

THE MESSIANIC JEWISH SIMCHA

The Jewish Conversion Process

(Approved in principle by the CTOMC Inaugural Conference July 17, 2006)

[The Jewish Simcha is another way of referring to "Gentile conversion to Judaism". Simcha originally means celebration.]

The Messianic Jewish Simcha (conversion) is a controversial subject among Messianic Jews. This is because we are careful not to do anything to confuse or conflict with the simcha/celebration we have obtained in knowing Messiah Yeshua our L-RD. Knowing Him is the highest and best form of Judaism in our estimation.

Messianic Believers Want Conversion

However, we must recognize that many non-Jewish believers, who have come out of the Gentile world into the commonwealth of Israel through Messiah, feel and live much more as a Jew than a Gentile or even a Christian. They are surely no longer Gentiles in lifestyle or adherence. When Messianics do not have a way of obtaining Simcha, it sometimes results in a strong urge to adhere to Israel through a less than authentic means: either trying to get an orthodox conversion or accepting the Ephraimite doctrine as their claim to Israel.

All Messianics, whether from Jewish heritage or not, are unified as one new creation of G-d through their faith in Messiah Yeshua. This takes care of the spiritual connection, but there remains the need for many Messianic non-Jews to obtain people-hood in the earth. People-hood provides culture, which comes from a shared heritage, history, trouble and glory. Many non-Jewish Messianics feel closer to the Jewish culture than say their Irish, African, Hispanic, etc. roots. That should not be a surprise, since the Messianic Jewish restoration naturally promotes that sensibility. It does this by connecting the Ancient G-d of the Jews with His prophetic and revelatory work happening today.

Some Reasons for Jewish Conversion

These are some valid reasons for having a Messianic Jewish Simcha:

1. Unification of a mixed marriage. A married couple might find it to be a unifying help for both of them to be considered Jewish.
2. Unassimilated Jewish ministry. A non-Jewish person called for ministry to the Jews may want to make sure that their work does not think to remove Jews from their Jewishness.
3. Ambiguous Jewish heritage. A person may have strong indications that they have Jewish heritage, but no "proof", so the Simcha serves as a point of assertion and commitment to their Jewish heritage.
4. Other motivations. There may be other valid reasons that yet need to be tested.

Messianic Judaism Wants to be a Valid Judaism

All other branches of Judaism provide for Gentile “conversion”. Such seems to demand that Messianic Judaism must also provide for Gentile “conversion”. If not, Messianic Judaism is called into question as a “true” or “valid” Judaism. Also, Messianic Jews normally accept Gentile conversions from other branches of Judaism. If Messianic Judaism does not have its own conversion process, then that means that Gentiles must go (and in fact are encouraged to go) to “non-believers” as the only path to becoming a Jew. Therefore in practice, other branches of Judaism seem to be more authentic or authoritative than Messianic Judaism. How is it that “non-believers” are considered more authoritative than believers? If conversions by other branches are “authentic” how is it that the Messianic Judaism branch does not perform such? Are we less “authentic” than the others? This perceived impotence by some may be one reason why Messianic Judaism cannot shake itself from being viewed by non-believing Jews as a mis-named sect of Christianity.

Pitfalls

Yet, there are great difficulties with a Messianic Jewish Simcha that must be considered:

- * First, a Messianic Jewish Simcha is likely to be confused among the unlearned with conversion to Messiah Yeshua, which is a spiritual conversion from sin, from darkness to light in Him.

- * Second, those Messianic non-Jews who do not want to have Simcha may feel second-class. Their position as equals in the promises may seem to be watered down. They may experience increased alienation unless their Messianic group is capable at explaining the situation properly. (I propose an adult non-Jewish confirmation as “a grafted in member of the Olive Tree of Israel” for them.)

- * Third, some will say that Messianic Jewish Simcha is a form of Judaising, in that becoming “officially” a Jew may seem to some as the proscribed or preferred path. (Actually, biblical Judaising was a doctrine of a very small Jewish sect who thought that being circumcised would make one exempt from being accountable for sin.)

- * Fourth, presently no other branch of Judaism will accept a Messianic Jewish conversion. Aliyah is presently not available to Messianic Jews. (Of course, Messianic Judaism does not recognize being Jewish or Jewish conversion as sufficient for salvation either, touche’.)

Safeguards

It may be possible for Messianic Judaism to develop a standard conversion process using these safeguards:

- * Jewish commitment: Candidates must be tested as to their Jewish commitment. They must be able to confess they are Jews with the understanding they may never recant. They must know and show their love and ability to live as a Jew.

* Full disclosure: Candidates must accept that Messianic Jewish Simcha probably will not give them acceptance in the non-Messianic Jewish community. Also, they may not be guaranteed acceptance in some Messianic Jewish circles.

* Messianic commitment: Candidates must have proved their loyalty to Messiah Yeshua as primary and above their Jewish conversion.

* Extent of Simcha: It must be clear with candidates that the conversion is basically an association with people-hood and is not a verification of spiritual stature of any kind.

* Inter-support: Ultimately the various Messianic Jewish organizations and congregations should conclude that they will accept and validate the Simchas of each other.

Process

The Messianic Jewish Simcha requires a recognized and somewhat standardized process or "examination" period. Here are the requirements:

* The candidate only becomes an official candidate on the third request. At least a six month waiting period from first to third request.

* The candidate must be actively participating in a Messianic Jewish synagogue.

* The male candidate must be or have been circumcised.

* The candidate must choose a Hebrew name.

* The candidate must show ability to perform major Hebrew blessings.

* The candidate must write out a full and clear account of their lifestyle as a Jew.

* The candidate must agree with the CTOMC Statement of Faith.

* The candidate must have a publically witnessed Jewish mikveh.

* The candidate should receive a certificate of Jewish conversion (this certificate will not mention faith in Messiah, so as not to confuse the purpose).

Conclusion

While this paper may be amended, it stands as the first principles regarding Jewish Conversion under Messianic Judaism, which has been adopted by the Coalition of Torah Observant Messianic Congregations. [Click here to get a Simcha application online.](#)

-- -- Steering Committee, CTOMC