



Servants of Reconciliation

Vilnius Statement on the Calling of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua (November 12, 2024)

This statement was written as the fruit of several consultations by Yachad BeYeshua, culminating in a conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, in November 2024. It is informed by the gathered wisdom of these conversations, by the memory of Vilnius's Jewish history, and by the hard challenges within the Jewish world at the moment in which it was written. Yet we believe the invitation we have received into a special calling for Jewish disciples of Yeshua pertains to a wider time and broader place.

Jewish disciples of Jesus have a variety of vocations shaped by person, local setting, and time, as given by the Holy Spirit. But we also hold common commitments and share a common service.

God is gracious and welcoming, a reality the world rejects. Our social location is one in which the rejection of the mutual welcome of Jew and Gentile is felt acutely. This makes us especially attentive to the example and command of our Messiah, who was servant to both Jew and Gentile (Rom 15:7-11). We seek to extend this act of God's *chesed* in our lives of faith, welcoming Jew and Gentile alike. *Serving the reconciling work of Yeshua represents the core of our vocation*, and all the specific aspects of our diverse lives and witness flow from this calling.

1. Israel and the Body of the Messiah

Jewish disciples of Yeshua are called to covenant fidelity (*chesed ve-emet*) to the Jewish people, maintaining a special concern for the land of Israel and the regathering of our people there. This covenant fidelity extends to the body of the Messiah (the Church), a community of Jews and Gentiles united in loving fellowship. Israel and the Church together constitute the people of the living God. Therefore, the healing of the ongoing rupture between the two, and of the divisions among all the followers of Jesus that have flowed from this rupture, stand as the special object of our calling as ambassadors of reconciliation.

2. Witness and Reconciliation

Jewish disciples of Yeshua are called to bear witness to Messiah, the hope of Israel, and to his Good News of the kingdom of God, within the Jewish people, and also among the nations. We are likewise called to bear witness to Israel as God's elect, within the Christian Church and before the world. Our two-fold witness manifests the



bringing together of two separated peoples. It involves the education of Christians about the Jewish nature of our faith, and the combating of antisemitism both in the Church and wider society. We participate in *Tikkun Olam* (the healing of the world) in our witness to Yeshua and Israel through friendship, prayer, education, advocacy, sacrificial service, and peace-making.

3. Tanakh (Torah, Prophets, Writings) and the Apostolic Writings

Jewish disciples of Yeshua are called to express our unbreakable bond with the Hebrew Scriptures. The history of Christians who have neglected, misread, and even denigrated the Hebrew Scriptures has fostered the separation of Israel and Church, Jew and Gentile. These ever-living words are oracles of God entrusted to the Jewish people (Rom 3:1-2) and embodied within their way of life and history. These words, furthermore, are embraced by the Church as a revelation of the Messiah and a proclamation of the Good News, which is incomprehensible apart from Tanakh. In our reading of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, as well as in our practice, we are called to demonstrate their inextricable unity. Witness to this unity is a gift that Jewish disciples of Yeshua offer to Israel and the Church.

4. Suffering and Hope

Jewish disciples of Yeshua are called to join with Jesus's suffering, humiliation, and exaltation as we witness to God's promises of reconciling Jew and Gentile to Him in "one body by the cross" (Eph 2:16). Openly identifying as Jews, we follow him in a unique way. Our place within a history of violently destructive conflict between Jew and Gentile, Israel and Church, has sometimes left us uncertain of our communal home, in a place of loneliness and isolation, and even of contempt. We willingly take on the challenge of following Yeshua within Israel and of following him as a Jew within the one Body of Messiah. We offer our witness as a token of our faith in God's future redemption. We are called to be a sign of the promise that God will repair the rupture between Israel and the nations, restoring Israel to its fullness. Then all people will be gathered in unity to worship God. We long for the day when Israel and the Church love each other with the same love we hold for them both.