

# **Jewish Children and Messianic Jewish Identity**

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What is a Jewish Identity? The old, worn out cliché: “Two Jews, three opinions”, provides some insight into why there is difficulty in answering such a seemingly objective and yet personal question. According to Rabbinic Law, a Jew is someone either born to a Jewish mother or a convert to Judaism. According to the Modern State of Israel a Jew is someone born of a Jewish mother and who has not converted to another religion; a Jew is also someone who has been converted by a recognized branch of Judaism<sup>1</sup>. Reform Judaism has caused an uproar in the last 25 years for watering down its conversion process and adding that the offspring of Jewish fathers, who have been raised Jewish, should also be considered as Jews. All of this of course is becoming critically important as different elements of the Jewish community seek to alter age old objective definitions to better fit their own modern subjective circumstances.

When we discuss Jewish Identity today what we are really discussing is Jewish Continuity. How do we keep Jewish people “Jewish”? A good starting point for this perplexing problem might be the question “Why?”. Why should someone continue to self-identify as “Jewish”? Why should they care about continuing to associate with a particular people group if they no longer share a sense of connection with that group? Why should they want to pass on to their children an identity, tradition or religion which they themselves found little to no personal satisfaction and meaning in?

For us as Messianic Jews we certainly make a big deal about the fact that we are Jewish. Yet we struggle very much ourselves with the continuity aspect of this issue. We also struggle quite a bit with the “Why?” question. The purpose of this paper is to provide some current information about the Jewish community, with a specific emphasis on Jewish children and their parents. This paper will also try to provide some insights into the present Messianic Jewish Community and how it relates to the children of the Movement as Second Generation Messianics. Finally I will offer some suggestions and challenges for us regarding both outreach and discipleship as it pertains to Jewish Children and Messianic Jewish Identity. Before moving on though I feel a need to end this introduction with a reminder: “God has children; God has no grandchildren!”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Israel’s Law of Return cited from Lectric Law Library at [www.lectlaw.com/files/int16.htm](http://www.lectlaw.com/files/int16.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Historical Drift, Arnold L. Cook, Page 100

## An Analysis of Children and Families within the Jewish Community

Our discussion of Jewish Children and Messianic Jewish Identity will begin by focusing on Jewish Identity as far as the Jewish Community at large is concerned. I will begin by discussing the changing Jewish Psyche, how the Jewish person is evolving in the understanding of him/her self. One leading Jewish sociologist whom I had the pleasure to meet and interact with recently was Sylvia Barack Fishman. Her recent book, Jewish Life and American Culture, provides some important information on the state of the American Jewish Community. She has been arguing for a new approach to understanding the way American Jews operate in American society. Sociologists since early in the last century have observed that Jewish people tend to compartmentalize their lives; their Jewish life is this and their American life is that, one not really blending with the other. This compartmentalization has been the modus operandi for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Jewish experience:

*“Jewish Americans provide particularly interesting examples of the ways in which ethnic and religious minority groups negotiate conflicting behavioral prescriptions and belief systems from both sides of a hyphenated identity, coping with simultaneous pulls toward assimilating and maintaining a distinctive heritage. Jews have often been perceived by themselves and others as a singularly divided and fractious people. Despite the frequently articulated sentiment that all Jews comprise one people, American Jews at the end of the twentieth century have established five commonly recognized official branches of Judaism...and also include in their midst a substantial number who see themselves as secular, cultural, or unaffiliated Jews, altogether outside of the rubric of organized religion. Moreover, not only are American Jews divided externally into differing religious groupings, many of them feel that they are divided personally and internally as well.... As Philip Roth puts it, ‘Inside every Jew there is a mob of Jews’”.*<sup>3</sup>

Times have changed though and unfortunately too many people still haven't noticed:

*“Recent analyses of American Jews... have sometimes ignored the critical role of age in determining American-Jewish experience. The fact is that the “Gentleman’s Agreement” America of the first half of the twentieth century has given way to the “Seinfeld” era of the centuries closing decades. Younger American Jews as a group have a different relationship with their own Jewishness than their elders, and those differences are reflected both statistically and in qualitative and cultural materials.”*<sup>4</sup>

The new sociological trend within the American Jewish Community according to Sylvia Barak Fishman is “coalescence”. **“Coalescence is a pervasive process through which American Jews merge American and Jewish ideas, incorporating American liberal values such as free choice, universalism, individualism, and pluralism into their understanding of Jewish Identity.”**<sup>5</sup> Jewish newspapers and magazines are filled with stories about how this trend has taken over Jewish life. In the Chicago Jewish News I

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<sup>3</sup> Jewish Life and American Culture, Fishman, Page 4

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Page 3

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, Page 1

read recently about Columbia University Journalism Professor Ari Goldman's recent book, Being Jewish: The Spiritual and Cultural Practice of Judaism Today. In his research for the book he discovered a big disconnect between what Jews are taught by their Rabbis and how they actually practice their Judaism. He lists some examples including Shabbat Observance ("I don't floss my teeth on Shabbat", "I don't eat shellfish on Shabbat", "I drive, but not on freeways on Shabbat") and Kosher ("I keep kosher, but only within 50 miles of my home." "I keep three sets of dishes – for meat, dairy and Chinese Food."). Goldman sums his research up by stating, "I loved these responses. They say much about American Jews who try to find their own comfort level in their practice of Judaism".<sup>6</sup> This is coalescence at work.

Another amazing insight into the trend toward coalescence is the recent American Jewish Identity Survey 2001. As the researchers were analyzing the data they determined that its importance depended on how one determined Jewish Identity. The study estimated 5.5 million Jews in America, but this included 1.4 million self-identifying Jews who say that they are members of another religion! It also discovered that 42% of the Jews professed a secular outlook while 14% said that they didn't believe in God at all. With this obvious secularization in mind, it was dumbfounding for those conducting the survey to discover that the overwhelming majority of American Jews (almost 70%) still identify with a particular stream of religious Judaism.<sup>7</sup>

Now that we recognize this change toward coalescence in the American Jewish Identity, it is time for us to see how this is impacting Jewish children today.

### **Jewish Family Life**

The first impact point of coalescence for children is obviously in the home. As Jews are living out this new understanding of Jewish Identity, it only makes sense that as they grow older, marry and have children, the choices they make will impact the children they have. Rising intermarriage, divorce, immorality and misplaced priorities within the Jewish community all have very negative effects on the children. The aforementioned rising trends can be directly traced within the Jewish community to the coalescence of free choice (i.e. Individualism) into the Jewish Community, something which prior to the American Jewish experience was not *in any way* understood to be a Jewish value:

*"The incorporation of the values of individualism into American Jewish Life has often proceeded in an unselfconscious mode. Living in a culture that privileges individual choice over family or community, American Jews quickly absorbed the individualistic ethos, but frequently did not perceive it as being in ideological conflict with their Jewish ties"*<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Chicago Jewish News, Edition unknown (frankly, I lost the specific source info : } )

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, November 9-15, 2001

<sup>8</sup> Fishman, Page 24-25

As a result of the “individual choices” of Jewish adults, the children are suffering. Because of rising intermarriage, Jewish children are experiencing a severe identity crisis according to the following quote from the American Jewish Yearbook:

*“...American Jewish leaders wondered whether the community was about to experience massive demographic erosion. New evidence that such erosion was likely came in a study, ‘Children of Intermarriage: How “Jewish”?’ by Bruce Phillips of Hebrew Union College, which appeared in Studies in Contemporary Jewry. Phillips found that 34 percent of the children of intermarriage were being raised as Christians and only 18 percent as Jews, while 25 percent were being raised in both faiths.”<sup>9</sup>*

There is one vitally important statistical percent they left out: **23 percent of these children are raised with no religion at all!** This means that not only is there the problem of religious confusion, but there is the problem of a religious vacuum! Children in these homes are not exactly sure who they are when it comes to a religious or spiritual identity! And this doesn’t even speak to the issue of Jewish ethnic identity, which is actually a growing trend in defining Jewish identity.

We live in a secular society where religion and religious practices are not looked upon too highly when practiced openly in the public arena. The Jewish community has incorporated this negative attitude toward public religious practice and is today one of the most secular ethnic groups in America. Samuel C. Heilman, a leading Jewish demographer details the reality of this from the 1990 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS):

*“Jewish identity for many American Jews, as we have also seen, is no longer something associated exclusively with religion, long the most acceptable and hence common way American Jews had for characterizing themselves. Instead, Jewish identity seems to have moved increasingly toward ethnicity or heritage and culture, while being a ‘good Jew’ has been defined in vaguely moral terms. In fact, 69 percent of those reported on in the 1990 NJPS (and even more of those who were ‘Jews by choice’ or those who were born Jews but who claimed no religion at the time of the survey) identified themselves as a national group, a culture...”<sup>10</sup>*

This movement within the Jewish community toward secularization of course has long-term ramifications for the children. A recent study on affiliated Jewish teenagers was done both by Brandeis University’s Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) seeking to ascertain the religious attitudes and involvement of Jewish youth after Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The Brandeis study focused on Boston area Jewish youth in general while the JTS study was focused on Conservative Synagogue youth. The JTS study found that Jewish teens affiliated with Conservative Synagogues at least a majority of the time were over-all positive about their Jewish identity and synagogue experiences including Hebrew School. At the same time the study still found a significant drop off of synagogue involvement by post Bar/Bat Mitzvah teens. In the Brandeis study they detailed that by a vast majority over-all Jewish teens in the Boston area held negative views of their Jewish experiences including Hebrew

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<sup>9</sup> American Jewish Yearbook 2000 Edition, Singer, Page 213

<sup>10</sup> Portrait of American Jews, Heilman, Page 135

School. The conclusions of the Brandeis study showed that “Judaism is ‘important’ to today’s teens, the authors write, but ‘only as it fits into their lives and their goals in a secular, pluralistic society.’”<sup>11</sup>

The issue of Jewish divorce is not a topic that is discussed enough within the Messianic Jewish Community even though the dissolution of the Jewish family has been well on its way for some time now. George Barna in his many studies of religious Americans has done a recent study on divorce and found that Jews are among those most likely to divorce (30%) compared with the general US population (24%)<sup>12</sup>. Who would have thought that the Jewish community today would be confronted by divorce, blended families and single parent families, yet this is precisely where things are. **Currently almost one third of all Jewish children live in homes that have been affected by divorce!**<sup>13</sup>

A logical by-product of divorce is the single parent household. Although single parent families make up a small percentage of Jewish households, they actually represent a fairly large percentage of Jewish children. A study done to determine this found that between 12 and 20 percent of all Jewish children today are being raised in single parent homes.<sup>14</sup> Women head most single parent homes. There are of course incredible difficulties related to this including time, finances and also community acceptance. Although divorce and single parenthood are still to a degree social stigmas even in our day, the trend is still for their to be more divorce and more single parenthood in the future as many of the children raised in these dysfunctional family situations marry, divorce and, in the process, have children of their own.

The Jewish family has changed in some other areas as well. There are far more two income families in the Jewish community today. “Nationwide, the NJPS data shows that among married women with no children, 85 percent work outside the home for pay. Labor force participation falls to 78 percent of Jewish women with one child, 68 percent of mothers with two children, 67 percent of those with three children, and 47 percent of those with four or more children.”<sup>15</sup> There is obviously then an absence of parental supervision that leaves Jewish children at risk for early experimentation with sex, drugs and other destructive behavior. Many sociologists now call the weekday afternoon from 3:00 to 6:00 the most dangerous time for children concerning these behaviors. Voices within the Jewish community are beginning to realize this and are calling for more Jewish sponsored activities and after school programs to meet this pressing need.<sup>16</sup>

There has been much said about the emphasis within the Jewish Community on children and teens. Unfortunately talk is cheap, as researchers have discovered in the world of the local Jewish Community Center (JCC):

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<sup>11</sup> Chicago Jewish News – February 23 – March 1, 2001

<sup>12</sup> Barna Research, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) –Article: *Christians are More Likely to Experience Divorce than are non-Christians*, December 21, 1999

<sup>13</sup> Fishman, Page 103

<sup>14</sup> Changing Jewish Life, Sternberg, Page 65

<sup>15</sup> Fishman, Page 44

<sup>16</sup> Sternberg, Page 73-74

*“For teenagers, especially those who come from dual-career or single-parent families who are concerned about activities during the after-school hours, Jewish Community Centers are an obvious target locale in which to serve this population. In a Brandeis University report by Amy Sales and Gary Tobin on revitalizing Jewish Community Center youth services...they found that most JCCs do not engage in systematic planning to implement youth services. The authors come to the conclusion that “teens are often a lower priority in JCCs than are seniors, pre-schoolers, and other groups. They comment wryly, “JCC leadership may claim that youth are a priority for the center, but their actions frequently belie this assertion.”<sup>17</sup>*

A quote from Sylvia Barack Fishman appropriately sums up this first section on the state of the American Jewish Community and its Jewish Identity:

*“American-Jewish families today can be seen as a microcosm of the challenges besetting middle-class America. Once perhaps the most predictably normative of American family types, contemporary American-Jewish families now seem to be the epitome of change...As a result, strategies that proved relatively effective for preserving Jewish lifestyles in the past may require a shift of emphasis if they are to meet American Jews, quite literally, where they live.”<sup>18</sup>*

## **An Analysis of the Messianic Jewish Community and Jewish Children**

### **What is Messianic Jewish Identity**

If there is one question that is harder to nail down than “Who is a Jew?”, it has to be the question, “Who is a Messianic Jew?” To some in this room I am too Jewish. To others I am not Jewish enough! To some, Messianic Jewish Identity begins and ends with the gene pool of physical Jewish birth, while others are not all that concerned about Jewish genetics and are more willing to extend (and limit) the title of “Messianic Jew” based on ones commitment to some form of a Torah observant life, loosely linked often, in some part, with the traditions of Rabbinic Judaism.

The first identifying point of a Messianic Jew is, of course, faith in the person and work of Yeshua the Messiah. Beyond that though, for the sake of brevity and needed clarity, my definition of a Messianic Jew is as follows:

- 1) **First and foremost a Messianic Jew is someone descended physically from Jews.** This means that there is an obvious genetic element to someone’s Jewishness. A person can’t say that they are Jewish just because they like bagels and lox. There needs to be an actual physical connection via birth. Jewish literature and tradition has always held this as the defining point of Jewishness (ie. A Jew is someone born of a Jewish mother). There have also been several recent

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<sup>17</sup> Fishman, Page 87

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Page 117

published articles showing the close genetic connection of Jewish people around the world. A person born Jewish can therefore never stop being a Jew.

- 2) **Second and finally, a Messianic Jew is someone who identifies with the Jewish Community.** This identification is extremely subjective and personal as Jewish people come to faith in Yeshua from primarily unaffiliated and secular backgrounds. The key question is whether through their actions and self-identification they continue to associate with the Jewish community at large, or do they “escape” into the Christian community, forsaking their Jewish identity and actions so that it becomes unknown both to them as well as to others that they are in fact Jewish.

### **What are Children within the Messianic Jewish Community Like**

As the Messianic Jewish movement is primarily a movement of first generation believers in Yeshua, it would make sense that growing pains would be experienced regarding the raising and developing of the “second generation” children. In all honesty, there have been great difficulties both in disciplining a second generation of believers as well as in perpetuating a second generation of Jews. The purpose of this next section is to provide some limited congregational analysis as it pertains to children and teens as well as some insights into the thought patterns of some Chicago area second-generation Messianic Jewish teenagers.

I will begin with some excerpts from an excellent book called Historical Drift by Arnold L. Cook. In his book he discusses how Congregations and Institutions in time lose sight of original purposes, and without clear effort and renewal move into a state of irrelevancy. In Chapter Six he focuses on the issue of nominal faith, using the example of Joshua and the generations that followed him who fell away from the Lord. He cites a work by Bruce H. Wilkinson called First Hand Faith in which three chairs are used to illustrate three generations of “believers”. In the first chair is the first generation; they are all believers. They came to believe through a personal and deliberate choice. The second chair represents their children who, although they heard the testimony of their parents, they themselves growing up in their faith, knowing the culture and language of the believing Community, were not forced themselves to make a deliberate choice to believe. Theirs was a secondhand faith; only about half of them become believers. The third chair represented the grandchildren who were again born into the believing culture, but who really did not personally make the choice to believe. Of this generation less than one quarter of them become believers.<sup>19</sup>

All too often we take for granted the fact that our children are coming to faith when they are not! There are very few multiple generation Jewish believing families. Why? **We forget that the children of each generation must be challenged to make a personal and deliberate choice to believe in Yeshua.** Many times believing parents expect that their congregations and congregational leadership will fill this need for them. They assume that through the Shabbat School and Service times that the children are learning

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<sup>19</sup> Cook, Pages 100-103

and internalizing the Message of Messiah Yeshua's death and coming to believe in it on their own. Parents are also comforting themselves that when little Joey or Mindy made a prayer of faith at the age of 4 or 5 that the work of faith has been completed in their young lives. This is a dangerous assumption! In Cook's book he points out that most nominal believers attend congregational services regularly, but with no personal relationship with God through the Messiah Yeshua! First generation Jewish believers must remember that it is their responsibility as parents to **actively raise** their children in the faith that Yeshua is the Messiah! They must not stop there though. **They need to also challenge each of their children as they get older to personally and deliberately choose to accept Yeshua for themselves and then to practically disciple them** into the teachings of the Scriptures once they make this statement of faith. This "choosing" to believe is much more an action of the pre-teen and teen years than it is the earlier years of childhood.

In analyzing the Messianic Jewish Movement, there appears to be a lack of priority on children and young people. This can be seen in a practical way when one looks at a recent *Lederer Messianic Jewish Resources Catalogue*<sup>20</sup>. Out of 32 pages of items, only one page is dedicated to children/youth. To compound the disappointment, there is only one small booklet listed for purchase which has been specifically developed from a Messianic Jewish believing perspective to encourage the faith and identity of Messianic Jewish children. There is also only one book which seems in any way to be for encouraging parents in the discipleship of their kids (not including the advertised Passover kits). Where are the biographies of great Messianic Jewish believers written for children? Where are the Tapes and CD's for children to encourage them in their faith and to help them with a sense of identity? Where are the parenting manuals to guide often ill-equipped first generation believing parents in the wisest ways to raise their children? We need to rethink our priorities if we hope to encourage and nurture succeeding generations of Messianic Jewish children.

From recent survey data and personal interviews with congregations it seems that this low priority for children is a common state. My surveys show that congregations on an average budget less than 1.5% of their annual expected income for the educating and encouraging of their children and youth. Obviously most congregations have limited resources and so have limited budgets with which to operate. But along with low budgeting we also find that almost no congregations provide for their children any additional meeting times outside of the 30 to 45 minutes of Shabbat School during the Rabbi's sermon time. There are also almost no Messianic Jewish Clubs or Youth Groups outside of service times that function in an organized manner for Messianic Jewish children to participate in. Our Messianic Jewish children either must attend church groups outside of their congregational community for discipleship and encouragement or go without. For this reason many of our children begin to leave our congregations in the early teen years never to return.

This brings me to my interviews with some Messianic Jewish teenagers. If there are two impressions which I received in my time with the kids, it would have to be that 1) they

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<sup>20</sup> The Catalogue referenced is the Spring/Summer 2002 edition

had a confused sense of their own Jewish Identity and 2) they really did not feel that their congregations were helping them to grow in their faith as believers! Since the average Messianic Jewish Congregation and even Messianic Jewish Outreach meetings are at least 50% non-Jewish, it would be inevitable that the issue of Jewish identity and connection to the greater Jewish community would become a bit confusing for the teens. None of them displayed any deep principled connection with the Jewish community at large, including a commitment to marrying a Jewish spouse, or understood with any depth the defining elements of what it meant to be a Jew. One teen commented that most of the observant people in his congregation were born Gentile so he felt being Jewish had more to do with religion than parentage. Just so you know, half of these kids came from a fairly traditional congregation and the other half from a much less traditional congregation. Their congregational tradition really didn't do much to clarify these points.

I was actually most concerned about impression number two: the teens really did not feel that their congregations were helping them to grow in their faith as believers! It was just disturbing to sense the spiritual vacuum that they feel in their congregations. One teen made it clear that he would leave in a heart beat if his dad would let him. Since most congregations tend to be based on the expectation that people will drive long distances to attend services, the close knit sense of community which is so important during the teen years is almost impossible for attending teens. This requires believing teens to seek out local teen groups (ie Gentile Churches or Para-Church works) to help them if they really want to grow in their faith. Some of the teens surveyed felt comfortable with this, others didn't. The teens also didn't feel that they had a place of participation within their congregations either. They felt they were too old to be in "kiddies" events that took place on occasion, but they also felt they were not considered old enough to be given the opportunity to give a teaching or be responsible for some service.

## **Conclusion:**

In the Jewish world today, one quarter of all Jews are under the age of 14. This represents both an awesome challenge and an amazing opportunity. The American Jewish Community is quickly coalescing into a mess where Jewish kids are receiving less clarity as to their identity, practicing less observance in their homes and also receiving less teaching as to their faith. At the same time they are experiencing unprecedented upheaval in their homes due to divorce, parental stress and family dysfunction. As Believers we need to rethink what we can do to be **a practical help to Jewish families** in need as well as **a spiritual help in reaching out to Jewish children with the Truth of Messiah Yeshua**. I have a few specific suggestions that I would like to leave you with:

- **We must not assume that just because children attend our services that they are actually becoming believers.** If you do not have a written plan to individually challenge each child in your congregation to make a deliberate choice to become a believer and then disciple them by Bar/Bat Mitzvah, then go make one today! If you are involved in Outreach work I encourage the same for you as well, with any child in your sphere of ministry influence.

- **We must not ignore the opportunity we have to invite non-Messianic Jewish children to special children’s programs and activities.** Because of the state of the Jewish community today we have more opportunities to meet needs than we are taking advantage of. Seriously consider adding some of the following to your list of Programs and Outreach activities:
  - 1) Family Services & Counseling
  - 2) Day Care & After School Programming (Club Maccabee Children’s Club)
  - 3) Bar/Bat Mitzvah Training
  - 4) Youth Groups that function outside of service times (This can be both a congregational as well as a community wide effort)
- **We need to increase our funding for children’s programming in our Outreaches and Congregations and to aggressively develop leadership.** It takes money to work with kids, especially as they get older. More importantly it takes trained leaders. Plan for your future youth group by starting a children’s club. Add age groups as the kids get older, developing your leaders from the parents of the children and other qualified people that you find. Don’t be afraid to train your teens to become Children’s Club leaders. This gives them an opportunity to serve and it will help them grow spiritually as well.
- **We need to provide Messianic Jewish Children with a consistent and unambiguous understanding of what it means to be a Jew.** Messianic Jewish kids need a clear and strong Jewish Identity. Remind them of their physical link to the Patriarchs and the Scriptures by birthright. Provide teachings and books on important Jews and Jewish History and involve them in Community wide Jewish activities. Teach them when they are young how to effectively speak of their faith as a Messianic Jew to other Jewish kids within the Jewish Community. Discourage the co-mingling of traditional Christian culture such as Christmas trees and Easter baskets with Hanukah and Passover that only add confusion for children. Avoid using Christian terminology to refer to your Messianic Congregations and Leaders (such as church and pastor).

Children require a lot of work with little immediate gratification. We must think long term. As James Dobson wrote in his recent book Bringing up Boys, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men”<sup>21</sup> Let’s get to work!

If you would be interested in interacting about this paper, or if you are interested in running a Club Maccabee Children’s Club chapter in your area, please contact us at:

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 7800 Niles Ave. Skokie, IL 60077 – (847) 674-9146  
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<sup>21</sup> Bringing Up Boys, James Dobson, Page 30

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**Congregational Survey for Analyzing the Messianic Jewish Identity of attending Children**

Name of Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Survey Respondent: \_\_\_\_\_ Congregational Position: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What is the total current number of children associated with your Congregation in the following age groups:
  - a) Infant to 4 years : \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) 5 to 8 years : \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) 9 to 12 Years : \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) 13 to 15 years : \_\_\_\_\_
  - e) 16 to 18 years : \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the total average attendance of these children on a weekly basis? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What percentage of these children are Jewish (At least one self-identifying Jewish Parent)? \_\_\_\_\_%
- 4) What percentage of your Congregation's budget do you allocate for Children's Programs (Education & Activities)? \_\_\_\_\_%
- 5) What are the top 3 programs and/or expenditures that you spend that money on (Please describe)?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
- 6) Do you have a reliable and competent person directing your Children's Education (CE)? \_\_\_\_ (Yes/No)
- 7) Do you have a training program or seminar for CE Teachers and Volunteers? \_\_\_\_ (Yes/No) If yes please describe:
- 8) Besides your regular weekly services, do you provide any other regularly scheduled weekly gathering opportunities for the children of your Congregation? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, please describe:
- 9) Would you say that you have a system by which you disciple your children one on one or in a small group (3 or less at a time) as they enter the pre-teen (Bar/Bat Mitzvah) years? \_\_\_\_\_ (Yes/No) If yes please explain:
- 10) Besides Bar/Bat Mitzvah training, what else does your Congregation do to foster the Messianic Jewish Identity of the Jewish Children in your Congregation?

Please return to **Devar Emet Messianic Jewish Outreach** P.O. Box 5353, Skokie, IL 60076  
by Fax at 847-674-9146 or e-mail at [club-maccabee@devaremet.org](mailto:club-maccabee@devaremet.org)

## Individual Survey for Analyzing Messianic Jewish Identity

Name of Survey Respondent: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

- 11) Are you a Believer in Messiah Yeshua? \_\_\_\_\_ (Yes/No/Kind of)
- 12) What does it mean to be a believer?
- 13) If you are a believer, how did you become one?
- 14) What is a Jew (How does a person come to be Jewish)?
- 15) How do you identify yourself to others:
  - a) Ethnically:
  - b) Religiously:
- 16) How do others identify you?
  - a) Ethnically:
  - b) Religiously:
- 17) Answer **T (True)** or **F (False)** to the following:
  - a) I feel comfortable identifying myself as a Jew when I am with other Jewish people: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) I feel more comfortable in a church environment than in a synagogue environment: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) When I grow up I will be looking specifically to marry a Jewish person: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) When I grow up I will marry whomever I fall in love with: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e) I have a good enough understanding of Jewish tradition and practice to lead my family in the Kiddush and Motzi on Friday Night: \_\_\_\_\_
  - f) I don't feel all that comfortable with my Jewish identity so I would not feel comfortable leading Jewish observances in my home: \_\_\_\_\_
- 18) Besides your regular weekly services, do you participate in any other Messianic Jewish activities on a weekly basis? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, please describe:
- 19) How has your congregation helped you to become a stronger believer in Yeshua?
- 20) Besides Bar/Bat Mitzvah training, what else has your Congregation done to foster your Messianic Jewish Identity?

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