



## Stan Telchin



Stan Telchin is a Jew who began his search through the Scriptures to find evidence to challenge the new faith his daughter had found in Yeshua. After accepting Yeshua as his Messiah, Stan Telchin became a Messianic Jew and pastor. He lives in Lakewood Ranch, Florida, working for Stan Telchin Ministries. He wrote two remarkable books *Betrayed* and *What's the Problem with Messianic Judaism*.

**S** *habbat Shalom:* Please tell us about your background as a messianic leader. What did it take for you, a Jew, to accept Yeshua as your Messiah? An experience in your life, an argument, an encounter with someone, or something else?

**Stan Telchin:** By the time I was 50 I had it made. Every dream that my mother-in-law ever had for me was fulfilled! Her daughter Ethel and I had a great marriage. We had two great daughters—Judy, 21, and Ann, 17. We lived in a 6,000-square-foot house and owned four BMW's. We had full time help and a huge swimming pool. I had an international reputation in my business, had received the Man of the Year Award from one Jewish

organization, was on the board of two other organizations and was a trustee of another. All I had to do was to keep on keeping on. I didn't think it could get any better. Even my golf game had improved!

Then six months later, I thought I was going to die. That's when Judy called one night to tell me that she believed Jesus to be the Messiah. I was stunned. I felt betrayed. How could my first born betray her mother and me—as well as all of our ancestors—this way? I kept telling her, “You can't believe in Jesus. You are Jewish! And Jews don't believe in Jesus!” But no matter what I said to her, I couldn't get her to change her mind. She was convinced that Jesus was our Messiah.

I had two choices. I could either disown her or I could win

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her back. I decided to win her back. How? By reading what she read and proving to her that she was wrong. Jesus might be the Messiah for the Gentiles, but not for us.

Over the next few months, as I read the New Covenant for the first time in my life and dug into the Hebrew Scriptures, I came up with five critical questions. If the answer to any one of them was “no,” I was finished. But if they were all “yes,” I had a problem. Here are the questions: “Do I believe in God?” “Do I believe that our Hebrew Bible is God’s divinely inspired word to us or merely the story of our people?” “Does our Bible prophesy about a Messiah who is to come?” “Has anyone ever lived who fulfilled those prophecies?” “Does his name begin with ‘J’?” What I learned from reading the Bible helped me say “yes” to each of these questions, and I confessed Jesus to be Lord of my life on July 3, 1975.

Five years later, after training, I planted the Living Word Fellowship in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and for the next fourteen years served as its pastor. The congregation was made up of Jews and Gentiles—people from every race and way of life. We didn’t concentrate on what used to divide us but on the One who unites us. For almost two years we met in a Seventh-day Adventist church on Sunday mornings and evenings and on Wednesday nights. Since I am Jewish, the church had a definite Jewish flavor. I taught about all of the Jewish holidays and we

had an annual Passover Seder that was open to guests. It was a wonderful experience.

***Shabbat Shalom: How did your family and your Jewish friends react to that move?***

**Telchin:** Initially my family was shocked. One sister didn’t talk to me for ten years. One brother said, “Well kid, if it makes you happy.” Another asked: “Are you crazy?” An uncle spit in my face. But I had counted the cost of becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

*“...have come to believe that one can’t be Jewish and believe in Jesus”*

***Shabbat Shalom: You have written a significant book about Messianic Judaism. What motivated your interest in that movement? Did your inquiry about Messianic Jews change your mind about them? Did you come to different opinions since the time you wrote that book?***

**Telchin:** At the very outset I must stress that I am not implying that the beliefs and actions of my brothers and sisters in Messianic Judaism are wicked or that they intentionally violate God’s Word. I am not condemning the individuals who are involved in Messianic Judaism. Rather, I am speaking out against some of the things they are saying and some of the things they are doing because I do not believe that their way is God’s way.

I wrote this book to accom-

plish three things: It was my hope and prayer that the leaders within Messianic Judaism would accept my challenge to question some of the teachings, attitudes, and practices of the movement in the light of God’s Word. Is what they are teaching and doing really consistent with God’s unchanging Word? Or is it possible that they have allowed Jewishness, synagogue life, rabbinic authority, pleasing the Jewish community, and tradition to shape the movement?

Additionally, I wanted them to consider these questions: “Are you so caught up in the beauty and nostalgia and romance of ‘Jewishness’ to the point that you are ignoring God’s clearly stated will that we all are to serve Him as ‘one new man’? Do you agree that in God’s sight there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles after they come to the faith?”

Finally, because more and more Jewish believers are proclaiming the Messiahship of Jesus every day and receiving Him as Lord of their lives, they—as well as pastors and church leaders everywhere—need to understand the nature of the crisis that is emerging. I wrote this book to help them understand how to respond to Messianic Judaism.

Somehow in the midst of my brothers’ emphasis on Messianic Judaism, they have lost sight of two facts. First, God has not called us to an ethnic identity. He has called us to a spiritual identity. We are complete in Him. Second, He has clearly called us—Jews and Gentiles

alike—to serve Him as one new man. Scripture teaches us that any *undue* emphasis on ethnicity or race or a particular worldly heritage or form or day of worship which causes us to be divided is contrary to God’s will. Since my book’s publication in September 2004, the affirming responses I have received from people in many different countries have confirmed for me the accuracy of and need for this book.

***Shabbat Shalom:* The phrase Messianic Judaism seems to be self-contradictory; if the word “messianic” is the translation of the word “Christian,” how could Judaism be Christian? Or is Christianity Jewish? Could you elaborate on this paradox? What is “Messianic Judaism” as a contemporary movement?**

**Telchin:** To some this phrase might seem self-contradictory. But those who take this view don’t understand the terrible treatment we Jews have had at the hands of so-called “Christians” over the past two thousand years. Because most Jewish people know of the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Pogroms, and the Holocaust, an overwhelming number of us have come to believe that one can’t be Jewish and believe in Jesus—that if one accepts Jesus he or she ceases to be a Jew. In an effort to overcome this conditioning, the term “Messianic” (rather than “Christian”) came into being.

But Messianic Judaism is a relatively new phenomenon. It is an emphasis on synagogue life and rabbinic form and keeping some of the 613 commandments God gave to the Jewish people in the Torah. Some say that Messianic Judaism’s primary objective is not to reach other Jewish people with the gospel, but is to identify with and gain acceptance from the

greater Jewish community.

It must be noted that the overwhelming majority of Jewish believers are not involved with Messianic Judaism. They are in the Church—and most maintain their ethnic and cultural identity as Jews within their Church. The primary appeal of Messianic Judaism and Messianic synagogues is to Gentiles. It has been estimated that 85% of the attendees in such synagogues are not Jewish.

***Shabbat Shalom:* How do Jews see this movement?**

**Telchin:** They abhor it. Jews see Messianic Judaism as a caricature of true synagogue life.

***Shabbat Shalom:* How do Christians see this movement?**

**Telchin:** As stated above, most Messianic Jews refuse to be part of Messianic Judaism. Many Gentile Christians, however, are attracted to it—thinking that somehow by observing the rituals and observing the Feasts and singing Hebrew songs and doing Israeli folk dances, they will be closer to Jesus. They forget—or ignore—the fact that Messianic Judaism imitates rabbinic Judaism rather than biblical Judaism. It should be noted that it is rabbinic Judaism which states that Jewish believers are no longer Jews, that it is impossible for a Jew to believe in Jesus, and that one ceases to be a Jew if he or she accepts Jesus as Messiah and Lord. Further, rabbinic Judaism bears no resemblance to the Judaism which Jesus knew.

***Shabbat Shalom:* What is the difference between Messianic Judaism and Christianity?**

**Telchin:** I need to be very careful in my response to this question because there is a wide variety of beliefs and practices among those involved in Messianic Judaism. Many Messianic syna-

gogues stress Jewishness more than *Jesusness*, and many times they are not active in reaching out to other Jews with the gospel.

Among the greatest errors the movement makes are the requirement that its members *must* keep some of the 613 commandments contained in the Torah, and its insistence that Jewish believers in Jesus *must* attend Messianic synagogues and not churches. Their emphasis confuses and divides the Church. It must be stressed that the above comments do not apply to all Messianic congregations. Many are well balanced and scriptural in their theology and practice. Each Messianic congregation or synagogue must be considered individually. Its statement of faith and practice must be carefully considered in the light of God’s Word.

***Shabbat Shalom:* In what way do Messianic Jews regard themselves as Jews and relate themselves to Judaism or the Jewish community at large?**

**Telchin:** To answer this question, one must understand that there are the Jewish people—and the Jewish culture—and there is the Jewish religion. They are not the same thing. All Messianic Jews are Jews ethnically and culturally, but they are not involved with traditional rabbinic Judaism. Many who were closely involved in the Jewish community may try to remain involved despite the rejection they receive from other Jewish people who know that they have accepted Jesus. Others who were not deeply involved in Jewish community life before coming to the faith appreciate their Jewish identity more than ever before. And certainly all Jewish believers have strong convictions about and identify with the State of Israel.

***Shabbat Shalom: How do Messianic Jews address the tension between the traditional Jewish reference to Torah and the Christian faith in God's grace?***

**Telchin:** This question requires an understanding of what Torah means. Literally it means the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. Its wider meaning includes the complete Hebrew Bible. Most Jewish believers who are not in Messianic synagogues understand that Jesus fulfilled the 613 commandments of the Torah and they are not obligated to keep any of them in order to earn favor with God. They understand that the new Covenant which God promised to Jews in Jeremiah 31 was fulfilled by the shed blood of Jesus. They understand that we are saved not by trying to keep the 613 laws of the Torah but by God's grace which we receive by faith.

***Shabbat Shalom: What is the future of Messianic Judaism? What are the challenges and tensions that threaten its existence?***

**Telchin:** I agree with Baruch Maoz, a Jewish pastor in Israel, who wrote: "If being accepted by the Jewish people is the major issue, Messianic Jews will have no choice but to continually erode their biblical convictions concerning Jesus until they finally turn their back to Messiah and embrace a wholly rabbinic Judaism. It is a matter of grave concern to note that such tendencies are increasingly evident among some Messianic Jewish groups."

It is my hope that the questions I posed in my book and the questions being posed by others will cause the leadership within Messianic Judaism to re-examine

their convictions, doctrines, and practices—that they will see themselves as part of the one Church of the Living God.

***Shabbat Shalom: Do you think that some day Messianic Judaism will be accepted by Jews as a Jewish movement? What, in your view, would be the conditions which would lead to that recognition?***

**Telchin:** No, I do not.

***Shabbat Shalom: Do you think that Messianic Judaism could play a role in the history of Jewish-Christian relations?***

**Telchin:** No I do not.

***Shabbat Shalom: What are your criticisms about Messianic Judaism, and what are your dreams about it?***

**Telchin:** My criticisms of Messianic Judaism can be found in my book. It would be impossible to list them here.

My prayer for those who are deeply involved in Messianic Judaism is that they will consider the questions raised in my book and affirm the following:

A. That the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are fully equal in their deity.

B. That the Mosaic Covenant was "our schoolmaster to lead us to Messiah." Now that he has come we are "no longer under the schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24-25).

C. That being Jewish or maintaining Jewish customs in no way promotes spirituality, holiness, or proximity to God.

D. That the body of Christ is one in which Jews and Gentiles, members of all and any race, are united—as are people from various social, educational, financial, or political strata.

E. That they will recognize the tremendous difference that exists between Jewish culture and rab-

binic form and will refrain from such emphasis on rabbinic form.

F. That it is God's will that together we be one new man. There is to be one Church.

G. That they will recognize that while Messianic congregations can be a bridge between the synagogue and the Church, no one builds a home on a bridge.

As I end this article, I must point out that many of the above observations have application to the Church as well. Many of our churches, our denominations, and our movements have become *institutionalized*. For many, methodology has become their purpose. They have allowed their hearts to be divided, and their concerns about what *we believe* have separated them from other believers and weakened the Church. God has not called us to focus on our churches, our denominations, or our movements. They are not to become our purpose. We must recommit ourselves to being the people—the *kainos*—that Jesus said we are to be, so that we can do what He has commanded us to do. *As one new man* we are to go to the uttermost parts of the world in unity as we proclaim the wonderful truth of the Gospel. Amen.