

# FAQS

## **Do I have to be Jewish to go to a Messianic congregation?**

No. Messianic congregations are typically composed of both Jewish and non-Jewish members. Messianic congregations emphasize support for Israel and Israel the Jewish people in general. Non-Jews who are attracted to Messianic congregations often express a sense of having been "called" to be part of one. Others express the thought that they receive a form of teaching they have found lacking elsewhere.

## **Why Beit HaSha'ar Messianic Fellowship?**

Beit HaSha'ar's ministry is because such faith communities are a useful means to reach out to Jewish people with the Gospel and to disciple them through sound teaching once they have become believers. Messianic congregations are also an excellent "settling place" for intermarried (Jewish and non-Jewish) couples who may find a Messianic congregation more comfortable than a church setting.

We believe that Yeshua must be at the center of our life and worship style! Messianic congregations send a positive message to both the Jewish community and to the churches: that faith in Yeshua (Jesus) is compatible with Jewish life. They also serve as a reminder that the Jewish people are a key component of the Great Commission.

## **How is a Messianic congregation different from a church?**

Messianic congregations are the same in the sense that they support and teach the basic tenets of evangelical Christian views and fundamentals. They are different because they do so in a Jewish way, with Jewish liturgy, music and other features of Jewish community life, which adds a dimension not found in other Christian traditions.

## **How is a Messianic congregation different from a synagogue?**

Just as there are many kind of synagogues that may differ significantly from one another, the same may also be said about Messianic congregations. However, the overarching difference between mainstream synagogues and Messianic congregations is that Messianic congregations consider the New Testament to be revealed Scripture along with the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Therefore, Messianic congregations consider Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah to be fulfillment of the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, which mainstream synagogues do not.

## **What types of Jewish traditions are observed in Messianic congregations?**

With regard to traditional observances, Messianic congregations - like congregations in the more traditional streams of Judaism - cover a broad spectrum. However, most Messianic congregations will engage in the following traditions:

- Sabbath worship (Friday evening and/or Saturday morning)
- High Holy Days observances: Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Yom Kippur Day of Atonement) and Sukkot (Tabernacles).
- Popular holidays, such as Purim, Passover (spring) and Hanukkah (winter)
- Memorial services, such as Holocaust Remembrance and Israel's Independence Day
- Life cycle events, such as circumcision, bar/bat mitzvah, Jewish weddings.

The greatest concentration of Jewish traditions will typically be seen in the context of the weekly Sabbath worship service. Therein, you will likely find Hebrew liturgy, Israeli folk dance, traditional Jewish songs, procession of the Torah scroll, the sounding of a shofar (ram's horn) and other culturally Jewish components which should serve to proclaim the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus) and the preeminence of God's Word.

### **Are Messianic congregations evangelistic?**

Messianic congregations vary in their approaches to evangelism, but they are one of the major reasons why the Messianic movement around the world has been able to reach more Jewish people with the Gospel than ever before. Statistics on church growth show that the most effective means of reaching people is through a strong, well-rounded congregational program.

Jewish people are culturally raised to resist any consideration that Yeshua (Jesus) is Messiah. They must hear the Gospel numerous times before they begin to take it to heart. Once that happens, there is usually a time of deep personal reflection before they accept the Gospel, because of the stigma and conflict that this decision will generate from their family and community. To take that step within a community of faithful Jewish believers makes it not only easier to consider, but also provides support through the crucial, vulnerable stages as they begin their faith journey.

### **What do Messianic congregations teach about Yeshua?**

Messianic congregations teach the fundamental doctrines that Christianity has held throughout the centuries, including the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, Yeshua's Atoning Sacrifice, Resurrection, Ascension and the expectation of His visible, physical return. Messianic congregations stress the Jewish context of Messiah's earthly ministry and His connection with Messianic expectation based upon the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible.

### **Why do Messianic congregations meet on Friday night/Saturday?**

For many of us in North American society, Sunday acts as the "Sabbath" although our calendars show that it is the first day of the week. Indeed, history shows that the Sabbath was changed after the death and resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus) to Sunday by the Roman Catholic Church. The Sabbath of Israel is the seventh day, which is Saturday. This has been true, according to the Scriptures, from Creation and has been honored by the Jewish people since the time of Moses, some 3500 years ago. In keeping with Jewish practice, tradition and culture, Messianic services continue the practice of Yeshua (Jesus) and his followers by keeping the Sabbath.

Messianic congregations meet on Friday night or Saturday to follow Jewish practice in order to sustain the identity and heritage of their members, as a witness to the Jewish roots of our faith and as a witness to the Jewish community. However, in keeping with the Lord's teaching (Mt. 12), Messianic believers are not legalistic in expecting that Christians will practice Sabbath-keeping on the seventh day. We understand that the culture of many Messiah-centered, Bible-believing churches is to practice their worship on the first day of the week.

### **What are the unique contributions of Messianic congregations?**

Afterwards, the congregation becomes a cultural bridge for them to tell the rest of their family about their decision. Over the long term, there are usually many opportunities to then reach out to other family members. This is even more important for a married person who needs to witness to their spouse in a culturally sensitive environment. Congregations have been the most effective means to bring whole families to faith.

### **Is it a good place to bring my Jewish friend?**

Messianic congregations address the greatest concern of Jewish people who are considering the Gospel: the fear of losing their Jewish identity.

If the Bible is taught from a Jewish perspective, expressing New Testament faith in a Jewish context, Messianic congregations can be a "seeker friendly" place for Jewish people. But if the congregation does not reach out to the Jewish community with the message of the Gospel, it runs the risk of becoming inward-looking and isolated.

### **What are Messianic congregations like in Israel?**

If you were to walk into a Messianic congregation in Israel today, you would be in for an experience that is unique in the world. Jewish believers in Yeshua are coming into their own; the songs, the sermons, and the prayers are normally all in Hebrew. Whereas at one time it was obligatory to translate everything into English, today many congregations are able to focus their energies on meeting the needs of their Israeli members. Worship is generally lively and informal, and congregations foster a living counter-culture, providing a place where their members can grow spiritually and be nurtured in their faith. There still are a lot of 'foreigners' and a large percentage of members will speak either English or Russian, but worshipping with believers in the Land is increasingly a truly 'Israeli' experience.

Israeli believers in Yeshua are actively creating a form of Messianic Judaism that is unique in the world. Congregations are incredibly diverse, yet as a whole they have chosen their own path, which is distinct from the needs and norms of Diaspora Messianic Judaism. Not feeling a keen need to affirm their Jewish identity, their congregations typically dispense entirely with liturgy from the Siddur (prayer book). Musical instruments, which are forbidden in Synagogues, are in abundance. Yes, when you visit an Israeli Messianic congregation, there is a palpable sense that a great movement of the Spirit is happening here!

Today, Israeli congregations have their own songs, their own teachers and their own associations which link them together. Nevertheless, they are amazingly diverse - as varied as the people of Israel itself.

Some of the diversity is due to the origins of those who founded them. Thus some are more charismatic, Pentecostal, evangelical or mainline in their worship styles. Some Messianic Congregations were founded before the modern State of Israel was established in 1948 - either by early pioneering Messianic Jews who saw the need to worship in their own truly Israeli way, or by venerable church institutions.

The various waves of immigration to Israel have introduced more diversity. Some Messianic congregations are almost entirely Russian, Ethiopian or American in their membership. Others are a veritable mosaic of nationalities. Sometimes a sermon is translated from Hebrew into English, then Russian, and finally into Romanian. Sitting through such a service is like sitting in an echo chamber!

Messianic Congregations also vary depending on their location; congregations in Tel Aviv are quite different than those in Jerusalem, which are different from those in the desert in the south. Needless to say, no two congregations are identical. Nevertheless, a common language, common worship music, and the natural effect of being together in a relatively small country increasingly bind them together. Wherever you attend, come to learn, love, and bless - and you will be blessed.

**How many Messianic congregations are there in the world?**

Messianic Judaism is growing so quickly as a movement, and is so diverse, that precise numbers are hard to come by. One has to sort out groups that claim the title 'Messianic' but are rejected by the mainstream consensus, such as 'two house' congregations. One also has to determine what a legitimate congregation is - is it legitimate if there are no Jewish members? Thirdly, one has to differentiate between established communities and small house groups (that nevertheless might become thriving congregations in a few years), which might properly be called 'chavurot' or 'fellowships' in Jewish lingo.

So... what's the number? An educated estimate would be that there are 400 viable, functioning congregations worldwide. This number is a huge increase from the small handful of Messianic Congregations that existed 50 years ago - so it is nothing short of remarkable!

***WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US AT BEIT HASHAAR  
BECOME PART OF THE REVIVAL AND AWAKENING TO TRUTH IN HASHEM'S WORD!***