



# ICDF Networks

## November 2018

### Messianic Dance



*Dancing at Beit She'an; photo supplied by Ralph Seta*

On hearing the words “Messianic Dance” one cannot but help think of a dance performed in a circle. It is interesting to know that in Exodus 5:1 the Hebrew word Châgag appears with the meaning “to move in a circle, to march in a sacred procession, to observe a festival” (Strong’s 2287). It reads, “Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast for Me in the wilderness” (AB). In this verse the Hebrew word for feast is Châgag. From this text, and from other historical sources, we know that circle dances have been part of the human culture and worship for millennia, and there is a sense of enjoyment and community for those who participate in them. So for this newsletter we are going to let our hair down, get into a circle and start practising our grapevine!

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## To Dance Like David Danced

Let's begin with the first Biblical mention of a man dancing before the LORD. This is in 2 Samuel 6:14 '... and David wearing a linen ephod danced before the LORD with all his might.'

As a young believer 45 years ago, I remember hearing about David dancing naked and thought that was a bit weird! I was beginning to develop Biblical morals and getting an understanding about what G-d expects from His followers. I'd started reading the Bible from Genesis as I toured Italy as a dancer and I became aware for the first time that this Book was a history of my own people! I'd had no idea! It was very clear that there are things you can and cannot do (Leviticus was an eye opener) and it just didn't sit right with me that a king... A KING... would dance naked before G-d and his own people?

I have been blessed with a bit of a black and white nature. I love facts and details and have a thousand questions about everything, constantly ... I can't take 'wishy washy' issues! It wasn't until I got involved in a dance ministry 12 years later that I thought I should look into the David thing.

It got more serious after returning to the UK when I was told by a man, 'I'd love to dance before the LORD but since it caused David to dance naked I just cannot.' I knew that scripture said David was wearing a linen Ephod, so why was it preventing this potential male dance worshipper from obeying the command to dance in worship?

I checked my Thomson's Chain Reference Bible and found in Exodus 28 a full description of the Robes of a priest including the Ephod. Exodus 28:2 says that they were 'set apart' - Holy, Kadosh. They were in fact a unit and could not be worn apart. It would be sacrilege to take one part away from the rest. I believe I saw that in a Tenakh (Jewish Bible) in a Devon Synagogue.

So many people in churches had heard (including my daughter at a recent dance workshop) that David danced naked, but It doesn't occur to some to check out this obvious contradiction of the Bible. Verse 20 of that chapter has Michal, David's wife, referring to him exposing himself. There are more ways than one of doing that. She was watching her husband from an upper window dancing in the robes of a priest in the procession (see Psalm 68) and felt he was demeaning himself. Here was a King undermining his status by wearing the robes of a priest. Michal was second- generation royalty and well aware that before Samuel's anointing, her husband had been a lowly, even despised, Shepherd.

I believe it was David's status she was referring to since according to 2 Samuel 6:14 he was dancing fully robed as a priest ministering before the ark as it entered Jerusalem. In her heart he was exposing his lowly status and embarrassing her. This misunderstanding was encouraged by Hollywood in the film 'David' in which Richard Gere was leaping about wildly wearing a cloth on his hips and many have taken this for fact!



*Community Church of Barrington:  
David Dancing*

G-d hates pride! Michal's pride in this situation was so offensive to G-d that he caused her to be barren for the rest of her life. In those days it would have been a double curse because every woman would have wanted to be the mother of the promised Messiah.

At a Paul Wilbur event in London a few years ago our introduction from a Pastor was 'THE BIBLE SAYS, David's skirt fell off when he was dancing... But here are the dancers' (I can remember how many of us gasped!) Thankfully I was able to tactfully discuss that with him later and he was humble enough to listen and see that the Bible did not say that.

If something in the Bible looks contradictory, look into it don't just believe everything you hear even from leaders if it doesn't sound right. It could cause you to miss out on something that could be a great blessing to you and others!

## Messianic Men's Dance

Men's dance, like so many other things, is cultural. For example, folk dancing in Israel is a part of the identity of the people. From its re-inception seventy years ago, and after having been scattered abroad in the "galut" exile (or dispersion/diaspora), the Jewish people returning to their land brought with them the cultures from where they had been. This even translated down to the steps that were being used in Israeli folk dancing. Dancing has been so engrained in the psyche of the people and culture of Israel - coming from Biblical times: "Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! Let them praise His Name with dancing..." (Psalm 149:2-3a).



*Dancing on the walls of Jerusalem; photo supplied by Ralph Seta*

Israeli dancing around the world has become so secularized that we, as a family, only enjoy dances which speak of the Bible, the God of Israel, the land, or its people. Mindy and I enjoyed the Israeli dance camps we attended, and desired to bring those aspects of community, joy, and worship to the Messianic community through Messianic dance. Being raised in an Italian home with an older cousin who loved dancing and taught me and my siblings, I have been dancing since a young age. Before becoming a believer in 1984, my sister and I would even enter dance competitions. Once becoming a believer, I did not see how dance could ever fit in to my new lifestyle.

Coming into the Messianic movement on November 22nd, 1988, I remember the dance leader of the congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio, trying to encourage me to dance. I didn't understand the difference between the dance that I'd been used to before entering this movement, and the dance as worship with our King. It took me six months to break-down and appease the dance leader by dancing with the team, and another six months before being able to appropriate this medium as worship for myself. However, for thirty years, this dance has been the preferred form of worship for me.

Now, for the last fifteen years of being in full-time ministry, we have been attempting to raise the standard of excellence within the Messianic community and we have been an example of what is our acceptable form of worship - which is to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1). I've noticed how, mainly, the women here in the United States have been the ones carrying the torch of dance. Whereas in Israel, it is the men who choreograph and teach most of the dance. I believe this came from Temple worship, where the priests would serve in different capacities, having dance as a part of the worship experience. I've noticed how folk dancing, in many cultures, has incorporated aspects of battle movements through the dance. Men are secure and sure of their position as men in dance in many of these cultures.

One of my short-term goals is to bring this Israeli form of dance to the men on a greater scale. I believe that the freedoms that come with this expression will lead to other liberating sounds, and the revival which I believe is wrapped-up in the Heart of God. Currently, my family and I are planning our winter tour throughout the United States. We are also planning another tour of dancing through Israel over the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost/Weeks) and meeting with the Jewish believers. Hope you will be able to join us!

Much love in Messiah Yeshua,

*Ralph Seta* - (Joint Network Coordinator)

## The role of men in the Hebraic styled dance

Men in dance worship is particularly important in Hebraic styled dance. I have been involved in this style for 33 years now since I joined The Dancers of the New Jerusalem (DNJ) in New York with a Jews for Jesus (J4J) group. I had left the UK at the age of 17 but after travelling as a professional dancer, marriage and living in the USA, we moved to London. I was thrilled that I had experienced 4 years with DNJ often travelling with the J4J music group, Liberated Wailing.

It was not even on my mind to dance again but the Great Theatrical Agent in the Sky had plans for me! Within a year I was rehearsing the dances that I had done with DNJ with a new friend, Helen Delap, who was also a Jewish Believer. After a dance booking at a London Messianic Fellowship (arranged by another new friend, Helen Shapiro) we had more dancers and bookings and I changed the name to the easier New Jerusalem Dancers. Within a couple of years our husbands decided that rather than being separated from us while we travelled to dance, they should join the group! We had been praying for men to join but had not thought it would be our own families.

What a difference it made to have men dancing! I had choreographed a lively Chasidic Men's Dance, and made costumes with typical Tzitzits and black jackets and Tallit Katan (the small items worn by the men in Fiddler on the Roof). During our tour of Holland arranged by a large messianic fellowship, we had the Rabbi and several other men join ours during that dance. We couldn't believe it when the audience stood and cheered and rejoiced during the dance! It was definitely the most popular one in our two hour concerts.

Because of that I also choreographed a Yemenite Men's dance which had the same effect! What is it about men dancing and praising G-d? My favourite memory of my 2 visits to teach in Israel was the night I went to the Kottel 'Western Wall' at Simcha Torah (rejoice over Torah) two days after the Feast of Tabernacles. I was teaching at a different conference there. The men's side was completely full of many circles of men in different cultural attire, led by a dancing Rabbi with a Torah scroll on his shoulder, joyfully thanking G-d for His Word!



Photo: Provided by Vera Chierico

In fact, in the observant Jewish community, the command to dance is so strong that it does not depend on personal circumstances. I have heard this is true from witnesses, that some men in Auschwitz danced at this feast with rocks on their shoulders because they had no access to the Torah scrolls.

Yes, the women's side at the Kottel was also pretty full of dance circles, but there was something so special about seeing hundreds of men dancing for joy and obeying the command to Praise His Name with dancing! They were all singing their own praise songs too, which made it even more powerful.

I try to include our Chasidic Men's Dance in most of our dance events and recently we women (with the men's approval) have encouraged the men in the audience to join them after a few opening bars and simply copy their movements.

The Chasidic founder, Israel Ben Eliezer, in the late 1700's suggested that followers do not need a Synagogue to praise Him in Dance, and they frequently broke out in 'Religious Rapture'. Even today when I visit the Jewish Ghetto in Venice (which was more or less taken over by Lubavitch 25 yrs ago) I see the young men break into a circle dance, singing Psalms or praise songs as they receive other young men either visiting or leaving the ghetto. I've been to Venice and the ghetto 34 times where dance and shofar blowing is a normal part of their day.

## The role of men in the Hebraic styled dance ... continued

Photo: Provided by Vera Chierico



Actually it always surprises me how quickly the men respond to the invitation to join our men. We have one very enthusiastic 12 year old in NJD at the moment with his parents who are Pastors, so boys are encouraged to dance too when they see him. At a recent Succoth celebration in Manchester there was a young man in a wheelchair with very limited movement. His chair was brought into the circle and he was given a tambourine, he couldn't do much with it but his joy was very evident. The same thing happened at a UK Messianic Conference when our daughter wheeled a man we had met in Holland into the centre. He was fit enough to hold and wave a flag. Which brings me to my next subject . . .

## Disability and Messianic Dance

Photo: Provided by Vera Chierico



ABOUT 15 years ago we were giving a two-hour concert at our British Messianic Jewish Alliance (ex Hebrew Christian Alliance which is about 175 years old!) I met a young girl I had known from teaching at a CDFB event who was surprisingly in a wheelchair. Her family had attended because we were there and she loved to dance for the LORD.

She was heartbroken that her condition meant she could no longer dance but I asked her mother if she could bring her to our NJD rehearsals once a month in London ... a 4-5 hour journey from the north. She agreed and for the next few years we gained two new dancers, since her mother was also

keen! Together we created upper body movement for her to use. Eventually she was on crutches, so we worked hard to involve her in the dances with those too.

When she recovered, her Fiancé (also disabled, having to wear a shoe lift to equalise his leg length) also joined NJD and they danced together at their wedding in our Chasidic wedding dance as Bride and Groom! She has produced a paper of 'upper body worship movements' for messianic dance.

As mentioned above, our husbands had joined the group and danced with joy and vigour. Over the years as an injury set in, our Paul has found it painful to even walk! Messed up knee procedures actually made it more painful (they accidentally 'nicked' the vein and being on blood thinners he haemorrhaged three times). A cycling accident which broke the neck of the femur and clavicle, and no ligament in the left ankle, has left his leg several centimetres shorter!

He still 'dances' with NJD, although I have had to find creative ways to choreograph around him. In the past in our Chasidic Men's dance he had used a walking stick or crutch, just to show that you don't have to be 'ultra-fit' to use dance as worship to the LORD!!



Photo: Accessible to all ages, a young boy of 2 years dancing with his mother in Australia. Photo published with permission of his parents.

*Vera Chierico* - (Joint Network Coordinator)

## Dancing in Israel

Often people will wonder why Christians would bother to go to all the trouble to travel to Israel to Dance. Chanah Rose explains: ***“We dance in Israel for more reasons than just to dance. Not only are we worshipping Yeshua, but when we start dancing, Israelis want to join in because it is a part of their culture - it is in their blood! Not only do they join in, but, when we have translators with us, we can start conversations about why we are dancing and about who Yeshua is.”***



Photos: Provided by Chanah Rose

### My First and Third Trips to Israel

The picture shown on the left is from my first trip to Israel when I was seven years old. That little girl in the purple shirt who is waving the flag on the Sea of Galilee was probably thinking, “Wow, Yeshua walked on this water a really long time ago.” That little girl is me, and even though that trip was nearly ten years ago, I know that the land inherited me and that Israel is my home. Imagine being in Israel and going to the same places that Yeshua went when he was here on earth. This, in and of itself, was mind blowing to me. My most vivid memories as a little girl are of being in Israel. I remember going to the Western Wall and putting my prayers and drawings in the wall, walking away from the wall backwards so that we would not turn our backs to the wall; I remember being baptized in the Jordan river, with the little fishes tickling my feet; and I remember dancing at every hotel with different Israeli believers every night of the tour.

You may be wondering why I am skipping right over my second trip to Israel. To be quite honest with you, I barely remember my second trip to Israel that we took in 2016. So, I have decided to talk about the two trips that my dad was able to come with us on, which are the two most vivid trips in my mind. The third trip that I took to Israel was my favorite trip, and this is because we got to spend a longer time in Jerusalem. The first night that we arrived to Israel, I was worried that I wouldn't be able to sleep the whole night because of the time change. However, right outside our third floor window was a loud crazy street, and, funny enough, I found this to be incredibly soothing! Hearing people speak Hebrew all through the night and feeling the Jerusalem air through the window was one of my favorite things about the tour! We got to live in Jerusalem for a few days, going to the “shuk,” the open-air market, walking to Jaffa Gate, walking to a Messianic synagogue on Shabbat, visiting old friends who we hadn't heard from in seven years who had moved to Israel, etc. All of this was so surreal to me, and it really felt like I was home. During our tour, we also got to meet with Holocaust survivors, have dinner with them, and spend time with them, even though we could not understand a word they were saying! We found ways to connect with them through hand gestures, emotions, and technology of course :)

*Chanah Rose*

## Hineh Yeshua Congregation

*When a congregation has a name such as this one can expect dance to be part and parcel of their gatherings. This is what the leaders have to say ...*



*Dancing during worship at the Hineh Yeshua Congregation.*

We have Messianic dance in our congregation as a part of the fabric of the culture of our community. Not only is dance a part of Jewish culture, but it is a part of Biblical culture. Most of the time we actually call Messianic dance, Davidic Dance, because we know from the Scriptures that David danced in worship before the Lord. This leads into the next point: we have men participate in the dance. Our western culture often looks down upon men dancing, and depicts dance as a woman's expression of worship. David, however, shows that a man can be both a warrior, and a dancer. I lead other men to dance, by giving an example for them to follow.

*Robert Miles - (Pastor)*

Messianic Dance enables us to worship God with all our might. There is a sense of community and unity when moving together. Messianic Dance enables people to move freely as one community, instead of the individualistic, concert style where people are stuck behind a chair and are only able to bob or sway.

*Eleanor Miles - (Dance Leader)*

## Surprised by God's Faithfulness!

In 1981, at the age of 24, I was volunteering on Kibbutz in Israel and discovered that I was really good at Israeli circle dance. I had coordination and I remembered the steps easily. This was a surprise to me as I never did any form of dance before.

In 1984 I discovered that Israeli dance steps were being used to worship God in congregations of Jewish and Gentile believers. As God began to restore the Jewish people to himself, He was also restoring an ancient form of worship through dance. In 1985 I went to a conference in the USA to learn about this and began teaching Messianic Dance in a Messianic Congregation in Sydney and in workshops. It was a surprise to me that people said I was easy to follow and that I am a good dance teacher.



*Photo Cathy leading dance in worship at Brit Chadashah Congregation Sydney, Australia*

When I am involved in Messianic dance ministry I feel that I am using the special gift that God gave me and that I am in the centre of His will for me. There are other things I am good at and have used for service but I don't get that same sense of purpose and connection with God.

I recognise that God hasn't given this ministry to many people and I feel blessed and obligated. However, there have been periods of my life when I haven't invested in it. In fact I almost stopped sharing Messianic Dance for a number of years except at festival events, because organising workshops etc. takes a lot of emotional energy. Consequently I saw others struggling to do what I wasn't doing. I wondered if God would take away this giftedness because of my disobedience.

Yet God is faithful. He hasn't taken it away. Of late He has called me into a Messianic Fellowship and there they have trusted me and given me the opportunity to serve Him as a leader in the dance worship ministry. I am surprised that I have another chance to do something special for God. Please pray that I can be faithful to let Him use me here.

*Cathy Wright*

# Survey: What is YOUR definition of Messianic Dance

## **Peter Hothersall**

Dance of Jewish origin used to celebrate and express our worship of Jesus Yeshua.

## **Andy Raine**

I'd expect dance with Jewish music and/or themes and/or steps that is sensitive to where ordinary Jewish people would be coming from in beliefs and culture, but might reference an understanding of Yeshua of Nazareth as Messiah - or might not! but that's a fairly wide brief.

## **Brian Millar**

To me Messianic Dance would get its name from the modern Messianic (Christian) Jewish movement, and dances associated with them, most I imagine coming from old Jewish traditions.

## **Karen Kerr**

To me, Messianic Dance has in mind the inclusion of Judaic culture, music and language woven into the moves of Worship to the Messiah Yeshua.

## **Serena Reddy-Melo**

Messianic Dance, also known as the Israeli or Davidic Dance, is a wonderful way for a community to dance together. It's all about the Jews and the Gentiles worshiping together for God's glory whilst strengthening bonds of fellowship with the Body of Christ. The Joy of the Lord is our strength and the Israeli dance cultivates an atmosphere for the Ruach Ha Kodesh, Holy Spirit, to pour forth HIS joy in us. This type of dance is not dependant on skill but merely hearts that want to express their love for the Lord in this form of worship.

## **Heather Gilfillan**

Is not all Christian dance Messianic?

## **Wikipedia**

A distinctive style of worship dance has developed within Messianic Judaism. Known as messianic dance or davidic dance (named after King David, who famously danced before the Ark of the Covenant), it takes a similar form to Israeli Folk Dancing.

When the  
Spirit of the Lord  
comes upon my heart  
I will dance like David danced



*James Tissot - David Dances Before The Ark*