua cannot be shaken.

Life in Israel may now be described as a time after the war, but for us, it is something deeper. It is a journey of faith in the midst of uncertainty. It is a testimony of God's protection and love. And it is a reminder that even when the war is said to be over, the calling of believers in this land continues.

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**IN THE MIDST OF
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CONTINUE TO RISE IN
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— GUY COHEN —

Covenantal Zionism, Moral Courage, and the Gospel

RICHARD CLEARY



Covenantal Zionism and World Redemption Promised Side-by-Side In Holy Scripture

While it may seem completely obvious to many of us, it is not to most today that Zionism is consistent with the Good News of God's love for all peoples. Therefore, for this reason, and many others, we need to give ourselves to a renewed and sustained effort in our teaching, preaching, education, conferences, writing projects, Jewish-Christian relations, podcasts, art, relationships, actions and more — that demonstrates that Messianic Jewish or Christian Covenantal Zionism does not lead to succumbing to a narrow focus on one land and one people at the expense of other peoples and the rest of the good lands on planet earth.

While Biblical or Covenantal Zionism does give attention to a particular focus on one land and one people group, it does so in the context of God's love for

the whole world and His sovereign purposes of redemption for all people groups and all the earth in Messiah Yeshua.

While this theme can be easily demonstrated through the whole of the canon of Scripture, a careful reading of the irrevocable covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning the people and the land of Israel (Zionism) is side-by-side with the irrevocable covenant promises, and pertaining to the salvation and blessing of all nations. The particular and the universal, the spiritual and the territorial, are not in competition or contradiction with one another. *This is in plain sight when God makes His promises to Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 17:4-8), to Isaac (see Genesis 26:3-5), and to Jacob (see Genesis 28:3-4; 35:9-12).*

It is not hermeneutically sound to take all these promises pertaining to the people and land of Israel and see them as *canceled* or *radically re-interpreted* in Messiah Yeshua, while at the same time *affirming* the promises are now relating to the nations as being *confirmed* and *fulfilled* in Jesus. It is far better, more ethical, and truly loving towards the Jewish people and all the Nations to recognize that the covenant promises of redemption for the people and land of Israel provide a pattern for His covenant promises for all nations and their lands on the earth. As New Covenant Jewish and Gentile disciples, we would currently differ with the majority of the Jewish community,



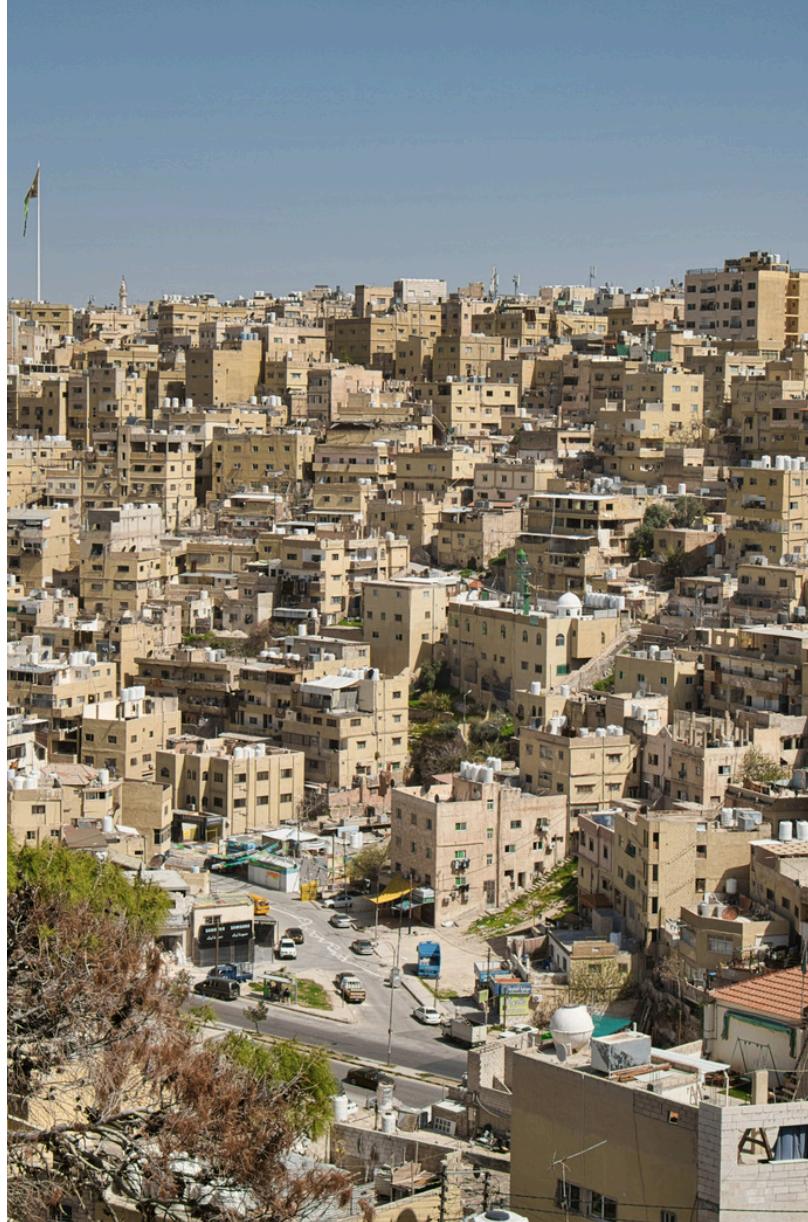
seeing all these promises as confirmed, mediated, and fulfilled in Messiah Yeshua, the eternal King of the Jews and Lord of the world. Likewise, this confirmation and realization of all God's promises come to pass based on Messiah's first coming and outpoured Spirit, which anticipate their consummation through His second coming and the World to Come. Keeping this both/and framework, which values Israel and the Nations, the promised land and the whole earth, Messiah's first coming and second coming are all important as we encounter the sophistry of many arguments associated with Zionism today. For these arguments that are often devoid of sound logic, accurate theology, or ethical love tend towards caricatures of the face and a twisting of the true intent of Covenantal Zionism. So we need discernment, big time.

Right-wing Anti-Semitism in America?

Have you noticed that Zionism is a hot topic in the culture right now, not just with the people of God? The topic is an urgent matter. Since October 7th, the rise of Anti-Semitism in the form of Anti-Zionism has grievously skyrocketed. Even this year, it has spread much, even through right-wing media influences from the likes of Tucker Carlson, Candace Owens, and Nick Fuentes. And many young people are being influenced. So this is not a time to just sit back and watch what is happening, nor is it a time to assume everyone in our congregations, churches, and families already has a strong foundation of biblical truth to sustain their stand with Israel and the Jewish people. According to Dr. Tom Blake, an important word often missing in this conversation is 'Covenant'. This is one reason among many that Covenantal or Biblical Zionism is helpful terminology as we engage.

A Time for Biblical Training and Moral Courage

Let me put our moment in a different light. If you are a Messianic Jewish Zionist or a Gentile Christian Zionist, you believe a message that makes many people hate you today. And not to spook us, but some people would want to kill us just for believing that God promised irrevocably the everlasting gift of the land of Israel to the people of Israel — the genealogical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To underestimate it just for a moment, it is probably really important that we have good, strong biblical roots and foundations for our Zionism, right? Yes.



But we can be much stronger than this. We must be. We have to know that we know that Zionism, rightly defined, is what the word of God teaches, not just accept it because our parents taught it, or our Messianic rabbi or pastor taught it. We need to be clear that this is biblical and worth believing in, regardless of the cost!

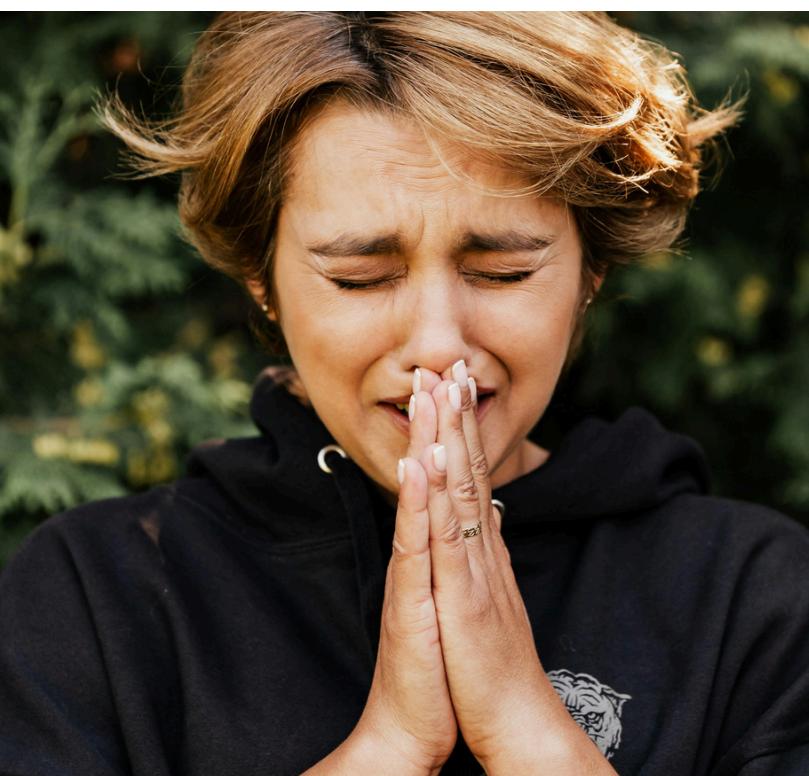
Calling Gentile Covenant-Partners to Solidarity with Israel

In our membership courses at Kingdom Living Messianic Congregation, we have told potential membership candidates something like this: "If you are not willing to die for Jewish people, to stand with Jewish people in their

suffering and persecution, you're probably not ready to be a member of Kingdom Living." This is especially a message to those who are among the Nations who seek to join us. Jewish people already know that being Jewish can be dangerous.

We want Gentile disciples who are possible membership candidates to think seriously about the cost and implications of joining communally and covenantally with the Jewish people through their union with the Jewish Messiah and Jewish disciples.

We want membership candidates to know that our community is standing with the Jewish people, and if they are not in a place where they are taking that notion seriously, this is probably not the community they should be a member of right now. We are not interested in adding Gentile members who love Jewish things but do not love Jewish people.



We owe this to our Jewish members. We owe this to the Jewish people as a whole. Again, if a person is not there yet on their journey, they can be learning and growing among us for a season until they get to that place. Am I being too strong? I don't think so. To be clear, we don't say things like this to a potential membership candidate because we have a doom-and-gloom understanding of the end times, or a fatalistic understanding of what has to happen here in America concerning Jews; that all we can expect is bad, bad, bad for the Jewish people. We don't think that way.

So don't read into things I am not saying. On the other hand, we do believe there will be real and great difficulties ahead for the Jewish people in America. They are already upon us. And we believe that we can't be passive bystanders about this. We must pray, act, and speak in covenant solidarity with Yeshua's Jewish family. The Jewish community, including the Messianic Jews who are within the household of Israel, needs real allies. Like Ruth before us,

New Covenant Gentiles need to count the cost of what it means to be grafted into and made co-covenant members with Israel in the one people of God — for better or worse. I hope we will have many more conversations on this subject. And to encourage that, I want to suggest some questions that we need to answer with clarity, boldness, courage, and love.

Important Teaching and Conversation Points on Covenantal Zionism

- Are there good exegetical and theological reasons to have confidence in Covenantal Zionism as being fully biblical — that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has made irrevocable covenant promises to the patriarchs and their genealogical descendants, the Jewish people, to give them the land of Israel as an everlasting possession? Also, can this be shown to be completely consistent with God's heart for all the Nations, the reconciling of Jew and Gentile in one Body in this Age, Israel and the Gentile Nations in the Age to come, and God's plans for the renewal of all the earth, not just the land of Israel? Yes.
- And from a New Covenant perspective, are all these covenant promises concerning land and people, for Israel and the Nations, confirmed and mediated through, and will be fulfilled in their entirety in Messiah Yeshua, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham — through His two comings? Yes.

While there is room for disagreement on what stage we are at, is it reasonable to believe the Jewish people's return to their ancient homeland is an eschatological sign of God's faithfulness to His promises to ancient Israel and His enduring commitment to them for the sake of the fathers? Yes.



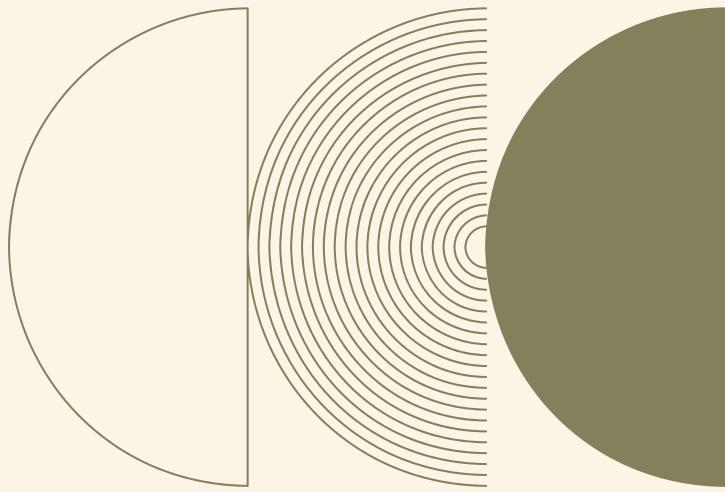
- Is it essential that we renew and strengthen our commitment to transmit Covenantal Zionism from generation to generation as an integral part of Messianic Jewish and post-supersessionist Christian Theology? Yes.
- Does this need to include a loyal and courageous support of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation that can defend itself from enemies without and protect the rights of its citizens within? And speaking out against Anti-Semitism in all its forms in America? Yes.
- Is Covenantal Zionism a form of racism, inherently filled with Jewish ethnic-superiority? Does it contribute to and foster hatred for other peoples? No.
- Is it anti-Arab Christian and other people's living peacefully in the land alongside Jews who respect Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation-state? No.
- Does one need to believe the current form of government in Israel is the best or ideal form of government to practice justice? No.



- Does it mean uncritical support for all the decisions of the Israeli government without any room for conversation and debate within the Jewish community, in Jewish-Christian relations, and international politics? But does it also mean swallowing the mockery, sophistry, and rhetoric that so often attack and accuse Israel, often without facts, logic, or sound theological grounding? No.

As we face these difficult times, I hope this article stirs you to prayerfully participate with moral courage in renewed efforts toward embodying and doing your part in transmitting to the next generation the hopeful Covenantal Zionism that aligns with God's heart of love for Israel and all peoples, knowing that, all His promises will be fulfilled, not cancelled, in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.

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While Biblical or Covenantal Zionism does give attention to a particular focus on one land and one people group, it does so in the context of God's love for the whole world and His sovereign purposes of redemption for all people groups and all the earth in Messiah Yeshua.

RICHARD CLEARY

THE COST OF LOVE

PATRICIA JUSTER

A small boy pressed his nose against a frost-covered windowpane, trying to get a closer look. He had smelled the odors of fresh pastries and roasting turkey wafting from the house, and it stirred memories of days long ago. Fragrances of love and family, that's what they were, how he longed to be a part of this scene he viewed from afar.

There they were, a father and a mother sitting on a bench before their upright piano. A gleeful young lad sat on the man's lap while the mother played and sang Christmas carols. And there stood a proper young girl dressed in fine pink silk and lace. She had her arm about her mom's shoulder and was trying to blend her delicate voice with the tones of her parents.

In the distance, he saw a table set with the best china, goblets, and colorful red napkins. He just knew that this was what he wanted for Christmas...a family.

Reluctantly, the boy pushed himself away from the window. It had begun to snow, and the wind started to pick up. The night was bleak, and wintry blasts of cold slipped down his neck. With determination, he pulled the collar of his thin coat up over his ears. Quickly, he shoved his bare hands back into his pockets. The cold felt like painful knives coming through the holes in his coat, but all he could do was scrunch his shoulders up into his head and bow low into the gusts as he walked. He trudged steadily towards town in hopes of finding a store open where he could receive warmth.



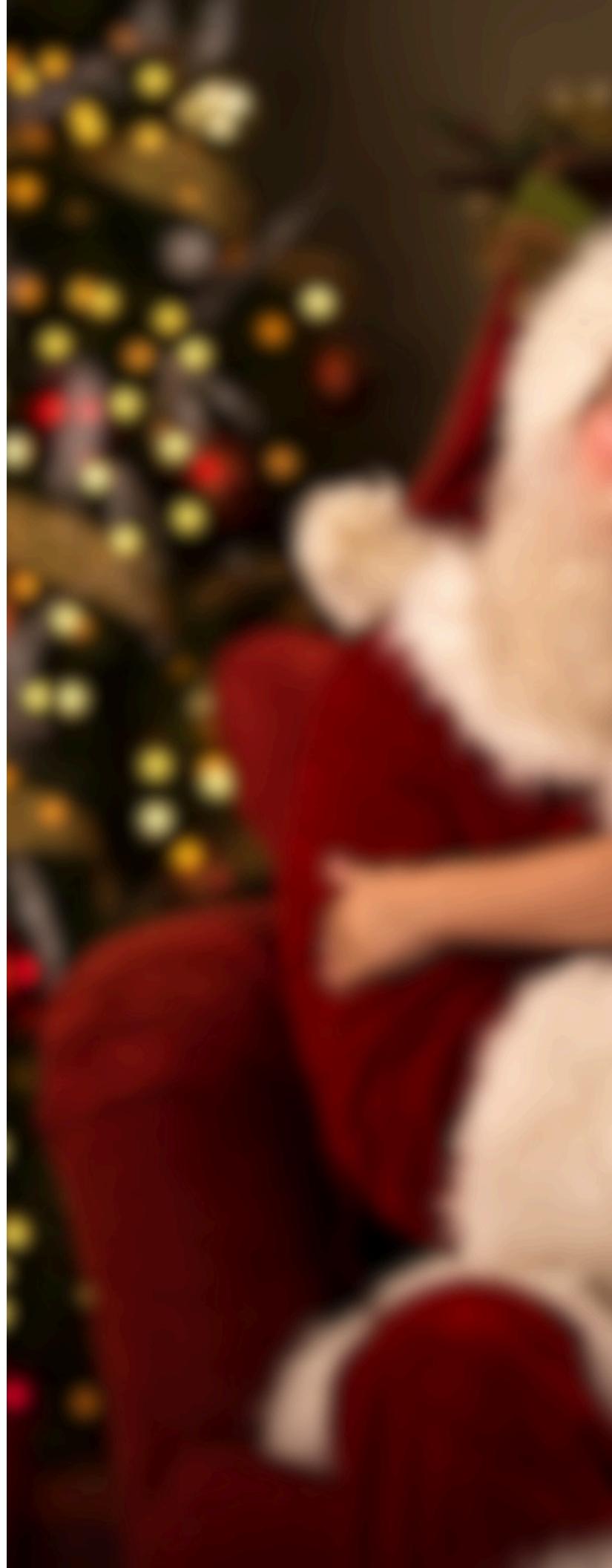
About three blocks down the road, the lad found himself on Main Street, and sure enough, a department store was all lit up. He took a moment to look at the Christmas displays in the windows before going through the revolving doors. There was Santa standing by his sleigh with his faithful reindeer peering back at him as if to question, "Now?" Numerous elves appeared to be scurrying about, getting ready for the big night. Multi-colored presents lay everywhere as if waiting expectantly for little arms to gather them up. Fake snow covered everything. Even this moved the boy into deeper sadness. Glancing toward the door, he decided to risk being caught and sneaked into the store. Luckily, no one was watching. He went straight for the toy department. How good the heat felt, and he began to relax his shoulders and to stomp his feet to get the blood flowing again. Crowds of parents with young children in tow shoved their way forward to get a chance to see Santa. Just maybe he would be blessed and be able to sit on Santa's lap like the other children. Maybe Santa won't notice that he was alone.

The line moved slowly, but he didn't care. At least he was out of the cold. He did not notice that almost an hour had passed before it was his turn. With head bowed low, the boy slowly crept up on Santa's big lap. It felt so good to have his big arms embrace him. Then he spoke those magical words that he longed to hear. "What do you want for Christmas, son?" Yes, those words touched his deep loneliness.

Quietly, he whispered into Santa's ears, as he did not want anyone to find out that he was an orphan. "I want a family to love me ... that is, I want more than anything in this whole world. Can you find someone to love me?" The jovial smile slipped from Santa's face as he looked at the ragged boy on his lap. His sandy hair was unkempt, and his face was smudged with aged dirt. Santa could still feel the cold coming from deep within the lad. What could he say?

His heart overflowed with compassion, and he knew that he did not have the power to grant his request. Santa drew the boy even closer into his chest and turned the boy's face towards his own so he could look deeply into his eyes. "My son, love is a gift. It cannot be bought. You or I cannot make someone love you. Love is only love if it is given freely. But it is a gift you already have in your heart. You do not have to wait to find someone to love you, but you can give this gift right now. It is a choice you can make...you can choose to love the way you want to be loved. When you love, then you are no longer alone. The coldness will go away.

You will know when you have found love when you hurt. When you love someone so much, and they do not love you back, when you love, and nothing comes back to you, then you must make a choice. Yes, it hurts, but do you keep on loving, or do you hold onto your gift because it hurts too much to release it? If you do not love, then you will return to being cold. Love is a gift, but it will cost you everything.



It is not something you can turn on and off. You must keep on giving love and never turn back. Once you plant the seeds, do not dig them up to see if they are growing. Then one day you will find that the seeds of love you have sown will sprout, and you will find a family of love."

The lad wiped a small tear from his face and wrapped his arms around Santa's neck. It seemed like he would never let him go. Somehow, he did not feel quite so cold anymore or quite so alone. Carefully, he slipped off Santa's lap as he joyfully thanked him. He left that store with a new flicker of hope. Yes, loving others would be worth the pain. He couldn't wait to get back to the orphanage to try out this newfound secret. The boy had some gifts to give, some seeds of love to plant.

LOVE HURTS

The emergency room of the hospital bustled with too much activity. The noise and confusion seemed too intense for so early on this Sunday morning. Huddled into a corner sat a young mother and father. They were sitting facing each other with heads bowed and hands grasped tightly together. The parents were visibly upset, and they looked like they needed treatment themselves. Both had dried blood on their faces and cuts and bruises on their arms. One could not mistake the reason for their consternation ... they were facing death.



A few hours ago, they were happily on their way back from visiting her parents. The weather forecaster never mentioned the prospect of freezing rain. Why didn't anyone know and warn the holiday travelers? Maybe they could have avoided traveling home last night and instead left that morning. But the speculation was futile. The unavoidable happened.

Their car skidded out of control and flipped over several times before coming to a stop. All of them were thrown out of the car, even though they all had seat belts on. How could this possibly be? Slowly, the man and woman found each other and were so relieved that neither of them was seriously hurt. But where was their son? Frantically, they searched the ground near the road. It was so dark along that country lane. Then they heard a moan coming from somewhere behind them, and they quickly found their three-year-old face down in the cold, wet mud.



Blood was oozing from his mouth. They were in shock and disbelief ... not their precious son! Fear seized them ... what could they do? The mother stayed with her boy while the father ran to flag down a car to get help. Fortunately, the driver had a phone and called for an ambulance. The ten-minute wait seemed like an eternity. Medics ran to their child and started to check him out. They didn't even take time to put him on a stretcher, but scooped him up into their arms and rushed him into the ambulance. Despite the parents' pleas to ride with their son, the medics refused them entry and slammed the ambulance door in their face. The waiting police whisked the mother and father away in his patrol car. Now they found themselves alone, waiting for news of their son.

Over four hours passed before one of the nurses came to take them through the emergency room doors into one of the small conference rooms. They were told to wait for the head surgeon, who had worked on their son. The parents looked intently into the nurse's eyes to discover if their son had made it through the surgery. But, she was cold and calculating as she carried out her duties, and her countenance did not reveal any news. However, it was only a few minutes before the doctor came in and that ethereal nurse scurried out. He had not even taken time to change his scrubs ... they were splattered with blood. The doctor could not even look the mother and father in the eyes ... then they knew.

Collapsing into each other's arms, they let out an unearthly wail. Their son, their precious child, gone ... so quickly. They never even got a chance to say goodbye or even give him a hug. The doctor clumsily asked if there was anything he could do. He said they tried everything they knew to do, but his injuries were too severe.

The same nurse who led them to this room came to lead them to a special room where they could view their son and hold him. Thankfully, she left them alone, and they were able to handle their shock and grief in private. They reached over to touch the still form of their son. It was already cold. The mother didn't know if being in this room was such a good idea, as her boy was greatly disfigured. His mangled appearance only added to the trauma. Maybe this body was not really her son. Maybe he was back by that road calling for them. Yet, there was no mistake. On his neck, a small red birthmark marked him as their own son. How they hurt. They touched him, but he did not wake. He did not respond. Unrequited love, the worst kind of pain. They hurt because they loved. Many children die every day, yet not one of their deaths affected them like this ... not even coming close. In fact, it never even crossed their minds to grieve over the losses of these other children.

But why did they hurt so much over the loss of their own son? It was because of love. The greater the love one has for someone, the more the pain of loss when love can no longer be returned. How much God must hurt when His love is not returned. R

Love is a gift,
but it will
cost you
everything.

PATRICIA JUSTER

Our Congregations

Arizona

BETH MAYIM CHAYIM
bethmayimchayim.org

YESHUA HA'MASHIACH
yeshua-hamashiach.org

BETH EMANUEL
bethermanuelaz.org

California

BETH DAVID
bethdavidmc.org

BETH SHALOM
bethshalomcorona.com

Colorado

OR CHAIM
or-chaim.com

Florida

BEIT HALLEL
beithallelocala.org

ELIM CONGREGATION
ElimMessianicCongregation.org

BETH YESHUA, HOUSE OF
THE RISEN SON
bethyshua.us

Illinois

NEW JERUSALEM HOUSE OF
PRAYER
newjerusalem.net

Kansas

KINGDOM LIVING
kingdomlivingkc.org

REMNANT OF ISRAEL
shalomwichita.com

Maryland

EL SHADDAI
escfrederick.com

ROSH PINA
roshpina.life

New York

ADAT CHAIM
adatchaim.net

BETH AM MESSIAH
bethammessiah.org

Pennsylvania

BEIT SIMCHA
beitsimcha.com

SHORESH DAVID
shoreshdavid.com

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syknox.org

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chodmontreal@gmail.com

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