**MESSIANIC TERMINOLOGY**

**Terms to use**

**Yeshua**

*Yeshua* is the Messiah's name. *Yeshua* is a Hebrew word which has the root meaning *salvation*.  *"You shall call His name Yeshua [salvation],*" a heavenly messenger said to Joseph, *"because He shall save His people from their sins."*

Transliterated into Greek as *Iesous,* (Ιησους) this word was spelled *Jesus* when it was imported into English. Messianic Jews use *Yeshua* instead of Jesus because *Yeshua* is the name He was called when He walked the earth.

Through the centuries Jewish people have suffered persecution "in the name of Jesus." Consequently, using the name "Jesus" brings to their minds hatred and anti-Semitism. On the other hand, the name *Yeshua* proclaims Messiah as a Jewish option for Jewish people, as well as for non-Jews.

**Messiah**

*Messiah* is used instead of *Christ.Messiah* is derived from the Hebrew word *Mashiach* (which means "anointed one"). *Christ* is the English equivalent of the Greek word *christos,* (which means "anointed one"). Jumping back over the Greek word to the use of the original Hebrew term is a way of emphasizing that the Messiah is for Jewish people and not exclusively for Gentiles. A second reason for using this term is that -- as with the name Jesus -- thousands and thousands (perhaps millions) of Jewish people have been persecuted and killed by those claiming to act on behalf of Christ. To Jewish people, the word Christ is not simply a non-Jewish word out of the Greek language.  "Christ" is a word that carries anti-Jewish connotations.

**Believer**

Instead of the term "Christian," messianic Jews use "believer." To Jewish people, Christians are the people who have hated and persecuted Jews for two millennia.  While it can be argued that the word Christian is a biblical one, it is used only three times in the New Covenant Scriptures (Acts 1 1:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16). An earlier term used for *Yeshua*'s followers is "believer." Believer can be used for those in Messianic circles as well as for those in traditional churches who truly believe in *Yeshua* and seek to follow Him. By using the term believer, focus is placed on a person's commitment to follow the Lord and away from the excess baggage of those who have called themselves Christians but who did not walk as He walked.

**Messianic**

Messianic refers to believers involved in Messianic congregations, Jewish or Gentile. Messianic Jews are those in Messianic congregations who are of Jewish descent. Messianic refers to that expression of the biblical faith which articulates itself in a Jewish manner.

**Congregation**

Messianic congregations are not called churches. Jewish people often associate churches with anti-Semitism. In the past, and in some places today, anti-Semitism has come from those who profess to be believers, both from clergy and laity. *Ecclesia* refers to people and not to buildings. The term congregation has the same reference point. A synonym in the New Covenant for *ecclesia* is "synagogue" as it is used in James 2:1-6. There, it points to a meeting of believers. For this reason, the term congregation, or even synagogue, is the most appropriate one to describe organized gatherings of Messianic believers.

**Covenant**

This is a reference to testament in the sense of agreement or contract. Instead of saying Old Testament and New Testament, Messianic believers refer to the two halves of the Bible as Older Covenant, or *Tenach* (its Hebrew name) and Newer Covenant, or *Brit Chadasha* (Hebrew for New Covenant).

**Tradition**

Jewish cultural and religious practices, whether in their original forms or adapted to reflect Messianic beliefs.

**Liturgy**

Jewish liturgical elements in both Hebrew and/or English which may be part of a Messianic worship service.

**In addition to the above terms, some Messianic believers substitute "-" for "o" in God and Lord, writing them as G-d and L-rd. This is a sign of respect in Jewish culture, just as many Gentile believers capitalize "G" in G-d and "L" in L-rd, even though there are no such capitalizations in the original texts of the Old and New Covenants.**

**Words and phrases to avoid**

The following terms evoke historic anti-semitic images rather than reflecting a Jewish cultural expression.  Therefore, most Messianic Jews do not use them.

**Christian** *Christian* was first used to describe non-Jewish believers in Antioch (as recorded to the book of Acts). Although the word *Christian* is used only three times in the New Testament, it eventually wound up being the commonly used title for Gentile believers. After the disappearance of ancient Messianic Judaism, *Christian* emerged as the primary title for members of believing congregations. Over the centuries, the term also became associated with those who hate Jewish people and who have rejected everything Jewish. Since *Christian* was (1) never directly used of Jewish believers in scripture, and (2) carries a negative historical reminder of anti-Semitism, the term *Messianic* is used instead. This word identifies Jewish believers as followers of the Messiah without the negative overtones which "Christian" has accumulated. [ See Believer ]

**Conversion**

To most Jewish people, *conversion* means turning away from being Jewish in order to become a Gentile (see above). Biblically, of course, conversion refers to repentance (i.e., turning to God). To communicate this same idea, in Messianic circles a person is said to have become a believer, or has become Messianic.

**Baptism**

Messianic Jews speak of believer's immersion. That's because *baptism* evokes memories of the forced conversions and baptisms perpetrated against Jewish people by anti-Semites. Horrible things, including forced baptisms, were done in the name of Jesus. Baptism is a symbol of joining a Christian -- that is, non-Jewish -- church. So, when Messianic Jews talk about the immersion of believers, they call it Messianic Mikvah, an act with origins in ancient Jewish practice. Calling it *Mikvah* keeps the ritual from being linked to acts of anti-Semitism or other negative issues associated with the Christian Church. Saying *Mikvah* rather than *baptism* emphasizes the true Jewish roots of the faith and keeps this sacred act from being identified with people who have profaned the name of the Messiah by deeds contrary to His teaching.

**Cross**

To Jewish people, a cross calls up memories of persecution inflicted on them by people invoking Jesus' name and brandishing crosses. Jewish believers prefer to focus on the real meaning of the cross. Thus, they call the place where the Messiah was sacrificed as the altar or execution stake.

**Years as A.D. and B.C**.

Dates are cited with the initials C.E. for "Common Era" or B.C.E. for "Before the Common Era." Jewish people prefer these neutral phrases instead of B.C. and A.D. initial meaning "Before Christ" and "In the year of our Lord