



## ***“Like Fish Swimming Against the Stream...”***

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When Yeshua said, “I will make you fishers of men...” I never thought for a moment that in the Messianic Movement He would be speaking primarily of us catching “fish” that were swimming “against the stream,” yet, that’s exactly what we’re doing!

Now, I am not talking about those who stop by and visit a Messianic congregation once or for a season and go on back, if Christian, to their Sunday-keeping, Christmas, Easter and other Christian holiday churches or, if Jewish, back to their traditional synagogues. Such are like the fishes we catch that are to be thrown back into the water for whatever reason: not the right size, wrong fish, etc.

Who I am talking about are those who visit, hear or see something that attracts their attention and come back over and over again. Something compels them to return and eventually they make the Messianic congregation their spiritual “home.”

Now, I have been in the Messianic Movement for nearly 20 years and have talked to many of these folk (I’m one of them) over the years. What I find is that these “fish who swim against the stream” have some common testimonials as to why they joined the Messianic congregation in the first place: 1) if Christian, they are attracted to the “Movement” because all the “pieces” of the Bible “fit together better” from the Hebraic perspective than that of the Greek perspective taught in Christianity today, 2) they are tired of the “trust me” attitude of many Bible preachers, rabbis and theologians from both camps who won’t or can’t put those pieces together, and 3) they recognized early on, if Christian, that somehow the “anti-Law” attitude of most Christian churches today didn’t fit in with what the whole Bible was saying and are, in fact, contrary to what Jesus and the Apostles were teaching. If Jewish, they recognized that they were not being taught the whole truth about this Jesus (His real name is Yeshua) and how He fulfilled the Scriptural requirements for the long-awaited Moshiach.

Having a great degree of commonality with each other, these people are hungry and searching for the truth sincerely and diligently and are willing to sacrifice much for the sake of that truth. They endure pressure from family and friends, former congregants and

loved ones to cling tightly to the truth. Some lose friendships and some close family ties in their pursuit of the truth – and *all* have sacrificed something...

I love to watch television documentaries on the salmon run every year and am fascinated by the determination and energy expended by these fish in returning to their spawning areas. Along the way they encounter many hazards and barriers: bear, birds of prey and other carnivores waiting to devour them, dams and other obstacles blocking their way, or even an over-abundance (or lack) of water-flow along the way that threatens to keep them from their goal.

It is easier, if you're a fish, to travel downstream with the flow of the water. It is simpler and more energy efficient to let the strength of the flow of water propel you than for you to expend the necessary energy and determination to swim against the flow.

In the Messianic Movement, I see the same thing with these spiritual "fish" who make our congregations their home.

We all desire to get to our goal, yet encounter spiritual "carnivores" or obstacles that threaten to devour us or deter as well. From the Christian persuasion, we find well-meaning friends, relatives or former church members saying, "You are putting yourself 'under the Law,'" or "You're joining a cult," or you are becoming "legalistic." Or from the Jewish persuasion who say, "If you believe in Jesus, you're no longer a Jew," and, "If you accept Jesus, you are dead to us."

I remember my grandmother, blessed be her memory, when I first joined the "Movement" in 1987 saying, "You're going straight to Hell!" It was several years after that that both she and my mother started attending a Messianic congregation for themselves; having come to an understanding of what we were all about.

Just as the salmon swim upstream, against the flows of the waters; so do we "Messianics." We get our obstacles from both sides: from the Church in its attack against the Law and from the Jewish community in its attack against the Messiah Yeshua. It doesn't matter whether your background is Jewish or Christian, being Messianic is not an easy walk. Yet, it *is* a walk for those who seek the truth – who come from *both* sides – the "fish" who swim against the stream from both communities.

Most folks who are believers from both faith communities do not want such a walk. Most would prefer to allow the river or stream to carry them to where it wishes. Most would rather not have to do the work to live out their faith and not challenge the status quo. They would rather be "fed" their doctrines from their pastors, rabbis and teachers rather than to do the work and study them out for themselves.

Those are not the "fish" who come and eventually stay in the Messianic Movement. When you come into the Movement you have to learn to study these things out for yourselves: if from the Christian persuasion, you have to learn to defend your faith relative to the Law and the believer; if from the Jewish, your faith relative to the Messiah

Yeshua. And if you *don't* learn to do this, you will be “devoured” by those who seek to get you to go back into the “flow” again.

“Stop fighting the flow, just go back to accepting the direction of the river – be like us...”

Sadly, there are those from both communities who *do* give up and go back. Having learned the truth, they realized the fight was just a little more wearying than they first thought; a bit more difficult than what they first expected. They liked the things they heard in the Movement and really wanted to go back to the Source (truth)! They grasped onto it for a little while; but when the pressure kept mounting finally said, “It’s too difficult for me to keep doing this. I’m a Jew/Gentile so I am going back to my former synagogue/church and do what I once did.”

The Messianic Movement, seeking *both* the truth of the Messiah Yeshua *and* that of the Torah in a believer’s life is not an easy path. It requires a continued hunger and perseverance for the truth, *whatever the cost*.

It’s certainly not an easy path, but *is* a fulfilling path; for finding the truth has its’ own reward.

In the Movement, we’re looking for fish, hungry fish. Fish not satisfied with the status quo; with being fed half-truths from our respective communities. We’re looking for fish wanting to go back to the Source – the Hebraic roots of both faiths: the Jewish *and* the Christian. Fish who are willing to study out the *entire* Word of God, seeking His will, regardless of where it will take us in our journey; just as long as it is God-ward, leading us to His truth! Just as it did with Abraham, Moses and all the other great men and women of God!

Are you that kind of fish – swimming against the stream? If you are, here we are! It’s not an easy walk; but is certainly a fulfilling one!

**Come swim with us...**