

## Endeavoring to Support:

- "The Messianic Times" - Publisher
- Israel Legal Defense
- Jewish/Gentile Fellowship
- International Conferences
- Forum for Debate
- Emigration to Israel
- Dispute Mediation
- International Affiliations
- Monthly Essays
- Theological Papers

### Early Foundations:

Our Alliance was originally established in England in 1925. During the Nazi era, some of our European affiliates were decimated. The remaining groups worked together to fund the escape of many fellow Jews.

This life saving work was officially recognized by Great Britain. Our earliest leaders were honored i.e. Sir Lawrence Levinson was knighted by royal decree and Harcourt Samuel was given the "Order of the British Empire" (OBE).

In 1976, the IMJA, in conjunction with two other founding charities established the Ebenezer Home in Haifa, Israel. This institution continues today and the IMJA annually helps fund its operation. It is home to 30 individuals, without regard to original nationality, race or religion. Food, clothing, medical care and transportation are provided. About a hundred people can be seen at some of its social events and there is always a waiting list to become a resident.

In some way, this is how you have found yourself as a reader of this essay and other writings about the whole Middle East future. Something draws us that doesn't interest others. We may even ask ourselves, "why am I so interested in this? I faced the same question when I first considered Yeshua (Jesus) as my Messiah. I couldn't shake it and slowly, slowly, despite my reluctance, my focus intensified. Finally, I had to admit I felt called to follow Him. That's it! I felt called.

So, it would seem to be the same with our attraction to the Messianic Movement. This is true among many Jews and Gentiles. It may be inconvenient and others may not understand, but we have decided that in this regard to pay no attention to others, but to let this be a private issue, between us and our God.

Viewed in this way, our calling is a one-on-one intimacy with the Lord. This is just how it was when we first accepted the Lord. Like Abraham, He wants us to have that exclusive relationship with Him. That is precisely where He wants us – alone with Him.

In Messiah,

Paul Liberman  
Executive Director

# International Messianic Jewish Alliance

## האגודה הבין לאומית של היהודים המשיחיים

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### ESSAY # 154

## VANITY

Dear Fellow Workers,

We who read the Scriptures have found it a never-ending source of wisdom. It's part of our quest to understand the meaning of our lives.

Some excel in plumbing great depths of understanding. King Solomon was particularly known for this attribute, and it is generally assumed he wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes.

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceedingly much and largeness of heart...And Solomon's wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all...and there came all the people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth..."  
(I Kings 4:29, 30, 34).

Perceptiveness and insight seemed to not only be his talents, but his life long investigation. As he got older, he was able to use his experience to come to several significant conclusions. These are spelled out in the twelve chapters of Solomon's Book, which is sometimes referred to as, "The Preacher."

The key words "vanity" and "under the sun" are each mentioned more than 25 times. In essence, he was saying that of all the things pertaining to the human experience, our vanity is at the core.

The book contains the reflections and experiences of this great philosopher. Like us, he was in conflict over the problems we face in life. On one hand, he speaks of the disillusionment of materialism. He comes to realize that the carnal enjoyments and the pleasures of the flesh do not ultimately satisfy.

## What We Do

Israel Support:

- Home for the elderly
- Humanitarian aid of goods from local warehouses
- Unwed mothers and widows
- Civil Rights Defense for Messianic Jews in Israel
- Jerusalem Headquarters utilized by Ethiopian Jewish Believers

Among the nations:

- Fostering the growth of New Testament Messianic Congregations (now numbering 750, including 120 in Israel).
- Small Ministries—Poor Countries: In many countries fund raising is not a practical possibility, especially for Jewish work. These works are volunteer efforts where even small amounts go a long way. It is our fervent wish to do what we can to facilitate Jews and Gentiles worshipping our Lord together.

Witness:

- Jewish outreach and evangelism
- New Testament Jewish roots
- Jews & Gentiles in joint worship

## National Alliances

- Argentina
- Australia
- Brazil
- Canada
- Colombia
- France
- Germany
- Great Britain
- Holland
- Israel
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Russia
- South Africa
- Switzerland
- Ukraine
- United States
- Uruguay

In the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, Solomon sounds weary. In verses 1 – 11, he makes even successful experiences in life sound monotonous.

verse 2: vanity of vanities; all is vanity

verse 4: one generation and then another, but nature doesn't change

verse 9: there is nothing new under the sun

In today's parlance, he might flippantly say, "here today, gone tomorrow, so what's the difference?" "Mirth," an archaic term, connotes having a party, but in chapter 2, verses 1 - 3, Solomon finds fleeting gratification to be without meaning.

When we see someone fascinated by their own image in a mirror, we describe them as "vain." Such a person might be saying, "will you look at me, aren't I something?" Solomon interprets gathering wealth, fame, and status as an extension of the same thing.

"Will the world please notice how good I am at art, business, sports, etc.?" We seem to be always driven to impress ourselves and others with our proficiency and accomplishments. Yes, the wise man is superior to the fool. But even in this, we quietly note how much smarter we are than the next guy.

By chapter 3, the natural man's view of life observes there is a season for all things, but so what? In chapter 4, Solomon observes that solving of social evils apart from faith is a delusion. Rightly so, he explains there is something intrinsically good about people helping one another.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow... If two be together, then they have heat, but how can one warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a three fold cord is not easily broken." (Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12).

So in his opinion helping one another makes life meaningful. He praises this, even in the midst of his despairing thoughts.

Even religious duties can be a form of vanity, as seen in chapter 5. Unconscious thoughts might be: My, what a good boy am I! Am I incredible! Wasn't that a great teaching I gave?

Please admire me for my dedication to our congregation/ denomination/ sect, etc. Surely everyone will notice my great singing voice, organizational ability, etc. I am surely deserving to be admired. There's a mirror, in the view of others, and another opportunity to look at our greatness.

All of this might seem somewhat severe, because it pokes a hole in all we are seeking to achieve. Yet, when we are returned to dust, what will all of it mean? (Genesis 3:19).

In John 11, we are reminded that even issues such as when we're born, when we die and when we will be resurrected are out of our control. These are of primary importance and even so, we cannot determine them (Ecclesiastes 8:8).

Solomon continues with many wise observations about injustices, the wicked and the deprivation of wisdom. By this time, we may have come to see Solomon as a depressed person in need of pharmaceutical medication.

However, in his last chapter, Solomon reaches a decision concerning the highest and most profitable activity, emerging from his observations and doubts with this noble conclusion:

*"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."* (Ecclesiastes Chapter 12:13).

If the Scriptural reference above is done in purity, there is not one blemish of our own vanity in its performance. It is not oriented towards ourselves, but only in magnifying and glorifying our Creator.

The name of this book was borrowed from the Septuagint. In the Hebrew source, it was called "Koheleth." This is usually interpreted as the "preacher" and Solomon has just given us a preaching. It's far reaching and takes an overview of life.

After a really good message, we sometimes want to express appreciation and perhaps ask a question, when congregational services have ended. Some might ask, "how can I know my specific area of work for my Lord?"

Being Jewish, Solomon might answer this question with another question, e.g., "what area have you found of compelling interest?" For me, and for many of you, Jewish evangelism, Israel regathering and the like seem so central to the Biblical story line.

## Foreign Translations

The Fig Tree Blossoms is a primary book about our Movement translated into Hebrew, Russian and now Spanish. It is a 30 year old classic and explains why accepting a Jewish Messiah, foretold by Jewish Prophets in a Jewish Land is a very Jewish thing to do. Distributions of the Holy Scriptures are available in 17 languages:

- Yiddish
- English
- Armenian
- Bulgarian
- German
- Greek
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Russian
- Spanish
- Swedish
- Hebrew
- Ukranian

