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Our Messianic Heritage: Hebrews 12:1-3

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Introduction

In chapter 11 of Hebrews, the author gives us a tour through a “Hall of Heroes,” biographical snapshots of past heroes of the faith. The author focuses on their achievements but also details the character traits that qualify them as heroes. This brief history lesson fits in well with the argument of the Book of Hebrews.

The argument of the Book of Hebrews is that Yeshua is better...better than the angels, Moses, the Levitical priests, the High Priest, etc. He also provides a better rest, a better sacrifice and covenant, a better hope and much more!

How then does this tour through the annals of great Jewish, and a few non-Jewish, faith-heroes fit in to the total argument of the Book?

There is one trait each hero had in common – and that is *faith*. In fact the chapter is as much about faith as it is about the heroes who lived by faith.

The author illustrates the role that faith must have in our lives and relationship with God by recounting the exploits of these great heroes of the faith!

Therefore, the author’s argument in chapter 11 is that *faith* is a better basis for a relationship with God. It is not as if faith was unknown in the Hebrew Scriptures as most of the examples in chapter 11 are taken from the Old Testament.

This begs the question then, “What is faith better than?” Certainly faith is better than no faith, but faith in the author’s reasoning seems to be compared to the religious practices of the day – both biblical and traditional. The author wanted his readers to understand that having faith is a *better* foundation for one’s relationship with God than even fulfilling the obligations of the Torah and the demands of Temple worship, including the priesthood, sacrifice, etc.

The above almost sounds like the writer is dismissing the significance of what was previously written in the Scriptures, but this is not the case. In fact, the writer of Hebrews

is saying the same thing that the Psalmist said in Psalm 40:4-8, where he extolls the virtues of faith and humility, rather than heartless and *faithless* obedience to the revelation from Sinai.

How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders, which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count. Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.

The Psalmist does not discount obedience or lessen the importance of God's revelation in the Torah...he simply declares that without faith keeping the Torah has little value to God. However, *right faith* will always lead to obedience and *right action*.

By saying Yeshua is better, it does not mean that the angels, the patriarchs, Moses, the Levites, etc., are without value. It simply means that Yeshua is better...He is the penultimate revelation of God for the blessing of mankind. And though the Torah is good and the demands of Temple worship were given by God Himself...faith is still the better way to relate to God...it is the spiritual oxygen we breathe that leads to obedience. It is the foundation for our hope.

As the author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 11:1,

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

And again the author more fully defines faith in verse 6,

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

The Hall of Heroes

A deep personal faith caused each of these heroes to demonstrate at least three traits that made them heroes in the eyes of the author of Hebrews and traits I believe are necessary today for building our Messianic movement in Israel and around the globe.

You can see these characteristics in almost all of those mentioned by the writer.

- Courage
- Commitment
- Calling

Our heroic forefathers (and mothers) lived by faith, suffered in faith and gave their lives to what they were able to see through faith that was invisible to others.

Let's take Abraham, for example, as the greatest number of verses in this chapter are focused on Abraham and his descendants: verses 8-22 (with a break for a more general principle in verses 13-16).

Abraham, who was counted as righteous because of his faith was willing to leave all he had – trusting God so completely that he was even willing to offer his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. In this we clearly see the link between faith and obedience. Abraham had the conviction of things not seen, and looked forward to living in a great country and achieving a greater destiny for both himself and his household. According to the author of Hebrews, Abraham also believed that if he killed his son Isaac, through whom God's promises would be mediated, he would rise from the dead.

He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (Hebrews 11:19)

Abraham acted on the basis of his faith as in the argument of the author, faith is only visible through what you do and say, especially when your convictions cost you a great deal!

Let's remember the Apostle James' comments on Abraham's faith,

But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (James 2:20-24)

This was also true of Moses.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...(Hebrews 11:24-25)

One commentator suggests that Moses and our other great heroes made self-sacrificing decisions because of their faith.

Such disgrace (or "reproach") carried with it the promise of infinite reward (eternal life) which made the things he renounced appear paltry

indeed. Such a renunciation is like the choices many Christians make today who choose to be faithful to moral principles, rather than to abandon them for the prospect of advancement or wealth.¹

Denying ourselves, following the Lord rather than seeking the rewards of this world, has caused believers to make decisions that would often lead to denial, suffering and even martyrdom. The author lists many other examples including those of a nameless group in Hebrews 11:35-38 to prove this as well. Is the “author” in all of these highlights the author of Hebrews or Ray Stedman, the “commentator”? If there is a difference, then Stedman should be named.

In summary the author concludes that these heroes of faith won approval from God, not man, and that they have received their rewards in part and are now waiting for us join them!

And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. (Hebrew 11:39-40)

So those who have gone before us into the presence of the Lord are waiting and watching for the fulfillment of God’s plan for humanity – and you and I are part of that plan! We are already linked by a heavenly connection to those who are waiting.

The Cloud of Witnesses

Those who have gone before us are part of this great cloud of witnesses described by the author.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin, which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

The author uses the motif of a race to paint this wonderful picture to encourage us to remain faithful to the Lord ...until the end...to complete our race for His glory. The author tells us to set aside sin and whatever else is not spiritually useful for those running this race for Yeshua. We are told to lighten our load by removing whatever weighs us down and keeps us from running the length of the race.

¹ <http://www.raystedman.org/hebrews2/heb2comm2.html#anchor164136>

The author is concerned with helping the faithful nurture the right motivation for the race so that we finish well. The cloud of witnesses surrounding us is part of what is hoped will motivate us.

Who is this cloud of witnesses? The Greek gives us a few hints. The term “cloud” might refer to a mass of clouds and, if so, this would be consistent with the term translated “so great.” It refers to a large number. The phrase “surrounding us,” however, implies that the crowd is more passive than active in their activities...having left us an example through their lives rather than being engaged in watching and cheering from the heavenly stands!

The well-known Greek term, *martureo*, which means *witness* and became associated in the early church with suffering death and, therefore, martyrdom, might have already had this particular emphasis by the time the Book of Hebrews was written. Certainly many of the examples selected by the author in Hebrews 11 were martyrs, having suffered and died for their faith.

Again, there are at least two views on what the author may have meant by this phrase, *we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us...*

The image of fans watching and rooting for the teams on the playing field... cheering them on is perhaps justifiable from the Greek but might cause us to read a little more into the text than was intended.

These witnesses arrived in the presence of the Lord in various ways; mostly of course, through one or another cause of death: disease, accident, etc., and, in a few instances – especially noted is Enoch, through some type of *instantaneous translation* from this life to the next.

Yet, quite a few arrived in the presence of God as martyrs and chose to pass into His presence sooner rather than later because of their stand for the faith.

And if their more active engagement with us is not clear in this context², we do know that those who have gone before better understood, as through the example of their lives and experiences revealed in the Bible, Jewish history, etc., it is important to know who they are and what they did so that their lives and achievements can encourage us to run the race set before us! That is not to say that they still might be watching and cheering!

Our Examples

² fans who are watching, waiting for us and cheering us on to faithfulness and fruitfulness as we serve the Messiah during our short time on earth

We can study this great text in chapter 11 and learn more about the biblical heroes and others from Jewish history, who ran the race and were victorious in the end. You see, one thing we learn from this cloud of witnesses is that death should not be viewed as failure or defeat, but rather the entry point to an eternity of glory.

There are others, besides those listed in Hebrew 11 who have finished the race and are now in glory. They are Messianic Jewish believers, some of whom were themselves martyrs that are now part of this great cloud of witness – waiting and watching for us to complete our course.

So, who are some of the men and women that Messianic Jews and missionaries to the Jewish people we should admire? Where are the examples of those who followed Yeshua in recent centuries whom we should emulate? Where are our Messianic role models?

Let me introduce you to a few you may or may not know. I believe it is important that we tell the story of their lives so that we have heroes to admire and to then pass their stories on to a new generation of saints who might very well be in the stands, cheering and waiting for us to arrive!

There are so many, but I thought I would choose a few whose example of faithfulness has meant a lot to me. There are so many to choose from but I would like you to be introduced to the legacies of two Messianic Jewish brothers named Feinstein.

Julius Feinstein

Julius Feinstein was a missionary to the Jews with the Mildmay Mission to the Jews in Russia around the turn of the 20th century. Samuel Wilkinson, the son of John Wilkinson, the founder of this Mission (now merged and known as Messianic Testimony in the UK), worked extensively in Russia. He wrote of Feinstein in his book, *In the Land of the North*,

I met Julius Feinstein in Odessa in 1897 and was impressed with him as a simple-minded, true man of God. Both he and his wife were of the household of Israel according to natural birth and of the household of faith in Christ Jesus. He entered into association with the mission laboring in Odessa and in the neighborhood. I covet the spirit in which he prosecuted his work and in which he spoke of it as follows, "I am not an educated man and cannot make an impression on educated Jews either by learning or eloquence so I seek out uneducated Jews and Jewesses and tell them how I came to Jesus and what I found in Him. I read to them in Yiddish out of the Old and New Testament, and pray with them for the coming of the Holy Spirit. I am often asked by poor Jews to visit them and tell their wives and children about the Messiah Jesus . . . I receive more than I am able to give."

Wilkinson wrote of the opposition he received from the Jewish community as he attempted to share the Gospel with them:

As a rule the Jews are very friendly. I was attacked only twice this year. One dark night I was sent forth to a Jewish family. The house was at the other end of the suburb in a Jewish district of not the best class. A sick old Jewess seemed to be in need of comfort. I read to her from the New Testament and pointed to Jesus who refreshes the weary and heavy laden. Midnight was passed and I was about to leave when suddenly several Jews armed with clubs burst into the room and fastened the door behind them. They surrounded me, shouting, cursing and blaspheming and threatened to tear me to pieces if I uttered the name of Jesus again.

I was prepared for the worst and committed my soul to God. "Bosche Israel (apostate) call on thy talui (crucified one) if he will save you!" As a furious old Jew thus crying was rushing to me, there was a loud knock at the door and a loud voice cried in Russian, "Open at once in the name of the law!" There was a mounted policeman with some soldiers who were looking for an escaped criminal in that remote quarter and had been attracted to the house by the noise. The lights were instantly extinguished and the Jews disappeared through the back door. The police officer came in. He found me alone with the members of the family, and I was able to give an account of myself and was escorted home by a soldier.³

Wilkinson provided a touching epitaph to the story. The story of this devoted missionary did not end with his death toward the end of 1898, but would continue through his wife and affect missions to the Jews until the very close of this century! Two of his children started missions to the Jews in the United States, missions that exist until this very day. Wilkinson added the following details:

This dear, simple child of God and true apostle of the cross passed away from heart failure on December 23, 1898 after about two years' work in Russia in connection with the Mildmay Mission to the Jews. His widow, now in London, is an efficient Bible woman amongst the Jewesses . . .and his eldest son gives assistance in office and bookstore work.⁴

These sons of Julius Feinstein eventually came to the United States; Isaac Feinstein became the leader of a Jewish mission in Newark, New Jersey. His brother, Daniel Finestone, began the Presbyterian ministry to the Jewish people in Philadelphia. Julius

³ Samuel Hinds Wilkinson, *In the Land of the North; the Evangelization of the Jews in Russia*. (London: Marshall Bros., 1905), 80.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

Feinstein's widow, Esther, married another missionary to the Jews, Mr. Kendall, whose son, Fred Kendall, became the leader of Israel's Remnant, a Jewish mission in Detroit that eventually merged with Friends of Israel.

Isaac Feinstein in Galatz

The Norwegian Israel Mission (NIM) carried on work in Galatz with an outstation in Reni. The work was under the direction of another Jewish believer in Jesus, Isaac Feinstein, his wife Esther, and two Norwegian deaconesses.

Richard Wurmbrand, who survived the war and served with the NIM, wrote fondly of Feinstein's early years and related some of the details of Feinstein's ministry.

Isaac Feinstein was a business executive of a small firm in Galatz. He heard the gospel at a Christian gathering there. He received Jesus as his Messiah and almost immediately experienced great persecution from his family as his father was an observant Jew. After growing as a Christian he sensed God's call on his life to serve among the Jews of Romania. He went to the London Jews Society Training School in Warsaw and returned to minister under the Norwegian Mission.

This man had an unlimited capacity for work. He published a periodical for adults and one for children, as well as countless Christian pamphlets. He preached all over the country and became an outstanding personality among the disciples of Jesus in Romania. He was ever a pillar of God's temple.⁵

Isaac Feinstein attempted to advance the work of the Gospel even in the midst of growing antisemitism. A report recorded in the minutes of a meeting held by the International Missionary Council Christian Approach to the Jews (IMCCAJ) reported on his ministry in the mid-1930s:

The building up of a monthly missionary paper, Prietenul (The Friend) in Romanian. The editor is Feinstein of Galatz, and has a monthly circulation of over 2,000. Most important is probably the decrease in colportage work coupled with an increase of meetings in the provincial towns, which again involves increased cooperation with local Protestant bodies. Of interest is the rapid decrease in the use of Yiddish in favor of Romanian. The problems to be faced are finding ways and techniques to reach communistic youth, particularly through suitable literature of which currently there is none. And also, approaches must be developed to reach

⁵ Richard Wurmbrand, *Christ on the Jewish Road*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), 30.

*the wealthier, more intellectual classes. Much of that literature, however, would have to be in Romanian.*⁶

Wurmbrand recalled that Isaac Feinstein was a young man, only thirty-seven years old, when the war broke out. He had formed a Hebrew-Christian congregation in Jassy as well but would visit Wurmbrand regularly in Bucharest. Wurmbrand recalled one of his last visits:

The atmosphere in Jassy was infected with anti-Semitism, with the ever-present overhanging threat of a pogrom. Feinstein was on a short visit to Bucharest and was staying in my flat. I suggested that he not return to Jassy, where death lay in wait for him.

“We could send a Romanian brother for your wife and six children and bring them back to Bucharest.”

He answered, “The shepherd’s duty is to die together with his flock. I know they will kill me, but I cannot abandon my brethren. I am returning to Jassy.”

A few days after his return to Jassy, on June 28, 1941, the pogrom broke loose. The number of Jews killed was 11,000. Feinstein was arrested. They took him to police headquarters where he preached to those who were his fellow detainees. He exhorted them to be converted in order that they might prepare to meet their God. Some of those who escaped told the story of how Feinstein turned to a rabbi next to him and said, “It is time for us to sing the Psalms.” Feinstein died in an overcrowded cattle car stuffed with dozens of fellow Jews.

He died while the rabbi was reciting the Psalms aloud, and Feinstein was explaining what they foretold about Jesus. When death came by suffocation, his head was resting on the rabbi’s shoulder. The rabbi himself died a few moments later—a Mosaic Jew and a Christian Jew were the victims of the same hatred).⁷

Wurmbrand’s summary of Feinstein’s martyrdom is expanded by information gleaned from a report by Joseph Hoffman Cohn, leader of the American-based American Board of Missions to the Jews (now Chosen People Ministries). He wrote,

⁶ International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews. Meeting, “Minutes of the International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews,” 1935, 2.

⁷ Wurmbrand, *Christ on the Jewish Road*, 32–33.

Many a time the tears come unbidden to our eyes as we ponder over the tragedies that lie hidden under the clouds of Nazi cruelties. In Galatz they took a beloved brother, Isaac Feinstein, and from what reports we got, they must have tortured him in a way that cannot even be described until his poor wilted body gave up the spirit within and the angels from heaven escorted him into the presence of his Lord whom he served to the point of death.⁸

Cohn continued the story as he had actually visited with Feinstein before the war and tried to persuade him and his family to leave Europe:

It was the summer of 1938. We were walking together on the Buda side of the Danube at Budapest. My companion was Isaac Feinstein, a beloved young Jewish brother who was then stationed at Galatz in Romania, about 200 miles farther east than Budapest, and was carrying on a faithful and brilliant testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ under the support of some Christian brethren in Norway. I coveted this young man and his talents for our work here in the States. Every time I looked into his face I could not help thinking of Nathaniel of old, the Israelite in whom our Lord found no guile. His eyes burned with the explosiveness of impassioned zeal. He had the perfect background for a marvelous ministry to the Jews of New York City. He was young, he was steeped in all the Hebrew lore as on his way he was a master in Israel and could speak to his Jewish compatriots with authority. So I turned to him suddenly and asked him if he would leave Romania, take his wife and six children and come to America and join our staff.

I pointed out to him the imminent dangers developing in Europe and brutal thoughts of Nazism and asked him to ponder and to pray seriously over the question as to whether the Lord would not have him leave these lands of horror and come to America for a greatly enlarged field of service and testimony.

He was overwhelmed for a moment, but soon recovered his poise and told me frankly with affection and emotion how grateful he was for this compliment. But that he felt it would be an act of cowardice to leave his post in the face of threatened dangers. He felt that Nazis or no Nazis, it was his duty to stay at his post. There were so many of his Jewish brethren in Galatz who were depending on him for spiritual comfort and leadership that he would feel all his life the terrible shame of having deserted them in the hour of their need. So we parted, and my last words to him then were that if ever the time came that he found himself compelled to leave

⁸ Joseph H Cohn, "Salutation," *The Chosen People*, American Board of Missions to the Jews, 48, no. 7 (1944): 6.

Romania, he should take the first boat to New York and report to our office.

Cohn continued:

Came the war, one by one the Nazi beasts took captive country after country. And soon Romania fell victim and the Nazis stormed over the land like the lice in Egypt. And to Galatz they came, spreading cruelties and death on every side. They seized this young brother, who had done them no harm but was a faithful servant to the Lord Jesus Christ. They tied him to a stake and then for days they tortured him. His tongue hung out of his mouth in desperate body-torturing thirst, but never was he shown one shred of mercy or decency. Finally he died from sheer torture and exhaustion.⁹

A more detailed account of his martyrdom was printed in *The Chosen People* magazine from the pen and perspective of Esther Feinstein. She captured the terror and horror of the account as no other person could:

About eleven o'clock in the morning, I was upstairs again to fetch something and I heard terrific rattling at the door and loud men's voices. As I quickly ran there I saw my husband encircled by rough types who held pistols in his face and yelled at him. Daddy [she was writing to her children] looked back at me and said to these hangmen, "This is my wife but she is a foreigner."

Those words stunned them and they lowered their guns. One of them said, slightly disturbed, "We are not going to do anything to your husband. He just has to come to the police with us. He will be back soon." I foolishly believed the words at this time.

With brutal kicking, they drove my husband outside and forced him to carry a Norwegian flag high above his head, thinking it was the flag of the Red Army. I kissed my dear husband and wanted to hold him but was pushed aside roughly and out they went with him. He walked calmly with uplifted head and turned around a last time waving good-bye to me. This is the last I saw of him.

One day a nice gentleman came to me and introduced himself as a mathematics teacher, X. He told me that he, together with my husband and several hundred Jews, had been locked in the cellar at the police station on that fatal Sunday. Feinstein had preached with a loud voice and appealed to the hearts and consciences of his fellow prisoners. They

⁹ Ibid.

were not to have illusions about assumed deliverance, but rather should prepare themselves to meet their God. His words made a deep impression and many talked individually to him. In the afternoon German soldiers came down the cellar and wanted to shoot down all Jews. Feinstein stepped in front of them, addressed them in German and pleaded for his comrades. They went out again. All were amazed at the effect his words had. The story was later confirmed to me by others who had also been present.

Toward the end of September 1941, hence three months after the abduction of our father, it was reported in the city that a number of Jews had been freed from concentration camps to be used here in town for cleaning away the rubble of the bombs. The same evening two men reported to me. They had much to tell me. I recognized them as former attendants of our meetings and knew I could believe their words. What they told me left me nearly benumbed with shock.

They related the following: "We were with your husband that very Sunday. In the cellar already he was a help to all. In the evening they led us into the yards of the police station. There were so many of us that we lay on top of each other like sardines. Our tormentors were doubtless hoping we would be hit by bombs. Regardless of the blasting around us we were spared. Alas! During the early morning we were led in long lines to the railway station. It was said that we were to be brought to concentration camps. Feinstein was in the same car as I. We were penned in until we could not catch a breath and no one could move, about 140 men in one cattle car in which there would have normally been room for only forty men. Then doors, windows, all holes and cracks were sealed tightly and steam was introduced from below. It was a horrible holocaust; many went insane in the screaming of the torture. It was harrowing and heartbreaking. From time to time the freight car was left standing for hours in the boiling heat of the sun. Terrifying scenes occurred and those of us who got away from it are haunted daily with the memory.

"Perhaps your husband did not have to suffer long. He soon started to recite Psalms with a loud voice and his face was like that of an angel. He begged the other victims to make their peace with God and to seek salvation through the blood of Christ before it was too late. And some did before it was too late. Then he dropped to the floor and fell asleep never to wake up again. During the night, at a small station in the Muldau, the cars were opened and the bodies fell out. It was supposed that all had been suffocated on this mortal journey. But six of us men who had only been unconscious were injured when our bodies fell out, and recovered consciousness. We were revived with hypodermics and then some nourishment was given to us. Then we were forced to bury our dead comrades in a mass grave. At that occasion, we found our beloved

Feinstein. We dug a special grave for him. Previously to that we searched his pocket to send you if possible, his papers or anything else; but he had nothing left, not even his watch. Everything had been taken from him before. After that we had to do hard labor in a camp with many others and endured a pitiful existence. Many times we regretted that life had been restored back to us. Now we have been brought back into the city. But no good is awaiting us.”¹⁰

Isaac Feinstein’s wife, Esther comments:

After all, we must understand that God’s ways, which seem so inconceivable, and cruel, mean love and mercy in the end. Only eternity will tell how much fruit and blessing have resulted from that tearful sowing.¹¹

It might be asked, “What happened to Feinstein’s congregation of Jewish believers in Jassy?” Unfortunately, according to Wurmbrand, “Not a single man from the Jewish Christian congregation in Jassy survived; all were killed in the pogrom.”¹²

This would have been true of most of the congregations of Jewish believers started by the missions in Eastern Europe. The Messianic Jews were killed along with the rest of their kinsmen.

These are some of the brothers and sisters we will meet in glory – they are part of the great cloud of witnesses!

What can we learn from our Cloud of Messianic Witnesses?

Their example, if followed, will motivate and help us to develop the qualities of character that defined their faith. Again, I see three traits that I want to be true in my life and also within our movement – now and in the future.

These men and women had courage, commitment and a sense of calling that never allowed them to give up – in spite of difficulties and hardship.

Courage:

¹⁰ Joseph H Cohn, “Jewish Notes,” *The Chosen People*, American Board of Missions to the Jews, 53, no. 1 (1947): 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14–16.

¹² Wurmbrand, *Christ on the Jewish Road*, 33.

These witnesses, in Hebrews 11 and amongst our Messianic brothers and sisters, displayed a supernatural ability to face extraordinary hardship without giving up. They kept going in the face of constant opposition. We will face opposition for our faith, for our mission, and for being Jewish! We must never give up until the day we join this august body of forerunners who have left us their example of courage. They are waiting for us – so run the race in order to win, as the writers says,

and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1b-2)

And the writer adds,

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:3)

Commitment:

Our commitment must be directed towards Yeshua Himself and not religion, our ministries, congregations, institutions or theological systems. Our deepest commitment and one for which we are willing to suffer and sacrifice is to a person! As the writer of Hebrews adds:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

This text also begs us to reconsider the question of unity in essentials of the faith and in the work we do as we will all endure the same hardships; therefore, it would be better to endure it together so that we can share in one another's strength and bear one another's weaknesses. (Romans 15:1-7, Galatians 6:2)

Calling:

There are easier ministries to which we can give our lives than Jewish evangelism. I venture to say you did not know this. We can win this race in spite of the opposition, apathy and discouragement we face, because our calling drives us. And because we are called, we keep our eyes on the finish line where we will hear those words from our Messiah,

“Well done, my good and faithful servant...” (Matthew 25:23)

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 15:58 (which is my “life verse”),

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

And again, the Apostle expresses similar sentiments to the church in Galatia,

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. (Galatians 6:9)

We look to Yeshua, who is the author and finisher of the faith and who for the joy set before Him endured all things!

...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:2-3)

Conclusion

One day you and I will join that great cloud of witnesses. We will leave the example of our lives and ministries as a legacy and join saints from previous generation in the cheering section rooting for many of the younger people we see here tonight at this conference.

So, dear friends, and if I could speak to my own generation of Messianic leaders just for a moment, may I ask a question, “What is the legacy you plan to leave behind to this next generation of younger believers and ministers among the Jewish people?”

My prayer for myself is that I might run this long distance race with endurance, *fixing my eyes on Yeshua* who saved me, sustains me, gives me hope and joy, has filled my life with incredible co-workers, friends and family and has given me the greatest gift of all – eternal life.

And I also pray that you and I – my fellow workers in the Lord’s harvest among the Jewish people – will leave an example of courage in the midst of hardship, commitment in the face of discouragement and an unrelenting, convinced sense of personal calling to reach the Jewish people for Yeshua... and to live our lives with passion and joy, just like our beloved Messiah! If there is a perfect role model of courage, commitment and calling for us to emulate it is the Messiah Himself.

As the undisclosed author of the Book of Hebrews writes about Yeshua Himself,

...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:2-3)