

TIKVAT YISRAEL POLICY ON DECLARATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

PURPOSE: The question of “who is a Jew” has baffled the world for over a millennium. Judaism, unlike any other religion, is not simply just a “religion”; as there are countless Jews who are “secular” and practice no religion yet are still identified as “Jewish”. Furthermore, being Jewish transcends nationhood and political boundaries as there are Jews from every nation on the earth, and every political persuasion, and not all are “Israeli citizens”. Additionally, the official language of Israel and the Jewish religion is “Hebrew”, yet not all Jews speak this language either! Judaism is not limited to a religion, a nationality or a tongue. However, at the same time Judaism does encompass all of these, as this people group has its own religion, it has an official State recognized by the United Nations, with Sovereign borders, and Hebrew as its own native language. Unlike Christianity, there is no official language of all Christians. Therefore, claiming Jewish identity is often a difficult matter to navigate considering all these factors. The purpose of this policy is to give guidance and outline exactly how and why Tikvat Yisrael Messianic Synagogue, it’s Board of Elders and Officers, recognizes a person as a Jew within our community and within our Messianic Jewish Movement. **NOTE:** It is not necessary that a person be “Jewish” in order to be a full member of the synagogue with equal membership benefits, privileges and responsibilities. Non-Jews are welcome to participate and join the congregation without the need for conversion. What then is the need for such a policy on Jewish identity?

NEED: Why is there a need for such a “policy”? Especially, in our “post-modern” world of shifting social values and self-referentiality, epistemological and moral relativism, pluralism, and irreverence towards traditional and Biblical values; among which include universalist notions of subjective reality, subjective morality, subjective truth, reliance on human nature, subjective reasoning, politically correct language, and social progressiveness towards a more secular agenda – our faith-based community has witnessed a need to define, again, “who and what is a Jew”.

Based on these conditions of our current society previously mentioned, there is a recognizable trend that has developed into a societal crisis of identity. In other words, we recognize that people in our society are suffering from a massive and acute case of identity crisis on a national scale. In the two + centuries since the founding of our country, mass-immigration and assimilation, historical African-slavery, as well as advancements in technology, science and medicine has afforded the opportunity for a whole new industry to explode onto the scene here in the U.S. DNA technology and Genealogy have created an opportunity for generations of people in this country who had up until recently, lost their connection of their social and national ancestry; to now discover those once long-lost connections and “REDEFINE” themselves, and even perhaps change their own identities. This trend also surpasses the limits of ancestral identity and has also crossed into areas of sexual and emotional identity. This explains why and how there are now increasing numbers of Americans who are questioning their own sexual identities and even changing

TIKVAT YISRAEL POLICY ON DECLARATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

them with new access to medical technologies for sex change operations. Ever since Rachel Dolezal fraudulently portrayed herself as “African-American” and as a result was elected president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter in Spokane, Washington from 2014 until June 2015, only later have to resign in disgrace once it was discovered that she was neither African, nor Black; to the most recent example of Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren’s fraudulent application to Harvard Law School claiming to be “Native American” in order to gain Affirmative Action and Government benefits for minorities; we have seen an increasingly shocking number of people enter our Messianic Jewish movement claiming “Jewish” identity without credible evidence as such. While the “NEED” for a definition of Jewish Identity is valid now more than ever; **it has NEVER been a need for a person to be “Jewish” in order to be recognized as a full member of equal status within and among Messianic Jews and our Messianic Synagogues.** Messianic Judaism neither requires nor permits religious “conversions” (1 Corinthians 7:10-24). Intermarriage between believing Jews and believing non-Jews who have all been “Born-Again” is completely and 100% accepted Biblically and practically within our communities. Therefore, there is no need for a non-Jew to become a Jew; and as a result, there is no need or excuse for a person to falsely claim “Jewish” identity for any reason. Unfortunately, however this is happening at an alarming rate.

SCOPE: The policy below is largely based on the work of a Messianic Jewish organization known as the Aliyah Action Council, in Poriya Illit, Israel. This organization is committed to helping and assisting Messianic Jews make successful Aliyah. Therefore, the qualifications included in this proposed policy are the same as what the Aliyah Action Council has published that are requirements of the State of Israel’s Law of Return.

Therefore, if an individual participating within the community of Tikvat Yisrael Messianic Synagogue, claims “Jewish Identity” or desires to join the congregation as a member and states that they are Jewish and/or simply wants to be recognized as a “Jew” for whatever reason; the following policy must establish:

1. JEWISH IDENTITY is defined as: **A.** The child of a Jew, or the grandchild of a Jew. “An individual who must have AT LEAST one Jewish grandparent – one of the 4 on either side of the family.”
2. QUALIFICATIONS: Proof must be one or more of the following:
 - Israeli Passport or Israeli State issued ID Card
 - Birth Certificate that states the person is Jewish
 - “Traditional” “Brit” (circumcision) certificate if a male
 - “Traditional” Bar Mitzvah Certificate if male; Bat Mitzvah Certificate for a female.
 - “Traditional” Ketubah from a Jewish wedding;

TIKVAT YISRAEL POLICY ON DECLARATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

- Certificate of burial in a Jewish cemetery, or picture of a Jewish grave marker with name.
 - VERY IMPORTANT: In addition to the above, you must also have an original letter from a Rabbi on synagogue stationary. The letter must include contact information, Rabbi's signature, Rabbi's name and title, the applicant's full name and that of the Jewish parent or grandparent. The letter must state that the Rabbi knows the applicant or has records showing that the applicant or one of the parents or grandparents is Jewish.
3. ALTERNATE MESSIANIC JEWISH DOCUMENTATION
- If an applicant cannot provide any of the above "traditional documentation", Tikvat's Board of Elders may accept the following:
 - An original letter from an **ORDAINED MESSIANIC Rabbi** by one of the following reputable Messianic Jewish Ordaining organizations: (IAMCS or UMJC¹) on synagogue stationary. The letter from the Messianic Rabbi must be fully Ordained by the organizations mentioned above; and include contact information of the congregation, the Messianic Rabbi's signature, the Messianic Rabbi's name and title, the applicant's full name and that of the Jewish parent or grandparent. *The letter must state that the Messianic Rabbi knows the applicant or has records showing that the applicant or one of the parents or grandparents is Jewish by the definition set forth above.*
 - The letter may also be accompanied by "Messianic" certificates of lifecycle events (*if available and applicable*) such as Messianic Brit, Messianic Bar/Bat mitzvah, Messianic wedding ketubah, etc. NOTE: these certificates have likely also been issued to non-Jewish individual members of Messianic Synagogues – THEREFORE, THE CERTIFICATES ALONE ARE NOT VALID FOR ESTABLISHING JEWISH IDENTITY – WITHOUT THE ACCOMPANYING LETTER FROM AN ORDAINED MESSIANIC JEWISH RABBI.
4. CREDIBLE TESTIMONY: In the absence of certificates of lifecycle events, the IAMCS will receive personal testimonials of third party references to an applicant's family, who can certify Jewish parentage or grand-parentage. In addition to third-party testimony, a personal testimony will be required through personal interviews with the Board of Elders of Tikvat Yisrael Messianic Synagogue.
5. WHAT WE DO NOT ACCEPT: Letters of Conversion from a traditional rabbi or Jewish institution, that are dated and generated for the purpose of establishing Jewish identity on Tikvat Membership applications are also NOT ACCEPTABLE. Also, The Board of Elders of Tikvat Yisrael does not recognize "Messianic Jewish

¹ The IAMCS does not recognize "Messianic Jewish Conversions" nor the practices of "Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council" which is loosely affiliated with the UMJC see <http://ourrabbis.org/main/>

TIKVAT YISRAEL POLICY ON DECLARATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

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6. RECENT DISCOVERIES: Another area that has been problematic are cases where an individual who has self-identified as a non-Jewish Messianic believer within our movement for many years; discovers that in fact they have at least one Jewish grandparent in accordance with our qualification for Jewish identity defined herein. In a case such as this an applicant will provide the newly discovered qualifying documentation as outlined above along with the letter from either the traditional rabbi and/or Messianic rabbi, attesting to the validity and authenticity of the newly discovered documentation. The documentation must be of the following:
 - Birth Certificate that states the person is Jewish
 - “Traditional” “Brit” (circumcision) certificate if a male
 - “Traditional” Bar Mitzvah Certificate if male; Bat Mitzvah Certificate for a female.
 - “Traditional” Ketubah from a Jewish wedding;
 - Certificate of burial in a Jewish cemetery, or picture of a Jewish grave marker with name.