

The Work of the Holy Spirit: Perfection of the Heart

by J.K. McKee 01 August, 2006 www.tnnonline.net

delivered live at Shavuot 2006, Orlando, FL

In the past year-and-a-half (2004-2006), more or less, the emerging Messianic movement has experienced some major upheavals.¹ This is to be expected in any reforming movement, as the history of our faith has demonstrated that when lost theological ideas or forgotten concepts of how we are to relate to God are restored, certain people will “run with it” to promote themselves or a particular agenda. Consider all of the various groups that arose out of the Radical Reformation in the late Sixteenth Century thinking that they could raise people from the dead or establish a New Jerusalem here on Earth. We should not be surprised that with a movement as important as restoring our faith to its First Century Hebraic and Jewish foundations that we would have people going too far. In the past year-and-a-half, many have challenged and denied the Divinity of Yeshua the Messiah, questioned the canonicity and inspiration of key Biblical books, have promoted mysticism and/or beliefs that are not substantiated by Biblical history, but more than anything else have gotten many people confused and off track from performing the work of the Kingdom. What are we to do?

I would like to tell you about an incident that took place several years ago at one of the local churches here in the Orlando area.² This was a rather new and budding church, appealing largely to younger families and college students. It was multi-cultural, and was able to attract a diverse group of people. This church had a large facility and staff, and it appeared that it was performing a critical function in the community. But then some sin crept in. One woman, who was being counseled by the senior pastor for a divorce she was going through, fell into having an affair with him. The senior pastor, knowing that this forbidden relationship must end stopped the “counseling sessions,” and transferred her case to the assistant pastor. Shockingly, the assistant pastor also fell into an adulterous relationship while counseling the woman. Not too much time passed until the story got out, and the district superintendent of the denomination was brought in to take care of it. Both the assistant pastor and senior pastor were relieved of their positions, and on one Sunday morning the congregation got to hear that their senior pastor had fallen into sin. Then, if that hadn't been enough, in the next moment they got to hear that their assistant pastor had likewise fallen into sin. As the church members came up for communion that Sunday, one of my seminary professors, who attended this church, was asked to help distribute it. As he gave the bread to each person, and they dipped it in the cup, he repeated a part of the old liturgy which was that “this is for the healing of your souls.”

Of course, the healing process was not over. Both the senior and assistant pastors were removed from their positions, and the church had a huge mortgage hanging over it. At least half of the church members did not show up the following Sunday. What do you do when something like this happens? Obviously, disciplinary action was taken against the offenders—but do you know who has the biggest responsibility? **The new pastor!** He has to minister to sheep who have been gravely wounded and whose spiritual confidence may be at an all time low. He has to get them focused on the future and what they need to be doing in order to grow spiritually and be walking closer with the Lord.

Some of the things that we have faced in the Messianic community as of late are no different than the story that I have just described. We have had sin, arrogance, insolence, gross unbiblical behavior, and even some perditious heresy enter into the camp. Some have been disciplined, and some sin continues. As a teacher and as a Messianic apologist I feel that it is my responsibility to you, the hungry sheep—or even the hurt sheep—to give you a message of

¹ This article has been reproduced from the paperback edition of the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*, pp 207-218.

² This story was relayed to me by Prof. Burrell Dinkins of Asbury Theological Seminary, in my Fall 2005 class Vocation of Ministry.

encouragement. It is my hope that my two messages delivered this afternoon, and later tomorrow afternoon, are delivered in that spirit of working for the “healing of your soul.” Each one of us as Messianic Believers needs to focus on the future, and we need to know how we should be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus be a witness so others around us can likewise be transformed.

Every year, we as Messianic Believers read through the weekly Torah portions. We begin each cycle with *Bereisheet*, the Book of Genesis. While everyone has a distinct way of studying the Torah, and indeed the Bible, every year it seems—at least to me—that a substantial amount of the weekly Torah portions is overlooked. Much of this is unintentional, as a teacher can only exposit upon so much in a teaching, and because of the fact that our minds can only handle so much to consider. But in the first Torah portion, the one that sets the stage for the entire story of God revealing Himself to His Creation, one important concept often gets overlooked. Perhaps it is because it is so profound and complicated that many choose to just jump over it, deciding not to “go there.” Perhaps because of what it means not only to us as individuals, but also to those we interact with, it is overlooked:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

We as human beings have been created in the *tzelem Elohim* (תְּצַלֵּם אֱלֹהִים) or the images of God. Being made in God’s image, we possess qualities that none of the animals possess. We have the ability to communicate in verbal language, the ability to reason complex situations or issues in our minds, as well as the ability to choose how we treat one another. These are abilities that we do not inherit via instinct, but have been imparted to us because we have been created by God for His special Divine purposes. Psalm 8:4-6 says that humans were made just a little lower than God (the Greek Septuagint says “angels”), indicating that they indeed have a connection to the supernatural. Jewish commentator Nahum Sarna well summarizes some of what it means for us to be made in God’s image:

“A human being is the pinnacle of Creation. This unique status is communicated in a variety of ways, not least by the simple fact that humankind is last in a manifestly ascending, gradual order. The creation of human life is an exception to the rule of creation by divine fiat...Human beings are to enjoy a unique relationship to God, who communicates with them alone and who shares with them the custody and administration of the world.”³

Because of the sin of Adam, however, each one of us has inherited a fallen sin nature. Every fiber of our being is prone to sin. Each one of us has the potential to be perpetually on the wrong side of God, violating His mandates for the world, and going against what He originally intended to be good. Things got so bad in early history that save Noah and his family, God had to basically “wipe the Earth clean” and repopulate it all over again with a new batch of humans. But in spite of this, and in spite of the fact that we are prone to sin, each one of us is still made in the image of God. Genesis 9:6 says, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.” People who are killed by sinful people are still considered by God to be made in His image.

As Believers in Yeshua we know that we need not take a knife and plunge it into someone’s chest, take a rope and choke the esophagus, or pull a trigger on a gun to murder someone. The Messiah says to us in Matthew 5:22, “I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.” We can commit character assassination through what we say about someone. When delivering His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua actually tells His audience not to call anyone “raca” (NIV), likely some kind of Aramaic curse word unique to First Century

³ Nahum M. Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 11.

Galilee.⁴ I do not think it necessary to list all of the potential curse words that we have the capacity to unleash today. But I do think it is necessary that we control our tongues and what we say to one another. James the Just, the half-brother of Yeshua, puts it this way:

“For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God” (James 3:7-9).

With our tongues, we have the capacity to bring life or death, order or chaos to a situation. We have the capacity to edify others, to testify to them of who the Lord is in our lives and what He has done for us. Or, we have the capacity to cause problems. According to James, while every species has been tamed by humankind, the tongue has yet to be tamed. The tongue can only be tamed through the power of God’s Holy Spirit and a transformation of our hearts and attitudes. As those who hopefully have had a spiritual encounter with the God of the Universe through His Son, Yeshua the Messiah, we have the responsibility of recognizing that all men and women on Earth, whether they know Him or not, have been made in God’s image—*and they all deserve our respect*. John Wesley once put it this way, “there remains from thence an indelible nobleness, which we ought to reverence both in ourselves and others.”⁵

The severe challenge with being able to do this is that each one of us not only needs to know Yeshua the Messiah as our Personal Savior, but have a true transformation of the heart. This includes a complete purging of all ungodly attitudes, ideas, concepts, and ways of acting—and having them replaced by godly attitudes and ways of acting that will bring glory to our Heavenly Father and accomplish His Kingdom’s work here on Earth. Admittedly, the process of sanctification or “being perfected,” if you will, is lifelong. If we are not continually being sanctified and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, what are we preparing ourselves for? Are we preparing ourselves for glory, or for condemnation? The Prophet Jeremiah gives us a very bleak picture of a heart that does not seek after God or His ways:

“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

The idea being communicated is that the heart is “desperately corrupt” (RSV), “beyond cure” (NIV), or “perverse” (NRSV). However it appears in your Bible, this is not a good description. The unregenerated, untransformed, ungodly, and wicked human heart is something that we need not have within us. Have you ever truly sat down and considered what it means to have a wicked heart? This is something that Rabbis, theologians, Sages, Bible teachers, pastors, and many others have had a very, very long time to think about. Consider the following words on the tendencies of the human heart and what sins can come forth:

“gnawing cares, disquiet, griefs, fears, wild joys, quarrels, law-suits, wars, treasons, angers, hatreds, deceit, flattery, fraud, theft, robbery, perfidy, pride, ambition, envy, murders, parricides, cruelty, ferocity, wickedness, luxury, insolence, impudence, shamelessness, fornications, adulteries, incests, and the numberless uncleanness and unnatural acts of both sexes, which it is shameful so much as to mention; sacrileges, heresies, blasphemies, perjuries, oppression of the innocent, calumnies, plots, falsehoods, false witnessings, unrighteous judgments, violent deeds, plunderings, and innumerable other crimes that do not easily come to mind, but that never absent themselves from the actuality of human existence.”⁶

⁴ BDAG, 903.

⁵ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, reprint (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 2000), 864.

⁶ St. Augustine, “City of God,” in Mitchell Cohen and Nicole Fermon, eds., *Princeton Readings in Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp 133-134.

If this list of gross immoralities has not upset you in some way, perhaps you need a graphic description...

This picture may be disgusting and gross to some of you. This is an image of a smoker's heart and lungs. For perhaps thirty, forty, or fifty years this person inhaled tobacco smoke into the lungs and infections steadily were spread to the heart and probably other areas of the body. While many of us know the dangers of smoking, consider what this is like on a spiritual level. When the center of our being, our heart, is black, sin has the tendency to spread to the other parts of our being. It will not just stay in the heart, but penetrate into our minds and how we think, to our words and what we say, and quite probably into our actions. Today, you can wreak absolute havoc by typing a few keystrokes on a computer. Sometimes this might be by ruining a person financially—and more often it may be by defaming someone's character. Do you know how easy it is to setup a personal blog web page now? Do you know how flippantly people can write every day how they are feeling and who has offended them and caused them harm—and how they want to get back?



When our heart thinks that it is better than everyone else, that no one else but ourselves actually understands what is going on, *or* that no one but us has the “truth,” is it a sign that we have an unregenerated heart?

These are sins that, sadly, much of the Messianic community today falls into all the time. We think ourselves better than everyone else. We think that we are the only ones who have any kind of understanding—and certainly the only ones who have had the truth the past 2,000 years. On the whole, we largely fail to recognize that we have a shared theological heritage with both the Jewish Synagogue *and* the Christian Church. Oftentimes, only one is recognized at the expense of the other, yet in some circles it is becoming more en vogue to oppose both. My friends, if we have these kinds of attitudes present in ourselves, we have a long way to go before Yeshua can return for a renewed and transformed people. Individually, we have a long way to go before God can use us to minister to others, and accomplish His tasks on Earth.

Consider the sins that I listed for you a moment ago. Were you offended by them? Did any kind of godly indignation rise up in you when thinking about the fallen world we live in? Did any of you think about how important it is for others to hear about the good news of salvation in Yeshua, and how we need to be living holy and separated lives? **I sincerely hope so.**

But I have one question for you: Does more indignation rise up in you when I tell you that the one who listed these gross immoralities was Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, otherwise known as St. Augustine? I would dare say that many Messianics are *more upset* at the mention of Augustine than at the sins that he listed in his book *City of God*. I do not agree with every single point of Augustine's theology; but I recognize that without the work that he performed for his time, we would be in a much worse condition. How many of us as Messianics treat people like this—who are long since dead and buried—as being part of “the problem,” when the real problem is our fallen humanity? Each generation of God's followers has a specific task to perform, as He has sovereignly decreed. The task of those who have gone before us was different than the tasks that we should be performing as today's Messianic movement. Each of us as individuals has the capacity to be sinners or saints, be we Messianic, Christian, or Jewish. How many of us still need to be transformed—or at least have a serious heart check—because we are more offended by people than by sin? Did not Yeshua die for all members of the human race? Is not Israel to serve the world, by testifying to the world who the One True God is?

While things may seem to be bleak at times, there is always a message of hope. Jeremiah 17:7-8 gives us the promise, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of

drought nor cease to yield fruit.” Ezekiel prophesies that when Israel is restored that the Lord says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). The promise of the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is that the Lord, by the power of His Holy Spirit, will write the commandments of the Torah onto our hearts, not only so we might keep them—but that we might keep them properly to His glory! The promise is that we might keep them as we perform His Kingdom’s work in the world. Each one of us is to be transformed so that we reflect God’s character, holiness, love, and compassion to a world that desperately needs to change.

In the Messianic community today, many of us claim to be Torah observant. We do this by remembering the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*, the appointed times of Leviticus 23 (of which *Shavuot* is one), and the kosher dietary laws. These are three areas that distinctly separate us from our Christian brothers and sisters. While these aspects are important to follow, they by no means make up all of the elements of “Torah observance.” A true Torah observance is very much to be reflected by us having ethical and moral lives, and treating others with love, mercy, and respect. James admonishes us, “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). How many of us understand the fact that if we are to live out God’s Word in our lives, the implanted Word, we have to have all of the evil filth put away? Unless we have experienced redemption in Yeshua, we cannot be used to perform good works.

I have heard the words following this in James 1:22 quoted many times in the Messianic community: “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” I have heard this quoted in the context of the fact that when we hear what the Torah says, we need to do it. *I agree*. But far too frequently James is hijacked as saying something that he is not. History proves that James himself was very, very Torah observant, hence his being called “James the Just.” He maintained ritual purity at all times, was a vegetarian, and seldom missed prayers in the Temple. But James also spent more time on his knees before God in prayer for the salvation of others.⁷ When James talks about us being doers of God’s Word, it is *primarily* in the context of us performing works of grace and mercy toward others—just as he did. The challenge for us is how we can maintain a proper balance in our ethics and morality, coupled with the days we remember, how we eat, and how we function as distinct members of the Commonwealth of Israel. Remember that James’ Torah observance was always coupled with his constant intercession. While James is an excellent example of a Torah observant Jew who believed in Yeshua, He is also an excellent example of one who loved and served others.⁸

We face some challenges in our quest to become Torah observant because many of us were raised in theological traditions where it was taught that the Torah or Law of Moses is to be subdivided between the “moral law” and “ceremonial law.” The moral law was believed to include commandments and regulations regarding human relations, how we are to treat others, how we are to care for others, not lie, not cheat, not steal, and be honest people who are hard working. The ceremonial law, in contrast, was believed to include those commandments relating to, among other things, the seventh-day Sabbath, the appointed times, distinctions between clean and unclean meats, male circumcision, and many other things that were viewed as making Israel distinct among the nations. In this hour of restoration, the Lord is restoring these things to us as His people. I fully believe that these things should be followed by all Believers, but too many are embracing what were viewed as “ceremonial commandments” at the expense of the “moral commandments.” There is no such distinction in the Scripture itself. Your celebration of *Shavuot*, for example, does not negate the need to love others or treat others with respect. On the contrary, when you understand the symbolism of *Shavuot*, your responsibility to love others and spread the gospel is enhanced—and it is even more severe if you fail to do it.

I would like to briefly discuss a Scripture passage that I am frequently asked about as a Messianic teacher: Mark 7. In this scene, we see some Pharisees come toward Yeshua and they

⁷ Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.4-5.

⁸ For further consideration, consult the commentary *James for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee.

have some criticisms for His students. These Pharisees were likely of the School of Shammai, a very strict sect that held to rather rigid interpretations, unlike the School of Hillel—which the Apostle Paul was a part of, having been trained by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)—that was more understanding and tolerant. Their criticism of Yeshua was “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?” (Mark 7:6). They issued this negative word, because they believed that one must rigorously wash hands before eating, in what is today known as *n'tilat yadayim* in Orthodox Judaism.

I do not believe that Yeshua was against washing our hands, but He did say to these people, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9). The reason He says this is not because Yeshua was necessarily against tradition, either. Yeshua Himself followed many, if not most, of the mainline Jewish traditions extant in the First Century. But when anything takes us away from the right attitude we are to be exhibiting in our hearts toward others—it becomes a problem. Yeshua makes it perfectly clear that what comes forth from us defiles us more than what we ingest:

“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23).

If we have transformed hearts, these things should not be prone to coming out of our mouths. When we speak, we should be speaking words of life, encouragement, mercy, and always be about to share the good news of salvation in Messiah Yeshua. The challenge when it comes to Mark 7 is that it is often interpreted as though Yeshua is negating the kosher dietary laws of the Torah, and so much of our discussion is focused on this part of the text rather than on the definite spiritual principles He wishes to communicate. Mark 7:18-19, in particular, is often a cause of much confusion for Messianics:

“And He said to them, ‘Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?’ (*Thus He* declared all foods clean.)”

What we must take important note of here are Yeshua’s words, as rendered in *The Message*, “Are you being willfully stupid? Don't you see that what you swallow can't contaminate you?” What the Lord is telling us is that eating food—note, Biblically defined food (Leviticus 11 & Deuteronomy 14)—with unwashed hands does not matter. This is because if you have a little dirt on your hands, the human body is powerful enough to kill germs and bacteria. What happens to this food is that it goes “into [the] stomach, and then out of [the] body” (NIV). Then we read the little phrase “*Thus He* declared all foods clean,” which is actually very easy to understand if we look at Mark’s underlying Greek.

The Greek phrase that is commonly rendered “*Thus He* declared all foods clean” is *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα). What is missing from this phrase is the verb *legō* (λέγω), meaning “to say” or “to speak.” Literally what this means is “purging all the foods” (LITV). There has always been the long-standing minority opinion in Bible translation that “purging all the foods” is the more accurate rendering. Robert A. Guelich attests to this in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, “Others view this as a possible anacoluthon drawing an obvious, if sarcastic, conclusion that the digestive process ‘cleanses all foods.’”⁹ Food eaten with dirty hands goes into the stomach and out of the body, because the body is able to “purify” it via excretion.

Which is more important: eating kosher or not demonstrating malice toward others? Please understand that I *fully believe* that the kosher dietary laws are to be followed today. In fact, I am of the opinion that there might even be a legitimate Biblical basis for (at least partially)

⁹ Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*, Vol. 34a (Dallas: Word Books, 1998), Prolepsis database.

For a further analysis of Mark 7:19, including the connection/non-connection between the Greek participles *legei* (λέγει) and *katharizōn* (καθαρίζων), consult the article “A Short Note on Mark 7:19” by Tim Hegg, available for access at <www.torahresource.com>.

separating meat and dairy. But I know that the Apostles in their journeys were sometimes served things that were unkosher. I know they just looked beyond what was on their plate, and prayed that God would give them an unbelievable amount of grace and mercy for those who they were ministering to. Sometimes it was difficult, but they asked Him for that extra part of His Spirit so they would recognize that person as being made in His image just as they were, knowing that Yeshua died for all. How are we as Messianic Believers to maintain the proper balance between something as key to our Torah observance as *kashrut*, while recognizing that what comes out of our hearts is more important?

My friends, let me be honest with you for a moment: I respect and have received a great amount of spiritual instruction from people over the years who eat bacon on a regular basis and do not know any better. Those who first instructed me in my faith in Yeshua the Messiah, who loved Jesus with all of their hearts, still eat sausage. I have actually received *less instruction* from those who abstain from bacon on how to love others and demonstrate the Messiah's compassion to the world. How does that reflect on the current state of the Messianic community? I hope we can experience some changes where we can show that one's heart attitude and eating kosher—among other commandments—do not have to negate one another. Both can be maintained and be used as witnessing tools to show others what God is doing in our lives.

One of the reasons that we celebrate *Shavuot* is to remember the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that took place after the ascension of Yeshua. At this time, we see the first major explosion of evangelism taking place, as the responsibility of spreading the good news was given to the Apostles, who then had to go out to the rest of the world. Is this one of the reasons why you celebrate *Shavuot*? Is the work of God's Kingdom in the world something important to you?

My all-time favorite theological term is not something that is Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, or even English. Some of you who have gone through our Wednesday Night Bible Studies on the Internet have heard me use it. It is the word *Heilsgeschichte*, meaning "salvation history." *Das ist ein gute deutsche Wort. This is a good German word.* Many of the German Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries used it to describe the Bible as presenting an unfolding plan of God's salvation for the world. In theological study, God's redemptive purpose for humanity becomes the controlling factor. When we read Scripture, we are to understand that all of the events that occur are designed for us to be brought closer to God and for us to understand His redemptive work.

God's unfolding "salvation history" is one of the major reasons why we celebrate the appointed times. They commemorate events in the world where the Divine has interrupted the lives of people in order to radically change things. We see this at *Shavuot* in the scene of fire and smoke with the Ten Commandments being given to Moses. And we definitely see it with the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Believers assembled in Jerusalem. *Shavuot* is a major example of *Heilsgeschichte*—as the salvation of the world is its major theme. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the First Century led us to seeing men and women enlivened to go out into the world, and proclaim the good news that the Savior had come. Synagogues in Antioch, Alexandria, Corinth, and even as far as Rome itself got to hear some amazing stories when congregants returned home from Jerusalem. *Shavuot* began the first major *worldwide* evangelistic campaign in the history of Israel.

We come to celebrate *Shavuot* this weekend so we can remember the unfolding plan of the Lord, and how He wishes to have a redeemed people. **We come to focus on Yeshua who is salvation.** But I would ask you, do you, personally, have an event that you commemorate, where God's salvation has been present in your own life? Do you remember the time when you received Yeshua and were spiritually regenerated? Do you remember any trials or difficulties that you were able to overcome because the Lord delivered you through them? Are there any seasons of the year that you have a fondness for, because of past experiences when you have had to rely on the Lord like never before? Do you have a testimony of "salvation history" in your own life? Corporately, we celebrate the appointed times of Leviticus 23, but individually, what do we remember? May it be our hope and prayer that every day be an unfolding of His salvation to us!

We face some challenges in the coming years as the Messianic movement grows and matures. We have a great responsibility before us. If we are to properly complete the work that God has assigned to us, we need to have some serious one-on-one time with Him. We need to recognize that what happens to the Jewish community affects us. We also need to recognize that what happens to the Christian community affects us. Atrocities that happen to Christians in the third world should sicken us, and we should pray for our brothers and sisters every day. Most of these people will never know about the Sabbath, the appointed times, or what it means to eat kosher. They just know that they love Jesus and that He brought them out of bondage and into freedom. They look forward to the day when they can see Him face to face in glory. Do we look forward to that day? Is our heart warmed when we think about Yeshua exalted in Heaven? Do we tear up at all? Do we think about all those who have gone before us, and how we get to complete the reforming work that they began?

Shavuot was the time when God poured out His Holy Spirit upon all men and women who had received the good news of Messiah Yeshua. It was the time when many people became “charismatic,” so to speak. But being charismatic does not necessarily mean having a dominant personality, speaking in unintelligible or intelligible tongues, raising hands in worship, or jumping and dancing for joy. The term charismatic is derived from the Greek word *charis* (χάρις), a secondary meaning of which is “gift.” But its primary meaning is “grace.”

Someone who is truly “charismatic” is one who has been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and is able to be used as a means of grace in the world. Any servant of the Most High should be charismatic. We should all be full of God’s love, His grace, mercy, and compassion to others. Do you pray for this every day? I know I do. It is not always easy, and some things I have to leave totally to Him, but that is part of the sanctification process. I would dare say that none of us will be “totally perfect” until about one minute before we die and enter into eternity. At this *Shavuot*, it is my hope that we can be used as a means of grace for our Father’s Kingdom work. But the only way that we can be used as a means of grace is for us to have a transformed heart that is being continually transformed into the character of the Lord Yeshua. It is my prayer that you have this transformed heart. Let’s pray...

J.K. McKee (B.A., University of Oklahoma; M.A., Asbury Theological Seminary) is the editor of TNN Online (www.tnnonline.net) and is a Messianic apologist. He is author of several books, including: *The New Testament Validates Torah*, *Torah In the Balance, Volume I*, and *When Will the Messiah Return?* He has also written many articles on the Two Houses of Israel and Biblical theology, and is presently focusing on Messianic commentaries on various books of the Bible.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.

edited edition from paperback *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*
posted 16 February, 2010