



*Legal Challenges*  
*for Believers in Israel*

# MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 63/ 2010*



# **MISHKAN**

**A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People**

ISSUE 63 / 2010

**Editor: Jim R. Sibley**

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**Mishkan** is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, Pasche Institute of Jewish Studies, or Criswell College.

**Mishkan** is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

## A Note from Your New Editor

By **Jim R. Sibley**



Among Evangelicals, there are two common, though opposite, misconceptions about freedom of religion in Israel. On the one hand, many assume that all evangelism is against the law in Israel; on the other hand, some assume that freedom of religion is unfettered in Israel. The truth, however, lies between the two.

Imagine my surprise several years ago when an Orthodox Jewish rabbi opined that only in a country with a distinctively Christian (and I believe he meant, Protestant or Evangelical) culture, can true religious liberty flourish. None of the other world religions possesses the theological foundation for religious liberty and neither does secularism. In fact, a Hassidic rebbe in America loudly insisted that "America's safety belt is the Bible belt!"

Doubtless, Jewish and Israeli leaders would disagree, arguing that the liberties of other religions must be curbed in order to preserve the "Jewish character" of the State of Israel. In this issue, two of the lawyers on the front lines of this debate take up the theme and add depth to our understanding of the legal challenges that face Jewish believers in Yeshua.

Also in this issue, Rudolph Gonzalez brings us part two of his fascinating article on the missionary commission of Matthew's Gospel. And with this issue, Seth Postell and David Allen are introduced to our readers. Postell has just completed his Ph.D. in Tanakh and contributes a stimulating article that should prove invaluable in Jewish apologetics. Allen, although a New Testament scholar, writes from a very similar perspective. He has written two books to be released this summer: a major commentary on Hebrews and a monograph on the authorship of Hebrews. His thesis is bold and provocative but also very persuasive.

Every article should inform, edify, stimulate, and, finally, motivate you, our readers, to pray "for Zion's sake."



# The Law of Return and Its Application to Messianic Jews

- *Discrimination within the Family*

by **Marvin S. Kramer**

"Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together, to which the tribes go up to give thanks to the Name of the Lord." (Ps 122:3–4)

Israel has faced much international condemnation in recent years, as anti-Israel attitudes equate Zionism with racism. Unfortunately, such people usually fail and/or refuse to acknowledge that God, Himself, is a Zionist.

Zionist ideology is based on the premise that the Jewish people need to be re-gathered in their own free state. In recognition of this underlying premise, Israel's Declaration of Independence proclaims, among other things, that "The State of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews and for the ingathering of exiles from all countries of their dispersion."

After becoming a sovereign state in 1948, Israel enacted laws to meet its needs as a Jewish, democratic country. One of them is the Law of Return (Hebrew, *Hok ha-Shvut*), enacted in 1950, which gave expression to the above-mentioned Zionist ideology within the framework of Israeli law. It was also a practical law, serving to encourage Jewish immigration to Israel after World War II and offering Jews a place of refuge from anti-Semitism. Today, the law grants to Jews, descendants of Jews, and their spouses the right to immigrate to, and settle in, Israel and receive Israeli citizenship. Two years later, the Knesset enacted the Nationality Law, which supplemented the Law of Return in dealing with matters of immigration.

*Aliyah* (literally, "ascent" or "going up," as to Jerusalem) is the term used to describe immigrating to Israel under the Law of Return. Understandably, the very nature and underlying purpose of this law has generated opposition and controversy. Some argue that by giving national backing to one religious (or ethnic) group over others, this law violates democratic principles. However, this argument seeks to force Israel to negate the Zionist basis for its establishment as a state. There is no contradiction between being a Jewish *and* a democratic state. Both are necessary and both are possible.

The above is not the only controversy generated by the Law of Return. Of necessity, the question “Who is a Jew?” arises both within the context of this law and in relation to other matters that are particularly Israeli. This is especially relevant when dealing with immigration to Israel by Messianic Jews—Jews who believe that Yeshua is the Messiah promised, given, and expected to return.

What follows is a review of various cases that were filed with, and decided by, the Supreme Court of Israel, sitting as a High Court of Justice (Hebrew, *Bagatz*), as they primarily relate to the Law of Return, the question of “Who is a Jew?” (in part), and the Messianic Jewish community. We will review the ever-increasing attempts on the part of the Minister, or the Ministry, of the Interior (both of which are referred to hereafter as “M/I”)—the government official and department with decision-making authority over who may enter Israel and the issuance of visas—to prevent Messianic Jews from immigrating to Israel and receiving citizenship, to prevent them from entering the country as tourists, and even to revoke their citizenship because they are Messianic Jews. While the cases mentioned are not exhaustive, they are, nevertheless, indicative of where we have been and where we are, and they may well indicate where we are going in this regard.

### **Oswald Rufeisen vs. The Minister of the Interior (*Bagatz*, 72/62 [1962])**

Oswald Rufeisen, more commonly known as “Brother Daniel,” was born in Poland to Jewish parents and was reared and educated in the ways of Judaism. With the outbreak of WWII, he was instrumental in helping to save the lives of many Jews from extermination by the Nazis. In 1942, he converted to Christianity, became affiliated with the Carmelite Order, and thereafter joined the Carmelite monastery in Israel. Only after repeated requests was he allowed to come to Israel in 1958. In all of his requests to the Polish authorities, he emphasized that he never stopped seeing himself as Jewish and was tied to the Jewish people in his heart. Even from the point of view of the Polish authorities, he immigrated to Israel as a Jew. However, his application to be registered here as a Jew by nationality was rejected by the M/I.

In his appeal to the Supreme Court, it was held that the Law of Return was a secular law and that Jewish religious law (*halakah*) did not apply. Instead, it was necessary to interpret the term “Jew” as it is understood by the reasonable man in Israel. The court applied a popular-objective, secular test, according to which it concluded that the common man in the street would not define a convert to Christianity, who dresses in priestly garb, as a Jew. In a split decision, Brother Daniel’s application was denied, but he was allowed to remain in Israel and received permanent residency.



## **Benjamin Shalit vs. The Minister of the Interior (Bagatz, 58/68 [1968])**

The petitioner was a Jew and an Israeli citizen who, while studying abroad, met and married a non-Jewish woman. Two children were born of their marriage. When they returned to Israel with their children, he requested that his children be registered as Jewish nationals on their identity cards, and in the place where religion was normally listed, that the entry be “no religion.” The M/I refused to register the children as requested. Interestingly enough, the issue of citizenship under the Law of Return was not the concern in that case, as all members of the family were citizens; the attention was focused on the scope of discretion granted to the registration clerk. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court saw the matter as essential for determination, as evidenced by the fact that all of the judges sat as a panel for the first time. The court decided for the petitioner, holding that the registration clerk did not have the discretion to refuse to accept the petitioner’s subjective request to register his children as Jews, unless it was very clear that the petitioner’s declaration was false. In essence, the registration clerk was not qualified to question the degree or level of a person’s Jewishness and, therefore, needed to accept the application on its face, unless it contained a clear indication of falsity. In so ruling, the court applied “subjective” considerations, contrary to its ruling in the Rufeisen case.

### **The 1970 Amendment to the Law of Return**

Following the diverse rulings in Rufeisen and Shalit, and what appeared to be the clear inclination of the Supreme Court to apply subjective, rather than objective, criteria in dealing with the question of “Who is a Jew?” in matters relating to *aliyah* and registration, the Knesset amended the Law of Return and accepted the religious perspective in this regard. Among other provisions, Section 4B was added to the Law, stating: “For the purpose

**The amendment was designed to exclude Jews who were considered members of another religion and made this change of “their own free will.”**

of this Law, a Jew is one born to a Jewish mother or who converted and is not a member of another religion.” The amendment also added Section 4A(A) to the Law, which was intended to embrace anyone who could have perished under Nazi persecution, but did not require that the person applying for *aliyah* practice Judaism in accordance with *halakah*. It also granted the

right to make *aliyah* to a child or grandchild of a Jew and to their respective spouses, except for a person who was born a Jew and had voluntarily changed his religion. The amendment was designed to exclude Jews who were considered members of another religion and made this change of “their own free will.” This latter expression was necessary to balance that part of the amendment which allowed for children of Jewish converts to another religion, or children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers,



to make *aliyah* on the basis of their unconverted Jewish father or Jewish grandparents.

### **James and Miriam Hutchens vs. The Minister of the Interior, and Others (*Bagatz*, 467/75 [1975])**

It did not take long before the Supreme Court had to deal with issues arising from the amendment to the Law of Return. The definition portion of the amendment included converts to Judaism, but purposely avoided specifying what type of conversion was necessary. This sparked considerable and heated debate over the issue of “Who is a Jew?” when the question really needed to be “Who is a Convert?” Attempts to further amend the Law of Return to add the Hebrew word *k’halakaha* (or, “according to rabbinic law or way of life”) did not succeed. Had it been added, it would have disqualified Conservative and Reform converts to Judaism, making them ineligible to immigrate under the Law of Return.

In Hutchens, the petitioners (husband, wife, and three minor children) were a Christian family who underwent a conversion ceremony by a rabbinical court in the U.S., including ritual immersion (*mikveh*) and the circumcision of the husband. The husband and wife even remarried in accordance with Jewish law, and a year later, they were given conversion certificates signed by the three rabbis who performed the ceremony. Approximately two years later, the petitioners decided to immigrate to Israel and sought assistance from the Israel Aliyah Center in the U.S.

When the handling of their immigration request was delayed, they contacted an Israeli lawyer to handle the matter for them. After contacting the Aliyah Center, their attorney was informed that the petitioners were not genuine converts, that their conversion was cancelled by the rabbinical court due to its having been obtained under false pretenses. However, prior to receiving that information, the petitioners came to Israel as tourists and made application to the M/I to make *aliyah*. Their application was denied, and they appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Court noted that during 1973 the Ministry of Religion received information “about the real intentions of the petitioners to convert, intentions for missionary activity in Israel, while disguising themselves as Jews.” The petitioners filed their application for *aliyah* in Israel in October 1974, and after an investigation of the matter, their application was rejected on the ground that they were not Jews within the meaning of the Law of Return. This investigation disclosed a “secret letter,” wherein the missionary plans and strategy of the petitioners were expressed: They aimed to establish an independent church in Israel and, for the sake of the gospel of Yeshua, were determined to come to the Jews as Jews. Various portions of the above-mentioned letter were quoted by the Court, which also quoted from the charter of the organization to which the petitioners belonged.

The Supreme Court ruled against the petitioners, finding that they never genuinely abandoned their belief in Yeshua, and, therefore, could not be considered genuine converts to Judaism; that their real intention was to



spread the gospel among the Jewish people; and that the rabbinical court in the U.S. had officially cancelled the conversions of the petitioners. The Court held that the M/I was not only authorized to reject their application for *aliyah*, but that, in light of the cancellation of the conversions, it also had the obligation to reject the application. Having been denied any status under the Law of Return, the petitioners eventually had no choice but to leave Israel.

### **Eileen Dorflinger vs. The Minister of the Interior (*Bagatz*, 563/77 [1977])**

One year after the Hutchens decision, Eileen Dorflinger, an American Messianic Jew, petitioned the Supreme Court when she was refused citizenship following a complaint to the M/I about her alleged missionary activity. She argued that she was not a member of any Christian denomination and had not been baptized within the accepted meaning of that term, but underwent immersion for cleansing.

The court ruled that her membership in “another religion” needed to be decided from the perspective of the other religion and not from within Judaism, noting that she was certainly Jewish, but at the same time was a member of another religion by her own choice. Justice Vitkin added: “I asked and asked again of the counsel for the petitioner, how he reconciles his client’s argument that she is not a Christian with her refusal to clearly negatively answer the question whether she believes in Yeshua as part of the Godhead. I did not receive any response from him, not verbally and not in writing.”

Her refusal to clearly deny her faith, coupled with the ritualistic significance of the baptism and certain other matters referred to, led the court to affirm the decision of the M/I, which denied her citizenship under the Law of Return on the grounds that she was considered a member of another religion.

### **Gary and Shirley Beresford vs. The Minister of the Interior (*Bagatz*, 265/87 [1987])**

The petitioners, both Jewish, sought to make *aliyah* under the Law of Return as Messianic Jews. Their application was rejected. The Supreme Court consolidated their case with two others, as all of them involved families who believed that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel. On Christmas Day 1989, the Supreme Court rendered its judgment. Two opinions were written—one from the Orthodox Jewish perspective and the other from the secular, dynamic liberal perspective. Both judges came to the same essential conclusion, namely, “History has done its work”—i.e., followers of Yeshua left their mark on the pages of history, which are filled with the blood of the Jewish people. Thus, the Supreme Court ruled that a Jew who believes in any of the basic tenets of Christianity has abandoned the family of Judaism. Consequently, the court decided that a Messianic Jew is not consid-

ered Jewish for the purpose of the Law of Return, but, rather, a member of another religion and, therefore, ineligible to immigrate to Israel under that Law.

The significant turning point here was the decision to make personal belief the criterion for membership in another religion. The court's pronouncement was overly broad in its conclusion that a Jew's "belief" in any of the basic tenets of Christianity—even if some of his other beliefs are heretical from the perspective of mainstream Christianity—causes him to be considered "not Jewish" for the purpose of the Law of Return. All other considerations, e.g., baptism, synagogue or church membership or attendance, and religious life-style, became irrelevant.

As a result of the Beresford case, many Jews have been denied the right to make *aliyah*. Notwithstanding this decision, many Jews—including some with a high profile in the Messianic community—were allowed to make *aliyah*. Clearly, an open door for one and a closed door for another have much to do with God's sovereignty, and a recognition of this essential truth will save many from unnecessary anguish, frustration, and anger over the way the authorities here may treat them.

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### **Tourism as an Alleged "Back-Door" Attempt to Make *de facto Aliyah***

Israel, like every sovereign nation, has the right to determine who can become a citizen and who can enter her gates, even as a tourist. The M/I is vested with the discretion to allow entry to Israel through the granting of a variety of different visas. Although this discretion has been held by the Supreme Court to be "absolute," it is still subject to review by the courts when this discretion is abused. As a result of the exercise of such "discretion," some of the brethren, both Jewish and non-Jewish, have been stopped at the airport upon their arrival in Israel, "turned around," and sent back to their last port of embarkation.

One such case involved a "mixed" couple from the U.S. (Jewish and non-Jewish), who came to Israel as tourists, were denied entry, and were eventually sent back to the place from which they had traveled to Israel. Attempts to peacefully resolve the matter failed, and a petition was filed with the Supreme Court. The government argued that the couple's desire to enter Israel as tourists was nothing less than a veiled attempt to settle in Israel, because they were missionaries and purportedly "knew" that they were not entitled to immigrate and receive citizenship under the Beresford ruling. The petitioners denied having such "knowledge." They further asserted that there is no law in Israel which defines "missionary" or "missionary activity," and that "as long as there is no material induce-



ment to cause another person to change his religion, it is just as lawful to attempt to persuade another person of one's religious beliefs, as it is to try to persuade another to change his political beliefs." After twenty months and three hearings before the Supreme Court, the M/I capitulated and the couple was granted a full, three-month tourist visa, and were later able to receive status as residents. This case stands on its own facts and should not be considered as a "norm" for others to follow.

Unfortunately, the above is not an isolated instance involving Messianics. Although some believers have been denied entry, held in airport detention, and then sent out of the country, others who were held in detention were released and allowed into the country, but often only after a high cash bond was paid to ensure their timely departure.

### **Revocation of Citizenship After Coming to Faith**

A different case involved a family that immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union. Inasmuch as the mother was Jewish, the minor children were also considered Jewish under the Law of Return. The parents—atheists when they made *aliyah*, came to faith a year later. Shortly thereafter, an anti-missionary organization complained to the M/I about the "missionary activities" of the father, following which the family was, apparently, placed on the M/I's "black list" and denied proper service by the M/I. The father's passport was not renewed, the mother was refused a passport, and the children were refused I.D. cards. The mother was eventually invited to the M/I and asked to sign a statement stating that she had converted to Christianity in 1972. She refused. She was told that no documents would be issued to the family unless she signed, so she wrote on one document "the above is not true" and signed it. She also signed a second statement acknowledging that she attended a certain local congregation. Soon thereafter, all the requested documents were issued. The nightmare appeared to be over.

However, while the husband was temporarily abroad, the citizenship of the entire family was revoked. After filing a petition with the Supreme Court, it was discovered that the government's case was based solely on two documents that the mother purportedly signed, one of which "admitted" that she converted to Christianity back in 1972. The mother contended that these two documents were falsified—that her signature was forged—and she submitted expert documentary evidence in support of her contention. These contentions were strenuously contested by the government. The husband was unable to return to the country, and, despite their efforts, the family could not leave to join him.

During oral arguments before the Supreme Court, the expert evidence submitted by the petitioners was not considered. Instead, one judge "strongly recommended" that the mother agree to receive permanent residence for herself and citizenship for the two children, as grandchildren of a Jew, indicating that they "would not get anything better than that." In short, the court informed us that it would not rule in favor of the peti-

tioners, irrespective of the clear documentation that was before it. Given the “Hobson’s choice” [i.e., a “choice” in which only one option is offered] that they faced, the petitioners accepted the status offered to the mother and children. Recent changes in the law have made it more difficult for the M/I to revoke citizenship.

Where do we go from here? We have seen what was and what is. Our Jewish, although democratic, country legally rejects and justifies rejection of Jews who believe in the Jewish Messiah, because of historical Christianity. There is discrimination within the family. A Jewish atheist has no difficulty making *aliyah*, while a Jew who loves the Lord Yeshua, His Word, and His people can be kept out and not allowed to “come home.” Similarly, a child of a non-Jewish mother and Jewish father or the grandchild of a Jew can make *aliyah*, while a person born a Jew, but who believes in Yeshua, cannot. In the outworking of the application of democratic principles, all are supposed to be equal—but, as noted, some are clearly less equal than others.

In light of the above, can we anticipate what will be? The trend of the above cases and situations is to restrict Messianic Jewish *aliyah* under the Law of Return. There are also attempts to prevent some from entering the country, even as tourists. The last situation mentioned gives a clear indication that at some time in the future, the “belief” test of the Beresford case could be applied widely to Messianic Jews who made *aliyah* since 1989, notwithstanding the change in the law regarding revocation of citizenship. Some will argue that we need to have a greater presence, so that society can see that we are good, upstanding citizens, who pay our taxes and serve faithfully in the army, so that we would be more acceptable to a secular society. But the Scriptures reveal a different picture. We will be hated because of Yeshua. A time is coming when religious zealots will try to kill the brethren, believing that they are doing God a favor (John 16:2). It is true that the liberal judge in the Beresford case left the door open for a change of attitude sometime in the future. But it is unrealistic to believe that the Supreme Court will overturn the Beresford ruling in the foreseeable future.

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## Our Response

Should one attempt to make *aliyah* or not? The issue is really a matter of God’s calling. Israel holds a fascination for many, and some attempts to make *aliyah* have been unsuccessful, leading to frustration and disappointment—first with the authorities, then with the brethren here, who sometimes appear unsympathetic and uncaring, and eventually with God. Some have even abandoned the faith, believing that God abandoned them, having called them without following through. Our God does not behave in



that manner. Those whom He calls, He also enables to fulfill that calling. He opens the door that no one can close and vice versa. Whatever decision you make and however it turns out, remember: God is sovereign.

A word of caution: life in Israel is hard, particularly for those who work and try to earn their daily bread. There is opposition from many fronts and, to the extent possible, we need to be sure of our calling and not be dismayed at the fiery ordeal that comes upon us for our testing (1 Pet 4:12–13). When praying about immigrating to Israel, remember also to pray about what the Holy One of Israel would have you do here—and remember to pray for those who are already here.

**Author info:**

Marvin S. Kramer (J.D., New York Law School, and Notary) is a practicing attorney in Haifa, Israel, and a founding member of, and counsel for, the Messianic Action Committee. He is also licensed in New York and New Jersey.

# Civil Rights in a Fledgling Democracy

by **Calev Myers**



## **Regional and Local Context**

It would be quite unfair, particularly in the face of current anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli propaganda in the international community, to write about civil rights problems in Israel without first presenting a factual context. The state of Israel, contrary to popular opinion, is not the foremost opponent of human and civil rights in the Middle East, not by a long shot.

Israel is not connected in any way with the child executions in Iran, or the horrid custom of female circumcision practiced in Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, or the ruthless Iranian terror campaign in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. The recent genocide in Sudan and the fighting between Yemen and Saudi Arabia have absolutely nothing to do with Israel. Likewise, the Taliban war in Afghanistan, the war between Egypt and Yemen where the Egyptians used chemical weapons, and Saddam Hussein's use of poison gas against his Kurdish citizens have absolutely no relation to Israel. Certainly, Hussein did not attempt to conquer Kuwait because of Israel. In fact, from the genocide and ethnic cleansing in the last few years in Algeria, to the ruthless murder of thousands of Syrian citizens in El Hama by their own government, to the Libyan hijacking and destruction of a Pan-Am flight a few decades ago, none of these horrible abuses of human rights have anything whatsoever to do with Israel.

The main problem in our region, which includes twenty-two nations stretching from Afghanistan to Morocco and from Turkey to Somalia, is radical Islam, which has effectively booted over 300 million Muslims back into the Dark Ages. This whole region, with a land mass exceeding that of the USA, and massive oil and natural resources, has a combined GDP smaller than that of the nation of Italy. The gaps between those who have and those who have not, in this sad reality, are simply staggering. The status of women's rights is deplorable. Millions of children are exploited, abused, and indoctrinated with militant hatred. Minority religions, such as Christianity and Judaism, are tolerated, but their adherents have virtually no rights, public representation, or substantive freedom to share their faith.

In the heart of this terribly dysfunctional region, a tiny, fledgling democracy called Israel has somehow succeeded in surviving; indeed, it is thriving.

The fact that there are more Israeli companies traded on NASDAQ than from all of Europe combined—even more than from India, China, Korea, and Japan combined—and that Israel has the fastest growing entrepreneurial economy in the midst of an international global economic crisis, is quite impressive. But it is nothing less than a miracle that this miniscule Jewish nation—located in the midst of the most chaotic region on the globe—has succeeded in building a strong, democratic society, which places the highest value on the sanctity of human life, liberty, and freedom of religion.

We are by no means stating that Israel is a utopia. If it were, there would be no need for the advocacy of a civil rights organization like the Jerusalem Institute of Justice. Anyone who has lived in this nation, for even a relatively short amount of time, knows that Israel, like every nation, has serious weaknesses and struggles.

In our opinion, Israel's civil rights challenges have evolved as the result of three major phenomena within its society. One phenomenon is the prevalence, and indeed the deepening, of a collective mentality termed by the Israeli academia as a "siege mentality." The second phenomenon has more to do with the organic development of historic political realities, namely the disproportionately large political power granted to the ultra-orthodox Jewish sector in Israel, in spite of their relatively small numbers in society at large. The third phenomenon, which is not a challenge faced exclusively by Israel, is the ongoing, unconventional, unethical, and downright evil attempt of radical Islamic elements in the region to infiltrate, undermine, and ultimately destroy the egalitarian fabric of all Western democracies. We will very briefly touch on how each of the above phenomena has developed and coalesced, and how their combination has created a situation of systematic illegal discrimination in certain cases in Israel.

### **Siege Mentality**

A siege mentality is a common factor in people groups who have a collective history of persecution and constant existential threats. It would be superfluous to list here all of the attempts to eradicate the Jewish nation, from the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, to the emperors of Rome, to the popes of the Inquisition and the leaders of the Third Reich; nation after nation, people after people, leader after leader have persecuted, hounded, harassed, and brutally murdered innumerable Jewish people over several millennia.

The effect that this historic reality would have on the collective mentality of any people group is an acute sense that they are under constant siege. This mentality is unfortunately reinforced in Israel by current realities. Undeniably, genocidal despots still find a platform in the international community from which to spew forth their rabid anti-Semitism; Mahmud Ahmadinejad heads the current list.



The siege mentality is so evident in Israeli society that many times new or unusual streams within Judaism, let alone foreign movements or societies, are perceived as an existential threat, a “time-bomb,” or an attempt to destroy the Jewish people. There are organizations in Israeli society that thrive on the promulgation and magnification of the siege mentality.

Although Messianic Judaism, for instance, currently accounts for less than 0.2 percent of the Israeli population, there are self-described “anti-missionary” organizations that raise tens of millions of dollars per year to “fight the Mission.” Such organizations play on the siege mentality by constantly exaggerating the size of the Messianic Jewish movement and presenting its members as devious individuals with the sole goal of converting as many Jews as possible to a foreign religion: a clear and present danger as far as they are concerned.

### **Political Power of the Ultra-Religious**

The disproportionate political power of ultra-religious Jewish factions in Israeli politics is the direct result of the structure of our coalition-government system.

Israeli democracy is both fascinating and admirable. It never ceases to amaze political science students to see how such a heterogeneous democratic system continues to function. After any given election, we usually have anywhere from ten to thirteen political parties represented in our parliament. These may include right-wing parties, left-wing parties, Russian immigrant parties, Arab communist parties, ultra-religious parties, national-religious parties, as well as parties with the sole goal of separating religion and state.

In fact, there are Arab members of parliament in Israel who do not believe in the legitimacy of the existence of the State of Israel. Yet these Members of Parliament (MPs) are permitted to express that opinion in the parliament of the very state which they wish to undermine. In this sense, Israel is probably the strongest democracy in the world.

After each election, a coalition government is formed by creating a political pact of several parties representing at least 61 out of 120 seats in the parliament. Traditionally, the political map is split up into three political blocs: a large left-wing bloc, a large right-wing bloc, and a relatively small ultra-religious bloc.

For the last three decades, it has been impossible for either the right-wing or left-wing bloc to win enough seats to create a coalition government on their own. In the 2009 elections, for instance, the right-wing had a stunning victory, but they still lacked approximately 7 seats to reach a

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61-seat majority—hence the need to incorporate the ultra-religious parties into the coalition government. Without them, there would be no government, and for this reason, they are commonly referred to as the “swing vote,” a term used to denote their relatively large amount of power.

The ultra-religious parties will typically join either a right-wing or left-wing government, just as long as they can receive more funding for their educational institutions and maintain control of key ministries in the government—particularly the Ministry of Interior, a position they have held for most of the last thirty years.

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the administration of many basic civil rights which affect the life of all citizens from the time they are born to the time they die, namely, the registration of births, the granting of citizenship, the registration of addresses and voting zones, the recognition of religious conversions, the allocation of funds to religious institutions, the licensing of fire-arms, the recognition of marriages, the administration of burial rights, and the registration of deaths.

To complicate matters further, even though Israel’s Declaration of Independence, its code of laws, and its court precedents uphold the right of freedom of religion, many of the civil rights in Israel are administered solely on the basis of religious affiliation. Such rights include the granting of citizenship, the recognition of religious conversions, the allocation of funds to religious institutions, the recognition of marriages, and the administration of burial rights. One can see why the ultra-religious parties prefer to control this portfolio.

Simply by profiling any citizen as belonging to a certain religion, their representatives can grant or deny this citizen basic civil rights. Thus, the controversial question of “Who is a Jew?” goes beyond theological discourse in Israel; it has very profound implications in the life of each Israeli

citizen. By maintaining their position in the Ministry of Interior, the ultra-religious parties have effectively maintained a monopoly in Israel over deciding “Who is a Jew?” for every practical purpose.

Without going into extensive detail, it is sufficient to say that this reality does not just affect the civil rights of minority religious streams in Israel. If we take the issue

of marriage as case in point, there are some 350,000 Israeli citizens who are prevented from getting married in Israel, because they fit into neither the orthodox definition of being Jewish (i.e., strictly by maternal heritage) nor the definition of any other religion (e.g., one who has a Jewish father and a Christian mother). For this reason, each year around 11,000 Israeli citizens fly overseas, mainly to Cyprus, to get married, so that after they return, their own government will recognize their marriage.

**The controversial question of “Who is a Jew?” goes beyond theological discourse in Israel; it has very profound implications in the life of each Israeli citizen.**

## Unconventional Security Threats

It is reasonable to say that in recent times Israel's—and indeed most of the Western world's—security threats have become unconventional, in every sense of the word. From sophisticated identity theft, to suicide bombings, to abuse of freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom of religion for militant purposes, to intentional targeting of civilian populations, to plain-clothed soldiers hiding in houses of prayer and hospitals, to smuggling massive amounts of weapons on commercial freighters, the radical Islamic expansionist movement has made a gross mockery of conventional rules of engagement.

The major difference between Israel and much of the Western world, however, is a difference of proximity. This nation of approximately six million Jews is surrounded by some three hundred million Muslims, millions of whom reside within its own borders. This situation has obviously not helped to diffuse or moderate Israel's already existing siege mentality.

Sophisticated warfare requires sophisticated defense mechanisms, and Israel, for pragmatic reasons, is far ahead of the international community at adapting to this new reality. Through the use of very advanced intelligence tactics and administrative cross-referencing, Israel is able to carefully monitor suspects posing a security threat and prevent them from wreaking havoc in Israeli society.

Unfortunately, no advanced system of profiling, monitoring, and prevention—no matter how sophisticated—can be on target one hundred percent of the time, and a small percentage of innocent civilians are bound to suffer the consequences from time to time. This is an inconvenience that we all bear due to the dubious methods practiced by Islamic terrorists in our modern societies.

### Case in Point

An excellent illustration of civil rights problems caused by the convergence of the aforesaid phenomena is the issue of the Ministry of Interior's Denial of Service Regulation (DSR). The DSR—which was condemned by the Supreme Court in 2004, yet is still in practice to this day—was created to protect Israel from security threats, both from within and from outside its borders.

If, for instance, an Arab woman who is a resident of East Jerusalem marries a Jordanian citizen who is suspected by Israel's security forces of being a terrorist, the Ministry of Defense can notify the Ministry of Interior with regard to its suspicions. According to the DSR, the Ministry of Interior must mark the file of the aforesaid citizen and deny her services, until such a time as the file is cleared by the legal department of the Ministry of Interior in collaboration with the Ministry of Defense.

This method, in theory, can prevent suspected terrorists from infiltrating Israel by obtaining citizenship through marriage. Unfortunately, the Jerusalem Institute of Justice has handled many cases where the DSR has



been used against innocent citizens in Israel over the past few years, simply because of their religious affiliation.

In most cases, so called “anti-missionary organizations” have written letters to clerks in the Ministry of Interior (who were appointed by the ultra-religious factions in control of that office), accusing certain Messianic Jewish citizens of being a “threat to the existence of the Jewish state” because of missionary activity. Regardless of the fact that no Messianic Jew in the history of the State of Israel has ever been indicted, tried, or convicted of illegal missionary activity (which in Israel consists either of actively proselytizing a minor under eighteen years of age or of bribing individuals to change their religion), and regardless of the fact that such clerks are not authorized to apply DSR-based notifications from non-government sources, the inevitable result always occurs.

Numerous Messianic Jewish citizens have been denied basic services from the Ministry of Interior, ranging from denial of entrance into the country, to refusing to register a newborn child, to refusing to renew a passport, to refusing to grant citizenship to a spouse (and unfortunately, the list goes on and on), all because their file was marked with a denotation prescribed for terrorists.

The clerks in the Ministry of Interior, like the vast majority of Israeli society, usually suffer from a siege mentality, and they see their position as an opportunity to protect the nation of Israel from “the others.” No matter how well-intentioned they may be, they are susceptible to propaganda from ultra-religious extremists, who create phobias by magnifying perceived threats to the existence of the Jewish people. These same clerks report to representatives of the ultra-religious parties who appointed them to their positions, and who consistently look for ways to favor citizens who fit into their narrow, warped definition of “Who is a Jew?” and to deny basic rights to those who do not. To complicate matters, these same ultra-orthodox parties have at their disposal very sophisticated systems that were created to profile, monitor, and prevent infiltration of radical Islamic terrorists into Israel.

## **Civil Rights Advocacy**

The good news, as mentioned in the beginning of this article, is that Israel is a strong democracy. We have an excellent, independent court system which upholds the rule of law, and a free and independent media. This means that the Jerusalem Institute of Justice—and other civil rights advocacy groups in Israel—has all of the tools necessary to achieve justice in cases of discrimination.

Indeed, thanks to the tools available to us, we have successfully handled over 350 cases of discrimination over the past five years, including fifteen victories in the High Court of Justice. We have combated the unequal application immigration laws, prevented revocation of citizenship and residency rights, safeguarded freedom of worship, and prevented unlawful termination of employment based on religious affiliation.

Our goal is to make Israel an even stronger democracy. There is a war raging between Western democracy, which values human life and dignity, and radical Islamic fundamentalism, which thrives on oppression and terror. Israel stands at the forefront of this war and, no matter where you live, her success as the only democracy in the Middle East will have profound effects on the peace and security of you and your children.

For more information about the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, civil rights in Israel, and how you can help strengthen Israel's democracy, please visit us at [www.jjj.org.il](http://www.jjj.org.il). If you, or anyone you know, are facing a civil rights problem in Israel, you are welcome to turn to the Jerusalem Institute of Justice for help at [counsel@jjj.org.il](mailto:counsel@jjj.org.il).

**Author info:**

Calev Myers (J.D., Hebrew University of Jerusalem) is the Founder and Chief Counsel of the Jerusalem Institute of Justice.





# To the Jew First and Also the Gentile

*- Capturing the Fullness of Matthew's Commission, Part 2*

by **Rudolph D. Gonzalez**

It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:46)

But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Rom 11:13–15)<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

In the first installment, it was my aim to show, through an analysis of the grammar associated with Matthew 10:1–11:1 and 28:18–20, that the two missiological passages are held in tension, much like a rubber band stretched and held taut by two poles. The analysis defends the position that Matthew 28:18–20 pulls the reader back to Matthew 10, even as it stretches the reader forward in anticipation of the later developments of Matthew 28. This being said, the Gospel of Matthew presents a comprehensive missiological strategy that is to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, in turn.

Part one of this article also took exception with influential scholarship that interprets the phrase “all the nations” in Matthew 28:18 as possibly including the Jewish people. In making such a claim, there is often a preconceived view that Matthew 28:18–20 commissions the disciples to minister to all people, without any ethnic distinctions. However, I believe, for well founded theological reasons, that such is not the case, as my first part also shows. Thus, it remains for us to inquire whether this Matthean two-fold missiological strategy is reflected elsewhere in the New Testament.

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New American Standard Bible.

Our attention is drawn to the Acts of the Apostles, where we have recorded the earliest missiological overtures of the church, and to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle to the Gentiles articulates the strongest case for a Jew-first strategy in some detail.<sup>2</sup>

### The Book of Acts: A "Jew First and Also Gentile" Missionary Pattern

In part one, we showed that the Matthew 10 commission to the Jewish people lists scenarios which the disciples/apostles would likely encounter in the course of their initial Jewish ministry. But, as we have also shown, the commission is only ostensibly to the Jews, for the Book of Acts shows that the same situations are found in Gentile contexts. Note the following categories:

MATTHEW 10	ACTS JEWISH CONTEXT	ACTS GENTILE CONTEXT
v. 7, Preaching	2; 3:11–26; 13:16–41	10; 14:15–18; 17:22–31
v. 8a, Healing	3:1–10; 5:12–16	9:11–12; 28:8
v. 8b, Raising of the dead	9:32–42	20:7–12
v. 8, Confronting the demonic	5:3	13:9–11
vv. 11–13a, Receptive homes	2:46; 4:23–35; 5:40; 18:1–4	16:14–15, 31–34; 18:7
v. 13b, Non-receptivity	8:4; 11:19; 17:10	19:23–20:2
v. 14b, Ritualized actions	13:51	18:6
vv. 16–17, 18, Hostile, legal actions	4; 5:21–32; 7:54–60; 8:3; 13:5	14:5; 16:35–40; 18:12–17; 24–25
v. 23, Itinerant ministry	9:32; 8:4–40; 11:19–21	13:1–21:14
vv. 26–33, Courageous witness	4:5–12; 5:29–32; 6:8–7:60; 18:9–10; 24–25	19:29–31; 23:11–25:22

<sup>2</sup> Though I arrived at my analysis independently, I acknowledge the earlier work of Axel von Dobbeler, who also noted a complementary (*Komplementarität*) relationship between Matthew 10:5b–6 and 28:18–20. In his analysis, the two mission statements are ethnically distinct and together converge to form a complementary expression of Jesus' messianic mission (see A. von Dobbeler, "Die restitution Israels und die Bekehrung der Heiden: Das Verhältnis von Mt. 10:5b–6 und Mt. 28:18–20 unter dem Aspekt der Komplementarität, Erwägungen zum Standort des Matthäusevangeliums," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 91 [2000]: 18–44). Joel Willitts has also made note of this important finding in arguing against the "universalizing" of the Great Commission, thus creating "theological abstractions foreign to Matthew's historical context" (Joel Willitts, "The Friendship of Matthew and Paul: A Response to the Recent Trend in the Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel," *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 65 [2009], <http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/151/233> [accessed April 23, 2010]).



These associations are crucial, for they, in effect, add a level of verification to our analysis that links Matthew 10 and 28:18–20 as one comprehensive missiological statement. However, these associations do not, in themselves, support the sequential Jew-first-and-also-Gentile pattern for which we are arguing here. They only show that the apostles experienced the same issues when dealing with both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> Thus, is there any evidence elsewhere in the New Testament that supports the missiological sequence we have outlined in Matthew?

As it turns out, Luke's account of the church's earliest development allows us to see the same sequential pattern played out repeatedly. Acts 1:8 sets the pattern for the way that the evangelistic mission of the church would progress. The early church was to go first to the Jews, historically on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and, thereafter, reach out beyond Judea and Samaria, ultimately to the Roman Empire (Acts 3–28). But did the Jew-first strategy continue as believers were dispersed to other Gentile lands?

The saga of the church's witness to the world develops over a period of roughly thirty years. Apart from the apostles' early witness in, and around, Judea (which seems to have been Jewish-oriented), Acts mentions fourteen occasions of going to Diaspora Jews in Gentile areas first, followed by outreach to the Gentiles.<sup>4</sup> And, it is worth noting that even Hellenistic believers, who first reached out to Gentiles, did not do so before first witnessing to Diaspora Jews (Acts 11:19–21). The evidence shows that the strategy was not merely driven by geography; that is, going to Jews first because the church naturally began in Judea, but changing strategy outside of Israel's territorial lands to reach out indiscriminately in Gentile regions.

Nevertheless, there are two occasions where the outreach is directly to the Gentile people.<sup>5</sup> One could argue that these are examples that break with the pattern, but that would only be so if the existence of a Jewish community could be demonstrated. What is more probable is that there was no Jewish presence, allowing the evangelists to minister to the Gentiles directly. And then there are many places mentioned in passing, where no information is given.<sup>6</sup> What Acts shows is that, as a general rule, the earliest Hellenistic evangelists, along with the apostles, sought out Jewish

3 I do not see a need to posit a necessary literary link between Matthew and Acts. The parallels noted suggest the substance of Matthew 10 and 28:18–20, traced to the lips of Messiah, was normative for evangelism throughout the apostolic era. For a discussion of Matthew, as having been written 60s–70s AD, see Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33a (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1993), lxxiii–lxxv. For Acts, as having been written around the same time, see F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 6–13.

4 See Acts 11:19–21; 13:4–12; 13:14–52; 14:1–4; 16:11–34; 17:1–9; 17:10–15; 17:16–34; 18:1–11; 18:18–22; 18:24–28; 19:8–10; 20:21; 28:16–29.

5 Paul's ministry in Lystra (Acts 14:8–18) and Malta (Acts 28:1–10) shows no apparent outreach to Jews.

6 Acts mentions the following cities and regions as places through which Paul travelled: Seleucia, 13:4; Perga in Pamphylia, 13:13; the cities of Liconia and Derbe, 14:6; Pisidia, 14:24; Attalia, 14:25; cities of Syria and Cilicia, 15:41; Phrygian region, 16:6; Mysia, 16:7; Troas, 16:8; Samothrace and Neapolis, 16:11; Amphipolis and Apollonia, 17:1; Macedonia and Greece, 20:1–2; Assos, 20:13; Mitylene, 20:14; Samos and Miletus, 20:15; Cos, Rhodes, and Patara, 21:1; Tyre and Ptolemais, 21:7.



people at home and abroad, and only after a concerted effort to press the gospel to the Jews did they turn to Gentile evangelism.<sup>7</sup> However, when they entered a city or region with no Jewish presence, they felt free to evangelize the locals. These assessments of early mission work are supported by three statements made by Paul, which bear specific relevance to this study. Collectively, they move in the direction of laying a theological foundation for the pattern.

The first statement is given in the Asian city of Pisidian Antioch, during Paul's second missionary journey. After the local Jewish congregation became jealous over Paul's initial success with both Jews and Gentile God-fearers, Barnabas and Paul spoke out: "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

Paul's statement holds important issues relevant to our understanding. To begin with, this is the first place in Gentile areas where Jewish people openly reject the gospel, giving Paul the opportunity to respond to their actions.

Paul clearly understands there to be an ongoing sequential order to his ministry. Only after he had faithfully executed his charge to witness to the local Jews did he feel free to turn to the Gentiles. This same scenario is repeated almost verbatim in Acts 18:5–7, during his second missionary enterprise at Corinth, but here we have a surprising development. Verse 8 notes that only after Paul turned to the Gentiles, "Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized."

This passage is significant, for it hints at another vital aspect of Paul's missionary strategy. As in the Antioch incident, he turned to Gentiles only after Jews had rejected the opportunity to believe. But that did not mean that his interest in them ended with their rejection. Even in turning to the Gentiles, the apostle hoped to reach Jews, thus bringing them to repentance and faith in Christ.<sup>8</sup> Here is one example where this aspect of his strategy actually works. Paul's turn toward Gentile evangelism brought about the conversion of a prominent Jewish synagogue leader, along with his entire family. It also opened up the possibility of a massive ingathering

**What Acts shows is that . . . the earliest Hellenistic evangelists, along with the apostles, sought out Jewish people at home and abroad, and only after a concerted effort to press the gospel to the Jews did they turn to Gentile evangelism.**

7 Bruce (247) suggests that Paul's interest in searching out Jews may have been, in part, motivated by his interest in finding Gentile God-fearers who attended the local synagogues, and, arguably, became the nuclei of the churches he established. The point is compelling, but there is ample evidence that the turn to evangelize Gentiles was not fully satisfied by working with Gentile God-fearers alone.

8 Rom 11:14.



at Corinth, an outreach strategy corroborated with a nocturnal vision (Acts 18:9–11).

Paul's third statement seals the issue. Acts 28:23–28 relates his encounter with the Jews upon his arrival in the capital city of Rome. After setting a day to meet with them to present the claims of Jesus, some were persuaded, but most would not believe (vv. 23–24). As they began leaving, Paul gave a "parting word," appealing to Isaiah 6:9–10. Again Paul underscores that Israel's hardness was the justification for turning to the Gentiles, because, as he put it, "the Gentiles will also listen." It is important to remember that Paul had been turning to the Gentiles throughout his ministry; this was not a new direction. Yet, he felt compelled to declare this shift to the Jews at Rome, prompting us to search for his rationale.

In my estimation, Paul needed to alert the Jews of this shift for several essential reasons. First, the shift was necessary because of their refusal to recognize Jesus as the Messiah; it served as a witness against their continued obstinacy. Second, missiologically, Paul needed to underscore their failure to live up to their covenant obligation to bless the nations (Gen 26:4; Isa 60; 61:9; cf., Gal 3:8). Finally, he hoped to stir them to jealousy. In rejecting the Messiah, they were, in fact, rejecting God yet again (Matt 21:41–44), and consequently neglecting the missionary reason for their existence. Since Jewish salvation was not happening wholesale, Paul, a Benjamite Jew, would carry out the God-ordained mission to evangelize the nations.<sup>9</sup> He would pick up the mission the Jews were abdicating.<sup>10</sup>

One final issue concerns the results of a "Jew-first-and-also-Gentile" strategy, as described in Acts. It becomes evident that there is no necessary correlation between Jewish outreach and immediate success among Gentiles. While there is immediate success at times (11:19–21; 13:4–12, 14–52), at other times the Gentiles side with the Jews against the apostle, resulting in his mistreatment (16:11–34; 17:1–8). Sometimes the results are meager among both Jews and Gentiles (17:16–34). And there are times when both strong acceptance of the gospel and violent rejection happen simultaneously (14:1–7). Overall, the picture is complex, and one would have to conclude that the "Jew-first-and-also-Gentile" pattern is adopted for more than pragmatic motives to maximize evangelistic efforts. From the standpoint of Acts, it is the Holy Spirit's leading that dictates the sequence (e.g., cf., 13:4; 16:6; 19:21; 20:23; et al). In the end, the Book of Acts gives testimony to the apostle's obedience in reaching out to Jew and Gentile, believing that a sovereign God is in control of history and their witness (Acts 4:23–31).

9 Paul's three mentions of turning to the Gentiles are, in part, motivated by Israel's failure to live up to her responsibility to bless the nations. The apostle sees his ministry as an extension of Christ's desire to bless the nations (cf. Isa 42:6; 49:6).

10 In Romans 15:16, Paul views his apostolic mission as a priestly function, working with the Gentiles to make them a pleasing offering to God. See Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 1998), 766–67.

## Romans 11: Paul's Evangelism to Jew and Gentile

Our overview of Acts focused on some of Paul's key missiological moments and the revealing statements he made and actions he took. But the teaching is indirect and somewhat implied. Fortunately, however, Paul has left us a record of his thoughts that speaks directly to these same issues of critical missionary importance.

In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, the apostle teaches what seem to be two irreconcilable truths: namely, that God has but one plan to save Jews and Gentiles alike; and yet, that God keeps in place a distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles.<sup>11</sup> While exploring the first leg of Paul's teaching is beyond our scope here,<sup>12</sup> Romans 9–11 provides the most telling evidence for the latter in Paul's letters.<sup>13</sup>

The apostle begins this passage by showing that he has an ongoing concern for his kinsmen (9:1–3), to whom belong the patriarchal promises which Christ fulfills (vv. 4–5). Furthermore, while God maintains the right to choose from among his creatures (9:6–33), Paul asks whether the scandal of the cross has alienated Israel completely.

Chapter 10 shows that, in spite of Israel's rejection of the gospel, God has not stopped reaching out to them (10:1–21). Israel has been exposed to gospel preachers, eliminating the excuse that no one had proclaimed the message of salvation to the nation (vv. 14–18). And, to the notion that Israel just did not hear it (v. 14), the apostle quotes a litany of passages from the prophets showing the irony that Gentiles heard the gospel message well enough (vv. 19–21).<sup>14</sup> The intent of Romans 10 is to show that Israel's rejection did not stop God from a continual effort to reclaim the nation.

Then, remarkably, Romans 11 reveals that despite national Israel's obstinacy, the apostle is able to see a missiological benefit. In fact, Paul's introductory words in 1:14 and 16 may well telescope his more detailed thoughts in chapter 11. At the opening of the letter, Paul mentions he has a debt to Greeks and Barbarians, essentially Gentiles.<sup>15</sup> Then he declares his belief in the gospel's power to save Jews, first, and also Gentiles (v. 16). The omission of any indebtedness to the Jews stands out, in contrast, and calls for some explanation, which, I believe, is held until chapter 11.

In Romans 11, Paul shows that Israel's rejection of the gospel actually promoted Gentile conversion (vv. 7–11). Thus, in verse 12, the apostle as-

11 E.g., cf., Rom 3:29; 9:24; 15:8–10; 1 Cor 1:22–23; Gal 2:14–15; 1 Thess 2:14, et al. See J. C. Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, rev. and exp. ed., ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).

12 This is a major theme of Paul, developed largely in Romans 1:17–3:30.

13 See Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), ch. 6, "Israel and Romans 11 Synthesis," 253–90.

14 Note Paul's use of Isaiah 65:2 in verse 21, where God's outreach to rebellious Israel is conceived of as "one long day." In my opinion, the use of such terminology stresses the need to extend a consistent and unbroken witness to Israel.

15 Schreiner, 50–76.



sumes that if Israel's loss has netted a gain for Gentile salvation, surely Israel's eventual embrace of the gospel would only mean a greater gain among all the nations. Romans 11:12 reads: "Now if their transgression [be] riches for the world and their failure [be] riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!" Note the first class conditional structure of Paul's argument here:

Protasis: "Now if their transgression [be] riches for the world and their failure [be] riches for the Gentiles,"

Apodosis: "how much more will their fulfillment be!"<sup>16</sup>

Some might be tempted to translate the protasis with the force of "since," but it is necessary to let the particle *ei* ("now") have its full force. Wallace sees it as a "tool of persuasion."<sup>17</sup> The dual protasis employs a form of synonymous parallelism to reinforce the premise; Israel's "transgression" has been her "failure"; nevertheless, it has resulted in a bounty for the world, the Gentiles at large (see Rom 11:17, 22). Paul desires his readers to see that there has been a correlating relationship between Israel's rejection of the gospel and the fruitfulness of the Gentile harvest. Then, in the apodosis, Paul envisions the greater magnitude of the Gentile mission were Israel to acknowledge Messiah. The apostle hoped his readers would see the fantastic harvest that would follow.

In my estimation, Romans 11:12 fleshes out the missiological strategy stated first in 1:14–16. Paul advances a win-win scenario with regard to Jewish and Gentile salvation. When Jews reject the gospel, Gentile conversions, nevertheless, follow; and when Israel finally acknowledges Jesus as Messiah, Gentile conversion will happen like never before. And, as verses 13–14 reveal, the apostle envisions this scenario as an ongoing reality to accomplish the mission. The reason Paul is "indebted" only to Gentiles is because he, as an apostle to the Gentiles (v. 14; cf. Acts 9:15–16; 22:21; 23:11; 26:17–18), is making good on the offer of salvation to them. Since Israel had defaulted on her debt to bless the nations, Paul was "covering the debt for them," so to speak.

Then, speaking to Gentiles (v. 13a), Paul finds it necessary to say to them, "Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them" (Rom 11:13a). In verse 14, the particles *ei pos* combine to suggest aim or purpose; the pair can be rendered "if by any means," and suggests a missiological strategy. Furthermore, when linked to the two aorist subjunctives *parazelosō* ("provoke to jealousy") and *sosō* ("rescue" or "save"),

16 Paul's statement is a first class condition, but with peculiarities. The protasis is compound, with two "if" conditions, both lacking the necessary indicative verb. Also, the apodosis lacks a stated verb. While these aspects deviate from the normal pattern, they are not uncommon. The sentence calls for an implied *eimi*.

17 Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1996), 692.

the phrase, as A. T. Robertson notes, “. . . brings the expectation within the horizon of a lively hope, in spite of the cloud of hovering doubt.”<sup>18</sup> Clearly, this outreach strategy was Paul’s best hope in light of Jewish obduracy. The text shows that Gentile conversion did not happen simply because Israel rejected her Messiah; it happened because Israel refused to embrace the gospel that was being continually offered. Focused outreach to Jews was necessary, because the moment evangelism to Israel ceased, so would the fruitful condition among the Gentiles that Paul was proposing.

**Focused outreach to Jews was necessary, because the moment evangelism to Israel ceased, so would the fruitful condition among the Gentiles that Paul was proposing.**

The term *doxazo* (v. 14), reveals further how the apostle thinks of this strategy. Its semantic range suggests something deserving of praise and honor (e.g. Matt 6:2) to something having glorious greatness (e.g. John 17:5).<sup>19</sup> Here, *doxazo* is a broad band, present indicative and conveys something in between an iterative and an ongoing, and customary, force. For Paul, extending the gospel to the Jews rendered his ministry constantly, and gloriously, honorable.<sup>20</sup> As Acts reveals, Paul’s evangelistic efforts were rarely bi-directional. There was a necessity to reach out to the Jews first and follow through with the Gentiles. That order would ensure that Israel would always receive a consistent opportunity to receive Messiah and fall in line with the evangelistic program. However, even if Israel should reject the gospel and default on her missionary responsibilities, God would honor the effort by granting a fruitful harvest among the Gentiles. Ironically, Paul envisioned a day when Gentile faithfulness to the strategy would prick the Jews to jealousy, bringing them, eventually, to embrace their Messiah and take up the task.

## Conclusion

This two-part study has argued that taken together, Matthew 10 and 28:18–20 reveal a different evangelistic approach than is traditionally understood when making Matthew 28:18–20 the definitive last word. When viewed comprehensively, or “complementarily” as von Dobbeler has earlier argued, the two statements support a sequential evangelistic pattern, beginning with Jews and continuing through to the Gentile nations.

Acts’ contribution is two-fold. Generally, it shows that the scenarios of Jewish evangelism, depicted in Matthew 10, were also experienced among

18 A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 1016. See also Cleon L. Rogers and C. L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1998), 337. See Wallace (707), who also sees a futuristic aspect in this first class condition of Romans 11:14.

19 Johannes P. Low and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), s.v., “*doxazo*.”

20 Wallace, 520–21.



Gentiles. Second, and more to our point, Acts reveals how this Jew-Gentile pattern played out in early missionary efforts. In Acts, evangelism begins with a genuine concern for Jews as God's covenant community. Reaching out to Israel first, in Jerusalem and throughout the world, brings the missionary in line with God's intent to save and use Israel to bless the nations. Furthermore, this "Jew first" strategy is Holy Spirit-directed and, though it may result in few Jewish conversions, opens the way for fruitful evangelism among the Gentiles. The strategy is not coincidental but purposeful, from start to finish.

As part of a larger unit, Romans 11 reveals the way God will accomplish his purposes in both peoples. In the end, the pattern envisions a day when the fullness of Gentile conversion will be realized, and God's judicial, but partial, hardening will be lifted from the Jews—and then, all Israel will be saved. At that time, Israel's place in God's scheme of redemption, as prophesied, will be fully realized.<sup>21</sup>

It is telling that Kenton Sparks, in writing about Matthew 28, wonders "whether Matthew was following a strategy similar to the apostle Paul's, namely, to stir up jealousy in unbelieving Jews by contrasting their spiritual predicament with that of believing Gentiles."<sup>22</sup> Sparks hints at a missiological principle that Bruce also discovers, but with respect to Matthew 10. Commenting on Matthew 10:5, Bruce notes:

Moreover it is taught in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, and nowhere more clearly than in Isaiah 40–55, that when Israel grasps the true knowledge of God, it will be her privilege to share that knowledge with other nations. Nearly thirty years later, Paul, apostle to the Gentiles though he was, lays down the order of gospel presentation as being "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16). . . . This statement of primitive evangelistic policy was evidently founded on Jesus' own practice.<sup>23</sup>

What "practice" could that be, but the one supported when Matthew's two missiological statements are taken together, as a complete whole.

Clearly, the sequential aspect of a "Jew-first-and-also-Gentile" pattern is supported by the chronological order given in Matthew. This is as important as the content of both commissioning texts. One could argue that Jesus was born in Israel, making it only natural that He would turn to His Jewish countrymen. But that would be to forget that Judea was an occupied land in Jesus' day. Jesus' injunction against going to Gentiles and Samaritans initially implies their presence.<sup>24</sup> The fact is that, in spite of the possibility of evangelizing both Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately from

21 E.g., Isa 40–55; Jer 4:1–2; 31:27–40; 33:6–9; Zech 2:10–11; 8:23; et al.

22 Kenton L. Sparks, "Gospel as Conquest: Mosaic Typology in Matthew 28:16–20," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2006): 661.

23 F. F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 106.

24 Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 75–76: "Galilee was a cosmopolitan crossroads . . . inhabited by

the start, Jesus chose to set a definite sequence in place. I would suggest that when Matthew 28:18–20 is seen as overriding Matthew 10, and *panta ta ethne* (“all nations”) in 28:19 is interpreted as inclusive of the Jews, the sequence is essentially dissolved, and evangelism becomes classless. But in so doing, does it continue to be fully biblical? Viewed in the light of this study, Matthew’s two commissioning accounts leave us with serious questions to ask of our missionary and evangelistic strategies and programs.

**Author info:**

Rudolph D. Gonzalez (Ph.D., Baylor University) is the Dean of the William R. Marshall Center for Theological Studies and Professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.  
rgonzalez@swbts.edu



mixed Jewish and gentile or all-gentile populations. . . . Thus, Jesus’ location in Galilee is potentially open to both Jews and non-Jewish people.”



# The Old Testament's Use of the Old Testament for Messianic Jewish Apologetics\*

by Seth Postell

## Introduction

There has been a growing discomfort among evangelicals with the classic approach to messianic prophecy and fulfillment, whereby a list of Old Testament (OT) prophecies and their New Testament (NT) fulfillments are provided in two columns as proof for the messiahship of Yeshua.<sup>1</sup> Why? Missing from this approach is an awareness of the larger context from whence these OT verses have been taken. All too often, we lack the ability to convincingly demonstrate, from the OT itself, that these verses were originally intended by the historical authors to be messianic prophecies.

One popular alternative to the classic approach does not appear to be very attractive either. There are those who seek to defend the NT's interpretation of the OT by appeals to the "Jewishness" of the apostolic interpretive method.<sup>2</sup> It is clear to those of us involved in Jewish evangelism,

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1 One good example of the classic approach (known as the single-meaning position) is Josh McDowell's *More Than a Carpenter* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977); for a helpful discussion of the issues involved in the relationship of the Testaments and the various critical and evangelical approaches to these issues, see Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 145–67. Regarding the single-meaning approach, Roger Nicole ("The Old Testament in the New Testament," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979], 1:623) states the following: "Its advocates are, however, faced with the difficult task of showing how the meaning ascribed by NT writers to a number of OT quotations was already in the purview of the prophets who originally wrote the statements." Jonathan Lunde ("An Introduction to Central Questions in the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 8) further notes, "Some of the OT passages that are 'fulfilled' in the NT don't look at all like predictions in their original context."

2 See, for example, Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). For a recent discussion on this topic with a list of helpful resources, see Lunde, 25–32; Darrell L. Bock, "The Canon of Scripture and the Deity of Christ: Is it Kosher to Substitute Jesus into God's Place?" (paper presented at the Borough Park Symposium, April 2010). For other possible alternatives to the NT's use of the OT see, for



however, that the battleground for our message to the Jewish people has to be the authorially intended meaning of the OT itself. Any attempt to argue for the messiahship of Jesus on the basis of the "Jewishness" of Matthew or Paul's hermeneutic seems to be little more than a case of special pleading. Yeshua's identity vis-à-vis the OT is made to rest on the *interpretive method*, rather than on the *interpreted meaning*. Yisroel Blumenthal, a well-known anti-missionary, drives this point home when he writes:

The Christian accepts Jesus on the basis of the Christian understanding that Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the Jewish Bible. The Jew cannot accept Jesus based on the Jewish understanding of the same Bible.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this brief paper is to propose a paradigm for understanding, and defending, the NT's interpretation of the OT and its identification of Yeshua as Him of "whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote" (John 1:45).<sup>4</sup> What I would like us to consider is the OT's own use of itself. The argument presented here is as follows: we cannot hope to understand, and to defend, the NT's use of the OT until we understand the OT's use of the OT.<sup>5</sup> To demonstrate this thesis, I will be looking at three examples: one from the Torah, one from the Prophets, and one from the Writings, in honor of the pattern laid down by our Master Teacher on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:44).

## The OT's Use of the OT

Before delving into three specific examples of the OT's use of the OT, it is necessary to say a few words about the concept itself. Most of us have heard the old adage, "The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture." For many of us, however, this statement is merely a truism with little exegetical payload. While we have grown well-accustomed to the notion of the NT's use of the OT,<sup>6</sup> the thought of the OT's use of the OT may at first sound quite strange.

example, the essays by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Darrell L. Bock, and Peter Enns in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

3 Yisroel Blumenthal, "Answering Dr. Brown's Objections to Judaism," Jews for Judaism, <http://www.jewsforjudaism.org/library/document-library/func-startdown/11/> (accessed January 18, 2010).

4 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are those of the author.

5 The concept of the OT's use of the OT was first introduced to me in the lectures of John Sailhamer. For a helpful list of resources and the diversity of names used to refer to this phenomenon, see Wong-Yee Cheung, *A Text-Centered Approach to Old Testament Exegesis and Theology and Its Application to the Book of Isaiah*, Jian Dao Dissertation Series 9, Bible and Literature 6, ed. Ka-lun Leung and Eppie Y. Wong (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary), 90, n. 240.

6 Moisés Silva, "The New Testament's Use of the Old Testament: Text Form and Authority," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 147-65; Roger Nicole, "The Old Testament in the New Testament," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 1:617-28;



What do I mean by “the OT’s use of the OT”? Stated quite simply, later OT prophets diligently studied and applied the inspired writings of earlier OT prophets for the making of their own books.<sup>7</sup> This process resulted in the development of an expansive web of inner-biblical OT commentary—itsself inspired—that sheds invaluable light on the intentionality of the earlier prophetic writings.<sup>8</sup> Frequently, this web of inner-biblical commentary is not only messianic in nature, but also remarkably similar to the interpretations we find in the NT.

### The Torah’s Use of the Torah

I would like to begin this study by looking first at the Torah’s use of the Torah.<sup>9</sup> Yeshua states unabashedly in John 5:46: “For if you believed in Moses, you would believe in me: for *concerning me* he wrote.”<sup>10</sup> As “already persuaded” believers, we accept Yeshua’s statement as authoritative truth.

**Our stalwart commitment to the authority of the NT, however, is no substitute for Berean efforts to “carefully study the Scriptures [OT] daily to see whether these things are so.”**

Our stalwart commitment to the authority of the NT, however, is no substitute for Berean efforts to “carefully study the Scriptures [OT] daily to see whether these things are so” (see Acts 17:11).

For our purpose it is essential to note what John Sailhamer calls “the poetic seams of the Torah.”<sup>11</sup> At specific points in the macro-structure of the Torah’s narrative, the author inserted large poetic discourses which focus on the coming of a king from the tribe of Judah in “the last days” (see Gen 49:1, 8–12; Num 24:14, 17–24; Deut 31:28–29; 33:5, 7). The repetition of this key feature within the macro-structure of the Torah suggests that the intention with which the Torah was written was, in fact, to engender faith in the coming Messiah.

I would like to call your attention to the oracles of Balaam (Num 23–24) to see the ways in which inner-biblical commentary on Israel’s exodus leads us directly to Matthew’s description of Yeshua’s early years as a fulfillment of prophecy (Num 23:22; 24:8; Matt 2:15). To establish the context, we must remember that these oracles are tied to the larger theme of “the last days” and the coming Messiah (Num 24:14, 17ff.). Also, the Balaam

Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, eds., *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. See G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham: Apollos, 2007).

7 This phenomenon was evident to the NT writers as well (see, for example, 1 Pet 1:10–11).

8 For a classic text on the subject, see Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

9 I am using “Torah” and “Pentateuch” synonymously here.

10 The translation from the Greek is my own. Emphasis is added in an attempt to remain faithful to the Greek syntax.

11 See John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 35–37.

narrative (Num 22–24), at the conclusion of the wilderness wanderings, is literarily linked to the beginning of Israel's Egyptian sojourn (Exod 1–2).<sup>12</sup> In both texts, a foreign king (Pharaoh/Balak) sees the numerical prosperity of the people of Israel (the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, e.g. Gen 15:5), fears, and attempts to thwart its fulfillment three times.<sup>13</sup>

In the third attempt to impede the covenantal blessings, the author draws our attention to the ascendancy of Israel's redeemer (Moses, Exod 2:1ff; the Messiah, Num 24:7–9, 17–24). Moreover, the author highlights the significance of Balaam's third oracle (Num 24:1–9), not only by contrasting it with the other oracles,<sup>14</sup> but also by means of literary parallels to the narrative account of Balaam's encounter with the angel of the Lord (Num 22). In both cases, Balaam futilely attempts to circumvent divine barriers ("the angel of the Lord," 22:28, 32, 33; the Abrahamic covenant, 24:10), and on his third attempt God opens Balaam's eyes (22:31; 24:3–4) to see Israel's mighty deliverer (the angel of the Lord, 22:31; the Messiah, 24:7–9).

Not only does the context strongly suggest that Balaam's third oracle points to Israel's future king-redeemer, but the citation of Genesis 49:9—a messianic prophecy about the coming king from the tribe of Judah—in Numbers 24:9 reinforces the likelihood that Numbers 24:7–9 is messianic (see Table 1).<sup>15</sup>

12 *Ibid.*, 41–44.

13 In Exodus, Pharaoh (1) enslaves the people; (2) commands the midwives to kill the male babies; and (3) drowns the baby boys in the Nile River. In Numbers, Balak hires Balaam, who in turn tries to curse the Israelites three times (see Num 24:10).

14 The text says that Balaam's third oracle was (1) not done by means of omens (24:1); (2) empowered by the Spirit of God (24:2); (3) a prophetic oracle (24:3–4); and (4) spoken with eyes completely open (24:3–4).

15 I acknowledge the possible ambiguity with the third person singular pronominal endings in verses 7–8 (is "him" referring to the king or to Israel?). One could argue that if "his" refers to Israel in verse 7, the natural assumption would be that the "him" in verse 8 also refers to Israel. There are, however, several factors in favor of the individualized messianic reading of verse 8. First, while it is clear that the third person singular pronominal endings refer to Israel in verse 7a–c, it is likely not the case in 7d. The more likely and most natural reading is to understand the exalted kingdom (v. 7d) belonging first and foremost to the exalted king (v. 7c). In fact, throughout the Hebrew Bible, kingdoms belong to kings (see especially 1 Chron 14:2; also see 1 Kgs 2:12; Jer 52:31; Ps 45:7; Dan 11:17; 1 Chron 11:10; 17:11; 22:10; 28:7; etc.). In this light, attempts to identify the third singular pronoun in verse 7d as "Israel" is forced. Second, the immediate context in which verse 8 is situated is eschatological. Text-critically, "Gog" (rather than "Agag") is the better reading in verse 7c. Not only are the textual witnesses stacked against the Masoretic Text [MT] (Qumran, Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion), but also Ezekiel's query in 38:17 implies that the prophets have spoken of "Gog" long before the exilic period. The only mention of "Gog" in the MT, however, is in Ezekiel 38–39. When one considers Ezekiel's reference to "the last days" (Ezek 38:18; see Num 24:14) immediately following his comments on "Gog," it makes most sense to assume that Ezekiel's Torah differed here from the MT. The inner-biblical witness of Ezekiel 38:17, therefore, corroborates the text-critical testimony that "Gog" is the better reading. The reference to "Gog" in verse 7 coupled with the overt citation of Genesis 49:9 (the messianic king from the tribe of Judah) in verse 9 sets verse 8 within a messianic-eschatological framework. Given the fact that Israel's exodus was already mentioned in the previous oracle (23:22), and given the substitution of the third person plural with the third person singular suffix in verse 8 (23:22), it is difficult to see how another reference to Israel's historical exodus is suited to the context. Third, there is an important relationship between Balaam's third (vv. 2–9) and fourth (vv. 15–25) oracles. The fourth



**TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF JACOB AND BALAAM PROPHECIES**

He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? (Gen 49:9, NASB)	He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him? (Num 24:9, NASB)
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We are ready to look at an important inner textual link within the oracles of Balaam. According to Numbers 23:22, Balaam's gaze is cast upon the people of Israel as a totality. He states, "God brings *them* out of Egypt, He is for *them* like the horns of the wild ox." There is little doubt this refers to Israel's exodus from Egypt.

In Numbers 24:8, this verse is cited in a nearly verbatim manner with one key difference: "God brings *him* out of Egypt, He is for *him* like the horns of the wild ox." The pronoun is singular, and the referent is no longer the people of Israel as a totality, but Israel's individual king. Just as God brought Israel out of Egypt in former days, so God will bring the Messiah-king out of Egypt in "the last days."

A theological precedence is thereby established by Moses to interpret Israel's exodus as a foreshadowing of eschatological and messianic realities.<sup>16</sup> In light of this prior inner-biblical precedent, it is not difficult to see how Matthew's retelling of Messiah's escape from the Pharaoh-like Herod and His exodus from Egypt (Matt 2:15) is thoroughly grounded in the eschatological portraiture of the Hebrew Bible. In this case, the Torah's use of the Torah provides a firm foundation for defending Matthew's understanding of Israel's exodus, and draws a direct line from the expectations of the Torah to the person of Yeshua.

Matthew's hermeneutic can be trusted, not because it falls within the bounds of the accepted rabbinic hermeneutical norms of his day, but because Moses himself validated a messianic understanding of Israel's exodus.<sup>17</sup> This inspired OT commentary serves as the basis for Matthew's interpretation of the OT.

oracle clarifies (interprets) the oblique poetic imagery of the previous oracle. "Water flowing from Israel's buckets" (v. 7) is explained as a "star [king] arising out of Jacob" (v. 17). The destruction of Israel's enemies (v. 8c-e) is described as the Messiah's victory over Israel's enemies in verses 17-24. This inner-biblical commentary strongly suggests that the one who "devours the nations his enemies" and "crushes their bones" and "shatters them with arrows" (v. 8c-e) is not collective Israel, but the individual Messiah-king. If the second half of verse 8 refers to the Messiah, it is likely the first half of the verse does as well. Fourth, the messianic interpretation of verses 7-9 is well supported in the history of interpretation, dating back to pre-Christian times (see Septuagint, Philo, Targum Neofiti, Fragment Targum recensions P and VNL, Targum Psuedo-Jonathan, etc.). In my opinion, the cumulative evidence strongly favors a messianic interpretation of all of verse 8.

16 See for example Isaiah 11:10-16 and Zechariah 14:4-5.

17 For a survey of first century Jewish hermeneutics, see Longenecker, 6-35.

## The Prophets' Use of the Torah

While *kvelling*<sup>18</sup> over the glories of salvation through Yeshua, Peter writes,

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. (1 Pet 1:10–11)

The Greek verbs Peter uses to describe the prophetic inquiries depict the prophets diligently poring over the writings of other prophets in order to gain more clarity about the coming Messiah. I believe Peter's knowledge about the prophetic activity did not simply come by way of inspired insight, but rather through his own careful study of the OT's inner-biblical web of inspired citations and allusions.

Given the literary relationship of the Prophets and the Writings to the Torah, it appears that the completion of the Mosaic Pentateuch catalyzed a big bang of prophetic chatter with respect to the certainties of Israel's failure under the Sinai Covenant and the promises of a future work of grace in "the last days" described by Moses. The prophets meditated on the Torah day and night, and this resulted in a Hebrew Bible fixated on a future glorious hope despite Israel's continual covenantal failures. In this light, we can now look at Jeremiah's reflections and commentary on the theology of the Pentateuch.

**... it appears that the completion of the Mosaic Pentateuch catalyzed a big bang of prophetic chatter with respect to the certainties of Israel's failure under the Sinai Covenant and the promises of a future work of grace in "the last days" described by Moses.**

Most of us have experienced the joy of reading Jeremiah's promise of the New Covenant to a seeking Jewish person. It may come as a surprise to hear that Jeremiah's prophecy was not a sudden burst of new developments in the course of progressive revelation. In other words, Jeremiah's "new" covenant was not an entirely new concept. Rather, several citations and allusions to the Torah suggest that Jeremiah's message was simply a reiteration (albeit a divinely inspired reiteration and commentary) of Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 30 (and of other eschatological passages from the Torah).

Scholars have long noted Jeremiah's dependency on Deuteronomy. Charles L. Feinberg, for instance, writes, "Some sixty-six passages from Deuteronomy find an echo in Jeremiah's eighty-six references to the book."<sup>19</sup>

18 Yiddish for "total delight."

19 Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 6:368.



Chapters 1–28 of Jeremiah primarily focus on the coming destruction of Jerusalem because of covenant disobedience. Chapters 29–33<sup>20</sup> unexpectedly turn to the theme of redemption in “the last days” (30:24) that also includes the promise of the New Covenant (31:31–34) and the coming Messiah (30:9). Jeremiah 29–33 (the new covenant section) is full of allusions to, and citations of, Deuteronomy 30, as well as other eschatological texts from the Torah.<sup>21</sup> J. G. McConville is quite clear about this when he writes,

Deut. xxx 1–10, first of all, has clear connexions [*sic*] with passages from the prophetic literature, notably Jer. xxx–xxxiii; Ezek. xxxvi. The affinities are greater with Jeremiah. Once again, linguistic usage signals the link. Jeremiah knows both a circumcising of the heart (Jer. iv 4; cf. Deut. xxx 6—with x 16) and a “restoration of fortunes” (*šûb šebût*: Jer xxix 10, xxx 3, 18, xxxi 23, xxxii 44, xxxiii 7, 11, 26). The later motif clearly clusters round the so-called Book of Consolation. Its association with Deut. xxx 1–10 is strengthened by its occurrence twice in collocation with the verb *rh̄m*, where Yahweh is the subject and is said to have compassion on his people (xxx 18, xxxiii 26). The Book of Consolation also develops the idea connoted both in Deut. xxx 6 and Jer. iv 4 by “circumcising the heart”. The essence of that idea is Yahweh’s initiative in producing Israel’s repentance, present in Jeremiah in the New Covenant theology of xxxi 31–4 and xxxii 39–40, and in Ezek. xxxvi 26–7, where it is also in collocation with the idea of a return to the land, v. 28. This feature of Deut. xxx 1–10 is quite as important a factor in the novelty and individuality of that passage as its introduction of the hope of restoration to the land.<sup>22</sup>

There are two noteworthy points I would like to make here. First, Jeremiah seemingly understood Deuteronomy 30 as the *promise* of a new covenant (see Jer 31:31–34).<sup>23</sup> Thus, Jeremiah’s book provides an inspired vantage

20 Chapter 29 narrates the contents of Jeremiah’s letter of instruction to the exiles. Chapters 30–33 are known as the Book of Consolation.

21 For example, compare Jeremiah 29:13–14 to Deuteronomy 30:3 and Deuteronomy 4:29 (both texts from Deuteronomy are themselves inner-textually linked; compare Deut 4:30 and Deut 30:2a, 3a). The key phrase, “restore the fortunes” (Jer 29:14; 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11, 26) is taken directly from Deuteronomy 30:3. Also compare Jeremiah 30:3 with Deuteronomy 30:5; Jeremiah 32:37 with Deuteronomy 30:3–4; and Jeremiah 29:18 with Deuteronomy 28:25 for possible allusions (compare also Jer 31:33 with Deut 30:3; Jer 32:41 with Deut 30:9; Jer 29:17 with Deut 28:48).

22 J. G. McConville, “1 Kings VIII 46–53 and the Deuteronomic Hope,” *VT* 42, vol. 1 (1992): 77.

23 It is worth noting there is a serious discrepancy in Jeremiah 31:32 between the MT and the NT (see Heb 8:9). Whereas the MT reads, “I was a husband to them,” the NT (following the LXX) reads, “I cared nothing for them.” What are we to make of this discrepancy? On one level the answer is simple and straightforward. Either the *Vorlage* (original Hebrew manuscript) of the LXX had a ג *g*, “abhor,” “loathe”) instead of a ב *b* (“marry,” “rule over”), or the LXX translator mistook the ב for a ג. Given the theological stakes involved, however, it is difficult to imagine that the translator could have made such a serious error. We are forced to ask ourselves (especially in light of our acceptance of the NT’s authority), whether the MT or the LXX is the better reading. I believe the notion of the OT’s use of the OT offers a plausible answer. We have argued that Jeremiah’s New

point for looking at the Torah's theology (the punch line of its message) as essentially a *new covenant theology*.

Second, Jeremiah's reading of Deuteronomy sheds invaluable light on Paul's interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Romans 10:6–8. In the context, Paul contrasts Leviticus 18:5 (a righteousness based on law) with Deuteronomy 30:12–14 (a righteousness based on faith). It appears that Paul understands Leviticus 18 and Deuteronomy 30 as two different covenants within the Torah itself: the Sinai and the New Covenants, respectively. And while many commentators are hard-pressed to find promises of the Messiah and the New Covenant in Deuteronomy 30,<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah's pre-Christian interpretation opens wide the path leading from Deuteronomy 30 directly to Romans 10, and to Yeshua our Messiah. Thus we have a vital link from the OT to Yeshua and to the NT by means of the Prophets' use of the Torah. Finally we will look at the Writings' use of the Prophets.

### The Writings' Use of the Prophets' Use of the Torah

Jeremiah 29<sup>25</sup> reveals Jeremiah's own understanding of Deuteronomy 30 (and other key texts of the Torah) as the promised New Covenant and coming of the Messiah in "the last days" (compare Jer 29:13–14 with Deut 4:29; 30:3). The introduction to the book of Daniel makes it quite clear that Daniel would have been among the recipients of Jeremiah's letter, himself being exiled by Nebuchadnezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (Dan 1:1–6).<sup>26</sup> This information proves crucial for our understanding of Daniel 9. There we find Daniel studying and responsively praying over<sup>27</sup>

Covenant derives, not only from prophetic inspiration, but also from his careful study of the Torah. Leviticus 26 is a crucial chapter in the Torah's eschatological vision. A key word in this chapter is געלל (Lev 26:11, 15, 30, 43, 44). There, Israel's violation of the Sinai Covenant and subsequent exile is foretold. Throughout this chapter there is a vacillation between the people's "loathing" of God and His commandments (vv. 15, 43) and God's "loathing" of the people (v. 30; see also Jer 14:19). Yet, God will ultimately deal with Israel's uncircumcised heart (v. 41) and will not in the end completely "loathe" Israel (v. 44) because of His covenant with the patriarchs. There is significant overlap between the eschatology of Leviticus 26 and Jeremiah 29–33 (compare especially Jer 31:32 with Lev 26:15), to the extent that one could argue that Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant in 31:31–34 intentionally alludes to Leviticus 26. In my opinion, the close correspondence of Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Leviticus 26 suggests that the LXX (and the NT) offers the better reading. The MT of verse 32, on the other hand, looks conspicuously secondary.

24 Richard Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 1) refers to Paul's use of Deuteronomy here as a *tour de force* that "must have startled his first audience." Darrell L. Bock ("Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 132) identifies Romans 10 as an "exegetical minefield."

25 A letter (*sefer*) written to the exiles on the eve of Jerusalem's desolation (see Jer 29:1–3).

26 Daniel would have been part of those identified by Jeremiah as the "good figs," namely, those through whom God would fulfill His eschatological promises (Jer 25:1–7).

27 Gerald H. Wilson ("The Prayer of Daniel 9: Reflection on Jeremiah 29," *JSOT* 48 [1990]: 97) writes, "The prayer is best understood as an attempt to have Daniel fulfill the conditions for restoration set out in Jer. 29.12–14."



the very letters (*seferim*)<sup>28</sup> referred to in Jeremiah 29—letters that determine the duration of a seventy-year period of time<sup>29</sup> until the fulfillment of God's promises regarding "the last days" (cf., Deut 4:29; 30:3; 29:10–14). Jeremiah's use of the OT (e.g., Deut; also compare Dan 9 with Lev 26), in this case, clarifies what Jeremiah means by the "good word" ("end" and "hope") promised to Israel in Jeremiah 29:10–11. It is clear that the goal (in the fullest sense) of Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy was not, and could not be, the anticlimactic events described in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>30</sup>

With this in mind, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between the first and second parts of Daniel 9,<sup>31</sup> namely, Daniel's initial *understanding* of Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy (v. 2) and Gabriel's task of bringing *understanding* of Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy to Daniel (vv. 20–23, 25). If Daniel already understood Jeremiah's words (v. 2), why was it necessary for Gabriel to come and impart understanding to Daniel?

Although some critical scholars perceive an irreconcilable tension here, this tension is resolved when one considers the timing of Daniel's prayer. It is apparent from Daniel 1:1 and 9:1 that Daniel uttered this prayer approximately sixty-eight years after his own exile.<sup>32</sup> As far as Daniel was concerned, the timing of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy should have been imminent. Gabriel's task, therefore, was to provide Daniel with a clearer understanding of Jeremiah's prophecy and the timing of its FULL-fulfillment. Gabriel symbolically interprets Jeremiah's seventy years: seventy years become seventy weeks of years.<sup>33</sup> It is essential to note that I am not denying the literal historical return of the Babylonian exiles after a seventy-year period. Rather, I am saying that Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy in chapter 29 is inseparably linked to the promise of the New Covenant in chapters 30–33. In that sense, the return described in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah is not the FULL-fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. Daniel

28 Ibid., 93. Wilson accounts for the plural reference to "letters/books" in Daniel 9:2 on the basis of the structure of Jeremiah 29, where he argues there is evidence of at least two letters written by Jeremiah to the exiles (vv. 10–14 and 24–32).

29 Ibid. According to Wilson, chapters 27–29 of Jeremiah deal with the prophet's attempt to counter false prophecies of a swift return from exile.

30 Paul L. Redditt ("Daniel 9: Its Structure and Meaning," *CBQ* 62, vol. 2 [2000]: 237), writing from a critical-historical perspective, states the following: "Whatever others may have thought of the restoration described in Ezra-Nehemiah, the author of Daniel was not prepared to accept the conditions of 165 B.C. (or 539 B.C. either) as a fulfillment of God's promise through Jeremiah."

31 I.e., Daniel's meditation on Jeremiah and his prayer in verses 1–19, and Gabriel's words of clarification in verses 20–27.

32 Wilson, 97. Daniel was exiled in 606 BC. His prayer was uttered in 538 BC.

33 See Redditt, 236; Fishbane, 482. My purpose here is not to explain the precise chronological nuances of the seventy weeks. Much depends on the identification of the decree in verse 25. Conservative evangelicals have argued for at least three possibilities: (1) Cyrus' decree (Ezra 1:1–4), ca. 539 BC (e.g., Michael B. Shepherd, *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible*, *Studies in Biblical Literature* 123, ed. Hemchand Gossai [New York: Peter Lang, 2009]); (2) Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra (Ezra 7:11–26), c. 458–457 BC (e.g., Gleason Archer, "Daniel," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985]); and (3) Artaxerxes' decree to Nehemiah (Neh 2:1–9), ca. 445 BC (e.g., John H. Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994]).



9, therefore, provides the necessary biblical background for evaluating the events described in Ezra-Nehemiah and also explains the reasons for the delay in the timing of Jeremiah's eschatological prophecies. To be clear, there is an indissoluble link between Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years and Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks: they are both descriptions of one and the same vision. Daniel 9:24–27 is simply an inspired inner-biblical OT interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy, a shining example of the OT's use of the OT.<sup>34</sup>

Based on the paradigm of the OT's use of the OT, one can say with a fair degree of certainty that Daniel 9:24–27 is messianic<sup>35</sup> because of its inner-biblical relationship to other overtly eschatological passages elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, "the last days" is a key phrase in the compositional strategy of Daniel that unites the Aramaic and Hebrew portions of the book (2:28; 10:14)<sup>36</sup>—a phrase no doubt borrowed from the Torah (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 4:30; 31:29) and incorporated by the Prophets (e.g. Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1).

Second, Daniel's interpretation of Jeremiah (and the Torah) contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the New Covenant, one that unites the removal of Israel's sin (Jer 31:34) with the death of the Messiah (Dan 9:26). Given the web of inner-biblical links from the eschatology of the Torah to Daniel 9, via Jeremiah, Yeshua's allusion to Jeremiah 31:31 on the eve of His Passover death (Luke 22:20) makes perfect sense. The inner-biblical prophetic tapestry necessarily includes the death of the Messiah. Once again, by means of the OT's use of the OT, we are able to defend a messianic interpretation of the OT that elucidates the NT's use of the OT—and, more importantly, leads directly to Yeshua.

**Daniel's interpretation of Jeremiah (and the Torah) contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the New Covenant, one that unites the removal of Israel's sin (Jer 31:34) with the death of the Messiah (Dan 9:26).**

34 Based on the presence of several inner-biblical citations and allusions, Fishbane (489) argues that all of Daniel 9 is "a skillful exegetical ensemble."

35 J. Paul Tanner ("Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 1," *BibSac* 166 [April–June 2009]: 181) calls attention to the pervasive tendency among critical and Jewish scholars to regard this passage as non-messianic. "Some writers see no reference to Messiah in this passage. This includes most critical scholars, who typically favor a Maccabean fulfillment (i.e., in the second century B.C.), and Jewish exegetes, who—although differing about various details—tend to see the fulfillment of this passage with the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 and/or its aftermath." The tendency of historical-critical scholars is, first, to adduce a late dating for the Book of Daniel (the Maccabean period), and second, to interpret Daniel's message in light of the historical events of that period. The paradigm I am suggesting (the OT's use of the OT) seeks to interpret Daniel's message as an integral part of the ongoing inner-biblical prophetic discussion regarding the meaning of the Torah and its eschatology. Daniel 9, moreover, must be understood within the compositional strategy of the book as a whole, a strategy whose primary concern is the events of "the last days" (Dan 2:28; 10:14).

36 Shepherd, 73.



## Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to present a paradigm for reading and interpreting the OT. I have argued that the OT already comes to its readers with a thorough network of inner-biblical interpretation. Our goal is not to interpret the raw data of the OT. Rather, we seek to be sensitive to the interpretations already laid out within the *Tanakh* itself.

I have also argued for a remarkable congruence between the OT interpretation of the OT on the one hand, and the NT interpretation of the OT on the other. This paradigm offers extraordinary explanatory and apologetic possibilities for defending the NT's interpretation of the OT and for demonstrating to our Jewish people that Yeshua is the promised Messiah.

I have only looked at a few examples, but I believe that this paradigm could revolutionize the way in which we think about messianic prophecy and the ways in which we argue our faith from the Hebrew Bible.<sup>37</sup> It is truly my hope that this paper will provoke each one of us to become more serious and sensitive readers of the OT *for Zion's sake*.

### Author info:

Seth Postell (Ph.D., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary) is a field staff member with Life in Messiah International and is currently on a teaching assignment at the Charles Feinberg Center. [sdavidpll@gmail.com](mailto:sdavidpll@gmail.com)

37 What if we could demonstrate by means of inner-biblical OT interpretation, for example, that Isaiah 53 is about an individual Israelite, or that Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, and Psalm 22 are messianic?



# Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament\*

by David L. Allen

## Historical Overview of the Authorship Question

In the past twenty-five years, commentaries and monographs on the epistolary sphinx of the New Testament (NT) known as Hebrews have mushroomed. After languishing in the canonical attic for years, this treasure has been rediscovered of late, dusted off, and researched with new vigor, all to the benefit of the church.

From the earliest days of the church, Hebrews has been shrouded in obscurity. It is the only truly anonymous letter in the NT. With regard to authorship, most modern scholars share the view expressed by Origen's dictum: "As to who wrote the epistle, truly only God knows."<sup>1</sup> Complicating the problem of authorship is the uncertainty regarding other background issues such as date, recipients, and place of writing. There is no clear and unequivocal internal evidence for any of these issues. Consequently, Hebrews is probably the most enigmatic book in the NT in terms of background and provenance.<sup>2</sup> The epistle's title "to the Hebrews" is not originally part of the letter's composition, but was an addition during the second century, and is of no help in identifying the recipients of the epistle.<sup>3</sup> Certainly much of the content of Hebrews is unique. It does not fit readily into the scheme of the Pauline, the Johannine, or the Petrine writings, yet it constitutes one of the most majestic presentations of Christology in the entire NT. Indeed, Barnabas Lindars ranks the author of Hebrews with Paul and John as one of the three great theologians of the NT.<sup>4</sup>

\* This paper was presented by the author at the annual meeting of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism—North America, in Atlanta, GA, March 1, 2010.

1 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.

2 E. F. Scott's now famous description of Hebrews as "the riddle of the New Testament" is apropos (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Doctrine and Significance* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1923], 1).

3 See the discussion on the title in relationship to the epistle's canonicity in Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 413–15.

4 Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

The question of the authorship of Hebrews has been something of a Gordian knot for NT studies. From the patristic era until today, a virtual cornucopia of candidates has been brought forth as potential authors. Many have conjectured, some have conjured, but very few have been convinced in the search for the author of Hebrews. From among the variegated list one finds the following names, listed in chronological order of their postulation: Paul, Clement of Rome, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Peter, Priscilla and Aquila, Aristion, Philip, Jude, Epaphras, John the Apostle, Timothy, and Mary the mother of Jesus, assisted by Luke and John.

Modern NT studies are quite content to leave the question unanswered, and since 1976, there have been no new theories concerning authorship. Phillip Hughes is simply summing up the attitude of most when he says that "as things are, the riddle of the authorship of Hebrews is incapable of solution. Failing the discovery of fresh and positive evidence . . . we must be content with our ignorance. To say this is not to imply that the offering of conjectures is out of place. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

Since the text itself does not name the author, the historical testimony is inconclusive in and of itself, and the internal evidence does not provide enough information to determine authorship, the most fruitful approaches are theories that provide other textual data with which to compare Hebrews. This is a weakness in the suggestions of both Barnabas and Apollos, in that as far as we know, there are no extant texts written by these men to compare with Hebrews.<sup>6</sup> Of course this does not mean that they could not have written it. Matthew, Mark, James, and Jude each authored only one book in the NT. It merely means that as far as we are concerned, there is no way of making any comparative study.

Although it is entirely possible that Hebrews was written by a heretofore unknown author, the most propitious place to begin the search for potential candidates ought to be the NT authors themselves, followed by major players in first century Christianity who are mentioned in the NT, such as Apollos, Barnabas, and Clement of Rome. Such was the approach of the patristics. Clearly two candidates emerge as frontrunners: Paul and Luke.

The suggestion that Luke may have had something to do with the writing of Hebrews has early patristic support. Written historical testimony actually begins with statements attributed to Pantaenus, head of the Alexandrian school. He ascribed it to Paul, but observed that contrary to Paul's custom in his other epistles, there is no salutation identifying him as the author. At the end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria, student of Pantaenus, was later quoted by Eusebius as saying that Paul wrote Hebrews originally in Hebrew and Luke translated it into Greek for a Hellenistic Jewish audience. Clement stated that it was this fact (Luke's translation) which accounted for the stylistic similarities between Hebrews and Luke-

5 Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 19.

6 The so-called *Epistle of Barnabas* is probably a second century Alexandrian work wrongly attributed to Barnabas. Eusebius included it "among the spurious books" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.25).

Acts.<sup>7</sup> By the middle of the third century, Origen allowed for Pauline influence on the thoughts of the epistle, but he ascribed the style and actual writing to someone else: "The statement of some who have gone before us is that Clement, bishop of the Romans, wrote the epistle, and of others that Luke, the author of the Gospel and the Acts, wrote it."<sup>8</sup> Throughout church history, others have suggested, though none has argued for it in any extensive fashion, that Luke was or could have been the author of Hebrews. Included in this list are such stellar names as John Calvin and Franz Delitzsch.

My proposal is Luke was the independent author of Hebrews. This "Luke" is the traditional author of Luke-Acts, a physician who traveled with Paul and who wrote the Gospel of Luke in ca. AD 60–61 and Acts in ca. AD 62–63. Acts was written from Rome during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Luke's intended reader of his two-volume work was Theophilus, a former Jewish high priest, who served in Jerusalem from AD 37–41 and was deposed by Herod Agrippa. The grounds for this deposition are not known. Herod may have wanted to assure that the High Priest was firmly committed to his new leadership; perhaps Theophilus was too lenient on the Christians to suit Herod's taste, or had himself become a Christian. Luke wrote Hebrews from Rome ca. AD 67–69, probably after the death of Paul. The letter was written to former Jerusalem temple priests, the first group of whom had been converted to Christianity during the early years of the church at Jerusalem before the outbreak of the Stephanic persecution (Acts 6:7). These former priests constituted a segment of the church located in Syrian Antioch, where as a result of this persecution they had fled. Having relocated in Antioch, they lived in relative safety and became a part of the Antiochene church. Luke was probably a member of this church, or at the very least, since both Scripture and tradition link Luke with Antioch, probably had contact with these former priests on numerous occasions.

In my estimation, the primary reason why Lukan authorship of Hebrews has not been considered seriously is the presumption that he was a Gentile. For centuries, the prevailing paradigm in NT studies that Luke was a Gentile has been axiomatic, as can be seen clearly by any cursory reading of commentaries on Luke-Acts.<sup>9</sup> However, within Lukan studies today, there is

**My proposal is Luke was the independent author of Hebrews. . . . Luke's intended reader . . . was Theophilus, a former Jewish high priest, who served in Jerusalem from AD 37–41 and was deposed by Herod Agrippa.**

7 Clement of Alexandria, quoted by Eusebius, from Clement's *Hypotyposes*, in *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.

8 Origin, as quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25. The oldest extant text of Hebrews is found in P46 (ca. AD 200) where it occurs immediately following Romans (most likely due to its length) in a fourteen-letter Pauline collection.

9 After noting that most commentators still posit a Gentile background for Luke, Darrell Bock comments: "In sum, it seems very likely that Luke was a Gentile, though it is unclear whether his cultural background was Semitic" (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, ECNT [Grand



no such consensus regarding Luke's background.<sup>10</sup> There is much evidence to suggest that Luke may have been a Hellenistic Jew whose writings exhibit characteristics both Jewish and Greek.

**There is much evidence to suggest that Luke may have been a Hellenistic Jew whose writings exhibit characteristics both Jewish and Greek.**

If Luke is the author of Hebrews, why does he not appear to exhibit a high-priestly Christology in his Gospel and Acts? I think Luke actually does do this and in surprising ways. Consider what Luke tells us about Zacharias the priest in Luke 1:5–23. He is serving by lot in the Holy Place when an angel visits him and informs him he and his elderly wife Elizabeth would have a child, though Elizabeth is past the age of child-bearing. Because Zacharias doubts the angel's word, the angel says to Zacharias that he will be mute from then until the day the child will be born. When Zacharias returns from the Holy Place to the courtyard, all the people are awaiting the completion of the liturgy which is the pronouncement of the blessing. But Zacharias cannot speak, so he cannot complete the priestly blessing.

Now fast forward to Luke 24:50–51. The resurrected Jesus takes His disciples out as far as Bethany and performs one final act before ascending to heaven: He lifts up His hands and He blesses them. This is the act of priestly blessing that concluded the daily Tamid service and also the final act of the High Priest on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, after the completion of the atonement liturgy. Many scholars see in this act of Jesus the symbolism of the priestly blessing. What Zacharias was unable to complete at the beginning of Luke's Gospel, Jesus now completes as God's final High Priest, who has made final atonement for the sins of the people.

## Hebrews as Creative Expository Preaching

Hebrews is one of the most important books in the NT for its contribution to the nature, theology, and practice of preaching. It is itself a first century sermon. Notice the author refers to his work as a "word of exhortation" in Hebrews 13:22, a phrase occurring only here and in Acts 13:15, where Paul and Barnabas were invited to speak in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. William L. Lane rightly concluded that this "word of exhortation" "appears to be an idiomatic, fixed expression for a sermon in Jewish-hellenistic and early Christian circles."<sup>11</sup> It is now generally recognized that Hebrews is

Rapids: Baker Book House 1994], 6–7). The Gentile background paradigm continues to dominate.

10 Jacob Jervell categorically states regarding Luke, "He was a Jewish Christian" (*The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 5). See Rick Strelan's newly released *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Aldershot, UK/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), where he argues that the many examples of priestly interest found in Luke indicate Luke was a priest who converted to Christianity.

11 William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary, no. 47a, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1991), lxx. Lane summarized Thyen's evidence and

indeed a written sermon. The frequent and well-placed imperatives and hortatory subjunctives, the interweaving of exposition and exhortation, coupled with its exquisite rhetorical touches all exemplify its sermonic nature. Jon C. Laansma described the epistle's exhortation as the "goal" and the exposition as the "means to the goal."<sup>12</sup> Lane rightly called the author a "gifted preacher" and noted:

Hebrews is a sermon prepared to be read aloud to a group of auditors who will receive its message not primarily through reading and leisureed reflection but orally. Reading the document aloud entails oral performance, providing oral clues to those who listen to the public reading of the sermon. . . . Hebrews was crafted to communicate its points as much aurally as logically. In point of fact, aural considerations, in the event of communication, often prove to be the decisive ones.<sup>13</sup>

Lane's use of the word "crafted" is well chosen. The author is writing for the ear, not the eye. Like a good preacher, he attempts to turn the ear into an eye! Much of the oral impact is lost in the translation from Greek into English. Consider the following examples of a master preacher at work.

- Alliteration – Heb 1:1 (*polemeros* [in many portions], *poletropos* [in many ways], *palai* [of old], *patrasin* [fathers], *prophetais* [prophets])
- Rhythm – Heb 1:1 (*polemeros kai poletropos* [in many portions and in many ways])
- Paranomasia – Heb 11:11 (*Sarra steira* [barren Sara]; English equivalent: sterile Sherill)
- Inclusio – Heb 1:2; 1:4 (*kleronomon – kekleronomeken* [heir – inheritance]); Heb 5:11; 6:12 (*nothroi* followed by *ginomai* [dull (you) have become]; section boundary marker)
- Chiasm – Heb 1:5 (Son, begotten, Father, Son – Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14)
- Anaphora – Heb 11

What makes Hebrews so persuasive is its creative blending of rhetoric with satisfying biblical exegesis and exhortation. Hebrews is an example of doctrinal preaching in that its author teases out doctrinal insight from exegesis and application of Old Testament (OT) texts. It is also an example of pastoral preaching that addresses the needs of the local church by satisfying exposition, exhortation, and encouragement. The author alternates between exposition and exhortation. Let us consider his exposition first. If

conclusions concerning the Jewish-hellenistic homily form of the first century AD as the best description of the genre of Hebrews. "Hebrews is a skillfully crafted homily of the type delivered in a Diaspora synagogue." For the complete discussion on the issue, see Lane, lxix-lxxv.

12 Jon Laansma, "Book of Hebrews," *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

13 Lane, lxxv.



Hebrews is an expository sermon, what is its text? Psalm 110:1, 4. As an exposition of Psalm 110:1, 4, Hebrews is a biblical text-driven sermon. Psalm 110:1 is the most quoted OT passage in the NT!

The NT documents indicate exegesis was the primary method of doing theology in the early church. This is no more clearly evidenced than with the author of Hebrews. For him, Psalm 110:1 and 4 serve as the “text” which he will, with the help of other OT texts, expound theologically and apply to his hearers. From Psalm 110:1, 4, the author identifies Jesus as Son, High Priest, and King. As Son, Jesus shares in the identity of God; as High Priest, He atones for sin; as Lord and King, Jesus reigns from the throne of God. The author of Hebrews is first and foremost an exegete before he is a biblical theologian. His theology is predicated on his exegesis of OT texts. He brings exegesis into the service of theology as an exegetical theologian, and he brings both into the service of preaching and thus into the service of the church as a preacher par excellence. He reads the OT wearing christological glasses just as Jesus instructed the disciples to do on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. As Lane says, Hebrews is “first century exegesis in the service of preaching.”<sup>14</sup>

Not only is the author a master expositor, but he also knows how to apply theology to the church through preaching. The sermonic journey known as Hebrews contains what at first blush appear to be several hortatory digressions and diversions (2:1–4; 3:7–19; 5:11–6:8; 10:26–31; 12:4–11). In reality, the hortatory passages are interwoven with the doctrinal sections very tightly. These hortatory sections are not digressions, but convey the dominant semantic information of the epistle with the doctrinal material functioning semantically as the grounds (support material). These hortatory sections are actually the goal of the argument: “on the basis of this . . . do this.” Hebrews is at heart a pastoral document in which the author attempts to persuade his readers to a particular course of action.

The book of Hebrews is about Jesus the Son who becomes our High Priest and then becomes King when He sits upon the throne of God in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1, 4. This schema is presented in brilliant summary fashion in the prologue and then is developed in each of the three major divisions of the epistle (Son, 1:5–4:13; High Priest, 4:14–10:18; King, 10:19–13:21). Christology is intertwined with eschatology and applied pastorally to a congregation facing discouragement and spiritual drift due to persecution and failure to press on spiritually because of their disobedience to the Word of God.

The value of Hebrews to the church cannot be overestimated. Its theological potency in revelation, Christology, and eschatology contribute to the church’s theological well-being in an age when doctrinal orthodoxy, especially in the areas of revelation and Christology, is assailed. Hermeneutically, the use of the OT by NT authors binds the two testaments together

14 William L. Lane, “Preaching and Exegesis in the First Century: Hebrews,” in *Sharing Heaven’s Music—The Heart of Christian Preaching: Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey*, ed. Barry L. Callen (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 91.



christologically in a way that the church today needs to rediscover. No NT writer has done this any more masterfully than the author of Hebrews. Pastorally, this epistle teaches us that life's problems, both internal and external, can only be met and solved by clear thinking about Christ and His finished work of atonement. Persecution is to be endured by Christians who are grounded in their understanding of the person and work of Christ. Spiritual progress to maturity is grounded in faithfulness to Jesus and in ongoing daily dependence on the living Christ as our intercessor. As T. Olbricht put it so well concerning Hebrews: "In depth Christological reflection is therefore the path to spiritual renewal. . . ." <sup>15</sup> Knowledge of the security of one's salvation and the certainty of our future eternal hope give daily hope in the midst of the stress of internal problems and external persecution.

### Use of Scripture in Hebrews

One cannot fail to be struck by the priority which the author of Hebrews places on the OT Scripture in his sermon. At least thirty-one direct quotations occur within the confines of thirteen chapters (12 from the Pentateuch, 7 from the Prophets, and 12 from Psalms and Proverbs). Oddly, not a single one of these quotations is from the MT; they are all from the LXX. For the author, all Scripture is prophetic speech, and all Scripture is the word of God.

The author's text for his sermon is Psalm 110:1, 4. Psalm 110:1 is alluded to in 1:3 and quoted in 1:13 at the end of the catena of seven quotations. Its occurrence in 1:3 and 1:13 forms an inclusio. Psalm 110:1 also is cited in Hebrews 8:1 and 10:12–13, and it is alluded to again in 12:2. Psalm 110:4 is quoted in Hebrews 5:6; 7:17, 21; and 8:1. It is alluded to in 5:10; 6:17, 20; 7:3, 11, 15, 20, 24, 28. Notice that both Psalm 110:1 and 4 are referenced together in 8:1.

The prologue of Hebrews is absolutely critical to a proper interpretation of the epistle. Here we find continuity and contrast of the OT revelation with Christ. According to Hebrews 1:1, God spoke "at many times and in various ways" to the fathers by the prophets. Revelation in the OT includes the media God used to express His word to Israel. Such media included verbal discourse, dreams and visions, signs, symbols, etc. <sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the choice of vocabulary by OT writers to express this revelation is both varied and precise. The "supremacy of the word" is the essential distinguishing feature of the OT prophet.

15 Thomas H. Olbricht, "Anticipating and Presenting the Case for Christ as High Priest in Hebrews," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 357.

16 For a full listing and discussion of the modalities of revelation in the OT, see Willis J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (1905; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 115–32.



Old Testament revelation was predominately verbal and auditory rather than visual. Throughout the OT, God's revelation is identified with speaking and hearing; with written text and the reading of written texts. Jesus made use of the spoken word exclusively according to the Gospel accounts, and this may be invested with theological significance. In continuity with this biblical focus, the author of Hebrews gives primacy to the mode of hearing the Word.<sup>17</sup>

In the OT, God spoke piecemeal and in different manners. However, in the Son God's revelation is now final and complete. The upshot of all this is that God's "speech" in Jesus the Son is, as Kevin J. Vanhoozer put it, "something that God says, something that God does, and something that God is."<sup>18</sup> Placing this in the order of Hebrews 1:1–4, God's revelation in Christ is something that God says (God has spoken through the prophets and in a Son), something that Jesus as God is (the radiance of His glory and exact representation of His being), and something that Jesus as God does (He created the universe, sustains the universe, and made purification for sins). Thus, God's revelation in Christ is being, word, and event.<sup>19</sup> There is thus a unity and continuity in God's revelation.

The prologue is followed by a catena of seven OT quotations in Hebrews 1:5–13. This catena is an example of theological interpretation via scriptural citation.

17 See the important discussion of these matters in Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 18–21. Wilder argued the point that language is more fundamental than graphic representation except when "the latter is itself a transcript in some sense of the Word of God" (19). Wilder opined that orthodoxy exalted the written word and neglected the oral feature which "inheres in the very nature of the Word of God, that is, its nature as an event in personal relations; and the Word therefore, is not just a bearer of a certain content of meaning which can be isolated, but a happening which brings something to pass and moves towards what it has in view" (24). Thankfully, orthodoxy has been in the process of remedying this oversight during the past forty years (see the works of Vanhoozer, for example, as they relate to this issue).

18 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 205. Timothy Ward (*Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002], 307), accepting a speech-act view of language, noted: "It soon becomes clear that persons, actions, and words are tied inextricably together." This, of course, has immense repercussions for the issue of revelation and inspiration, and provides another platform for the orthodox doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture.

19 Vanhoozer (456–57) suggests a Trinitarian theology of communication. God, as a communicative agent, relates to humanity through words and the Word. His very being is a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts a covenant of discourse: speaker (Father), Word (Son [and Scripture as Word of God, I might add]), and reception (Holy Spirit). Speech Act Theory serves as handmaiden to a Trinitarian theology of communication. If the Father is the locutor, the Son is the preeminent illocution. The Holy Spirit is the condition and power of receiving God's message, and as God the perlocutor, the Holy Spirit is the reason that His words do not return to Him empty. See also Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 89: "His words were done as well as spoken, and his deeds spoke as much as his words." Speech Act Theory is put to good use by Ward in his outstanding *Word and Supplement*. This work seeks to recover the classical doctrine of Scripture against both post-liberal (Barthian) and revisionist theologians.

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Appointment as heir (2b)     | Appointment as Son and heir (5–9) |
| 2. Mediator of Creation (2c)    | Mediator of Creation (10)         |
| 3. Eternal nature of Son (3a–b) | Eternal nature of Son (11–12)     |
| 4. Exaltation of Son (3d)       | Exaltation of Son (13)            |

Herbert W. Batemen is correct when he noted that rhetorically, the seven OT quotations are woven together by the author in the form of a “conceptual chiasm” to make a theological statement about Jesus the Son.

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| A The Son's Status as Davidic King (Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14) | (1:5)     |
| B The Son's Status as God (Deut 32:43; Ps 104:4)        | (1:6–7)   |
| C The Son's Status as Divine Davidic King (Ps 45:6–7)   | (1:8–9)   |
| B' The Son's Status as God (Ps 102:25–27)               | (1:10–12) |
| A' The Son's Status as Davidic King (Ps 110:1)          | (1:13)    |

Bateman's conclusion is that “two Jewish concepts about a future Davidic king and God are merged hermeneutically and exegetically and thereby find fulfillment in one person, the Son.”<sup>20</sup> The repetition and placement of Psalm 110:1 at the beginning (1:3 where it is an allusion) and end of the catena coupled with its use throughout Hebrews marks it as the key OT passage for the author of Hebrews. The author views Jesus as the Son and Messiah who was promised to David and who has inaugurated the Davidic kingdom by His exaltation to the right hand of the Father in heaven and thus in this sense begins the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.<sup>21</sup> The implication is that the Son's rule will have an earthly dimension which will be fulfilled, according to premillennialists, in a one thousand year earthly reign over all the nations, and an eternal, cosmic dimension where He reigns over all things. Thus, according to Hebrews 1:3, Jesus is the eternal Son (3a), Incarnate Son (3c), and Exalted Son (3d).

How is it that the author's christological interpretation of the OT avoids the arbitrary imposition of Christian interpretive methodology, yet does not distort its original meaning? The author, by his use of the OT, affirms his treatment is not only correct, but is correct from the viewpoint of the

20 Herbert W. Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5–13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), 244. See also his “Two First-Century Messianic Uses of the OT: Heb 1:5–13 and 4QFLOR 1:1–19,” *JETS* 38, no. 1 (March 1995): 11–27, especially 26–27. Richard Bauckham likewise sees a chiasmic pattern in these verses with the fourth quotation at the center (“Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. S. North [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 177). The first three quotations characterize the Son as Son. The fifth and sixth quotations characterize the Son as eternal. The first line of the fifth quotation, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,” and the last line of the sixth quotation, “Your years will never end,” are semantically equivalent. The seventh quotation is a summary conclusion. The fourth quotation is central because it contrasts the angels with the Son, the theme of the first three quotations, and then contrasts the angels with the Son as eternal, which is the theme of the fifth and sixth quotations.

21 So argued by David R. Anderson, *The King-Priest of Psalm 110 in Hebrews* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000), 138–76.



OT itself. This is of course a crucial aspect of the issue of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.<sup>22</sup>

The step from God's revelation through prophets to His revelation in His Son indeed involves something new from God's revelatory perspective, but not something so new that it was not already latent in the OT. This is illustrated in Hebrews 1:5–14 in several ways, one of which is the use of Psalm 110:1 in Hebrews 1:13 and three other times in the epistle as the foundation verse for the author's Christology.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Ronald Clements contended that the NT authors were not imposing a distorted, alien concept in their interpretation of the OT prophets, but rather were extending a process of interpretation already begun by the OT prophets.<sup>24</sup> According to Clements, the author argues not only from OT quotations, but also to *them*, because he recognized that readers may misinterpret so as to undermine the completeness and finality of Christianity. In Hebrews, the OT is used to illumine Christian doctrines, and Christian doctrine to illumine the OT. Hebrews seeks to show how the OT should be interpreted in light of Jesus, God's final revelation. The author's use of the OT reveals its value for Christians in knowing God's revelation. In fact, for Hebrews, God's OT revelation is absolutely necessary to an understanding of the significance of His revelation through Jesus!<sup>25</sup>

**Hebrews seeks to show how the OT should be interpreted in light of Jesus, God's final revelation. The author's use of the OT reveals its value for Christians in knowing God's revelation.**

Even though the interpretation of the OT employed by the author of Hebrews is not identical with traditional Jewish interpretation, there is a certain consistency in the way he handles its intended meaning. It would appear that many first century Jewish interpreters quoted from the OT with respect to its original context and the same appears to be true for

22 The literature on this subject is immense. An accessible review can be found in James H. Charlesworth's "What Has the Old Testament to Do with the New?" in *The Old and New Testaments: Their Relationship and the "Intertestamental" Literature*, Faith and Scholarship Colloquies Series, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 39–87; and David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 257–70.

23 See *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. James R. Davila, Carey C. Newman, and Gladys S. Lewis (Boston, MA: Brill, 1999), 61–63.

24 Ronald E. Clements, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (London: John Knox Press, 1978), 131–54. B. Child's calls Clement's approach here a "highly creative, illuminating attempt to break new ground" (*Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1989], 129). C. F. D. Moule (*The Birth of the New Testament*, 1st ed. [New York: Harper & Row, 1962], 75) noted that the author of Hebrews engaged in a "lively defense" of the Christian use of the OT in the tradition of Stephen, "by carrying the attack behind the enemy's lines: read your scriptures, Stephen is saying in effect, and you will find that it is the scriptures themselves that tell you to look beyond Moses and beyond the Temple." Moule views Hebrews as representing "precisely" the kind of debate which the trial of Stephen indicates (76).

25 These points are well made by R. Clements, "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews," *SWJT* 28 (1985): 36–45.

NT authors as well.<sup>26</sup> He avoids distortion of original textual meaning, yet builds his exegetical case in continuity with the OT.<sup>27</sup>

It has long been recognized that NT authors are not bound to reproduce their sources verbatim. It seems clear from the overall evidence that the author of Hebrews has occasionally modified his OT sources, but only with the clear purpose of stylistic enhancement, theological clarification, or to emphasize important points. None of these alterations alter or affect the contextual sense of the quotation.<sup>28</sup> There is strong evidence the author used an early LXX text.<sup>29</sup>

Herbert Bateman thoroughly analyzed the seven OT quotations, comparing their appearance in the MT, the LXX, and Hebrews. He identified Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; and Psalm 110:1 as "corresponding citations" in that they demonstrate a one-to-one correspondence in all three texts. Psalms 104:4; 45:6–7; and 102:25–27 are designated "conflicting citations" as they reflect differences between the LXX and the MT and the LXX and Hebrews. Bateman concluded relative to these citations:

The author reproduces the minor translational liberties in the Septuagint but adds his own interpretive changes—neither of which distort the conceptual sense of the Old Testament. Unlike the translator of the Septuagint, however, the author of Hebrews applies and thereby recontextualizes the conceptual sense of these Old Testament passages to describe the Son's superiority over angelic beings.<sup>30</sup>

There is one area of fascinating study when it comes to the author's use of OT Scripture: his use of quotation formulae. For example, note carefully who is said to be speaking in Hebrews 1:5–13—God. Though God Himself is not the direct speaker of many of these seven OT quotations, yet the author of Hebrews, by virtue of his quotation formulae, identifies God as the speaker. Now notice the quotation of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:7–11. Who is doing the speaking here? Notice the text says, "As the Holy Spirit says . . ." Now consider the OT quotations in Hebrews 2:12–13. Who is doing the speaking there? The author places these quotations on the lips of Jesus! The author of Hebrews makes his case by persuasive appeal to Israel's OT, in which both he and his readers hear the voice of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Here is exegesis in the service of preaching. The author does

26 David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 30 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 167–69. The same is true for NT authors according to G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," *Themelios* 14 (1989): 90–91.

27 See the excellent discussion in Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*, NABPR Dissertation Series, no. 10 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), especially 243–56.

28 See the excellent discussion of this issue by Bateman, 123–47, and Leschert, 243–56.

29 Kenneth J. Thomas, "Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 11, no. 4 (July 1965): 324; Bateman, 144.

30 Bateman, 141.

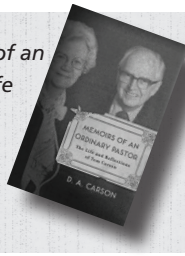


theology by reading and preaching Scripture! Notice how all citation formulae in Hebrews employ some form of the verb “speak.” Never is *gegraptai* (it has been written) used in Hebrews. Many of the citation formulae use the present tense form *legei* (to say), and only twice is the OT author’s name cited. More frequently we read, “God says,” or, “the Holy Spirit says. . . .” The author is stressing two things: 1) the ongoing relevance of Scripture to the current situation; and 2) the fact that God continues to speak through Scripture in the sense that Scripture is His direct speech. All Scripture quotations in Hebrews involve direct address! Scripture is an authoritative Word of God in the present. Scripture narrative is never quoted in Hebrews. Rather, it is retold in paraphrase. The focus in Hebrews is what God is saying now to us through the Word written then! Not once does the author say, “God has given me a word of knowledge to give to you,” as is common in Charismatic circles today. The author may have been an apostle; certainly he was a church leader in the apostolic church. Yet, he addresses them through Scripture, not extra-biblical revelation! Where does God speak today? For the author of Hebrews, He speaks to us in His written Word—the Scriptures, and in His living Word—the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Author info:**

David L. Allen, (Ph.D., The University of Texas at Arlington) is Dean of the School of Theology, and Professor of Preaching. He is the author of *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews and Hebrews*, New American Commentary, both of which will be released this summer by B&H Academic. [dallen@swbts.edu](mailto:dallen@swbts.edu)

D. A. Carson. *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Reflections of Tom Carson*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008, 160 pp., \$15.99, paper.



BOOK REVIEW



It will seem odd to review this book in the context of a publication intended for Jewish missions. The reason is really quite simple: I found in these pages a kindred spirit to the struggles and problems missionaries to the Jews face, and a remarkable set of parallels. Sometimes we in Jewish missions are so engrossed in our own problems, conflicts, and challenges that we fail to remember that others have encountered similar circumstances. That fact should give us encouragement as well as a sense of solidarity and camaraderie with those who have labored in other fields.

Don Carson, who teaches New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is always incisive, insightful, and direct. This book departs from his usual theological reflections to focus on the life of his father, Tom Carson, a missionary-pastor to French-speaking Roman Catholic Canadians in Québec in the mid-twentieth century. It is written to both the personal and the larger ministry situation. Personally, it is a loving, respectful look at a man who was pastoral, perfectionistic, and often consumed with feelings of failure and self-doubt. Ministerially, it offers a little-known glimpse (little known to Americans like myself, at any rate) of a difficult mission field often filled with opposition (personal and civic), requiring great patience and faithfulness, and slow to see “results” for a number of decades.

Some may relate to the personal end of the story. The wider picture will resonate with anyone in Jewish missions. The theme of opposition to the gospel is one point in common, as illustrated in letters written to Tom Carson. There is opposition from family:

by **Richard A. Robinson**

Dear Pastor, Several days ago I asked my wife why the Pastor had abruptly stopped visiting us. She replied in an angry voice that you had indeed come to the door, but that she had not let you in and had given you back [a book you had given us]. Then she blew up in a violent scene over my prospective change of religion, warning me that if I converted that would be the end of the marriage. (p. 40)

There is the mocking sort of opposition:

I am writing to tell you to no longer send anything to me because we pay little attention to your gospeling. . . . Your letters will not stop us from seeing our priests. You don't amount to anything in comparison with the church. You are only capable of sending out letters. . . . (p. 41)

And there is opposition from the authorities:

We had been visiting for about an hour and a half when a police car drove up. They called to me and asked if we had a permit for distributing our circulars. I told them that they were purely religious circulars, that I was a Baptist minister, and that I did not know that I needed to have any special authorization. I showed them a copy of one of the tracts we were dis-

tributing, "The Best Priest in the World." He told us to stop and that we could not distribute such without a permit. I asked him where we should get this. He told us from the Police Department. I thought that it was best to make further inquiries before doing anything. . . . [They] asked if the other man—Mr. Jubinville was on the other side of the street—was working with me. I said "Yes." So . . . they stopped their car a little farther on [where he was], and told him also to desist. Mr. J. offered them a tract and gave them a big smile. (p. 43)

There is opposition too from the equivalent, in that context, of a mission board or sending agency.

Also in common with Jewish missions is the slowness in seeing "results," until God providentially unleashed a flood of changes which included many coming to faith. Those churches that have objected to supporting Jewish missions because they want to put their money into more "fruitful" fields would do well to consider what their response would have been had they been asked to support French Roman Catholic missionary work in the circumstances outlined in this book (or, for that matter, missions to Muslims or Hindus). And those who face discouragement in the work may not only find a kindred spirit in Tom Carson but can take comfort in the fact that God eventually did providentially open the door to many conversions. In the case of French Canada, the innovations of Vatican II had much to do with this, but even then the gates did not open wide until the '70s. (Among American Jews, the '60s counter culture similarly and providentially paved the way for the "Jesus Revolution" of the '70s.) In fact, missionaries to the Jews might take even more encouragement. The Scriptures at least give the promise that "all Israel will be saved." Those who labored in francophone Canada had no such assurance

that "all French Canada will be saved"!

Finally, the same mix of human traits, and yes, human sin, that leads to personal conflicts in the Messianic movement or to difficulties for mission workers is reflected in counterparts here—whether it is the "increasingly dictatorial approaches" (p. 52) of T. T. Shields, the quite influential pastor at Toronto's Jarvis Street Baptist Church, or Tom's own perfectionism that leads him to overload his schedule and set unreachable goals.

Certainly there are other mission books in which Jewish workers can find resonance. This one came into my hands at a breakfast I attended where Don Carson was the speaker; I am glad it did. The difficult, even "unfruitful" mission field; the parallels between Catholic and Jewish responses to the gospel; the opposition whether in written letters or in police demands for a permit in order to evangelize—all will receive a nod of recognition among our own workers. It is a quick read; buy it and be encouraged that we are not alone, but of a piece with God's workers everywhere.

#### **Author info:**

Richard A. Robinson (Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary) is Senior Researcher with Jews for Jesus. rich.jfj@gmail.com



*In this segment of “News from the Israeli Scene,” we focus on new ways of reaching Israelis with the gospel. The following is an excerpt from a paper presented at a recent seminar on evangelism in Israel.<sup>1</sup> The paper presents the motivation for Internet evangelism and a new initiative that is being developed in this field in the country. In the past, a focus of street evangelism and poster evangelism has been to direct interested people to Messianic Web sites such as [www.yeshua.co.il](http://www.yeshua.co.il) (connected to the Jerusalem Assembly – House of Redemption congregation) and [www.yshua.co.il](http://www.yshua.co.il) (run by Jews for Jesus). This new initiative supplements these sites by targeting not only those who have been exposed to some evangelistic material on the street, but also people who are searching for spiritual truth on the Internet. The group behind this initiative is called OneForIsrael ([www.oneforisrael.org](http://www.oneforisrael.org)). They are currently offering five Web sites, with two more planned for the future.*

### **Why the Internet?**

According to comScore ([www.comscore.com](http://www.comscore.com))—the leading company, globally, in measuring the digital world—Israel leads the world in average time spent online: 57.5 hours a month! This is twice the amount of time the average U.S. Internet surfer spends online.

There are 7.4 million Israelis. About 3 million have a Facebook account. Ninety-five percent of Israelis between the ages of 15–28 have their own personal Facebook account.

Today, if an Israeli searches the Internet for “Messianic Jews” or “God” or “Yeshua” in Hebrew, the first results to come up are anti-missionary Web sites. That is because anti-missionary organizations invest money in Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for the words for which people look when search-

<sup>1</sup> The author is an Israeli believer who has asked to remain anonymous. This material is used with permission.



by **Knut Høyland**

ing about spiritual issues online.

Today, in the high-tech era, the Internet is the safest and most efficient way to reach Jewish Israeli young people. Each student on campus receives class updates and other information from the university via email, which means there is a high probability that every student will go online at least once a day. In addition, most young people (youth, teenagers, soldiers, and students) have their own Facebook and YouTube accounts.

Israelis shop online, research online, communicate online, create relationships online, and entertain themselves online. Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) is available to the public free at hot spots, usually found at beaches, universities, coffee shops, malls, and even hospitals. Furthermore, almost every home in Israel is connected to the Internet.

Meet Michael G., an Israeli Jewish soldier who came to know the Lord:

I happened to bump into a Messianic Jew online. We chatted for a while, and she sent me some links to read about the faith. Through one of them I ordered the New Testament in modern Hebrew, just to understand where she is coming from. I wanted to prove her wrong, and we argued about the faith until we agreed to disagree. Once she invited me to join a young people's meeting so I came. It

left an impression on me but I didn't want them to know. Inside, my heart was touched. It took me a few weeks until I couldn't fight it anymore.

Just as in Michael's story, people online can enjoy the benefits of privacy—none of their family members or friends needs to know that they are exploring about Yeshua. None of them can tease them for doing so. If you are shy, you can "hide" behind the computer screen. The Internet lets you open your heart before strangers you have never met before.

**Vision**

Up until this point, we have developed five different Web sites and are working on two more.



The problem is that we do not want to develop an "online church," but to bring interested people from the Internet to a real, local congregation.



For this reason, we are about to develop a new online system which will not only give people access to the gospel online (instead

**Growing Interest in Searching for the Phrase "משיח" ("Messiah") on Google:**



GOOGLE LOOKUP	
Monthly search average	Phrase
98,600	(Messiah) משיח
480	(coming of Messiah) ביאת המשיח
18,100	(Yeshu) ישו
4,400	(Yeshua) ישוע
590	(Yeshua the Messiah) ישוע המשיח
2,400	(New Testament) הברית החדשה
5,070	(Messianic Jews) יהודים משיחיים



of them ending up at anti-missionary Web sites), but also help us follow up on new believers and on those who want to know more about the Messiah Yeshua. Following a decision to trust Yeshua, the next step is to provide basic discipleship for five weeks, after which the user will be referred to a local congregation of real people.

We wish to see our Web sites (listed in the next section) used by God as a tool to bring the good news to the Israeli Internet audience by:

1. Being used by believers to reach non-believers, in cooperation with congregations, ministries, and individual believers around the country.
2. Online advertisement (for example: Facebook, YouTube, Google, Walla, and other Israeli Web sites) as well as offline (for example: T-shirts, booklets, buttons, and more).
3. Being used as a follow-up tool and for basic discipleship.

### What Web Sites Will Be Promoted?

**iGod.co.il**—Includes scientific and academic articles (“apologetics”) about different subjects, with a focus

on people who are looking for a more intelligent rationale

for believing in God. The articles are arranged in the following categories: Science & Evolution, History & Archaeology, Theology & The Bible, God, Messiah, Enigmas, and Life Issues. Within these categories, you will find articles like “Where Was God in the Holocaust?”; “Does Science Support the Existence of God?”; “Why Do We Desire Sex and Relationships?”; “When Does the Bible Say the Messiah Will Come?”; “Why Is There Hate in the World?”; “Is Faith in God for Simple Folks Only?”; “Did Jesus Ever Claim to Be God?”; “Why Isn’t It Enough That I’m a Good Person?”; “The Forbidden Chapter



(Isaiah 53)”; “Why Do Rabbis Hate Jesus So Much?”; and “Is Life a Result of Random Coincidences?”—just to name a select few from about eighty other articles (all of which are written in Hebrew). This compilation of articles is a result of our working together with William Lane Craig, Josh McDowell, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Jews for Jesus, Campus Crusade for Christ, and others. In addition, it is possible to order materials, such as a copy of the Jesus film on DVD or the New Testament in modern Hebrew, via the Web site.

**medabrim.org.il**—The testimonies of Israelis who have come to know the Lord are presented in

both video and text formats, as well as answers to questions

on a variety of issues. We also upload these video testimonies to YouTube for wider viewing. It is also possible for Internet visitors to contact us and order evangelistic materials.



**הברירה-החדשה.com**—Read, listen to, or order a copy of the New Testament in modern Hebrew. This Web site

is operated in cooperation with the Israeli branch of Jews for

Jesus, which sends out New Testaments and creates opportunities for follow-up appointments. Internet visitors are able to contact us via the Web site.



**newlife.org.il**—The Jesus Film Project offers visitors the opportunity to order a complimentary DVD of the film *Magdalena: Released from Shame* in a number of languages, as well as to view it in live-stream, high definition quality. Each order is followed up by Campus Crusade.

**xRabbi.co.il**—This Web site gathers together testimonies of successful rabbis who

have come to know the Lord, in a very modern and attractive design. Through the Web site, a visitor can order a complimentary copy of the New Testament, as well as contact us.



**WhyGod.co.il**—This soon-to-be-available Web site gives the pure gospel in a modern, multimedia presentation with an invitation to pray to receive the Lord. Visitors can contact us and will be followed up with by an Israeli Messianic believer.

**WhyYeshua.co.il**—This soon-to-be-available Web site is a five-week long follow-up course for new believers who wish to know more about faith in Yeshua, the Messiah.



The follow-up is in a question-and-answer format and is designed to fill the gap between a decision to trust Yeshua on the Internet and a more thorough program of personal discipleship in a local congregation. This Web site seeks to distinguish itself from any other Web site currently available by offering this intermediate “Step 2.”

*Thus, with these new Web sites, a more comprehensive approach can be taken to sharing the good news with Israeli seekers. They cover the areas of apologetics, the Jesus film, the New Testament, testimonies of Israelis, testimonies of rabbis, a clear presentation of the gospel, and a discipleship course. Please pray that the Lord will use these new tools.*

**Author info:**

Knut Høyland is International Director of Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, Jerusalem.  
knut@caspari.com

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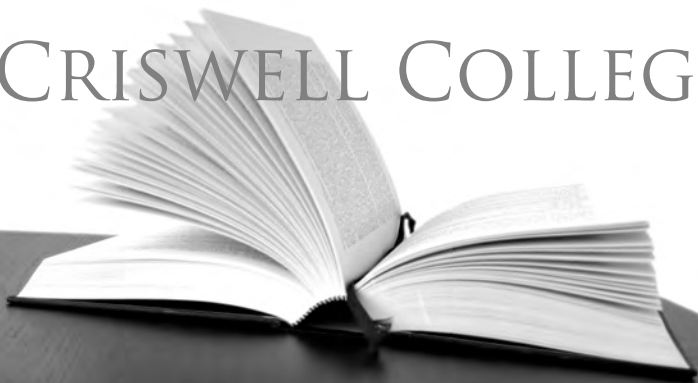
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