

A Review of Boaz Michael's *Tent of David* (FFOZ, 2013)

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Slippery when All Wet or Duplo® Lego® Dogma

Do you remember Duplo® Legos®? My kids used to play with them when they were little. You can have a lot of fun with them, especially when the kids are into it, but options are very limited and whatever you build will soon fall apart anyway. Moreover, as they grow the kids' motor skills become refined and their interest moves to more specialized sets with smaller (and easier to lose!) pieces, from which much more intricate and magnificent creations can emerge. There is even Robot Lego® now!

I liken some of our "religion" terminology to giant Duplo® Lego® pieces. Take "Judaism" and "Christianity" for instance. How much stock should we place in these terms? Do they help us think clearly, or do the ideas we build with them always fall apart? When it comes to religion, they can get so slippery they're almost of no use at all.

I'm not saying we should get rid of these terms; only that they have their place and that *that place is limited*. Case in point: There are Christians who will proudly call themselves Christians. But there are also people who identify as Christians that other self-identified Christians will say are not truly Christians. In the same way, there are Jews who call themselves Jews. But there are self-identified Jews that other Jews will say are not "really" Jews. To add a layer of complexity: there are Christian Jews who proudly call themselves Christians, and there are Jewish "believers in Yeshua" who don't want to be called Christians but want to be called Jews (especially by other "real" Jews). If you're like me, you probably know or have met people from each of these categories. What's up? How helpful is it for us to use terminology that is not at all helpful? What are we trying to accomplish here anyway?

Now let's add "Messianic" to the mix. There are apparently Messianic Jews and Messianic Gentiles. Some say Messianic Jews belong in Judaism and Messianic Gentiles belong in Christianity. That sounds nice and orderly. But if this is the case, in what way is the term "Messianic" even helpful? Besides, who defines "Christianity" anyway? Who defines "Judaism"? Are we seeking to please men or God?

Duplo® Legos®, all of them.

In the first century, such struggle to define terms was very real. In this case, the terms were not like our slippery notions of "Christianity" and "Judaism." They were much more specific and critical. Paul's wonderful *Epistle to the Galatians* is a great example. Keywords like "Messiah," "Gospel," "Torah," "Son of Abraham," "Jerusalem," "Sinai," "Circumcision," and "Foreskin" were all highly charged symbols that had already circulated throughout the Greek speaking Diaspora for centuries. They were "hot" in the market of Jewish speculation about redemption and the promises of God. Groups were not arguing whether or not these symbols were in fact "Jewish." Rather, they argued about what these symbols *meant*, what "true" significance they held within God's unfolding plan. Different groups had different takes, but they more or less agreed on what terms were in the vocabulary. These keywords had what I call ideological currency. In other words, Jews didn't have to sell *that* there was a Torah or a messianic hope or even a *Ioudaismos* (Greek term from which we get the English word Judaism), etc... what they

sold was the “spin”; the “true” Torah, and the “correct” Messiah, “proper” Sabbath observance, the “real” Israel, etc...

In the midst of all this zeal to bring clarity to these common and powerful Jewish symbols, the first believers in Yeshua knowingly risked everything by making a bold, life-endangering assertion. Speculation was over. The widely recognized hot-topic word “Messiah” (big “M”!) was once-and-for-all identified with a certain flesh-and-blood person: Yeshua of Nazareth. Unique among all the messianic movements of antiquity, Yeshua’s disciples continued to call Him “Messiah” long after His death. They didn’t go out and find a “replacement” leader or dissolve the company, as other groups did. No! They continued, in the face of great persecution, to proclaim that the Psalms (2 and 110, for instance) and other Scriptures had been fulfilled. Yeshua had not only risen from the dead, but had ascended to the right hand of the Father! Praise Adonai!

“Messiah” is not the only term they clarified. The “Gospel” was for the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike. All His disciples, regardless of ethnicity, were taught and aspired to walk in His Torah. By faith in Messiah Yeshua, individuals become “children of Abraham,” and were recognized so by the community of believers. Of course, none of these “definitions” sat well with Jewish authorities, but Yeshua anticipated this conflict. The “rule” of His community would reflect a new expression of love, holiness, and humility: Any who would seek to leverage their “Jewishness” to justify exclusion of a Gentile would find quick, and sometimes harsh, correction. Gentiles, taking note of the many worldly and/or “unbelieving” Jews, might boast that God had entirely forsaken them and now favors Gentiles instead. This attitude would be corrected also. (On the contrary, the Gospel was to be preached to Jews first!) In seeking to obey the Torah of the Messiah, insecure Gentile males sometimes felt they had to follow the teachings of Jews that were not committed to the Gospel message but yet seemed to teach the “real” Torah. This too was corrected.

As time went on, Messiah’s words became fulfilled. Believers in Yeshua, Jews and perhaps even some Gentiles, were expelled from the synagogues. This is an important point to remember. Yeshua did not teach that there would be a “parting of the ways,” or that “Christianity” would separate from its mother religion “Judaism,” or any other of the popular models you might hear or read today. No! He said that His followers would be kicked out of the Jewish communities, and that the leaders doing so would believe it was God’s will. Saul of Tarsus was one of the more zealous Jews with this type of thinking, persecuting and putting to death believers in the name of God and the traditions equated with “Torah.”

But in his epistle to the Galatians, Paul makes it absolutely clear that he had been dead wrong. Same symbols, but wrong spin. In his letters the Apostle goes to great lengths to clarify for us the meaning of central Judaic symbols in light of the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah. Often we find him directly or indirectly engaged polemically with groups that are peddling other, contrary definitions. It gets heated! For Paul, his were not “optional” definitions, or “possible” interpretations among many. He was specific, precise, and exclusive. The truth of the Gospel was at stake.

We will give account for every idle word we speak. Let us not settle for “Duplo[®]” thinking, but rather strive to be clear in our communication. If we don’t fully grasp a concept, or if we find a term particularly “slippery,” let us remember to slow down, take some time, and seek Adonai. Ask Him for patience and understanding. Talk to a friend or a teacher. Give yourself permission to ask whether you’re imposing a word or concept where it doesn’t belong, or even whether the person confusing you is “all wet”!

A Swing and a Miss

I wish I had it on video. It was November 2012 at the Society of Biblical Literature's (SBL) annual conference in Chicago. David Rudolph, a respected scholar within Messianic Judaism was at the podium speaking to the audience of about 80 people or so. "Baruch Hashem," I thought. "Here we are in an international professional academic environment and a Torah-honoring, Jewish believer in Yeshua has got the attention of all these people." Rudolph's voice was clear, but kind. His presence was gentle and his smile shining.

At a certain point in the talk, he began to discuss the different "callings" there are for the people of God, as conceived by the Apostle Paul: a "circumcision" calling and an "uncircumcision" calling. Paul taught that Jews were to continue in Judaism, to live the "circumcised life," argued Rudolph. Gentiles, on the other hand, are to stay "uncircumcised," i.e., not convert to Judaism. Torah, with its "covenant responsibilities," was for Jews and Judaism. The Gentile "calling" was something different. Needless to say, not everyone in the room was accepting this interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7.

Right down the row from me, listening intently to Rudolph, was one of my favorite Christian writers and speakers, N. T. Wright, whom I was surprised to see there at all. "I don't think he'll agree," I thought. Wright had his Greek Bible out and was following along, flipping a page or two here and there. It was at this point, when Rudolph gave his twist on "callings," that I couldn't help but notice Wright, shaking his head back and forth adamantly, several times, showing publicly but silently his staunch disagreement. (Wright is a prominent figure, and I would guess that most if not all the people were aware of his presence. But only those next to or behind him would have noticed this. Rudolph *had* to notice.) Of course, question-and-answer comes after the last speaker, so I was secretly hoping that Wright would hang around and challenge the presenter's hermeneutic. "This will be good!" At the end of the talk, many in the audience clapped. I looked over to see Wright sitting, unmoving, unsmiling. And he did not stay for the Q&A.

"A swing and a miss," I thought.

Tent of David

In his new handsome book, *Tent of David*, Boaz Michael cites at least three books by Wright, and at least three works of Rudolph. But Michael is either not aware of the sharp disagreement between these scholars or he smooths it over. In any case, N. T. Wright is a popular author beloved by thousands and thousands of Christians, layperson and pastor alike. He is very well respected in the academic world too... his talks at SBL are usually standing-room-only. For Michael to bring Wright into his book is a clever move. I don't say this to question his sincerity, but I find it telling that for a book looking to appeal to Christians he will naively, or at least uncritically, reference one of their own, as if Michael and Wright were somehow on the same page. The fact is that a foundation to Michael's bilateral ecclesiology, informing the whole new trajectory that First Fruits of Zion (hereafter, FFOZ) has taken these last few years, is rejected by N. T. Wright. But readers of *Tent of David* will not know this. So, Wright's name is brought into the book, but for what feels to me like a superficial effort to connect with the

Christian audience.

“Assumption is the foundation of all poor communication” (*Tent of David*, p. 186). This truism, ironically, voices well my conclusion about the author’s present perspective and the “swing and miss” that is the book *Tent of David*. What follows is an effort to get at some of the governing concepts that have determined the shape of Michael’s thinking.

I’m glad he wrote the book, because it provides a snap shot of how FFOZ and like-minded organizations have interpreted some critical issues facing Torah-pursuant Messianic Jews and Gentiles today. This is not a “review” in the sense that I am going to give a guided tour of the book. But after spending several hours over a week’s time reading and reflecting on the message of *Tent of David*, I feel like I can fairly express my deep concerns with some core assumptions made in it.

Some Basic Misconceptions: Three Examples

Boaz Michael and his team are making a mistake at a basic conceptual level, and *Tent of David* exemplifies it. This mistake can be best boiled down to what I say is a misuse of the terms “Judaism” and “the church.” By giving personhood to these non-entities, this book dumbs down its audience at the ground level. In an effort to keep this response as short as possible, I will give three citations from the book that demonstrate this problem.

1. “Judaism” in History

...as Christian doctrine has its roots in Second Temple Judaism, there should be a way to articulate the core doctrines of Yeshua’s identity in the Hebrew language, in a way that Second Temple Jews would have been able to understand. (45-46)

This statement contains what I believe is something very dear to Boaz’s heart. (I say “Boaz” here because I’m shifting to a more personal reflection. I recall us having coffee together in late 2011, hearing his passion for reaching Jews with the Gospel of our Master Yeshua. I praise Adonai for the blessing it was for me that Boaz would fit a few afternoon hours, after making the long drive to Spokane from Seattle, to spend with me before his speaking event that evening. For me, it was a grace filled, edifying time. Any criticisms leveled in this article are in no way to be taken as a doubt in Boaz’s sincerity, love for Yeshua, passion and hard work for this movement, or his very evident gifting as a leader in the Messianic movement.)

Back to the statement above. As a whole it’s confused. A good editor would have insisted, “Revise.” First off, “Second Temple Judaism” is too vague. Like I’ve said elsewhere, this term is a giant Duplo® Lego® piece - it’s got a bright color and everyone can see it, but you can’t build much with it, and what you do build can’t be depended upon to stay together. Jacob Neusner, pointing to the great diversity of Jewish expression in the Second Temple Period, suggested that scholars adopt “Judaisms” rather than “Judaism.” Another highly respected Jewish Talmudist-historian, Daniel Boyarin, has pointed out the problems of using the term “Judaism” to describe Jewish religion in first century altogether. Nevertheless, when readers see “Second Temple Judaism,” they’ll probably assume this was some *real* thing, as opposed to a scholarly construct used by historians as they try to talk about the past.

The second part of the statement, “there should be a way to articulate the core doctrines of Yeshua’s identity in the Hebrew language,” is good in-and-of itself. That is, the truth of the Gospel of Yeshua and His person should by all means be communicated so that native Hebrew speaking Israelis can clearly understand it (as it should for every language!). But how this follows the “Second Temple Judaism” clause is not clear. The last piece helps us understand.

“...in a way that Second Temple Jews would have been able to understand.” We don’t have any Hebrew from that period written by believers in Yeshua. What we do have is the inspired Greek Apostolic Writings, written by Jews, for Jews and Gentiles of that era. I find it presumptuous to intimate we could know what combination of Hebrew words would express the doctrines of Yeshua’s identity so that Jews at that time would have understood. It’s fanciful imagination; without a time-machine, impossible. Moreover, the Hebrew language today is very very different than it was then. (Even the rabbinic, “Mishanaic” Hebrew of the late second century is in many ways different than the Hebrew found in the Dead Sea Scrolls; both of those are very different from that of the medieval rabbis, and so on.) An Israeli today and a Jew from the first century, even if they both spoke Hebrew, would not understand “the core doctrines of Yeshua’s identity” on the same terms. What they could both look at, however, would be the passages from Tanakh used by the Apostles.

But here, we don’t have to guess. We have the texts! So where Michael writes, “there should be a way...” I would reply, “There is a way: The Scriptures themselves.” To be fair, perhaps he has in mind later Christian doctrinal developments, and not Tanakh passages themselves. If this is the case, it’s all the more problematic to assume we could take third or fourth century expressions (Greek or Latin) of Yeshua’s identity and translate them so our imagined first-century Jewish conversation partner would grasp them in his native Hebrew (The vast majority of 1st century Jews spoke either Aramaic and/or Greek. But for the sake of Michael’s comment, we can suppose that Hebrew had not already become a language of the educated elite). Rather, the truth of Yeshua has been and will continue to be communicated in Hebrew by many competent missionary organizations in Israel. What we need are teams of fluent Israeli Messianic Jews to become experts in Koine Greek; what we need is the sharpening of our Modern Hebrew translation of the Greek Jewish Scriptures, with solid commentaries that engage today’s best scholarship. What we do *not* need is more unverifiable speculation of what a hypothetical Hebrew-speaking Second Temple Jew might or might not have understood. (I suspect that a similar fuzziness in thinking was involved when Michael and his team decided to translate and publish Franz Delitzsch’s Hebrew translation of the Gospels (from the 1800s) into 21st century English. It could be likened to playing an old record on a Victrola, recording the music with a little handheld cassette machine, and then playing back the cassette into your laptop’s microphone for the purpose of burning it onto a high quality CD. Not a strong methodology; so much information lost.)

2. “Judaism” Today

...I want to state emphatically that *Judaism does not need or want Gentiles taking on Jewish identity or becoming Jewish.* (179-180, italics original)

We see here the same fuzzy thinking as in the first statement. At what we could say is one of the most poignant moments in the book, “Judaism” is presented as having personhood. It has needs and wants. Not only that. Boaz Michael has put himself in a position to “state emphatically” what those needs and wants are. My criticism here is simple. “Judaism,” however you define it (to my knowledge Michael provides no definition), does not have needs or wants.

People want things, need things. And as with any other person, individual Jews have needs and wants. But “Judaism”?

This is not to say that I believe Gentiles *should* convert to Judaism. On the contrary, Gentiles should stay Gentiles. My point here is that Michael and his team are promoting a cloudy picture of a “Judaism” that has personhood and for which he is a spokesman. The problem is that “Judaism” is an ideal with various definitions depending upon who you ask. Michael has ignored the lines that divide the *real* Jewish denominations represented by *actual* institutions and organizations with “official” leadership, interpretations, agendas, and *halakhot* (if any), and which can be criticized and can criticize each other. In the place of real *Judaisms* he presents his Christian audience with a “Judaism” that has needs and wants but no official definition. We only have Michael to speak on its behalf. To exaggerate somewhat, perhaps a new creed for the Messianic Jews and Gentiles could be: “I believe in Judaism, and Boaz Michael its spokesman!” I know this sounds flippant, but that is what I hear in the book.

3. “The Church”

I stated above that the church is good, and it is. Yet often, “good is the enemy of the great.” (181)

At this point Michael provides an endnote referencing the 2001 best seller by Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*. The reader is left to wonder why or which parts of Collins’ book might apply to Michael’s criticism of the church, and we’re not told whether *Good to Great* principles were ever instituted at FFOZ. This is troubling for at least two reasons, which I will explain. One has to do with Michael’s idea of “the church,” the other with the application of a corporate America business success model with the Great Commission.

To start with “the church”: Here and again throughout *Tent of David*, Michael uses this term much the same way as he does “Judaism.” The first chapter after the Introduction is even entitled, “The Church is Good.” Later in the book he spends time describing some of the nuances differentiating institutionalized forms of Christianity, but we know that the label “Christian” is tricky, even for those who self-identify as such. (One only need look as far back as the 2012 presidential race to see the transformation of evangelical leaders and churches into supporters of the devoted, high-ranking Mormon priest Mitt Romney for debates about “who is a true Christian and who is not.” The question of the day was, “Are Mormons “Christians”?) Of course, Christians do not tend to self-identify as such on an ethnic basis, whereas ethnicity is the primary criterion for being Jewish. On this note, if we want to talk about a “Judaism” and a “Christianity,” we would have to establish whether or not they are even two types of the same thing and in what ways they may be profitably compared.

Just as he is a spokesman *for* Judaism, Michael is a spokesman *to* “the church.” But whereas he offers no criticism of the former, there is a clear plan (and the needed sets of FFOZ training materials) for changing the latter. His vision has two aspects: Messianic Jews are to reconnect with Judaism and Messianic Gentiles are to bring correction to the church, at whose feet the “burden” of the tragedy of “secular anti-Semitism which lead to the Holocaust... Crusades, the Inquisition, and other atrocities... is properly laid” (181; cf: 69ff). It is just and good that institutionalized expressions of faith and their leaders - Christian and Jewish - be held accountable for bad theology or skewed conceptions of history, particularly when it ignorantly profanes the name of Messiah or hampers the Gospel going to the Jews. (That great care is required when the Shoah/Holocaust is mentioned in Jewish-Christian dialogue cannot be

overstated. The immensity and horror of the destruction of the many millions of Jews and others (including Christians!) boggles the imagination; pain, anger, and helplessness would be completely overwhelming if not for the many precious stories of risk, hope, light, and triumph. Confronted with hints of “the church’s” responsibility, Christians may easily mistake their own faith with this non-entity (“the church”) and slide into feeling guilty for a crime they didn’t commit. Their next logical step is then to look to the Jew (or even “Judaism”!) with a repentant attitude seeking some kind of forgiveness. Careless Holocaust conversation can attribute personhood to both “the church” and “Judaism.” Remember the Duplo Lego analogy.) All this aside, Michael has demonstrated with his own testimony as a member of his local Baptist church that a Jew is just as capable as a Gentile in bringing basic Jewish awareness to Christian communities through relationship building founded on love and patience in the Messiah. The absence of a local Messianic Jewish synagogue has not deterred him from being effective in a local confessional church.

Regarding his reference to *Good to Great*. Is the “the church” really comparable to an American corporation? Granting for the moment that “the church” is definable and is a candidate for such a comparison, in what ways can we do so? Michael doesn’t provide an explanation, leaving his readers to figure it out.

Just look on your local bookstore shelves. Many books, from authors such as John Maxwell and Laurie Beth Jones, teach about how the Bible, Christian faith, and the workplace rightfully belong in the same sphere. If good businesses run on biblical principles, why shouldn’t “the church” run like biblical business? (Again we’re temporarily sidelining the issue of giving entity to “the church” rather than individual churches.) Certainly Messiah calls us each to lives of integrity; to fulfill the *Shem’a*, “...with *all* your heart, *all* your soul, *all* your strength...” To compartmentalize faith from the workplace is completely wrong-headed, and there is certainly nothing wrong with an organization seeking greater efficiency in achieving its aims.

But there is a certain applicability of *Good to Great* that deserves questioning, and I believe Michael missed a great opportunity to clarify. For those who know the book, it’s the “get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off, and then decide where to drive” principle. Jim Collins unpacks this in his third chapter, called “First Who... then What.” The main thrust is that any organization, if it is to experience sustainable growth, needs to prioritize in a manner that might seem at first counter-intuitive. A business is likened to a bus and its leader the bus driver. One would normally think that the bus driver knows where he’s headed before people get on the bus. Not optimal, says Collins. Rather, before he decides where to go, the CEO/bus driver’s task should be to get the right people on the bus, in the right seats, *and* to get the wrong people *off* the bus. Then, and only then, will the bus driver have good counselors helping him map out a destination and a driving route to get the company to the “Great” success they dream of.

I’ve worked for a few different Christian “for-profit” business owners over the years, and each was interested in bringing faith into the workplace. I’ve also worked for religious organizations, both Christian and Jewish. Somewhere in the mid-2000’s, one of my Christian employers and his managers used the book *Good to Great* to “step up the game” and increase productivity and profits. I remember how the company culture changed during the months that “Chapter 3” was being applied. It wasn’t pretty. Until Messiah Yeshua separates the sheep from the goats, this can never be applied within the Body of Messiah. I could see it used in actual churches, in synagogues, where there is a payroll, a volunteer base, etc... but not in “the church” or even in “Judaism” as holistic categories of “religion.” Either way the thought is quite scary... who decides who gets kicked off the bus? Who does the “kicking”? You have to have a man-made institution for this type of personnel management to even be an option.

While reflecting on this problem, and Michael's silence on the issue, I recognized a larger pattern being played out here. Gentiles are being asked to return, as Messianic emissaries (Michael follows Chabad and uses the Hebrew word *shlichim*), to the church and Messianic Jews are encouraged to reconnect with Judaism. Thus, the dissolution of Torah communities - Jewish and Gentile believers worshipping together as equal heirs to the covenants of Israel - is implied. In order for Michael's vision of "Messianic Judaism" to get to its destination (the stated goal being "to reconnect with Judaism"), it has to get the wrong people off of his bus. I can only assume that these "wrong people," to use Collins' model, are none other than the Messianic Gentiles. The "right people," then, are those Jews who believe there's a good core to "Judaism" and a good core to "Christianity," and that God has ordained and endorses both; that believing Jews only need remain in Judaism and believing Gentiles in the church. Is Michael thinking that if he gets the MGs off the bus and the right MJs on, he'll know where to drive? On the flip side, let's not suppose for a moment that he's leaving the MGs on the side of the road to fend for themselves. Rather, he has another bus already set up for them, with the promise to deliver the education and training they'll need (that is, driving tips and maps). This way, they'll be sure to get to where he wants them to go.

Conclusion

Over the years Michael and his team have contributed significantly to the larger effort of bringing knowledge of the Jewishness of Jesus and its implications to the marketplace. His love for Yeshua, the Scriptures, the Jewish people, and his artful skill as a publisher, author, and teacher are not in dispute. What I take issue with here are some fundamental assumptions that in the short term have crippled his conception of ecclesiology and in the long run will undermine the success of his vision. As times get tough, and the saints persevere, the education level of pro-Torah believers (Jew and Gentile) around the world will only skyrocket. Technology will be on their side. Competency in the original languages and cultures of the Bible, rabbinic literature, history of Jewish-Christian relations, etc... will be such that the conversationalists will no longer lean on conceptually vague non-entities like "the church" and "Judaism" to build their cases. Rather, real educational engagement within and between Torah communities, a solid grasp of the the primary sources, contemporary scholarship, all in the context of a life walking with and worshipping Yeshua the Messiah in the Spirit, will be the order of the day. Churches will continue to be the fluid things they are, as will synagogues. Just as David Rudolph was given a platform to speak at such a prestigious forum as SBL, so will the conversation continue to develop and arguments become corrected or better substantiated. There is much more good to come at the level of scholarship, which, *be'ezrat Hashem*, will slowly but surely permeate the universities and seminaries, colleges and institutions that are equipping Jewish and Gentile, Christian and Messianic leaders of tomorrow.

All this being said, Michael's observations and concerns about Messianic "messiness" are not off-base. And I agree that a big part of helping this movement (which we probably define differently; cf: *Tent of David*, p. 214, n.6. One Torah communities are not mentioned here, likely because they are viewed as illegitimate and supersessionist at the core) step forward will be proper, patient educational outreach mixed with blameless, Messiah Yeshua-centered Torah living. But in as much as it writes Jew-and-Gentile Torah communities out of the picture with its reification and personhood-ization of "the church" and "Judaism," *Tent of David* is a step in the wrong direction. If it has any success at all, it will be in inoculating its readers from clear thinking and honest, reflective thought.

This is where TorahResource Institute has an important part to play. With Adonai's help, we will continue to help educate and equip Yeshua-loving, Torah-upholding individuals - not necessarily *shlichim* - who will be ready, willing, and able to gracefully and competently serve Messiah within our movement and without. They will have an answer for the hope that is in them. They will continue to grow, build relationship, and bring correction and healing for the many Messianic Jews and Gentiles who have received mis-education from well-meaning Messianic teachers.

Post Script

Tent of David urges, along with other FFOZ authors (for example, D. Thomas Lancaster's *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians*, (FFOZ, 2011) p. 195), that times are urgent: American Jews are being lost to assimilation. Michael calls this the "American Holocaust" (*Tent*, p. 180). About ten years ago this argument was used by local orthodox rabbis to convince one of my fellow worship leaders serving a Messianic synagogue that the Jews were dying off and that if she didn't come back under their wings, she would be in effect guilty for the catastrophe. She was Jewish (that's why the rabbis were so insistent!), and our community leadership was unable to keep her focused on Messiah Yeshua. Fear won the day and, as could be expected, the transition arrangements were made and she moved into the "frum" community. The rest is history.

I get that assimilation is an issue. But who is in charge of preserving Israel? To use the "Holocaust" as a whip to scare believers into submission is abusive. This kind of fear is of man, not of Adonai. Lancaster calls Jewish believers "an endangered species" (*Holy Epistle*, p. 195). Is God not faithful? Even Paul had to be schooled in the hard lesson of Elijah's presumptuous cry, *I alone am left, and they seek my life!* (Romans 11:3). The Scriptures are clear: even in Israel's disobedience, God watches over His own. He will fulfill His promise for His namesake; it does not depend upon what man does. Any Jew (or Gentile for that matter) drawn to the Torah and observance of the holy mitzvot in the name of Messiah Yeshua do so by a move of the Holy Spirit, Who is a gift! Indeed, the very faith we have is a gift, *lest that any man should boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9).