



The Gospel and
**JEWISH-GENTILE
COUPLES**



MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

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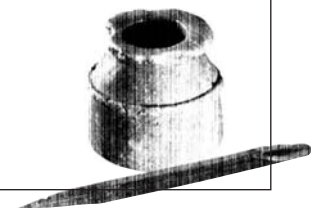
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Mishkan is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

A Missiological Opportunity

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



The theme of this issue of *Mishkan* is Intermarriage, and more specifically, Jewish-gentile couples. By implication this includes those Jewish people who are dating, co-habiting, or thinking about marrying gentiles.

The demographics and sociological impact of intermarriage are described. But more than that, the articles underscore how Jewish ministry and Jewish evangelism should be challenged by the high intermarriage rate and see it as a significant missiological opportunity.

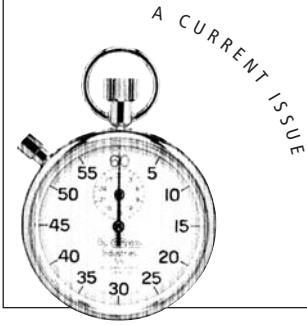
The articles are edited by Tuvya Zaretsky, Director of Staff Development with Jews for Jesus. He has a Doctor of Missiology degree from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon on studies related specifically to this topic.

Tuvya Zaretsky maintains that "spiritual harmony is possible only when both partners share a common faith in God through the Messiah, Jesus," but with the important addition that this "can be accomplished without disregard for their different ethnic identities and cultural preferences."

Jewish-gentile couples are at great risk of relational failure – the divorce rate is double that of Jewish-Jewish marriages. On the other hand, Jewish-gentile couples seem potentially more open to spiritual ministry.

It is said that at the turn of the millennium, nearly one third of all American Jews were married to non-Jews. The rate of Jewish intermarriage in the United States is over 50%, and in some countries in Europe as high as 70%. The intermarriage rate in Israel is comparatively low, at only about 10%, but approximately 450,000 Jewish Israelis are married to non-Jews.

Considering these figures and the documented claim that Jewish-gentile couples provide a significant missiological opportunity, people involved in Jewish evangelism need to take up the challenge and reach out to this group.



The Gospel of Judas and the Emperor's New Clothes

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

That a document carries – or is given – the title “gospel” guarantees nothing at all. We know of about 30 documents from the period up to the year 600 AD that claim to be gospels. Judging by the four gospels in the New Testament – the canonical gospels – we must conclude that the Gospel of Judas (recently published in Coptic and English), understood in its *entirety*, is a false gospel. The same can be said of the Gospel of Thomas, which is popular in many circles.

But to maintain that something is false is not the same as saying it is irrelevant. From an academic point of view, any new find is of interest. The critical question is whether the Gospel of Judas and other New Testament apocrypha provide new insight about Jesus of Nazareth. We cannot, for example, exclude the possibility that some of the 114 logia in the Gospel of Thomas are more original than their parallels in the canonical gospels. Each writing must be examined and evaluated, and scholars arrive at quite different conclusions.

The Gospel of Judas may increase our insight into the development of a gnostic form of Christianity in the second century. It seems, however, to have very little to say about Jesus of Nazareth and what he stood for.

When we consider the Gospel of Judas in its entirety, there should be no disagreement that this document is of a different spirit. The Jesus portrayed in the canonical gospels is fundamentally different from the Jesus presented in the Gospel of Judas. The god in the Gospel of Judas is not identical with the God of Israel – the Father of Jesus Christ. And Jesus has been “stripped” of the Jewish clothing he wears in the canonical gospels.

According to the canonical writings, the God of Israel is the God of creation; according to the Gospel of Judas the created world is a misunderstanding. The important thing is to escape the prison – namely the body – in which the soul or spirit is confined. The goal is to attain knowledge (*gnosis*) of one's own divine origin.

In the canonical gospels, salvation means forgiveness of sin and guilt, a forgiveness which is accomplished through the substitutionary work of Jesus. This element is absent from the Gospel of Judas.

In the Gospel of Judas, Judas Iscariot is portrayed as having a positive

role in the death of Jesus: "For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me," Jesus tells him. This means that Jesus was imprisoned in his own body; with Judas' help he managed to get out of this prison through death.

The Gospel of Judas knows nothing of salvation history. The suffering and death of Jesus in order to take away the sin of mankind is of no importance. Nor has salvation anything to do with the resurrection of the body. This is a far cry from Paul who, on the basis of what had been passed on to him in Jerusalem, wrote, "... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared ..." (1 Cor 15:3-5).

If we look at Judas in the canonical gospels, there are several possible interpretations of his behavior. His betrayal is an *evil* act, he is *responsible*, and yet it is God's will that happens.

Perhaps Judas is the most clear-sighted of Jesus' disciples. He seems to be the first among the twelve to have reached the understanding that Jesus actively *wanted* his own death and that the disciples could do nothing to prevent it. This happens in connection with the anointing of Jesus at Bethany.

Some decades ago Judas was partially vindicated in the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which has been called "The Gospel According to Judas." Central to this work is Judas' struggle to understand Jesus. When all is said and done, the Jesus of this musical is just as disillusioned as Judas.

The publication of the Gospel of Judas before Passover 2006 inspired a lot of media coverage. In 2003 *The Da Vinci Code* was published. In 2004 Mel Gibson produced his film *The Passion of the Christ*. Altogether, these things should make it easier to talk about Jesus of Nazareth and to present him in his New Testament clothing.

When you consider the enormous media exposure the Gospel of Judas has received and the excitement its publication has stirred, you cannot help being somewhat disappointed when you hold the book in your hand. And I assume it is the "real" thing that has been published, not a forgery. Somehow I cannot help but think of "The Emperor's New Clothes," Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale about two impostors who told the emperor that they could weave clothes that would be invisible to all who were either unsuited for their office or outrageously stupid. None of those who "saw" the clothes would admit that they saw nothing. Then the emperor announced that he would wear his extraordinary new clothes in a formal procession. All the bystanders pretended they could see his clothes – except for a little child who said what was on everyone's mind: He is not wearing anything!

The Jesus of the Gospel of Judas is clothed in gnostic clothing. Like other gnostic writings, there is no *gospel* in it when judged according to the New Testament.





THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES

The Gospel and Jewish-Gentile Couples

By **Tuvia Zaretsky**

A New Opportunity

This aim of this issue of *Mishkan* is to put the spotlight on a significant missiological opportunity. It is intended to highlight a growing segment of the American Jewish community, one that is increasingly open to hearing the gospel. The implications for mission work among Jewish people might prove to be valid in other countries as well, but we will leave that to those who are experts in various regions. My own area of study has been focused within the American cultural context.

Demographic research demonstrates a current trend toward assimilation by American Jewry. A key indicator has been an increase and sustained elevation in the rate of Jewish-gentile intermarriage. At the same time, sociological studies have shown that these exogamous marriages are at higher risk of divorce than are endogamous marriages within the same ethnic community. These factors have led a growing number of American Jews to seek resources addressing the challenges of cross-cultural relationships. Jewish-gentile partnerships include dating, cohabiting, and other pre-marital situations, as well as cross-cultural marriages; the presence of bi-cultural children raises further challenges for intermarried couples.

The first article will introduce this missiological opportunity through a sketch of the demographic and sociological impact of Jewish intermarriage. The findings from a qualitative ethnographic study, which was the basis of my own doctoral research, is summarized to describe some of the key challenges faced by Jewish-gentile couples. These become the entry points at which gospel ministry might be appropriately introduced. While the main idea here is ministry to Jews who are intermarried, the findings apply also to those Jewish people who are dating, co-habiting with, or thinking about marrying gentiles.

I asked Nikki H. to write an important article corroborating research findings on the challenges of intermarried couples. She is a Jewish believer in Jesus who holds a degree in theology and biblical literature from Simpson College and a MFA in directing from the University of Southern California. Nikki was the producer and director of the documentary on interfaith marriage titled *Joined Together?* It aired on the US PAX-Television network and has won several awards. The process that she followed to

elicit the feelings and thoughts of Jewish-gentile couples is an important step in understanding the cross-cultural world, which must be entered with sensitivity if we are to reach this segment of the population.

Scott Brown is the leader of a healthy and mature Messianic congregation in Rockville, Maryland. He shares insights from his congregation's ministry to intermarried couples. Their spiritual balance and embrace of Jewish-gentile couples provide a healthy paradigm for congregational ministry. Scott was also a co-producer and significant contributor to the film *Joined Together?*

Rich Robinson has written a fine analysis of David Rudolph's contribution to ministry among intermarried couples. Rudolph's *Growing Your Olive Tree Marriage* is worthy of mention among the few materials addressing Jewish-gentile outreach by Jewish believers in Yeshua.

In her second article, Nikki H. writes about some of the creative ways that she has used the *Joined Together?* video for evangelistic purposes. The idea is to spark interest in other missiological possibilities among Jewish-gentile couples.

We will begin with an examination of why this is an important subject, one that has potential for bringing the gospel to Jewish people.

Orientation

The approach taken in ministry to Jewish-gentile couples is *evangelical*. That is, I am looking for means of ministry that are gospel centered,¹ asking where the power of the gospel might meet various threats to the stability of Jewish-gentile relationships through God's redemptive grace in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus).

I write from an American Jewish point of reference. Not everything in this article will be appropriate for all cultural settings in which Jewish ministry is taking place. The anecdotal references will reflect American Jewish experience more than any other. Let the reader take from this whatever can be applied, in principle, to other Jewish cultural settings.

The traditional American Jewish practice is to use terms like *interfaith marriage* and *intermarriage* when referring to Jews who "marry out." The first term indicates that the religious faiths of the Jewish and gentile partners are different. Therefore the term *interfaith* would not properly apply when partners from different ethnicities share the same faith, or if both are committed secularists. We are not looking to define partners according to religious categories.

The distinguishing factor between partners, at least for this article, is their different ethnicities. We are talking about *Jewish-gentile couples* (see the brief article "Why the Term?").

Trying to define the essence of Jewish identity can be tricky. Often, Jewishness is assumed to be a religious distinction. However, though this

1 J. D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).



Why the Term “Jewish-Gentile” Couples?

The term *intermarriage* just does not adequately cover the scope of the Jewish subject under discussion. Not all couples in which one partner is a Jewish person are actually married. Some couples are dating; others are simply cohabiting.

The American Jewish perspective usually focuses on the end product of Jewish-gentile relationships. The obvious reason for this is that intermarriage is a more easily measured indicator of social change than are less permanent relationships like dating and cohabitation. No one knows exactly how many Jewish-gentile couples end up terminating their dating relationships, never making it to the *huppah* (Jewish wedding canopy) or the church altar. Meanwhile, we do know – from the American Jewish Identity Survey of 2001 – that 81% of cohabiting adult American Jews were living with gentile partners.¹

For the missiological purposes of this edition of *Mishkan*, we are specifically interested in reaching *Jewish-gentile couples* with the gospel. American Jewish public policy debates about how to allocate funds and plan programs in response to changes in Jewish demography have focused in part on Jewish *intermarriage* – Jews who marry “out,” taking spouses who are non-Jews, or *gentiles*.²

The Hebrew term that is often translated *gentile* is *goy*. Literally it means “nation,” but individually it is used for “one who belongs to another nation, a Gentile, or non-Jew.”³ Additionally, within the Jewish frame of reference there is confusion: the religious term *Christian* is commonly misused as a synonym for the ethnic designation *gentile*. This is a simple matter of failing

point might be argued, in its simplest sense the word *Jewish* is an ethnic designation. Sociologists Liebman and Cohen concede that, while the religious “tradition is a hoary one,” there are Jewish people “who view the Jewish culture from a secular perspective and interpret its symbols in ethnic or national terms.”² It is in that national or ethnic sense that I use the word *Jewish* here.

Importance

Missiologist Paul Pierson has said, in his course on the history of mission, that revivals and renewal movements often begin in the margins of society. Jewish-gentile couples usually see themselves as being culturally marginalized by both synagogue communities and churches. Demographics

2 C. Liebman, C. and S. Cohen, *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 6.

to distinguish between ethnicity and religion. *Jewish* is properly understood as an ethnic identification among the many nations. *Christian* is a religious cultural component that may be found in various forms among individuals within various ethnic communities.

Religion is one aspect of the learned values, beliefs, and practices of a culture. The term *interfaith* applies when the cultural difference between a Jew and a gentile is religious.⁴ In the American Jewish cultural context, the partnering of Jewish and gentile people definitely entails a difference of ethnicities. On the surface, we might not know if it is an *interfaith* matter until the partners self-identify their religious beliefs, practices, and values. We are interested in how to reach Jewish people with the gospel – not only those who are intermarried, but also those who are in relationship with non-Jews. In this context we may appropriately use the designation *Jewish-gentile couple* for partners of mixed ethnicity, where one is Jewish and the other is a gentile or non-Jew.

1 Egon Mayer, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar, *American Jewish Identity Survey 2001*, "AJIS Report: An Exploration in the Demography and Outlook of a People" (New York: The Graduate Center of the City of New York, 2002), 7.

2 From Latin *gentiles*, referring to a people, clan, or race, also a foreigner. Also, "any person not a Jew; often specifically a Christian," according to David B. Guralnik, editor, *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* (Collins-World Publishing Company, 1978, Second College Edition), 583.

3 A. M. Heller, *The Vocabulary of Jewish Life*, revised edition (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1967), 179.

4 D. Schaper, *Raising interfaith children: spiritual orphans or spiritual heirs?* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999), 9.

show that they are a growing majority of the newly married population within the Jewish community. However, as a group they are invisible, rather than simply in the margin of the American church.

The challenges faced by these couples are significant. Believing that outreach efforts to the Jewish people would be well served by a better understanding of the specific nature of these challenges, I undertook an anthropological study. Using qualitative methods of research to produce an ethnographic model of the challenges experienced by Jewish-gentile couples, I was able to identify several specific entry points for ministry.³

Efforts to reach intermarried Jews do exist within traditional forms of Judaism. However, it seems that a prime motivation is to ensure Jewish continuity. The goal of those efforts avowedly is to bring both partners

3 Enoch Wan and Tuvia Zaretsky, *Jewish-Gentile Couples: Trends, Challenges and Hopes* (Pasadena: William Carey Library Publishers, 2004).

into closer contact with the Jewish community through Jewish education, promotion of Jewish choices, and the conversion of gentile spouses. That might be good for the Jews, but one must ask if it is good for the Jewish-gentile couples. Is that what they want and need most? Jewish public policy debate has been driven by the allocation of funds to help intermarried couples “make Jewish choices.” Yet, as we will see, that strategy may not be serving the needs of Jewish-gentile couples.

At the same time, the American Christian community could also do more to engage these couples. I suggest that an appropriate policy for approaching Jewish-gentile couples, whether by the Jewish community or the Church, needs to begin with their specific cross-cultural challenges. A brief overview of trends in American Jewry might help us better understand the situation.

Jewish-Gentile Marriage Trends

Disaffiliation

The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) revealed dramatic trends within the American Jewish community. Most prominent were the declining birth rate, rising intermarriage, and a steady exodus from the practice of Judaism as a religion. Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman noted that about 63 percent of the core Jewish population was *unaffiliated*:

They belong to no synagogue and, in most cases, do not hold membership in any Jewish organization or institution. These unaffiliated Jews contribute far less to Jewish charities than those who belong to synagogues: few subscribe to Jewish publications or observe religious practices at home.⁴

The same study found that eighty percent of American Jews would say that their religion is Judaism. However, only eleven percent of American-born Jews who identify their religion as Judaism attend synagogue weekly.⁵ Demographer Samuel Heilman analyzed the findings of the 1990 NJPS: “Jewish identity seems to have moved increasingly toward ethnicity or heritage and culture, while being a ‘good Jew’ has been defined in vaguely moral terms.”⁶

Since World War II, the trend within the American Jewish community has been toward secularization. In Rabbi Haberman’s analysis, Jewish people have responded to American tolerance and acceptance with a “waning will to be Jewish.”⁷ Professor Jack Wertheimer of the Jewish

4 Joshua O. Haberman, “The New Exodus Out of Judaism,” *MOMENT* (August 1992), 35.

5 Barry A. Kosmin, S. Goldstein, J. Waksberg, N. Lerer, A. Keysar and J. Scheckner, *Highlights of the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations Publication, 1991).

6 Samuel C. Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 135.

7 Haberman, *ibid.*

Theological Seminary, along with sociologist Sylvia Barack-Fishman, suggests that American Jews are undergoing “coalescence”:

A pervasive process through which American Jews merge American and Jewish ideas, incorporating American liberal values such as free choice, universalism, and pluralism into their understanding of Jewish identity.⁸

American Jews live in a society that no longer defines people by their ascribed identities, either ethnic or religious. Social barriers have collapsed and intermarriage is an accepted aspect of American culture. American Jewish leaders, however, view intermarriage as a crisis that is transforming the Jewish community. Attorney, Harvard Law School professor, and author Alan Dershowitz wrote of the “Vanishing American Jew.” Jack Wertheimer described this assimilation trend as “a long process whereby Jews have willingly surrendered ever more aspects of their distinctive worldview in order to ease their own Americanization.”⁹

Declining Birthrate

The 1990 NJPS discovered a birth rate of 1.8 children per American Jewish couple. The obvious significance of that number is that it is not enough to replace the current Jewish population. If nothing changes, according to Rabbi Buchwald of the National Jewish Outreach Project, the American Jewish population is expected to drop 20 percent every 25 years.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the children of interfaith couples present a sizable population that is open to gospel ministry. The 1990 NJPS found that there were 750,000 children under the age of 18 being raised in interfaith homes. Bruce Phillips of Hebrew Union College found that 34 percent of the children of intermarried families were being raised as Christians, compared with 18 percent being raised as Jews. Another 25 percent were being raised with both faiths, and 23 percent with no faith at all.¹¹ This means that by 1985, half of the children in Jewish-gentile households were already being exposed to Christian faith.

Intermarriage

Over the past thirty years the Jewish trend toward exogamy – marriage to gentiles – has increased dramatically. By the turn of the millennium, nearly one third of all American Jews were married to non-Jews.¹² This is the product of an intermarriage rate that quadrupled between 1970 and

8 Jack Wertheimer, “Surrender to Intermarriage,” *COMMENTARY* (March 2001), 31.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Fishkoff, *MOMENT* (10/00), 85.

11 *The American Jewish Yearbook*, 2000 edition, 213.

12 Joe Berkofsky, “American Jewry by Numbers,” *JTA: Jewish Journal* (September 12, 2003), 21.

1990.¹³ And the 2000/1 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) showed that the trend did not abate in the following decade.

Before 1960 the rate of Jewish intermarriage was below 7%. While the pattern had been observed, Jewish communal leaders ignored it, even as the percentage rose from 7 to 25 percent by 1970. The 1990 NJPS revealed that 52 percent of all American Jews who married between 1985 and 1990 married gentiles. The average rate of intermarriage was higher in the western United States. The rate of Jewish intermarriage has remained stable at over 50% ever since, as reported by research such as the 2000/1 NJPS and the American Jewish Identity Survey of 2001.¹⁴

The United States is not alone in this particular trend. Dinah Spitzer, writing for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, recently reported, "The intermarriage rate in Europe is on average 50 percent to 70 percent, and much higher in Eastern Europe."¹⁵ It was surprising to see a 2003 article in *Haaretz*, an Israeli newspaper, that reported the intermarriage rate in Israel as 10%. Certainly, that is not on the same level with the trend in the United States and Europe, but it shows that perhaps as many as 450,000 Jewish Israelis are married to non-Jews. We suspect that this community of Jewish-gentile couples is potentially open to spiritual ministry. First, we should note the implications of these sociological trends and the resulting challenges experienced by Jewish-gentile couples. These need to be considered before devising a strategy of ministry.

Risks of Intermarriage

Marital Instability

Traditional Jewish social authorities, such as rabbis, can no longer prevent intermarriage. The religious taboo against intermarriage has collapsed. Personal experience has led American Jews to realize that they can intermarry if they want. Christian society has found that American individualism makes it unpopular to teach the Biblical material about being unequally yoked. Though the New Testament context for that subject is admittedly business partnerships, it is clear that there is potential for spiritual disharmony when a believer in Jesus joins with a person who does not share that faith.¹⁶ Old Testament warnings against taking spouses from among the heathen nations focus on the potential spiritual harm the Israelite might incur.¹⁷ Nevertheless, today's Jews are marrying

13 B. Lazerwitz, "Jewish-Christian marriages and conversions: 1971 and 1990," *Sociology of Religion* 56, 4 (Winter 1995), 443.

14 Egon Mayer, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar, *American Jewish Identity Survey 2001, "AJIS Report: An Exploration in the Demography and Outlook of a People"* (New York: The Graduate Center of the City of New York, 2002), 7.

15 Dinah Spitzer, "European Jewish Leaders Confront Questions of Apathy, Intermarriage" (Prague: JTA, reported in Boston by the Combined Jewish Philanthropies, February 16, 2006), www.cjp.org.

16 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers."

17 Exodus 34:11–15; 1 Kings 11:1–2.

gentiles at a rate that just exceeds in-marriage, and with significant sociological risk involved.

Studies have shown that interfaith marriages of any kind are at greater risk of dissolution than same-faith marriages.¹⁸ Qualitative research examined the tensions experienced within interchurch marriages, where the partners came from similar but not identical Christian traditions.¹⁹ The partners reported spiritual challenges and threats to marriage, even where the differences were minimal compared to Jewish-gentile couples.

Marital Dissatisfaction

Stress increases where spiritual differences are greater. Dissimilar religious faiths, along with differences in ethnic heritage, have been found to be negative influences on marital stability and satisfaction.²⁰ Research that compared Jewish-Jewish marriages to Jewish-gentile ones found the divorce rate in the latter to be double. Social scientists have shown a significantly higher risk of marital dissolution and dissatisfaction among Jewish-gentile couples.

Inability to Forge Spiritual Intimacy

Tensions rise around the inability to find spiritual intimacy. One quantitative study measured marital satisfaction and marital spirituality, finding that both diminished dramatically when there was not mutuality of belief.²¹ In the research for my qualitative study of Jewish-gentile couples, I heard many describe a longing for intimacy in their relationships. Often the threshold to that deeper level of intimacy was described as a shared spirituality. However, this longing was often threatened by awareness of the disparate and deep-seated beliefs and core values separating the partners. Jewish-gentile couples are at even greater risk of relational failure when they cannot discuss the religious source of the tensions between them.

As we will see, traditional Judaism proposes to answer the problem of intermarriage with an unambiguous reattachment to the Jewish community through Judaism. This presupposes that these Jewish-gentile couples are outside the traditional Jewish community. Yet they already comprise at least a third of American Jewry, and are currently the dominant pattern of Jewish marriage. Jewish leaders in America do not seem to have noticed that American Jews are already moving away from traditional Jewish religion, nor that they want their gentile spouses to be included in

18 V. R. Call and T. B. Heaton, "Religious influence on marital stability," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36, 3 (1997), 382–392.

19 L. M. Williams and M. G. Lawler, "The challenges and rewards of interchurch marriages: A qualitative study," *The Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 19, 3 (Fall 2000), 205–218.

20 T. B. Heaton and E. L. Pratt, "The effects of religious homogeneity on marital satisfaction and stability," *Journal of Family Issues*, 11 (1990), 191–207.

21 Paul R. Giblin, "Marital Spirituality: A Quantitative Study," *Journal of Religion and Health* (Winter 1997), 321–332.

finding a mutually satisfying spiritual intimacy.

American evangelical Christians understand that the only hope of eternal life, for both Jews and gentiles, is in the Messiah, Jesus. At the same time, the Jewish survival instinct is a powerful force against Jewish evangelism. Since the Holocaust, Christians have been more sensitive to the common Jewish misperception that conversion to Christ and Jewish identity are mutually exclusive. So while the Jewish community views intermarriage as a threat to its survival, no similar urgency exists in the Christian community.

Of course, spiritual harmony is only possible when both partners share a common faith in God through the Messiah, Jesus²²; then it can be accomplished without disregard for their different ethnic identities and cultural preferences.

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²² John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 1:16; 10:12–13.

Challenges of Jewish-Gentile Couples

THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES



By **Tuvia Zaretsky**

Through qualitative research, I found a complex phenomenon being reported in the experience of Jewish-gentile couples.¹ The importance of this study was in hearing directly from these couples about their challenges, as described in their own words. Analysis of the data required an interdisciplinary approach. The reported challenges fell within the dimensions of sociology, psychology, family theory, child development theory, anthropology, and theology.²

Five key challenges were observed through interpretive analysis of the research findings:

Challenge 1: Confusion over Identity Differences

Challenge 2: Tension over Religious Differences

Challenge 3: Disagreements over Life-cycle Celebrations

Challenge 4: Challenges to Family Harmony

Challenge 5: Discord over Training Children

Challenge 1: Confusion over Identity Differences

Couples reported having trouble understanding their cross-cultural differences regarding their unique identities. Often that difficulty was attributed to confusion about terminology. Jewish people use descriptive terms like *Jewish* and *Judaism* in particularized meanings. While these might properly be understood as descriptors for ethnicity and religion respectively, the Jewish habit of blending the two was confusing to the gentile listener. In a parallel usage, Jewish people tend not to distinguish between the ethnic category *gentile* and the religious cultural designation *Christian*.

1 Tuvia Zaretsky, "The Challenges of Jewish-Gentile Couples: A Pre-Evangelistic Qualitative Study," dissertation submitted to the faculty of Western Seminary (Portland, OR, 2004).

2 Wan and Zaretsky, see figure 15 on page 92 in the book.

Challenge 2: Tension over Religious Differences

Evangelical Christians were often concerned about the eternal state of their Jewish partners. They were concerned for the spiritual wellbeing of the Jewish partner in terms of his or her “salvation” or being “born again.” Jewish people, on the other hand, were more focused on the physical survival of the Jewish people. They wanted to maintain their relationship with a gentile partner without allowing spiritual differences to create problems.

Discussions of religious differences often had explosive consequences. Partners reported difficulty in communicating their core values in ways that their partners could understand. Jewish partners frequently spoke about the importance of their “Judaism,” when what they meant to describe was their commitment to preserve their heritage as Jewish people. Christians reported hearing such statements as expressing unwillingness to think about spiritual alternatives, like their faith in the Messiah. It was not apparent that the Jewish partner had already signaled a decreased affiliation with the Jewish religion through intermarriage.

So, as Christians spoke of their concern for the eternal salvation of their Jewish partner, they would report feeling frustrated or disappointed by the Jewish partner’s insistence on remaining Jewish. The Christian partners were hearing Jewish rejection of Christian faith and, it follows, a rejection of salvation. The Jewish partner, meanwhile, was affirming a core value: the desire for Jewish survival and continuity. They were evidently talking past one another.

Communication theory could be helpful in aiding couples to hear what their partners are actually saying about religion or ethnicity, and also to understand what they are not saying. Mission workers can be translators for Jewish-gentile couples if they have a bicultural understanding of both partners. That would include being able to relate the underlying meanings behind the words and the messages being communicated by the partners.

Couples often did not understand the deeply held religious core values of their partners. As a result, Jewish-gentile couples described feeling lonely and alienated from one another. When they were unable to discuss spiritual differences, or resolve religious tensions, the hope of finding spiritual harmony faded. This should be noted as one of the key points at which evangelistic ministry might be sensitively and appropriately initiated.

Challenge 3: Disagreements over Life-Cycle Celebrations

Descriptions of literally every ritual, holiday, and family gathering presented a gauntlet of choices and conflicting cultural signals. Just planning a wedding ceremony could become the occasion for a family feud. After the wedding, ordinary life-cycle celebrations presented frequent times of discomfort. Misunderstandings and quarrels could erupt over symbols as-

sociated with life-cycle events or family holiday celebrations. The tension only compounded during the enculturation of children.

In America we have heard of “the December dilemma,” or the tension that erupts as a Jewish-gentile couple navigates the Hanukkah and Christmas season. The color of every light, the choice of holiday songs, every cultural symbol, and each day that is observed becomes a minefield of emotion-laden traditions. These, too, can become opportunities for ministry for the worker who is skilled at navigating bicultural seas with fair-minded appreciation.

Challenge 4: Challenges to Family Harmony

When a couple marries they don't take on just one another, but they embrace the entire extended family of their new partner. Jewish-gentile couples described challenges relating to their in-laws. Many spoke of having to endure culture shock, or of overcoming the prejudices and expectations of their new family as members attempted to assimilate a stranger.

Some spouses were more adept at learning cross-cultural relational skills. Others spoke of suffering feelings of alienation at family gatherings. I recall in particular one very sweet, but backslidden, Texas coed, who was living with her Israeli boyfriend. The only language spoken at his family gatherings was Hebrew. With no apparent attempts to translate for her or to include her, she spoke of going through culture shock in her American community.

As couples grow together they must forge their own unique joint identity. It means developing mutual respect for the cultural differences – including religious differences – which emerge out of two distinct ethnic realities. The choices, within a Jewish-gentile family, are to create an atmosphere of collaboration, competition, or mutual rejection. The path to family harmony is paved with mutual respect and a willingness to learn from one another. The commitment to forge family harmony is a prerequisite to finding spiritual harmony.

The path to family harmony is paved with mutual respect and a willingness to learn from one another

Challenge 5: Discord over Training Children

During the dating phase of their relationship, couples frequently shared their dreams about children. Many reported that such discussions turned tense when their partners presented alternatives to their own dreams for the identity, religion, and training of any future children from their potential union. Then, after the wedding, the same tensions resurfaced – often amplified – when the expectations of extended family members created renewed pressures about ethnic heritage, religious faith, and training for future children. Among the potential solutions couples reported were a blend of their two religious identities, one or the other of them, or neither.



These five challenges helped me to develop an ethnographic picture of Jewish-gentile couples. The challenges, as reported, are probably cultural universals for heterosexual dating, cohabiting, and intermarrying Jewish-gentile couples, at least in the United States. They have provided a better appreciation for the cultural experience of Jewish-gentile couples, and with this knowledge it is possible to have a better idea of where to focus appropriate evangelistic ministry.

In addition, and for comparison, it is also helpful to see the results of the research done by Nikki H. in conjunction with her production of a video outreach to intermarried Jews.

The Journey of "Joined Together?"

THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES



By **Nikki H.**

Is This Really Needed?

In 2002 I was presented with an opportunity by a Jewish mission organization to produce and direct a film on the subject of interfaith marriage. At the time, I could think of no topic more irrelevant for a media project.

I began to do research, looking for a way to approach the material. I realized this could be an opportunity to utilize my professional skills in a venture that could potentially benefit my own Jewish people in the cause of the gospel. I read various books and articles on the subject of Jewish intermarriage. I rifled through an enormous list of television shows and films that dealt with this subject matter. I wanted to get a sense of how pop culture was dealing with interfaith marriage. I also interviewed some people who were considered experts on the topic from both the believing and non-believing communities.

I discovered that a remarkable increase had occurred in the number of Jewish intermarriages. Until then, I had no idea that over half of the Jewish people marrying in the United States in the past twenty-five years had wedded non-Jews.

My preliminary research and numerous interviews revealed a significant shift, in attitude and response in the Jewish community, to the changing culture of Jewish intermarriage. Reverend Scott Brown, who pastors a Messianic congregation of primarily interfaith couples in Maryland, said in an interview,

All of the major movements in Judaism are recognizing (interfaith marriage) as a reality except for perhaps the Ultra-Orthodox sector of the faith... In the last ten years, we have seen movement from the Reform saying "maybe," the Conservative saying "probably not," and the Orthodox saying "never." Where now, the Reform are saying, "This is the best opportunity we have had in years to recruit." The Conservative are saying, "Oh, we better get busy and change some of our forums." And the Orthodox are saying, "Well, maybe this is an option."¹

I read *Mixed Matches: How to create successful interracial, interethnic and interfaith relationships* by Dr. Joel Crohn, a leading Jewish clinical psychologist and author. In his professional observations, he confirms that the rate of Jewish interfaith marriage indeed has soared.

This is leaving many traditional Jewish families to believe that there are a diminishing number of “all” Jewish families left. For the extended members of such interfaith families reactions often include emotions of guilt, anger, hurt, and confusion regarding their new gentile in-laws.

For the marriage partners themselves, they are often pulled in many conflicting directions at the same time in an effort to remain loyal to all parties involved. These feelings of pain and discord can spread and deepen within the family making life for all extremely difficult at times.²

I discovered that, whereas a few years ago this issue had remained virtually ignored and “untouched,” today more and more synagogues are beginning to form workshops to help intermarried Jewish couples and their families cope with their unique set of problems. Initially, such workshops were limited to dealing with the intermarried partners alone. Today, however, therapeutic approaches have developed to include the extended family as well.

Once I understood who our audience was and gained a knowledge of the people we were trying to reach, I became excited about this video project. I was on board. There was nothing like it existing at the time and I could see the immediate need for such a tool among the Jewish people. The challenges being experienced by intermarried couples led to the project name that raises the question: *Joined Together?*

How to Tell the Story

I am a director, producer, and communicator. When crafting a media project there are always three strands involved in creating an effective piece.

- 1) The script (or information/content that one wants to communicate)
- 2) The production and execution of the script
- 3) The audience

Frequently, one or more of these elements are left out in religious programming. A production team may have great information to com-

1 Interview with Rev. Scott Brown, Son of David Congregation, Silver Spring, MD (November 24, 2002).

2 Joel Crohn, Ph.D., *Mixed Matches: How to create successful interracial, interethnic and interfaith relationships* (Fawcett Book Group, 1995).

municate, but when poorly produced, the message is often discounted. Conversely, a project can be well produced (featuring good acting, visually interesting footage, etc.) and have great content, but if the target audience is not identified and the information is not effectively communicated in a language they can absorb, the whole project is a futile endeavor.

I knew our primary audience was to be intermarried couples. So, in order to understand this "market," I also needed to comprehend the reasons behind the rise in intermarriage, since that would become part of telling the story.

I learned as much as I could about the factors that were contributing to the emergence of this new intermarried Jewish community. Three of the elements seemed pretty obvious.

- 1) Growing assimilation of the American Jewish community
- 2) The secularization of America and the erroneous idea that Jewishness is a religion
- 3) Increasing tolerance of Jewish people in America

With the increase of tolerance has come a decline in anti-Semitism in America. This is certainly a good thing. However, it is leading many to assume that Jewish people are no different from anyone else. That was not the case fifty years ago.³ Of course, we find that growing American tolerance for minorities only contributes further to the increase in Jewish mixed marriages.

Dr. Michael Rydelnik, a professor of Jewish Studies at Moody Bible Institute, comments on the growing embrace of Jewish people in American culture by a religiously nominal gentile population:

There are still pockets of anti-Semitism (in America). But because Jewish people are being tolerated more than ever, gentiles or nominal Christians ... will be much more willing to marry someone who is Jewish. There are many people ... who are pretty much (religiously) nominal. They do want to be married in a church or have their children baptized. So, as long as a Jewish partner is willing to allow that to happen (nominal religious practices), they will get married.⁴

Including Children in the Mix

I found that one of the biggest hurdles faced by intermarried couples is deciding how to raise their children. Parents must come to an agreement

3 Rick Groleau, Producer, *An American Experience: America and the Holocaust* (PBS Public Television).

4 Interview with Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Director of Jewish Studies at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL (May 21, 2001).



about which religion and culture they want the children to learn and carry with them. Often, the ideas of Jewish and gentile parents are in competition.

It is amazing to think that as important as children are to a family, too often they are an afterthought, since the subject is too disruptive at the beginning of a relationship. Couples fall in love, then get married, and at the beginning the differences in their cultures remain a novelty in their relationship. It seemed to me that the majority of these intermarried couples considered themselves to be secular and non-religious. However, when children came into the family a whole new set of cross-cultural issues appeared.

Reverend John Perling pastors a Lutheran congregation in the heart of Beverly Hills. With a high concentration of Jewish people intermarried with his Lutheran members, he counsels many interfaith couples. He observed that "being in love is nice, but it is not enough because eventually children come. People get very religious where they had not been religious previously."⁵

When children need to be instructed, the traditions that previously seemed unimportant suddenly become paramount. Should they have a bris (circumcision) or a baptism? Should the children receive instruction for Bar Mitzvah or prepare for Confirmation? Will they attend church or synagogue? Children look to their parents for their religious and spiritual identity. Issues that were previously submerged can suddenly force their way to the surface as children begin to wonder, asking questions of their parents about things like God, Jesus, and Jewishness. Often, even the most ardent attempts to answer their questions with sensitivity can cause the other spouse, or even in-laws, to feel discomfort, alienation, or resentment.

I realized at the outset of this project that one of its most important aspects was how to treat the issues regarding children. That topic seemed to be a catalyst for many of the tensions reported by the couples I spoke with.

Initially, I even considered doing this project from a child's perspective, as a short film. That idea was overruled in favor of the approach that featured interviews with different couples.

Finding Couples to Tell the Story

From a creative perspective, footage of talking heads is, by far, the most difficult type to make interesting. So, I set out to find "our couples." As I pre-screened couples, I found that many of them were a bit embarrassed by the topic, especially the ones who were not followers of Yeshua (Jesus).

5 Interview with Rev. John Perling, Pastor, Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Beverly Hills, CA (January 10, 2002).

Curiously, many of them seemed to be in denial that any issue or problem even existed. They tended to downplay any notable differences.

In my day-to-day life, when people asked me what project I was currently working on, I would answer, "A documentary on intermarried Jewish-gentile couples." It was amazing how often there was a squeal of recognition from the inquirer if they were part of an interfaith marriage, or if they knew someone who was.

One day at a barbeque, a female plastic surgeon yelled, "Oh, we should be in it!" She ran to retrieve her Jewish husband to inform him of what I was doing. However, when I mentioned that I wanted to explore the conflicts or cross-cultural issues in the film, they retreated. The topic suddenly seemed to be threatening. There was a reluctance to admit that any of the differences related to their backgrounds could be a cause of tension between them.

I questioned my research sources a bit more. Dr. Michael Rydelnik is not only the son of Holocaust survivors; he is a partner in a Jewish-gentile marriage. He revealed an interesting nuance.

First of all, I am personally opposed ... (to) the typical categories of race, particularly because I am Jewish. The whole Nazi (interest in eugenics) with the Arian races (over) the Semitic race. (The Nazis) were thinking that people can be categorized (and improved upon) biologically... There are different ethnic groups and we can celebrate culture. However, when you start categorizing people biologically, I feel uncomfortable with that.⁶

Clearly people's unique cultural perspectives were going to color the responses I observed. No one wanted to be labeled in way that highlighted their differences or conflicts, especially the ones that could possibly stem from race or religion. A significant number of the intermarried people that I interviewed, especially the Jewish ones, were sensitive about having the spotlight focused on their ethnicity.

American culture places a high value on tolerance and multiculturalism. There is a reticence in noting conflicts that might be attributed to differences in race, culture, or ethnicity. On top of that, the conflicts between distinctive religious beliefs appeared to be deeply felt, causing significant hurt. It would be a challenge for me to get people to discuss those things on film.

I decided the best Jewish-gentile couples for our film would be the ones who both knew Yeshua now, but had experienced these sort of conflicts prior to coming to faith in the Lord.

To find a sufficient number of Jewish-gentile couples to interview, I sent out letters to Messianic ministries and congregations asking about intermarried couples that might be interested in the project. Once I

6 Rydelnik interview (May 21, 2001).



compiled a list of couples that fit the profile, I sent them a letter asking them to make a home video. I wanted to see how they answered some specific questions about their religious experience prior to the time of their engagement. It was a sort of survey on how each partner identified religiously. They answered questions about their faith and practice, connectedness to religious roots, difficulties and tensions they encountered, children, and their comfort with Judaism and Christianity.

Issues for Discussion

Couples responded, sending VHS tapes with their answers to my preliminary questionnaire. From these I learned that the relational issues fell into some common and repeated categories. In addition to the issues of child rearing and identification, there were four other primary areas of difficulty:

- 1) The wedding – a minister or rabbi, what traditions to include or exclude
- 2) In-laws – the expectations and evaluations of each spouse's extended family
- 3) Holidays – how to incorporate both, neither, or some traditions for each partner
- 4) Religious community – an unexpected need rekindled by desires for familiar traditions

These issues emerge like time bombs. That observation was confirmed by at least two experts that I interviewed for background research. A good deal of sensitivity is needed in seeking solutions with the interfaith community, since these emotional time bombs can appear unexpectedly, catching the couple by surprise as the relationship develops.

I structured the video around these primary topics, and looked into the various solutions and answers that they could provide from their experiences. I also tried to pepper it with perspectives from teens and children, both positive and negative.

I hoped these couples would be able to find a place of vulnerability to enable them to relive some of their challenging experiences prior to finding Jesus as a commonality in their lives.

During the interviews for the film project, it was not hard to tap into the real emotions of those memories. Several of the couples relived the emotions associated with the differences that surfaced in their marriages. Even after arriving at unity through faith in Jesus, they had to deal with difficult emotions from the conflicts that once existed between them. One couple went for marriage counseling to resolve past wounds that had resurfaced during the interviews for the documentary. The key to dealing successfully with those tensions was in their shared spiritual resolution through hope in Yeshua.

Various Solutions

Currently, there are limited solutions or possible resolutions for intermarried couples in crisis. Rabbis, pastors, and priests agree that having the same spiritual or religious foundation is very important. Reverend Perling doesn't always quote the New Testament passage about being "unequally yoked" with non-believers to members of his Lutheran church who date Jewish people. Instead he refers to Ezra, who prayed for the Jewish people after their return to the land from the Babylonian captivity. He points out that the Jewish people who had intermarried promised to abandon mixed marriages.⁷ His message runs along the same lines as that of many rabbis: It is better to marry only among your own people.

Allen Maller is the rabbi of Temple Akiba, a reform congregation in Southern California. His synagogue has about 325 couples, many of whom are intermarried. The congregation offers an eighteen-week introductory class on Judaism for the non-Jewish spouses. Rabbi Maller recognizes that interfaith marriages are a reality. Still, his personal feelings run deep.

I'm not interested in promoting them (interfaith marriages). I believe that Jewish community continuity is part of the will of God. Interfaith marriage ... erodes the continuity of the Jewish community.⁸

Many synagogues and Jewish community centers offer classes to intermarried or engaged Jewish-gentile couples to help provide them with answers. Usually, these introductory courses were actually the first step in advocating the conversion of the gentile partner to Judaism. Scott Brown surveyed some of those classes and concluded,

Some classes are primarily for the Jewish spouse. Or, for the Catholic spouse, that class is geared toward promoting the benefits of conversion. So, conversion is one of the major solutions being offered... You have that (and then) you have the seminars, which are more kind of giddy and fun. What they will do is promote a blended model where we look at our traditions. We try to find some common links and we tie them together. Then usually, with regard to child-rearing, they would say something like, "Let your children see you enjoying each other's traditions, let them see you loving each other through compromise and let them make their (own) choice. Let them decide when they are older." There is generally a lot of tension, because it never really works. There is resentment that happens between the parents as they try to do their own recruiting among the kids.⁹

⁷ Ezra 9 and 10.

⁸ Preliminary interview with Allen Maller, rabbi of Temple Akiba, Culver City, CA (January 8, 2002).

⁹ Interview with Rev. Scott Brown, Son of David Congregation, Silver Spring, MD (November 24, 2002).



Ironically, when I was doing the preliminary interviews, every person of the clergy I spoke with – including rabbis, ministers, priests, and Messianic leaders – said some version of the same thing: “It’s best to stick to your own kind.” However, once I turned on the camera, they all shied away from making those thoughts public. Despite their personal visceral response or the sociological analysis that these mixed marriages are not the ideal, they all acknowledged that intermarriages are here to stay.

An effective solution has been emerging from among Messianic communities: Jewish-gentile families can be unified by the mutual completion of both partners’ faith identity in Messiah Yeshua. Through this video project, I began to see a new and unique opportunity to present this spiritually effective option for both parties. Through the documentary we could provide information about a path to spiritual harmony within Jewish-gentile families. It was all the more exciting as we saw Jewish spouses becoming much more willing to explore the message of Yeshua than other Jewish non-believers.

Spouses in a mixed marriage are, spiritually speaking, orphans without a religious home. As they become more spiritually aware and begin to search for answers, they are far more likely to be open to a “Jewish” Gospel than you might think.¹⁰

I set out to produce *Joined Together?* as a tool to provide insight into the struggles of intermarried couples. I came to realize how important this subject is for ministry to modern American Jewish people. We could not just tell the story without also offering the ultimate and best solution: unity in Yeshua. My perspective has changed through this journey. My original skepticism regarding interfaith marriage as a relevant study subject has been clearly altered. There is no doubt now that this field of ministry is ripe for harvest in the kingdom of God.

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10 *Joined Together*, a companion booklet offered by Chosen People Ministries, 2002.

Responses to Intermarriage

By **Tuvia Zaretsky**

THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES



Jewish-gentile intermarriage is now a fact of American society. However, traditional Jewish social services do not agree on the best response. Jewish community leaders have debated public policy in reaction to what they regard as a threat to Jewish survival in America. Surprisingly, ordinary Jewish Americans no longer see intermarriage as a problem. A 1998 *Los Angeles Times* poll reported that only 21 percent of single Jews would exclusively marry only someone who was Jewish, while 57 percent said that the religion of a prospective spouse didn't matter.¹ Two years later, during the presidential race, Senator Joseph Lieberman came under fire from American Jewish leaders for asserting that there is no Jewish prohibition against intermarriage. At the same time, a survey conducted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) surprisingly confirmed Lieberman's comment as accurately reflecting the true sentiment of the majority of ordinary American Jews.² The Jewish taboo on mixed marriage has collapsed in the US. Fifty-six percent of the survey respondents said they disagreed with the statement, "It would pain me if my child married a gentile."³

Traditional American Jewish discussion about how to reengage with Jewish-gentile couples is far from settled. Those who are committed to embrace these couples are divided. Some have simply wanted to welcome them into the Jewish community, but that is changing Judaism and what American Jewry looks like. Others now advocate seeking the conversion of the gentile spouse to Judaism. In fact, last November, Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, called on leaders of Reform synagogues to increase their efforts to convert non-Jewish spouses.⁴ In December, Rabbi Jerome Epstein urged the leadership of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism to "be more aggressive" in converting gentile spouses to Judaism.

1 Jack Wertheimer, "Surrender to Intermarriage," *COMMENTARY* (March 2001), 27.

2 Julie Wiener, "Changing Attitudes: US Jews Accept Intermarriage in Growing Numbers, Survey Finds," *The Jewish Journal*, Los Angeles (November 24, 2000).

3 Francine Klagsbrun, "Survey Says Intermarriage is Okay," *MOMENT* (April 2000), 32.

4 Michael Luo, "Reform Jews Hope to Unmix Mixed Marriages," *New York Times* (February 12, 2006).

Brandeis University Professor Jonathan Sarna points out that barely one third of the children of mixed marriages “identify Jewishly.” He suggested that in the face of a high intermarriage rate, the small Jewish community in America, “which is really an endangered religious species, will simply disappear.”⁵ His observation underscores the motivation for traditional Judaism’s outreach to Jewish-gentile couples – the need for the survival of Judaism. This approach tends to ignore what is good for intermarried couples – their need for marital satisfaction, stability, and survival.

Even here the debate is fierce between traditional Jewish approaches. One debate is between those who seek conversion to Judaism of gentile spouses, even at the risk of driving couples away. On the other hand, outreach that does not insist on conversion takes two forms: the blended tradition/interfaith option or the one faith approach.

As I have suggested, it would seem that none of the possible approaches proposed by Jewish community leaders have been based on the needs of Jewish-gentile couples. Rather, they are motivated by the desire for Jewish survival and the continuity of Judaism.

Blended Tradition or Interfaith Option

The *blended tradition or interfaith* option proposes that Jewish-gentile couples merely incorporate two faiths into one family. This approach seeks to ensure that Judaism and Jewish life choices remain part of the family identity. Sociologists like Bruce Phillips encourage interfaith parents to help their children appreciate their two religions. In his opinion, children are provided with “the best of both worlds” by blending family traditions in the interfaith option.

The authors who write in favor of this approach generally are intermarried themselves.⁶ Critics of the interfaith option charge that children who are taught both faiths are confused about their identity and alienated from both religious communities. Naturally, the sharpest critics of the interfaith option are the writers who advocate the one faith approach.

One Faith Approach

Blended tradition advocates claim that they provide children with a broader exposure to different ways of experiencing spirituality. The more traditional *one faith approach* asserts that Jewish-gentile children have a clearer sense of identity and firmer emotional security when they are taught a single, consistent moral code within one religious affiliation. The groups that call for the conversion of gentile spouses to Judaism advocate the one faith approach.

The one faith family hypothesis warns that Jewish-gentile parents cannot adequately impart two religious traditions to their children with any depth or meaning. Authors such as Dennis Prager, Goodman-Malamuth,

5 Ibid.

6 For a list of works from this perspective, see Wan and Zaretsky, 24–27.

and Margolis advocate choosing Judaism as the sole religion rather than the blended tradition approach. They claim that the latter cheats children of what they call “authentic” religious experience, or gives them only a “spotty, superficial view of Judaism and Christianity.”⁷

The Jewish community is divided between outreach for the sake of inclusion and ingathering couples with the aim of converting the gentile spouses to Judaism. Outreach means bringing as many Jewish-gentile couples as possible into the Jewish community, while urging them to make Jewish choices for their family. Ingathering calls for a full reattachment to Judaism and an unambiguous affiliation with a synagogue. Again, the need for Jewish survival and support for Judaism are guiding forces for public policy. There is no argument that Jewish survival is an important matter. That is certainly the case if one holds to the notion that God has an eternal purpose for the Jewish people, to the glory of his name and the praise of his grace.

Some Jewish leaders have suggested that being against intermarriage is like being against the weather. Intermarriage is a dominant fact of Jewish life. At the same time, 75 percent of the children of intermarried couples also intermarry. Less than one quarter of Jewish-gentile couples raise their children exclusively Jewish. Outreach efforts, aimed to reach these couples, seek to raise the rate of Jewish family identity to over fifty percent.

Toward a Missiological Approach

I suggest that the key to serving Jewish-gentile couples is meeting their needs as they have expressed them. They want to understand the distinct ethnic identities that flow from their extended family and meet in their children. They long for spiritual harmony in their personal lives and families. They want to learn how to appreciate the rituals and life cycle events that are part of their joint cultural heritage. They want to find a harmonious family identity that expresses a unique ethnic blend and cultural diversity, without being a community oddity. They want help in raising their children with a sound spiritual foundation and a proud ethnic heritage.

The gospel is the sole hope of spiritual harmony for Jewish-gentile couples. The good news of salvation in Yeshua (Jesus) is the sure hope of their reconciliation with God and with each other. The evangel is the key to security in the welcoming affection of the Lord Almighty and to open inclusion in his forever family. In the gospel his people have a clear identity, a sense of family, a community for fellowship, freedom to express faith through cultural practices, and guidance to provide children with a living spirituality.

An American Jewish Committee Study in 2002 found that intermarried American Jews do not want an unambiguous connection with Judaism.

7 For a list of works from the one faith perspective, see Wan and Zaretsky, 27–30.



They don't want to be coerced into Judaism. In fact, they don't want to be prodded into any religion. They do not like being marginalized. They don't like being pushed or pulled for anyone else's social or religious agenda. They do want to preserve meaningful Jewish rituals, and they do want their children to be as comfortable as possible with their Jewish identity. They have stepped out into a new frontier by marrying a gentile spouse. When they understand that they are at the cutting edge of culture change, they are amazingly open to new spiritual options for themselves, their children, and their extended families.

Options for Ministry

Several Messianic congregations have been able to initiate effective spiritual ministry to Jewish-gentile couples. Scott Brown will describe one excellent effort by the Son of David Congregation in Rockville, Maryland.

Currently, I do not know of a church or denomination that has focused on intermarriage ministry. Harold Floreen urged American Lutheran pastors in the late 1940s to concentrate on potentially fruitful outreach ministry among Jews who were intermarried to Lutherans. Milt Kohut has written about intermarriage mission strategy for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and Fenton Ward did the same for the Southern Baptist Convention. I would welcome information on other efforts that could be catalogued and made available to Christians seeking resources for ministry to Jewish-gentile couples.

Jewish as Ethnicity and Religion

THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES



By **Tuvia Zaretsky**

I have found it helpful to make a distinction between ethnicity and religion. I take the word *ethnic* to mean the common classification of a people or nation. The ethnicity or classification *Jewish* denotes one who is descended from Jewish parents, going back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *Jewish* then is the descriptive term for one who is descended from the distinctive line of the Jewish people. *Jewry* is the collective term for Jewish people, allowing for variations of culture among the singular ethnic people, the Jews. We can speak of "Russian Jewry," "American Jewry," "Israeli Jewry," or "world Jewry."

I am reminded that *gentile* is a Jewish term for peoples, nations, or persons who are non-Jews. Heretofore, it had not occurred to me that gentiles did not refer to themselves by that term.

Ethnicity, then, is like the hardware of a people. It is the DNA, the bloodline, or the basic physical stuff of ancestry. On the other hand, *culture* is like the software of a people. Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede produced a model that is helpful for studying and comparing the different cultural indices of nations, organizations, and people.¹ I have come to understand that culture is the set of learned behaviors, social authority structures, personal experiences, and core values that comprise the "operating system" of a nation, organization, or person. The emphasis is on the *learned* elements that comprise a culture.

One of the learned elements of culture is religious belief. One is not born with beliefs; they must be learned. A people or nation may be identified with a specific cultural component such as their language, unique clothing, or religion. However, the distinction between ethnicity and culture must be maintained, like the difference between hardware and software.

The Jewish people are most often identified with the cultural religious component known as Judaism. However, Judaism does not make a Jewish person part of the Jewish nation. Birthright does that. A cultural religious component, like clothing, language, or belief, can change.

¹ Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991).

Judaism is commonly known as the monotheistic religion of the Jewish people. Yet Jews can be Jewish without holding to the beliefs of Judaism. There are not only Jews who reject the beliefs of Judaism, but also those who embrace other religious faiths, all the while maintaining their ethnic identity as Jewish people.

Judaism has also been used as a descriptive term for things other than religion. Jewish people have used it as a description of Jewish *civilization* and *culture*. Milton Steinberg described Judaism as “the total actualities, past and present, of the ... Jewish people ... (embracing) secular as well as sacred elements.”

In *Settings of Silver: An Introduction to Judaism*, Stephen Wylen defines Judaism as “the way of life of the Jewish people.” He suggests that the word embraces culture, customs, ethics, and sense of self. All, he says, are “a part of Judaism as much as the faith and rituals of the Jewish people.”

Judaism is properly regarded as a cultural trait of ethnically Jewish people. Not all Jews practice Judaism, and not only Jews practice Judaism. Intermarried Jewish people have rejected an unambiguous connection with Judaism. They have married out, breaking the social taboos of Judaism and the culture of the Jewish people.

When Jewish leaders oppose intermarriage, calling intermarried Jews to make choices to reconnect to the Jewish people and Judaism, they tend to further alienate intermarried Jews, their spouses, and their children. Meanwhile, over 63% of American Jews are not affiliated with any synagogue or Jewish social institution.

The 2001 American Jewish Identity Survey (AJIS) found that among Jews who identified themselves with the religion Judaism, 42% professed a secular outlook and 14% said they did not believe in God. Evidently, more than half of the Jewish people who connected culturally to Judaism were actually not religious, or were atheists. It was concluded that although 80% of American Jews in 1990 described their religion as Judaism, less than 11% regularly attended synagogue. The rest were secularized – if not by conviction then through existential condition. Recent studies among American college students show that the practice of Judaism is regarded a matter of choice, rather than something influenced by family or community connections. A 2002 survey at UCLA reported that Jewish college freshman felt less spiritual than did their gentile peers. Social psychologist Bethamie Horowitz observed that “religious Judaism is one way of being Jewish, but not the only way.”

A clear distinction exists between Jewish ethnicity and the religion Judaism. It is helpful for the Jewish mission worker to keep that in mind and to aid Jewish-gentile couples make that distinction as they find their way through their “cross-cultural software.”

The Messianic Congregation:

A Safe Haven for the Intermarried Family

THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES



By **Scott Brown**

As I am pondering what perspective to take in this assignment to write on the subject of ministry to intermarried Jewish people for *Mishkan*, my office phone rings. “Scott, hey, it’s Mark R. I know it’s been a while, but I really need your help. Janice and I ... well ... we just lost our baby girl. Can you officiate the funeral?”

Mark’s voice is trapped inside the quiet hoarseness of a mourner. As I listen to him pour out the pain of the last twenty-four hours, my thoughts drift back to our original encounter. Three years earlier, a Christian friend had brought Mark and Janice to an open forum for Jewish-gentile couples, where there was honest conversation about topics pertinent to intermarriage. Questions fairly exploded out of Mark, ranging in scope from Christmas trees to *brit milah* (circumcision). Clearly, he was hungry for answers to questions that were still forming in his heart and mind.

Mark and Janice then appeared at an intimate home group geared toward ministering to intermarried couples. There they heard the real stories of real people who were just like them: Jewish and gentile husbands and wives, struggling with issues that gnawed at their marriages like foxes on vines. Mark was surprised to hear the others reporting solutions stemming from “faith in God” and relying on such ancient sources as the Bible. He sensed a new journey beginning for him and his wife.

The word *Kaddish* snaps me back into the present.¹ “Janice’s pastor never even heard of it,” Mark says, “and he doesn’t understand the needs of my side of the family. I know this is sudden, Scott, but we really need you right now.”

“We really need you right now...” In my neighborhood, between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, nearly two thirds of the Jewish people are intermarried to gentiles. Like Mark and Janice, this eclectic majority is increasingly saying to the Messianic world, “We really need you right now.” In the opinion of this author, it is precisely this need that affords the Messianic congregation unprecedented opportunities for the gospel of Messiah Yeshua among our Jewish brethren.

¹ *Kaddish* is the Hebrew name for the mourner’s prayer; it means “sanctification.”

Before discussing the practice of ministering to this segment of the Jewish community, it is appropriate to ask in what forms their felt needs appear. The prevailing conflicts among intermarried couples seem to fall into four general categories: child rearing, parents/in-laws, traditions, and “religious rekindling.”

Jewish-Gentile Felt Needs

Child Rearing

“How will we raise our kids?”

“My little girl keeps asking, ‘Mommy, what are we?’ – I don’t know what to tell her!”

I hear these pleas, and many more, from intermarried couples. They are pressured parents who are resorting to any number of strategies for meeting the needs of their sensitive and inquisitive children. One such strategy is avoidance. The mantra of this method is, “We’ll let them decide when they’re older.” Instead of training their children, these interfaith parents choose to ignore them on issues of religion and spirituality.

Another common strategy is blending. In this one the children are arbitrarily and superficially exposed to each parent’s respective religious heritage. Sadly, such a strategy usually results in frustration at best, or at worst, a time bomb. The children sense familial tension during the holidays, experience a mounting resentment internally, and finally equate religion and traditions with dysfunction. In short, the blending strategy is the result of cheap parenting, resulting in children who are spiritually bankrupt and robbed of a spiritual heritage.

Children have a built-in craving for a settled identity. They are hungry to know who they are, culturally and religiously, and they will not be satisfied with mere religious forms or superficial traditions. They desperately need a spiritual legacy, a relationship with the Bible’s God, but parents cannot give their children what they do not have themselves. Most intermarried Jewish-gentile couples are not prepared with answers for their children, because they have not discovered answers for themselves. The question they must face is this: “Are you willing to pursue a spiritual reality, an authentic relationship with God that is so substantive and genuine that your children will be compelled to follow?”

Parents / In-Laws

“Darling, I found your father’s christening gown! Will you launder it or shall I?”

“So, kiddo, who’s catering my grandson’s bris?”

The marriage of two people is the marriage of two families. And in the case of the Jewish-gentile intermarriage, it is the joining of two very different families, deeply defined by differing cultures, heritages, religions, traditions, holidays, and most of all, expectations. Often, these ominous expectations lie sleeping under a blanket of tolerance, but when the grandchildren arrive, the monster awakens!

Of course, parents and in-laws are not the problem. They only appear to be the problem in the absence of shared vision among the members of the intermarried family. "Without a vision, the people cast off restraint."² When it comes to the religious identity of the intermarried family, someone will lead the way in choosing the path. And when husband and wife lack shared vision, those parents/in-laws, who are settled and confident in their religious constructs and whose eyes are riveted to the grandchildren, often take the lead by default.

Tradition

"It's not my holiday; why should I celebrate it?"

"The bat mitzvah is important to my family, but she just won't compromise."

Tradition is designed to be a means to an end, not an end in itself. If access to God and relationship with him is the destination of our faith, tradition is one vehicle for taking us there. It is when the vehicle becomes the destination that confusion and conflict arise.

More often than not, each partner in the interfaith marriage regards certain holidays/traditions with deep-seated passion, not for their spiritual significance so much as for the weight they carry in the realm of identity and culture. The argument over Easter eggs is never theological. It is usually the "Christian" spouse defending her right to deposit a cherished piece of herself into the life of her child. The Jewish partner's insistence on attending Aunt Miriam's Passover *Seder* stems not from what he believes so much as who he is. Again, when the vehicle becomes the destination, it often results in offense and alienation for the interfaith couple.

So, what's the interfaith couple to do? The most common "fix" for intermarrieds is compromise. In the winter, we hang Hanukkah *dreydls* on the Christmas tree; in the spring, we hunt for Easter eggs and the *afikomen* at Passover. While such strategies may champion the value of compromise, they ignore the deeper value of a substantive, shared faith in God – the very thing that traditions and holidays are designed to celebrate. Additionally, when the novelty of celebrating everything eventually wears away, all that is left are offended in-laws and children who are confused at best.

Religious Rekindling

When Jews and gentiles marry one another, they are usually operating from a secular, non-religious station in life. Premarital discussions about "religious differences" are quickly resolved with an exchange of knowing smiles. "Neither of us is religious. Anyway, we really love each other, so we would never let anything like religion come between us." A few months later, at the wedding, a glass is crushed and some rice is thrown, then the loving couple settles into their new nest. Years pass. Seeds that once lay invisible under layers of secularism suddenly germinate, sprouting an

2 Proverbs 29:18a.



unexpected yearning for a religious identity. He/she senses an urgency to return to the religious heritage of his/her forebears. Jews who experience this “religious rekindling” typically begin leaning toward Jewish religious forms and non-Jews lean toward non-Jewish forms. The result: One or both spouses feel alienated, abandoned, and left behind.

In such circumstances a caring couple will find ways to cope. But the dissonance that often arises from one or both partners journeying back to a lost heritage is only symptomatic of a deeper dilemma, namely the absence of a spiritual foundation on which the whole marriage rests.

Discovery, Healing, and Community

Jared and Kristin visited Son of David Congregation for the first time yesterday. In our brief conversation after the Shabbat service, I learned that Jared is about to earn his graduate degree and Kristin is a marketing analyst for a local firm. Their friendship has evolved into romance, and they are now paused at that fork in the road where thinking couples inevitably land.

You see, Jared is a Jew who was raised in Conservative Judaism, and Kristin identifies herself as a Christian. “We heard about Messianic Judaism and it sounded like just what we’re looking for,” Kristin reports. “We found you on the Web and, well, here we are.” I choked back tears of joy as I pictured the parade of Jareds and Kristins who preceded them, ostensibly shopping at our congregation for some way, some truth to life, only to encounter the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Hiding my emotion, I welcomed the couple. “Guys, why don’t we get together sometime this week? You know, there’s a powerful link between your two heritages – the Bible – and it has some surprising things to say about who you are and how your relationship can work. Interested?” Kristin’s eyes lit up while Jared tilted his head and touched his chin. “You would do that?” he asked.

Discovery

Without meaning to sound haughty or prophetic, I can predict with assurance that Kristin and Jared, like so many interfaith couples before them, are about to open a new chapter in their lives. It is the chapter entitled “Discovery.”

In the context of the ministry of the Messianic congregation, they will discover new meanings to words like “Jewish,” “Christian,” and “Jesus.” In their calculated search for common ground, they will eventually dig around the tree of Christianity and discover its Jewish roots. The Torah will unveil its glorious vision of Israel “rejoicing with the nations,” suggesting that the union of Jews and gentiles in a monotheistic worshiping community has long been high on the list of God’s priorities, and that the only intermarriages condemned by the Scriptures are those which include the worship of false gods.

But most of all, the congregation will send countless, intangible cues

to this searching couple that will prompt them to step outside the box of conventional solutions – like ritual conversion or cultural compromise – and dare them to capture a vision that may never have landed on their field of possibilities. As they observe and relate with intermarried couples in the Messianic congregation, they will discover something that transcends ritual and religion and burrows right into the heart. Perhaps for the first time, they will imagine a spiritual reality that they can share without one or both abandoning their critical identity as Jew or gentile. And whether or not they choose it for themselves, they will discover the wonder of being one in Messiah.

Healing

One problem that intermarrieds face is the same problem that all married couples face when it comes to the treachery of selfishness, pride, anger, and unforgiveness. But these are only manifestations of the root problem that is buried deep in the unregenerate heart and woven tightly into the human fabric: Sin. Often, by the time an interfaith couple comes to our congregation, they have lived long enough with the usual strategies to know that they don't work. They don't work because they relate more to the symptoms than to the cause of the problem. Layer onto this fundamental dilemma the struggles inherent to intermarriage and you have an unwieldy burden that few marriages can bear.

Countless churches exist that deliver the message of redemption with spiritual power and integrity. Thankfully, many intermarried couples are attending their local church and hearing the gospel, and some are entering into eternal life by grace through faith in Messiah Yeshua. While this is the critical healing that every human soul longs for, there remains a wound in the bowels of the Jewish-gentile couple that the local church rarely recognizes, much less heals. It is the wound of the Jewish heart, assimilated and unfulfilled.

Interestingly, this wound has theological ramifications. In Romans 11: 1–5 Paul speaks of the existence of a “remnant,” an insignificant minority of Jews in every generation that dares to believe the promises of God, refusing to “...[bow] the knee to Baal.” This continuing remnant of believing Jews seems to have a mission: To declare the sovereignty and faithfulness of the God of Israel.

In one sense, then, Jewish identity is most meaningful when it contributes to the testimony of God's faithfulness. Today, as in the last three and one-half millennia, Jewish followers of Israel's Messiah, the remnant who remain identifiably Jewish, are living signposts from heaven, declaring the faithfulness of the Almighty. When the Jewish believer becomes unrecognizable as a Jew to the world around him, the message of God's faithfulness and the declaration that YHVH is the only God whose promises have veracity are compromised.

Herein lies another facet of the great need for Messianic congregations.

With the phenomenal growth of the interfaith community in recent decades, the prospect of cultural assimilation is greater than ever before in modern history



With the phenomenal growth of the interfaith community in recent decades, the prospect of cultural assimilation is greater than ever before in modern history. Jews who marry gentiles are more likely to relinquish their Jewish identity than Jews who marry other Jews. When culturally assimilated and intermarried Jews come to faith in Messiah, the likelihood of their Jewish identity being recognized is slim at best.

However, Jewish followers of Yeshua usually cultivate or rekindle their identification with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when participating in a Messianic congregation. Week after month after year, the surrounding community sees them worshiping Messiah while maintaining a Jewish lifestyle, sharing Jewish concerns, celebrating Jewish holidays. The remnant is seen, and God is glorified as the faithful God who keeps his promises.

Another obvious wound that festers in the hearts and minds of interfaith couples is the wound of rejection. The intermarried community is largely a community of outcasts. While we live in a pluralistic society whose god is tolerance, and while it is true that churches and synagogues are increasingly accepting of Jewish-gentile marriages, it is also true that most religious institutions lack the initiative and know-how to minister to these couples. It does not take long for the intermarried couple to sense the void left by the absence of an authentic "track" for their spiritual journey. Then comes the inevitable coup de grace: the well-meaning pressure to prevent the marriage or convert the spouse.

While this kind of rejection is regrettable, it provides a significant opportunity for the Messianic congregation. Imagine the shock of an otherwise rejected couple, having been passed from priest to rabbi with little more than casual regard, now landing in an environment that recognizes their union as prophetic of God's redemptive plan! To many, it is nothing less than the receiving of an enormous, unexpected inheritance. And to many, the joy of finding a niche for their intermarriage becomes the incentive to consider the claims of Yeshua, eventuating in repentance and salvation.

Perhaps the greatest need for healing among interfaith families relates to the spiritual needs of the children. As mentioned earlier in this article, the standard strategies usually have devastating results. Intermarried couples usually admit that their children deserve a spiritual reality, a relationship with the living God, and they suffer for their inability to give to their children what they themselves do not have.

Thousands of intermarried couples have discovered something that has changed the course of their lives and healed their ailing families: It is wonderfully possible to be fully united in one faith in one God without either spouse/parent relinquishing their Jewish or Christian heritage. They are excited to discover that the solution emphasizes simple faith and trust over religious affiliations and conversions. Best of all, it provides a spiritual legacy for their children that will transform them, too.

Community

The intermarried community is less timid than it was even one decade ago, but it has still yet to discover its majority status in much of the

Jewish world. It is, in a very real sense, the new Jewish tradition – though if one dared to consider the marriages among Judaism’s biblical heroes, one could hardly label the tradition “new.” Therefore, it does not need to conform to the conventional, failing strategies of hybridizing, compromising, or converting. It need merely awaken to the fact that it is an emerging community that has a life and a meaning all its own.

The intermarried community is the proverbial sleeping giant, and the Messianic congregation is poised and equipped for the astounding mission to rouse this giant from its sleep. In a healthy, fully functioning congregation, this awakening can take any number of forms, but at the core of each is the prospect of authentic and satisfying community.

The intermarried community is the proverbial sleeping giant, and the Messianic congregation is poised and equipped for the astounding mission to rouse this giant from its sleep

First, there is the invitation to experience community through education. In my first brief conversation with Jared and Kristin, newcomers to our congregation, I invited them to join me in discovering relevant truth in the Scriptures. When I next meet with them, I will focus on the Torah’s prophetic revelation of the gospel, which is the message they most urgently need. Knowing that they are searching for solutions to the riddle of Jewish-gentile relationships, we will take a whistle stop tour of redemption and the part that Jewish-gentile unions play in it. I can only imagine their surprise when they discover that:

- In the very first book of the Torah, God promises to make Abraham, the first Hebrew patriarch, the father of many *goyim*, literally “nations” in Hebrew.
- Moses married the daughter of a Midianite priest, a gentile.
- King David and Jesus are both descended from the Jewish heroine Ruth, who was not Jewish at all, but a Moabitess. And she was married twice to Jewish men.
- The Hebrew prophet Isaiah wrote that God would join Jews and gentiles to create a “house of prayer for all nations.”
- In the New Covenant, Paul wrote to gentile congregations in Ephesus and Rome about a “mystery,” namely that God would one day meld Jews and gentiles into one unified worship community.

In other words, it excites me to imagine the response of this young couple when they discover that the marriage of a Jew and a gentile has the potential of demonstrating a part of God’s eternal purposes – purposes which can be experienced and expressed in the Messianic congregation.

There is also the invitation to experience community through *havurot*, small groups of caring, committed believers and pre-believers. While the corporate worship event each Shabbat is a joyful venue for celebration, transformation happens best in the context of small circles of spiritual friends who know your name, your story, and your challenges. In addi-



tion, the Messianic *havurah* provides a ministering channel of care, counsel, and consolation through people who understand those intermarriage challenges. Who could resist the magnetism of the final verses in Acts 2, where we see the pioneer Messianic community aggressively communing in small home groups? So attractive was their fellowship that the observing community beat a path to their doors, “and the Lord added to the congregation daily those who were being saved.”³

The Lord is still using small groups to gather his harvest. Sandy H. is a Jewish woman whose husband is gentile. They live at the crown of their cul-de-sac, and their bay window affords them a cinemascopic view and the luxury of supervising their little neighborhood. Sandy had heard about the Messiah many times from her Christian neighbor to the right, Estelle, but “it didn’t feel right” for her.

One day, a car struck Estelle, resulting in temporary paralysis. During her lengthy recovery period, Sandy watched car after car pull into Estelle’s driveway. Every driver, a member of Estelle’s home group, brought help like food or cleaning equipment. Sandy was overwhelmed by the ongoing, second-mile brand of love and friendship Estelle’s small group was showing her. Sandy’s intermarriage and the observable love of a small group so provoked her that she later surrendered her life to the Lord.

Finally, the Messianic congregation ministers to the intermarried couple in the context of the emerging culture. Whether you label this emerging culture “postmodern” or “post-Christian,” the fact remains that a generation has appeared in the Western world that flatly rejects any organization or institution that claims to “know the truth,” “have the answer,” or which is offering the carrot of self-improvement. In my experience, young pre-married and married interfaith couples usually fall into this category of hope-starved seekers.

Who are they, and what drives them? Dozens of books are being written about them, and the subject far exceeds the parameters of this writing. Simply put from our experience, young interfaith couples who belong to this “emerging culture” will be drawn to a congregation that:

- emphasizes a relational community
- longs for healing relationships
- demonstrates interdependence, especially among its leaders
- provides a niche, a place
- builds a heritage for its children
- presents a relational God as opposed to a religious God
- chooses wounded leaders who themselves need to be healed
- is non-segregating

Once again, the Messianic congregation that commits to understanding this emerging culture will make an impact on its interfaith constituents.

3 Acts 2:47.

At the opening of this article, I mentioned a call I received from Mark R., a Jewish pre-believer married to Janice, a Christian. Mark was calling to ask if I would conduct the funeral of their stillborn daughter.

The funeral presented a challenge, not only because of the nature of the death, but because the congregation consisted of an unusual mix of families: Mexican Catholics and American Jews. My wife and I visited Mark and Janice to listen and to cry with them. Finally, as we discussed the funeral, Mark reflected on our many times together, studying the Bible with a view toward considering the Messiahship of Yeshua. "Scott, I want you to talk about Jesus in the funeral," Mark said. "He's important to Janice, and he's becoming more important to me, too."

A few days after the funeral, I bumped into Mark at a bookstore, sipping a latte and pounding on his laptop. He was warm and friendly, gushing with gratitude for my care for his family. "By the way, Scott," he added, "I'd like to start up those Bible studies again, if you're willing."

It is well stated that "they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Despite the many topics and strategies we can discuss related to the business of ministering to intermarried couples, it always boils down to that "most excellent way," the way of love. A multitude of congregational "sins," our insufficiencies, are covered when the congregation has discovered the power of love – particularly that brand of sustaining, surrendered love that bears the image of Messiah's cross.

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THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES

Book Review:

Growing Your Olive Tree Marriage

By **Rich Robinson**

David Rudolph is a second-generation Jewish believer in Yeshua (hereafter JBY) and intermarried. His new volume has the feeling of being two separate books that were combined into one. The first half is a clearly-written account of the demographics of intermarriage, its particular dilemmas, intermarriage in biblical and religious (i.e. Jewish and church) law, and a discussion of the issue of Jewishness and “race.” The second half is a much sketchier and anecdotal account of how “Messianic Judaism” can be a solution to the problems of intermarriage outlined in the first half. The reason I put “Messianic Judaism” in quotes will become clear below.

Chapter 1 outlines the statistics of intermarriage along with projected Jewish population trends. Chapter 2 presents ten dilemmas or challenges that face intermarried families. Many of these can be summed up as the dilemma of Jewish continuity, clearly an issue for the larger Jewish community as well as for many JBYs.

Chapters 3–6, together with Appendix A, are in my opinion well worth the price of the book. Chapter 3 is an unusual and instructive survey of intermarriage in biblical history, and is helpful not least for showing that God blessed many such biblical unions. Rudolph’s conclusion here is that “Biblical precedent suggests that there is no reason for a Jew to feel he is doing anything wrong by marrying a gentile, as long as the spouse-to-be fully embraces the God of Israel and the people of Israel as their own.”¹

Chapter 4 covers intermarriage in biblical and canon (church) law. Helpful here is the recognition that the biblical commandment against intermarrying applied largely to the “seven nations” of Canaan. A brief account is given of the halakhic development, amidst rabbinic debate, of the eventual application of the prohibition to all non-Jews. Opposition to Jewish-gentile marriage in church law is summarized. Appendix A addresses the question, “Who is a Jew?” This is an especially useful discussion of patrilineal vs. matrilineal methods of reckoning Jewishness, concluding that the biblical model is patrilineal.

¹ Page 23.

Chapter 5 discusses the issue of Jewishness and “the myth of a Jewish race,” pointing out that the Jewish people comprise a variety of ethnic groups and thus are not a single “ethnic group,” and cites genetic research meant to confirm that Jews have intermarried.²

Chapter 6 lays out the various common approaches to intermarriage, namely “Interfaith,” “No religion,” “Jewish Only,” and “Christian Only.” Each term is defined and statistics are provided.

From here on the book takes on a different complexion, relying largely on personal stories to make the points.

Chapter 7, “Intermarrieds in the Local Church,” addresses, with some cited statistics, the problem of assimilation among JBYs, which is correlated with involvement in a local church as opposed to a Messianic congregation. Says the author, “Loss of Jewish identity is almost certain in the local church.”

Though the book concerns intermarrieds, this chapter seems to suggest that his statement is true of all JBYs. Here we run across a potential danger of which historians are well aware, namely that of *confusing correlation with cause*. How does the observable fact of assimilation in the past few centuries of JBY history relate to involvement in the “gentile” church (Rudolph’s term)? Did church membership cause or encourage a loss of Jewish identity? Did these people view assimilation as a positive thing, as was the case in earlier times? Was church involvement a natural outgrowth of their faith or of their social aspirations? Is it different in recent decades, because, e.g., Jewish believers’ attitudes toward assimilation have changed over the decades, as the attitudes of local churches toward things Jewish have likewise changed? In contrast, what is the nature of Jewish identification among the second or third generations raised in Messianic congregations? The historical and present-day studies have yet to be done.

Chapter 8 then offers “Messianic Judaism: A Natural Option” as a solution to the dilemmas of intermarriage; it is followed in chapters 9–13 by a series of personal and anecdotal accounts by intermarried partners who attend a Messianic congregation.

Messiah or Messianic?

I observed two problems in this latter half of the book. First, what exactly *is* the option being offered? “Messianic Judaism” is nowhere clearly defined except incidentally and via the anecdotes – a problem not just for this book but also for a number of others I have read, whether pro or against.

After carefully defining the traditional options in Chapter 6, the lack of a clear definition for the proposed alternative is perplexing. Nor are

² Some recent DNA studies seem to mitigate against this conclusion, e.g. Malcolm Ritter, “Study: Most Ashkenazi Jews from Four Women,” *USA Today* online edition (January 12, 2006) and others.



the incidental definitions consistent. On page 56 readers are told that Messianic Judaism is “essentially an attempt to restore the early Nazarene sect in a twenty-first century context,” and Gershon Nerel is approvingly quoted as describing this restorationism as contrasting with “unbiblical developments” in both later Judaism and Christianity. But on the next page, this is seemingly contradicted when we are told that it “appropriates both Torah and Jewish culture in the formation of a Messianic Jewish lifestyle” – since Jewish culture extends to the present day, in what sense is it restorationist? Not until page 117 are we actually given a definition, almost in passing, from the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations.

By then we have more or less gleaned from the anecdotal accounts that “Messianic Judaism” involves attending a Messianic congregation and embracing the observance of the Torah and/or Jewish tradition – but this would have been most helpful to say at the outset. Another question yet to be answered is whether being “Messianic Jewish” and adhering to “Messianic Judaism” are the same thing.

The other perplexing, and potentially serious, problem is that the Messianic Jewish option is described largely in terms of social identities. It is presented as offering an integrated identity, a bridging of backgrounds, and of particular value for the self-identity of the children in the marriage. The variety of personal accounts include those in which the Jewish spouse is not interested in the gospel message, but finds the Messianic congregation to be a place of comfort or a coping mechanism for both spouses. I am unclear at this point as to what the author perceives as the goal of inviting intermarried couples to align with a Messianic congregation. Though the author advocates for faith in Yeshua, it seems as though the goal of the Messianic congregations, vis-à-vis intermarrieds, is to

Though the author advocates for faith in Yeshua, it seems as though the goal of the Messianic congregations, vis-à-vis intermarrieds, is to address the problem of the continuity of Jewishness

address the problem of the continuity of Jewishness, not primarily to address foundational faith issues.

In this regard, the book gives the appearance of reflecting the wholesale shift in the discourse of Judaism and Christianity that has taken place over the past twenty-five years. Beginning with E. P. Sanders, the so-called “New Perspective on Paul” has re-oriented

the discussion of what Paul in particular and the New Testament in general is saying, namely from issues of salvation from sin to issues of community boundaries. Beginning with the New Perspective, this re-orientation has extended to issues of Jewish-Christian relations and to trends in the Messianic movement. The advocacy of Messianic congregations in this book appears to have more to do with social boundaries than with sin; the basis for a healthy intermarriage is delineated not in terms of a common faith in a common Savior, but in a kind of fusing of the social boundaries such that both spouses are comfortable, or find themselves in a new kind of social matrix that makes social sense to both of them.

If the author does hope to see intermarried couples both embrace faith in Yeshua, as I would hope he does, that aspect receives little encouragement from his descriptions.

A few brief comments: I am less sanguine than Rudolph on the current state of the Messianic congregational movement. The statement that “the Messianic Jewish movement is largely comprised of Jewish people and led by Jewish people” is, as far as the *congregations* are concerned, not true: recent surveys have indicated 50–75% non-Jewish membership.³ The congregational movement is also treated as a monolith, as though just the fact that something is a Messianic congregation is enough. Like churches, each Messianic congregation needs to be evaluated on its own merits.

I am also less sanguine about the acceptance of “Messianic Judaism” by the Jewish community. On the one hand, Jewish pluralists argue that Messianic Jews should be allowed at the table, as one more item on the smorgasbord. This is not necessarily a bad thing. The changing perception of Jesus in the Jewish community – from viewing him as a sorcerer and deceiver of the people to considering him to be a good teacher and rabbi – undoubtedly increases the “plausibility factor” for many Jewish people. So “acceptance” in this sense is not necessarily bad. But will the pluralist/postmodern “acceptance” come with the caveat that “proselytization” is unacceptable, as has already been suggested by some of the anecdotes here?

On the other hand, there are voices of people such as Dennis Prager, who says that Messianic Jews are okay as long as they say Jesus is not God, and Michael Wyschogrod, who says that Messianic Jews are okay as long as they observe Torah. Theological compromise and silence may be the costs to pay for acceptance by the orthodox on the one hand and the pluralists on the other. I hope it plays out differently. But there is the distinct danger that acceptance will come with the motto “Give up and shut up” (i.e. give up key theological points and be silent about the need for faith in Yeshua).

In short, I am as divided about this book as some of the tension-laden Jewish-gentile couples described. On the one hand, the more academic chapters on intermarriage, though brief, are altogether helpful, whether or not you agree with all the author’s points. The extensive bibliography provides all sorts of follow-up re-

Theological compromise and silence may be the costs to pay for acceptance by the orthodox on the one hand and the pluralists on the other

³ Jeffrey S. Wasserman, *Messianic Jewish Congregations: Who Sold This Business to the Gentiles?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 100, n. 25: “My survey showed 60% Gentile membership [in the Messianic congregations surveyed]. Schiffman’s 1987 survey revealed Gentile membership between 75% and 50%.” Cf. Michael Schiffman, *Return from Exile: The Re-Emergence of the Messianic Congregational Movement* (Columbus, OH: Teshuvah Publishing, 1990), 119: “most ... have percentages of Jewish membership between twenty-five to fifty percent.”



sources for delving more deeply. On the other hand, the advocacy of "Messianic Judaism" as an option is too sketchy and raises too many unaddressed questions to be of real help. We are left to make do without a clear definition of the term. In addition, we have to ask whether social issues, crucial though they are, have crowded out spiritual and salvific concerns.

For those who minister to intermarried Jewish-gentile couples, the demographics, dilemmas, and history sections are of useful background value. The anecdotes will offer insight into the thinking of some intermarrieds. The author has not, however, made a case for "Messianic Judaism" or the practices of Messianic congregations being more helpful than other "solutions." In cases where one or both spouses are nonbelievers in Yeshua, it would be helpful to hear that a common faith in Yeshua should be the foundation of a marriage. For intermarrieds who do share a common faith in Yeshua, the author has not made the case that the local church will inevitably correlate with the loss of Jewish identity, as may have been the case in the past, because correlation and causality are two separate things.

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An Evangelistic Approach to Interfaith Marriages

THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES



By **Nikki H.**

As the producer and director of a documentary video on interfaith marriages called *Joined Together?*, I quickly learned from my research that the world of intermarried couples was a unique and appropriate field for evangelism. Typically, both parties in a Jewish-gentile couple were straining to find common ground on issues that were either under the surface in their marriage or not easily labeled.

In this short article I would like to share what I learned about developing a missiological strategy for reaching these couples. As I thought about how to best utilize *Joined Together?* and by soliciting the experiences of Jewish-gentile couples through advice, comments, and focus groups, I realized that I could accomplish two goals at once:

1. Work on the quality and content of the video to better understand our audience and sharpen the focus of the project.
2. Use the process of market-testing the film as a means of sharing the gospel and actually try out some new methods of communication in our postmodern culture.

Understanding the Audience

Identifying with Objections and Discomfort

During the process of making *Joined Together?*, I first made a "rough cut." This is a version of the video that contained just the interviews and content of the dialogue without additional visuals or music. Within the development process, I brought Art onto the production team. He is a non-believing Jewish prime-time television editor. He worked with me on the rough cut.

After viewing the initial sequence, Art's response was surprising. He looked at the footage and said, "You can't just plunk down the fact in the middle of the video that Jews believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Any Jewish person watching this is going to react to that statement. We have to put in a response to it. We have to make sure the audience knows that YOU know how they are feeling."

He actually suggested adding the following sequence:

NARRATOR

Thousands of Jews have come upon the startling revelation that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Instead of only seeing Jesus as the Christian God, they now view him as the promised Jewish Messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures and realize that a Jewish person who accepts that claim remains Jewish.

LISA

What do you mean you believe in this? How do you know? I mean how do you know?

TOM

There is Judaism and then there is Christianity!!

ERIC

Believing in Christ was fine for Deb ... however I was a Jew!

ROGER

I only wanted something in times of trouble.

BLAKE (a gentile spouse)

I knew that Yeshua was Jewish, but I hadn't really thought about how that would affect the Jewish person.

INTERFAITH MARRIAGE COUNSELOR

When couples hear the solution, they don't believe me. Everything they've heard is on one level and this is asking them to go to a deeper level.

It is important to let your audience know that you understand their sensitivity to the subject. Like most people, they first want to know that you understand their dilemma. Demonstrating an appreciation for their perspective is a key element in seeking to share with Jewish-gentile couples. Understanding these nuances takes a bit of effort. The difficulties these couples encounter constitute a set of challenges unique to the culture of this newly emergent people group.

Equally important to communicating Jesus to the Jewish partner is the need to identify with their cultural response to all things "Christian." Broaching the messiahship of Jesus is a challenge, since he is usually perceived as the unique "Christian God" who is not for the Jews – ever. In other words, it is advantageous to anticipate the Jewish response to the message about Jesus, and to let them know you can, at least, empathize with how they feel about the subject.

The Sideways Approach

People don't usually like to feel that they have been targeted. This is true especially within the Jewish community. The word *proselytize* is consid-

ered a negative term, culturally associated with forced conversions by Christians in medieval times long past.

Often our Jewish people feel ethically compelled to respond with the obligatory “No thanks – I’m Jewish” whenever Jesus is offered as a spiritual option or presented as a theological solution. Growing up in New York, I learned to respond to religious dialogue about Jesus with the immediate disclaimer that I call the *Jewish waiver*. We say, “I’m Jewish” as a means of terminating the conversation and chilling any notion of further proselytizing efforts.

Given this understanding, and applying it to the distinct sensitivities of intermarried couples, I found what I call the “sideways approach.” It is a method that seems to work best when initially presenting the gospel. As a matter of fact, I now utilize this approach frequently in my evangelistic communication efforts.

I have found that if I can provide a good excuse for someone to give themselves permission to hear the good news, then they will more readily enter into a conversation about the Lord. Let me give you some examples:

- Once I had the rough cut of the *Joined Together?* video, I was able to use that to open doors for discussion and feedback. Whenever I met someone in an interfaith marriage I said, “Oh, I’m producing a documentary on interfaith marriages and would love to have your feedback on this before it is complete.” Most individuals were flattered, but then I put in a qualifier: “I need to tell you, there is an agenda in the documentary that you might not agree with or might make you upset.” More often than not, the person assured me that they were perfectly able to be objective and give me valuable feedback. And so conversations about the Lord ensued. They were hearing the message as an observer instead of as a target. They were free to dialogue with me about the content from their own experience.
- Art, the prime-time television editor who I previously mentioned, heard I was doing this project and offered to do the editing on it. Art is Jewish and is married to a non-Jewish woman. Neither of them believed in God, let alone Jesus. I saw that this could be a wonderful opportunity to have built-in feedback from our primary audience. It could be an occasion to share the gospel with him as well. However, before I would allow him to work on the project, I put in a qualifier: “Art, I’m not sure this is the project for you. You will be hearing about God and Jesus the whole time. It might not be your cup of tea.” When Art insisted, and after I prayed about it, I felt it was from the Lord. It is clear that God is still working on Art’s heart. He is now exploring the truth of the gospel for himself. He is separated from his wife, who has recently become a believer. I received a call yesterday from a friend who told me they saw Art walking into the side door of their Sunday morning church service for the first time.
- When the video was complete, one of the first opportunities we had to



show it to a group of people was at our “Cast and Crew” screening. This was held at CBS studios. Several non-believers who were involved in the project or were friends of the crew showed up at this screening. I was a little nervous about possibly encountering a hostile response. We did a short panel discussion with Q&A immediately following the screening. I realized that most of the Jewish non-believers present felt like they were being invited to view and provide input on a topic that they could watch from a safe place of detachment. Actually, some of the responses following the screening were terrific. One Jewish atheist said, “It actually makes sense. It was surprisingly excellent and very touching.” His wife wanted to know if she could get a copy to mail to her daughter who is in an interfaith marriage. I doubt they would have been that open had I approached them directly to offer something unsolicited to help them with their daughter.

Relating to the Culturally Familiar

I purposely put key subliminal elements into the cultural content of *Joined Together?* for the Jewish spouse to identify with. Woven throughout the project are melodies as familiar to the Jewish ear as is the doxology to an American Christian congregation. When talking about the Trinity, I underscored the music with the traditional Jewish *Shema* melody: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

I also have images of items familiar to most Jews. There are Passover *Haggadahs*, Shabbat candle lighting scenes, and the traditional Jewish prayer shawl known as a *tallit*. Many of these items were used in the context of talking about bringing Yeshua into the marriage. Often, within interfaith marriages, couples feel like they have to fight for turf to maintain their share of tradition and religious influence on their children. Sometimes spouses even show off the benefits of their cultural or religious upbringing.

When ministering to intermarried couples, I try to make sure that each person has a connection point of cultural familiarity. I find that without this point of identification for each party, one of the spouses is likely to feel alienated or marginalized.

When relating to intermarrieds, put them at ease. Try to take away any fears they might have that you are there to change them or press them to relinquish their cultural orientation. Frequently, those of us who are both Jewish and followers of Jesus can be used to help translate nuances between the Jewish and gentile partners.

The Spiritual Perspective

It is important, when presenting potential solutions to challenges that an interfaith couple might encounter, that we approach it in terms of the spiritual solution. There are already enough traditional approaches being pressed on them, like *blending traditions* or *one-faith solutions*. The pressure to solve relational tensions by simply converting to a different religion fails to emphasize what God might want to offer the couple.

The solutions I present in the film are not about traditions or culture, but rather flow from the spiritual condition of humanity and God's intended relationship with his children.

Ways to Utilize Joined Together?

The interfaith marriage video *Joined Together?* has won three Aurora awards. They were for best directing, best low budget, and best life skills documentary. Additionally, it was a main entry in the Damah film festival and a finalist in the People's Choice awards at the National Religious Broadcasters convention.

I produced two versions of *Joined Together?* One is shorter, and is intended as a pre-evangelistic tool for Christians to use in eventually sharing the gospel with Jewish-gentile friends or contacts. It is called the short or half-hour version. It emphasizes that there are spiritual solutions to the challenges that couples are facing. It suggests that there is a way to break down the dividing wall between Jew and gentile, but it does not mention Yeshua. It is useful for starting conversations with Jewish-gentile couples. The longer version provides the complete package. A couple watching it would hear testimonies and have the gospel clearly presented to them.

In addition, it is possible to give the video to a Jewish-gentile couple and ask them for their feedback on it. This too is a great way to open a conversation. Some congregations are using this video as a tool for outreach events.

In Maryland, one of the Messianic congregations has partnered with six different churches to offer combined outreaches using the video as the point of discussion. Hundreds of congregants attended the preliminary training session and then invited their intermarried friends to the outreach/screening. Hundreds of people have attended, and the outreaches were followed up with six weeks of small group discussions for those couples that were interested.

Thoughts in Retrospect

My ultimate goal in producing the *Joined Together?* video was to present the gospel to an audience of Jewish-gentile couples. Most of the rabbis I spoke with, and Christian clergy too, advocated that the only ideal solution for intermarried couples was the conversion of one spouse to the religion of the other. Of course, happily, *Joined Together?* offers the alternative that I think is the best and only solution for ultimate fulfillment. However, in retrospect, one of the limitations that I feel is inherent in the video is its presentation of only one solution to the issues at hand, making it seem biased and one-sided. I am aware that this has been typical within the evangelical community. Too often we are reluctant to present all options in an even-handed way while allowing the truth to rise to the top.

I believe that if we present all points of view fairly, the truth will seem

I believe that if we present all points of view fairly, the truth will seem that much more real



that much more real. Oftentimes believers find it difficult to address subjects as Paul did on Mars Hill. We frequently take a bellicose stance toward cultural viewpoints different from those we believe to be true.

To compensate for the lack of alternate viewpoints in *Joined Together?*, I usually let people know that the video does have a specific agenda that represents just one point of view. This has proved effective in diffusing any objections viewers might have.

Joined Together? has received dozens of responses such as the following:

During a pre-wedding planning meeting of a mixed couple (he is gentile and she is Jewish) Bonnie and I were able to follow the concepts taught in *Joined Together?* We were able to lead the young Jewish lady to the Lord. Adam and Julianne can now begin their new life together with new life in the Messiah!

Within Our Community

Thus far, I have only encountered one non-believer who was offended by the content of this project. (In that case, I had not prepared him about the agenda and he felt duped.) However, I was surprised to find mixed responses to the video from within the Messianic Jewish community. Some of my Messianic Jewish friends were agitated that the agenda of the film was not slightly different. The feedback from some Messianic groups was most peculiar, and included presuppositions about how the non-believers in the film should feel or respond, instead of listening to how the Jewish-gentile couples were actually responding. That signals a potential inability to empathize with or care for the challenges of Jewish-gentile couples.

We always run the risk of imposing our own concept of a Messianic Jewish community on others, rather than listening to their real needs. Hopefully, as a community we can find a number of models that work for different individuals.

Be Ready In Season and Out

I encourage the reader of this article to equip him or herself to minister to Jewish-gentile couples. I have opportunities to share the Lord on a casual basis almost every week. I fully attribute this to being prepared. I am looking for opportunities, always carrying resources on hand. Last Rosh Hashanah I went to services at a Messianic synagogue. Afterward I walked across the street to a store for a take-out lunch.

The matzo ball soup didn't have a single matzo ball in the broth. I complained to the store clerk, more loudly than I realized. Out of the blue, a college age girl who overheard me asked, "Are you Jewish?" I told her "yes," and that I had just come from services across the street at a Messianic synagogue. Suddenly, she started telling me about her parents being intermarried and how confused she was. She was really trying to sort it all out.

She offered that she was Jewish, but her dad was a Christian. “Surprisingly,” I had a copy of the *Joined Together?* video and some evangelistic pamphlets in my car. I told her about the film, shared the gospel with her, and then went to retrieve a copy of the film for her from my trunk. When I returned, Zora was talking with her parents, telling them about our conversation. Things like that happen frequently. I believe that is partially attributed to being ready and prepared, so the Lord sends people in my direction. I challenge the reader to pray for and prepare to reach Jewish-gentile couples. It is my hope that *Joined Together?* will be just one of many tools that will be developed to reach this growing and open community of Jewish-gentile couples.

A copy of *Joined Together?* can be obtained through the producer/director at NikkiLH@aol.com or www.PRISMHollywood.com.





THEME: JEWISH-GENTILE COUPLES

Further Suggestions for Future Ministry

By Tuvya Zaretsky

Scope

The research on Jewish-gentile couples and the suggestions for ministry should be helpful for those of us in mission service to the Jewish people. They should be helpful for those in Messianic congregations and churches where large numbers of Jewish-gentile couples are present. I hope to develop further material this year that will help us all strategize for evangelism in those contexts. What follows is a preliminary effort.

For those of you working overseas, this material may be helpful in providing basic insights. At the same time, I would not warrant these findings as appropriate in formulating strategy for intermarriage ministry in all international regions. Perhaps further ethnographic research in your countries might be valuable. I would be glad to collate such material and chronicle the comparisons for future use.

The Learner Approach

This work has reinforced my own thinking regarding the necessity to approach missionary work as a practitioner – as one who is still learning. Donald K. Smith said that all communication is cross-cultural. Therefore, we have to learn the culture of our communication partners in order to effectively relate the gospel to them. We have to be strategic about how we present that gospel in a cultural scene where we are outsiders. So we practice the missionary endeavor with humility among the people to whom God sends us. That is true even when we are of the same ethnicity.

In contrast, Jewish communal leaders have planned public policy to reach Jewish-gentile couples based upon their own agendas. The rabbis are concerned about Jewish continuity. So programs for *outreach* or *in-gathering* are proposed to strengthen the Jewish community.

We, as Jewish mission workers, ought to be just as concerned about Jewish continuity and the survival of the Jewish people. However, we also ought to begin our strategic planning, not with our agenda, but with sensitivity to the needs and challenges of Jewish-gentile couples.

I commend the efforts of those in the Messianic congregational move-

ment who are seeking to promote spiritual harmony among Jewish-gentile couples. That approach recognizes the challenges that are being identified by these couples. It was for that reason that I specifically asked Scott Brown and the Son of David Congregation in Rockville, Maryland to share in this issue of *Mishkan*.¹ They have dedicated themselves to proclaiming the Messiah Yeshua without being embarrassed about the cause of Jewish evangelism. At the same time, they have geared themselves in particular to embrace Jewish-gentile couples. Believing Jewish-gentile couples give testimony to the healing and spiritual harmony found in a mutual relationship with the same God, through his Savior, Yeshua.

Missionary work to interfaith couples is cross-cultural. We function as learners and practitioners of the missionary craft. If we learn and discover the cultural differences of intermarriage partners, then understanding is created and communication improved. We can function as “translators” between partners. In doing so we can help them discover their own cultural meanings, and that can open the door to comprehension of spiritual truth.

Multidimensional Approach

Ministry to Jewish-gentile couples requires a multidimensional approach in strategic planning for evangelistic ministry. The following are some examples.

1. Social Dimension: We have to recognize that missionary work necessitates that we engage in social relationships. As we work cross-culturally, we can help in the area of interpersonal communication. Jewish partners can learn not to be afraid of Christian symbols or meanings in the lives of their gentile partners. In doing so they are exposed to the genuine gospel message.

We can also connect Jewish-gentile couples with other couples. I found, in one setting, that a small group provided free-flowing discussion about the very subjects that we as mission workers long to engage.

2. Intergenerational and Educational Approach: In evangelistic ministry to Jewish-gentile parents, we will be able to minister to them by providing biblical material for their children. It is possible to introduce parents and children to the rich Jewish ethnic and spiritual heritage in the Bible along with the spiritual content of the Christian gospel. Doing so is a fair practice in the context of intermarriage ministry.

3. Psychological and Social Dimensions: Small group ministry can help couples grapple with feelings of frustration, confusion, loneliness, tension, and discord. Small group ministry addresses the psychological challenges of Jewish-gentile couples.

¹ For more information see www.sonofdauid.org.



A small group that promotes an egalitarian discussion of sensitive topics will help build a new social network, increase family stability, and improve interpersonal communication between partners. Small groups have been a safe place to introduce the stability and peace found in the gospel of Yeshua.

4. Ritual, Symbolic, Spiritual, and Social Dimensions: Jewish-gentile couples need help in navigating the choice of symbols in various life-cycle events. Those life celebrations and holidays can be entry points for evangelistic ministry. We as mission workers need to be trained in cross-cultural explanation of the symbols and rituals of life-cycle events to Jewish-gentile partners. We already attempt to do that through some of our presentations. We can just as easily minister biblical truth through those life-cycle events to intermarried partners.

5. Spiritual, Theological, and Social Dimensions: The need for spiritual harmony presents an obvious opportunity for evangelistic ministry. This is a challenge that couples reported through all phases of their relationships. We as mission workers need to be prepared to address the longing for spiritual harmony with couples that come to us experiencing challenges. Christian marriage enrichment programs already exist that could theoretically be a basis for introducing the path to spiritual harmony with Jewish-gentile couples. The gospel of Messiah Yeshua directly addresses the longing for spiritual harmony reported by these couples.

Ministry Opportunity

Paul Pierson observed that spiritual breakthroughs and renewal movements usually begin in the margins of a society. Jewish-gentile couples regard themselves as being marginalized from both Jewish and Christian society. However, they may now find themselves together within their own unique community. I believe they present a strategic opportunity for evangelistic ministry within a community that is now uniquely prepared for spiritual awakening.

I believe they present a strategic opportunity for evangelistic ministry within a community that is now uniquely prepared for spiritual awakening

Jewish-gentile couples are generally unaware that they form a significant component of the American Jewish community. They represent a potential audience for strategic Jewish mission efforts.

I have suggested that we need written materials for the Jewish-gentile couples that are coming to us for help in sorting out their cross-cultural challenges. Materials are needed to encourage them in the spiritual nurture of their children. A discipleship format is needed for Jewish-gentile cross-cultural studies that lead to spiritual harmony in marriage.

I look forward to producing materials for college and graduate level courses for those who want to specialize in ministry among Jewish-gen-

tile couples. A mission workers manual is planned for lay church and Jewish mission workers in this specific field. It has been a joy to hear of the numerous Messianic congregational efforts and small group *havurot* for Jewish-gentile ministry. I welcome information about the creative efforts of others. Giving credit and appreciation is only half of the need. We all can profit from the effective ministries that are going on throughout this fruitful field.

In my opinion, we live at a unique time in Jewish mission history. American Jewish people, and those overseas, are going through a season of cultural change. Now, more than ever, we have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel. We know that it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the gentile. I believe that God is opening a door for us to speak to those who are the ethnic and spiritual heirs of Abraham as Jewish-gentile couples.





Daniel Edward: Pioneer Missionary

By **John S. Ross**

In 1838, the Church of Scotland established its Committee for the Conversion of the Jews, and in 1839 it instructed a deputation of four ministers to visit as many Jewish communities in Europe and Palestine as possible, to advise on the most appropriate location for its first mission station.¹ The deputation was divided in its opinion: the two older men, Drs. Black and Keith, favored Pesth (Budapest), but Andrew Bonar and Robert M'Cheyne preferred Palestine. The problem with Palestine was the unsettled state of the country, which made missionary work "inexpedient if not impossible." On the other hand, the large number of Jewish people in Hungary, Walachia, and Moldavia (modern Romania) would afford "a reasonable hope of many enquirers." Europe was also less challenging economically.²

At this time the name of Daniel Edward (1815–86) came before the Committee. Edward had graduated with his M.A. from the University of Edinburgh in April 1836, and during his divinity course he had offered himself for service to the Church of Scotland's Jewish mission.³ He was advised to undertake further theological studies in Berlin, where he established a warm friendship with William Wingate, who would join the first missionary group to Pesth. Although less celebrated than the famous "Rabbi" John Duncan, Edward was the true pioneer of the Church of Scotland's mission to the Jews.⁴ The Committee, laying aside the competing claims of Pesth and Palestine, agreed that his location would be Jassy (modern Iasi, Romania).⁵

1 The report was published as Andrew A. Bonar & Robert M. M'Cheyne, *A Narrative of a Mission of Enquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1878), reprinted as Andrew Bonar & Robert M'Cheyne, *A Mission of Enquiry* (Tain: Christian Focus Publications, 1996).

2 Minute Book of the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews of the Church of Scotland (NLS Dep. 298/249), 32–34, hereafter MB1.

3 Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, [3rd Ed. 1915–1928]), 7:715; cf. William Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), ad. loc.

4 Scotland's first missionary to the Jews, Claudius Buchanan, was not a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland but a minister of the Church of England. Cf. *Mishkan* 46/2006, 59f.

5 MB1, 46.



Jassy: Phase One

In 1841 Edward returned to Edinburgh, was ordained to the Christian ministry, and by early summer – with Hermann Philip, a Jewish Christian, as his assistant – departed for Moldavia, arriving in Jassy on the 16th of June.⁶ The Committee had been well aware of the sensitivities in Jassy, as well as the opportunities offered.⁷ Early in their experience, when Edward and Philip discussed the claims of the gospel with Jewish people, the ensuing tumult almost resulted in their imprisonment.⁸ The main force behind the opposition was Rabbi Aaron Moses Ben Jacob Taubes, an enthusiastic member of the strictly-orthodox Habad movement, who had been appointed to Jassy in 1841. Taubes (1787–1852) was a formidable foe, being a gifted organizer and a highly authoritative figure in the Jewish community, to whom even “the most famous rabbis turned with their problems.”⁹

The work, coupled with the antagonism he faced, soon took a toll on Edward’s health, and at the instigation of the Committee he returned to Scotland for a period of recuperation.¹⁰ During this furlough he met Catherine Grant, a sister of a former college friend, William Grant. In her *Memoir of Mrs. Edward*, Catherine described herself – no doubt truthfully but a trifle immodestly – as one whose eligibility to be Daniel’s wife was enhanced by being “a kindred spirit, glowing with the same ardent love for the house of Israel, and qualified by natural gifts and acquired attainments to be a help-meet in his home and in his work.”¹¹ But for the meanwhile, Edward returned to Jassy alone to commence his second term of service. He would not be long alone, for they had planned that Catherine should follow him as early as possible and that they should meet and marry in Germany. Their wedding took place on August 25th 1846, according to the rites of the German Reformed Church, and immediately afterward they departed for Jassy, complete with their luggage and furniture, including a traveling carriage and a piano.¹²

Struggles and Joys

Returning to the little mission station, Daniel and Catherine Edward were in an optimistic mood, not least because the Committee had authorized

6 Lionel Alexander Ritchie, “Daniel Edward (1815–1896) and the Free Church of Scotland Mission to the Jews in Central Europe,” in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, vol. 31, 2002.

7 *Home and Foreign Missionary Review of the Church of Scotland*, no. 6 (December 1839), 88.

8 Ritchie, op. cit.

9 Cecil Roth & Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (London: Macmillan, 1972), vol. 15, 834.

10 Catherine Edward, *Missionary Life Among the Jews in Moldavia, Galicia and Silesia* (Edinburgh: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1867), 33.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 34, 41f.

them to carry out of some of the most modern methods of missionary enterprise. As well as a school, which had been established earlier, they planned to establish a workshop to train new converts and enable them to make an independent living. A cabinetmaker from Scotland had arrived the previous year and a locksmith was on his way.¹³ And in addition to the help of Hermann Philip, they enjoyed the services of Alfred Edersheim, who had been appointed a missionary of the Free Church of Scotland in October 1845.¹⁴ Edersheim, born in Vienna in 1825, had been a student in Budapest, where he met the Scottish missionaries who introduced him to Christian teaching and baptized him in 1844.

The opposition from Rabbi Taubes continued: he threatened any Jew who dared go near the mission or the school with excommunication.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the work continued. The mornings were dedicated to study, and Catherine was pleased to report they were "continually interrupted by Jews calling."¹⁶ Throughout the coming months more interest was awakened, until by the end of November twelve people were seeking baptism. To these, as well as to gentile enquirers, the Edwards opened their home. Catherine excitedly informed her brother that their "saal was almost full [with] upwards of sixty people, and about twenty-five long bearded Jews."¹⁷

At this stage of their missionary career, Catherine's accounts give the impression of a normal busy missionary household, challenged by the difficulties of the task but fundamentally happy in their work. She, at any rate, seemed to flourish. She wrote, "I have grown quite fat again; my face is absolutely vulgarly round and my health is, I am thankful to say, very much improved."¹⁸ But in the very next sentence the first ominous note is struck: "Dr. — has raised a storm among the Jews."¹⁹ The anonymous doctor was John Mason, from Dumfries in Scotland, who had arrived to open a dispensary and help break down the barriers of suspicion in the town through his medical skills. But, accused by Edward of "certain irregularities," the Committee asked him to leave Jassy in May 1847.²⁰

Another setback rocked the mission station as Alfred Edersheim left under a cloud. Not only had he got into difficulties with the Committee over his intention to get married, but also a disagreement concerning personal financial matters had broken out between himself and Edward.²¹ Edersheim was cleared of all suspicion, but the Committee refused to

13 *Ibid.*, 35.

14 MB1, 372. Cf. *Annals* vol. 1, ad. loc.

15 Edward, op. cit., 48.

16 *Ibid.*, 57.

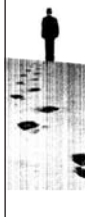
17 *Ibid.*, 60.

18 *Ibid.*, 62.

19 *Ibid.* Mason, a medical man from Dumfries, had been taken on by the Committee in December 1845 for service in Jassy at the salary of £250 p.a.; cf. Wood to Mason, NLS MS 19000, 195.

20 MB1, 47. The available evidence indicates that the alleged irregularities were of a sexual nature.

21 *Ibid.*, 74.



reinstate him to Jassy. In 1849 he became minister of the Free Church of Scotland congregation at Old Machar, Aberdeen, where he remained until he moved to Torquay, in the south of England, in 1863. The Free Church of Scotland had irretrievably lost the services of one of the most notable Jewish Christians of his generation.²²

As if the problems relating to Mason and Edersheim were not enough, there followed a breakdown in the relationship between Edward and Philip. Finding both Edward and the situation in Jassy too difficult to cope with, Philip took his family to Constantinople, but the missionaries there could make no use of his services, so he resigned and returned to Scotland.²³ The Committee found fault with Edward, partly for his mishandling of the situation and partly because of his failure to communicate.²⁴ In addition, the British Consul at Jassy also complained of his arrogant behavior toward the staff of the Consulate, but this time the Committee wisely agreed to hold their counsel until Edward could offer an explanation.²⁵

As, from this time onward, the pressures inexorably increased, Catherine's letters remained a model of good judgment. Although she describes the "load and weight of anxiety that was pressing us to the very earth," there is little sign of grumbling.²⁶ Instead, she spoke frankly of living "in the midst of realities," or surrounded by matters of "great and deep interest ... [not] easily related, especially by writing."²⁷ Yet her letters do betray one clear sign of the stress under which they were laboring: their increasing bitterness toward the Jewish people. Over time, Daniel and Catherine's attitude subtly shifted, from a romantic fascination with all things Jewish to criticism and negativity verging on anti-Semitism.²⁸ This is well known today as typical of prolonged culture shock, the symptoms of which include acute homesickness and withdrawal from the local culture.²⁹ It was a relief to take a brief holiday and return to find the Committee's correspondence supportive and caring, having arranged for their friends, the Wingates, to join them for the winter.³⁰

Meanwhile, Rabbi Taubes kept up his opposition; the Habad Hasidim followed his lead and the ordinary Jewish population deliberately or inadvertently implemented his strategy. It was such relentless opposi-

22 *Ibid.*, 353, 356, 358, 359. After an unhappy relationship with the English Presbyterian Church, Edersheim withdrew to join the Church of England, becoming in 1882 Warburtonian Lecturer in Lincoln's Inn, Lecturer on the Septuagint in the University of Cambridge, and preacher to the University of Oxford.

23 Minute Book of the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews of the Free Church of Scotland (NLS Dep. 298/250), 160, hereafter MB2.

24 *Ibid.*, 77.

25 *Ibid.*, 162, 165.

26 *Ibid.*, 108.

27 Edward, *op. cit.*, 65, 79.

28 For their earlier attitude toward Jewish people, see *ibid.*, 40.

29 Cf. Marjory F. Foyle, *Honourably Wounded: Stress Among Christian Workers* (Bromley: MARC Europe, et.al., 1987), 100f.

30 MB2, 109.

tion, not paranoia, which led the Edwards to believe spies reported on those calling at their house.³¹ Their fears were borne out by the distressing case of Naphtali Horowitz, a young man from Austria, who had false legal charges lodged against him. The missionaries, having every reason to believe that he had genuinely embraced the Christian faith, planned to baptize him and thus remove him from Jewish jurisdiction. Enraged, some Jews reported him to the police, alleging trumped up charges of the theft of a silver candlestick. Horowitz was brought to trial for larceny and for attempting to escape military service. However, the plot failed, and much to the embarrassment of his enemies he was acquitted.³²

One of their greatest encouragements turned out to be a catalyst for some of the fiercest opposition they had to face. A rabbi named Nahum Birman had been reflecting on the claims of Christ, and presented himself for baptism along with his three children. The following morning, knowing full well his action would invoke the wrath of the community, he went to open his shop as usual. It almost cost him his life. Upward of a thousand Jews assembled, stones were thrown, and abuse was heaped on him.³³ When Nahum and his girls moved into the missionaries' home, the hostilities shifted from his shop to the mission, which was surrounded by a hostile stone-throwing crowd that attempted to storm the house after dark.³⁴ By September 1847 Daniel and Catherine were lonely, dispirited and utterly worn out.³⁵ Daniel's reports to the Committee also indicated

The following morning, knowing full well his action would invoke the wrath of the community, he went to open his shop as usual. It almost cost him his life

clear signs of anxiety, weariness, and depression; he believed he had "completely failed in setting the station properly before the eye of the Church and as a consequence he, his family and the work was largely unknown and badly misunderstood."³⁶

The arrival of William Wingate and his wife from Pesth brought to the Edwards the respite of comfort and Christian friendship.

William sympathetically confessed that the situation in Jassy was very difficult compared to anything he had ever encountered in Pesth, where he had never experienced protracted ultra-orthodox hostility.³⁷ He noticed that Daniel and Catherine's morale was low and their situation discouraging; the little church was "very low in spirituality." To help cultivate the spiritual and communal life of the church, he started Fellowship Meetings and spent time praying with the Edwards. On his return to Pesth he flattered himself that his efforts had not been wasted, but in

31 Edward, *op. cit.*, 84.

32 *Ibid.*, 91–95.

33 *Ibid.*, 100.

34 *Ibid.*, 103–104.

35 *Ibid.*, 109.

36 MB2, 27.

37 Edward, *op. cit.*, 117.

reality his contribution was far too little, too late.³⁸ Daniel and Catherine now recognized the extreme precariousness of their situation and contemplated withdrawal from Jassy.

Withdrawal from Jassy

Catherine's first letter of 1848 began on a very low note; in it she lamented that "Satan's blows had been well nigh too strong for us. All loveliness, all joy had fled from us."³⁹ It was, therefore, with heavy hearts that they prepared for the bi-annual celebration of the Lord's Supper. Their spirits, however, were lifted when a number of Jewish friends made known their desire to profess their faith by taking part for the first time in Communion. One was Rabbi Birman, who brought with him eight other Jewish friends, all deeply impressed by his commitment to Christianity.⁴⁰

To add to all their other problems and discouragements, Jassy suffered a cholera epidemic that spring. Staring death daily in the face gave many people recourse to serious religious reflection, and thus the epidemic was not without positive results for the mission. Edward wrote, "Previous to this last visitation, all was looking dead and desolate around, causing many questionings and searching of heart."⁴¹ And as if cholera were not enough, 1848 also brought with it the revolutionary convulsions that shook much of Europe, affecting Jassy too. By early April people in the Jewish community "were running about on the streets ... screaming and weeping — '*die Revoluzy ist gekommen!*'"⁴² During the month of June another outbreak of cholera wracked the city, and renewed revolutionary activity provoked the Prince to invite assistance from the Russians, who entered Jassy in July. The impact on the local economy of sustaining a camp of some 30,000 Russian soldiers was crippling, with costs escalating as provisions became increasingly scarce.

Then, on July 31st, amid all the discouragement, epidemic, and revolution, Catherine gave birth to their first child, a daughter.⁴³ To Daniel, this joy brought a new priority, the welfare of his wife and child. He, therefore, wrote to the Committee requesting approval to close the work in Jassy and open up a fresh work in Lemberg before the winter should set in.⁴⁴ The Committee acceded to his request, reflecting that in the circumstances Lemberg would be a good location for the commencement of a new work. But after little more than a year they were forced to leave Lemberg too, expelled by the Austrian government at the same

38 Gavin Carlyle, *Life and Word of the Rev. William Wingate* (Glasgow: R. L. Allan & Son, n.d.), 112.

39 Edward, 119.

40 *Ibid.*, 120.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*, 153.

44 *Home and Foreign Missionary Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, vol. III, no. 23 (November 1848), 561.



time as the missionaries in Pesth. After a brief spell in Scotland they took up a long residence in Breslau, where they enjoyed many years of fruitful missionary work.⁴⁵ Daniel retired from his work in 1896, aged eighty-one years old, and died the same year.

It is difficult to adequately evaluate the work at Jassy. Despite numerous difficulties, discouragements, and opposition, the mission was not as fruitless as may be thought. Even Catherine acknowledged “many and lasting fruits of the seven and a-half years of labour there.”⁴⁶ During their time in the town some twenty-nine Jewish people had been baptized, and although some fell away again, the work did not sink without a trace. When Theodore Meyer visited Jassy twelve years later, he found surviving evidence of their work, which included Nahum Birman, an influential rabbi who believed in Jesus; Naphatali Horowitz, a successful merchant trading with India; two local men, Mr. Weiss and Samuel Neuman, who had become missionaries to their own people; and Michael B., a young man saved from the cholera, who was now the librarian to the Prince of Moldavia.⁴⁷ Yet, despite a few exceptions, Jassy, with its unremitting difficulties and challenges, proved to be the counterpoint to the remarkable success at Budapest.

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45 For the work in Lemberg and Breslau see Edward, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Ritchie, *op. cit.*; George Schnucker, *The East Friesians in America* (Topeka: Josten Publishing, 1986), 142, 154.

46 Edward, *op. cit.*, 158.

47 *Ibid.*, 160–162; cf. David McDougall, *In Search of Israel. A Chronicle of the Jewish Missions of the Church of Scotland* (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1941), 60–61.

Competition, Cooperation, and Overlap

– *How to Pool and Share Information and Resources*

By **Rolf G. Heitmann**



The topic of this paper consists of five important aspects of missions and ministries in general, and Jewish mission and evangelism in particular:

- Competition
- Cooperation
- Overlap
- Sharing information
- Sharing resources¹

Each topic should be examined separately and in depth, but in this paper I will leave specific application to the reader and concentrate on the following:

- A) Two biblical principles – a biblical fact and a biblical commandment
- B) Building relationships/experiences in partnership
- C) Some challenges for the future

Two Biblical Principles

A Biblical Fact: United in Messiah

Competition is often regarded negatively. We are afraid of competition, and look upon it as a threat and potentially damaging to our ministries and ourselves. If we could work solo, everything would be better: We would have no problems recruiting manpower, our income would be secured, and we could focus on our vision and goals rather than on how to defeat our competitor.

If competition means that one will win and the other will lose – as in individual sports – competition in Christian ministry is damaging. If competition means attempting to defeat each other, even if it is not expressed in this way, it is destructive.

But competition can be constructive or positive if we understand our-

¹ This paper was originally presented at the 2005 LCJE CEO conference.

selves not as individual players, but as part of a team. One of the most successful coaches in Norwegian soccer, Nils Arne Eggen, summarized the success of Rosenborg in this way: The main factor is not that we have a team of 11 brilliant soccer players, but that we manage in our team to make each other better.

Our perspective in Jewish evangelism should be that we belong to the same team – or to be more biblical, we belong to the same body, that of Jesus the Messiah. We have a common vision and a common goal: That Christ may be glorified in the midst of his people, and that they, the people of Israel, might be saved (Rom 10:1).

As agencies, organizations, and ministries we have different functions in the body (Rom 12:3–5 and 1 Cor 12), but we should all aim to make each other better.

The impact of unification into one body is first of all acceptance: Accepting each other as we are, with our own heritage, identity, culture, structure, methods – and maybe even theological diversity. Diversity in unity should be appreciated rather than neglected or rejected. The arm and the leg, the hand and the foot have different functions, even if they belong to the same body.

The second consequence is practical: In order to function optimally we need communication. The hand needs to know in what direction the foot is moving. Sharing information is much more than being updated. It is necessary in order to make the right strategic decisions and act properly for the benefit of the whole body.

A Biblical Commandment: The Weak and the Strong

Not all parts of the body have the same image, or seem to be as important as the others. (For what reason do we have an appendix?) Our ministries are also different. Some are small and some are big. Some have a strong economy, and others are struggling for survival. Some are working worldwide, while some are concentrating on specific fields. Some are involved in many activities and projects with regard to Jewish-Christian relations, while others focus only on evangelism. Some have clear and convincing answers to questions about the millennium, and methods for how to approach the Jewish people with the gospel. Others allow room for different views on such things.

In Romans 14:1–3 and 15:1–2, Paul speaks about the weak and the strong with regard to the kosher lifestyle and keeping Jewish traditions. I think the same principle is transferable to other aspects of life and cooperation: The strong should not despise or condemn the weak, and the weak should not envy the strong. Let us respect and honor each other in our diversity. Let us identify with each other without claiming to be identical.

Building Relationships

Cooperation is not only a question of “how,” but also a question of “with whom.” As a mission agency we cooperate on different levels with dif-

ferent bodies, and in the following I want to share my own experience in cooperation on three levels.

Cooperation for me is first of all building and strengthening a relationship, which also includes sharing information, experiences, and know-how. Secondly, cooperation will also lead to common acts and practical results, i.e. with regard to sharing manpower and other resources.

Relationships with the Local Church

It is my understanding that the local church – gathered in the name of Jesus and sharing the Word of God and the sacraments – represents and expresses the presence of the body of Messiah. My first obligation as an expatriate should therefore be to seek out the local church, share my vision for the Jewish people, and invite others to partnership. Even if we find that we don't have a common vision or understanding of the importance of sharing the gospel with "the Jew first," we should do our utmost to develop and maintain a good relationship with the local church. Why is this so important?

First of all, as already mentioned, the local church – in spite of its weaknesses – represents the united body of Christ. Secondly, the local church understands better than any expatriate the local context and culture. Thirdly, we need to challenge, teach, and invite the local church to take part in Jewish evangelism. The local church represents the continuation of the ministry when the expatriates leave. No one and no ministry can replace the local church, nor take over the calling of this church to share the gospel with the Jews.

When, after the fall of the "iron curtain," NCMI wanted to restart a mission work in Hungary, our first initiative was to investigate the options by contacting the leadership of the Lutheran church in Hungary. Very briefly expressed, the outcome of this contact was a partnership agreement between NCMI and the church, which included teaching the pastors, common studies, and involving the church in mission. So far we have arranged courses for more than half of the Lutheran pastors, trying to create an understanding of the importance of sharing the gospel with the Jewish people and challenging the church to be open, accepting, and supportive of Jewish believers in the congregations who want to express their Jewishness. Last month two Hungarian pastors spent three weeks in Israel, meeting with Messianic Jewish leaders and congregations in a project called "Sharing Pastoral Life." Without the local church taking an active and supporting part, we would never succeed.

Relationships with Partner Organizations

LCJE is a network of partner organizations, even if networking in Jewish evangelism is far older than the Lausanne movement. Actually, NCMI has always, from its very beginning 160 years ago, followed a strategy of partnership in mission. For the first 50 years of our history we had no missionaries, but supported other Jewish mission organizations, first in Germany, and then also the London Society.



NCMI today (actually since 1949) focuses on the Jews living in the state of Israel. Founding congregations of Jewish immigrants whom we knew from our previous ministry in Romania was our first calling in Israel. But we realized quite soon that building congregations was not sufficient.

First of all, our missionaries recognized that many of the older immigrants suffered and had trouble assimilating into the Jewish society. Among them were also Messianic Jews who had survived the *Shoah*. A vision of establishing a home for these needy and elderly Messianic Jews was conceived.

We could have said, "It's a good idea, but we have no resources, nor do we know how to build and run such an institution." The leadership of the NCMI at that time did not look at the limitations, but at the opportunities. Through our international network, which had been created over many years, the vision was spread and appeals sent out. Next year the Ebenezer Home will celebrate its 30th anniversary. By holding a common vision and sharing resources, the Home became a reality. Today there is still a multinational staff of employees and volunteers from supporting organizations.

Another opportunity was the lack of local institutions providing the Messianic congregations with qualified leadership and programs in Hebrew. In order to raise up a new generation of Messianic leaders, we started Caspari Center with its "theological education by extension" program. This project was also made possible through a joint venture of several organizations involved in Jewish evangelism and training.

Ebenezer Home and Caspari Center have developed from NCMI-owned institutions into partner-owned and governed institutions, with boards elected by partners with mutual responsibility and authority. Local bodies are now more involved in the governing and running of the institutions, which have local management. The transferring of authority does not mean that the partnership is less important. Rather, we would say that we are strengthening equal partnership, not only among the agencies, but also with the local body.

I will not hide the fact that we, as an organization with long-term commitments based on agreements with partners, have had financial difficulties. In our own country we also have limited resources with regard to manpower. We have no mission training school ourselves, and the screening of missionary candidates takes time.

We especially felt the difficult times in our ministry in Tel Aviv. After a split in the congregation in the early 1990s, we did not have the resources ourselves – neither money nor manpower – to continue the work. Our good partnership with the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) solved the problem. At a time when our resources were limited, they assisted by sending staff and covering the related personnel expenses.

This partnership created a new vision: to define the Lutheran work at Immanuel Church in Tel Aviv/Yafo as a joint venture of all Nordic Lutheran mission agencies involved in Jewish evangelism. Joint Mission to Israel (JMI) today consists of 5 partner organizations, so that even small organi-

zations (like the Fareo Island Israel Mission) that are not able to establish a ministry abroad may be part of an important and bigger project, and even have influence on its development. The biblical principle of the strong and the weak is well illustrated in JMI.

Such cooperation has been a blessing to the local work in Tel Aviv, as well as to the cooperating partners. Shared responsibility for covering expenses and recruiting personnel has been important in order to run the organization, and I feel that in this way we have been able to plan and work more strategically. The present Danish pastor replaced a Norwegian pastor, who replaced a Finnish pastor. In principle, JMI is open to new partners, and today we are discussing partnership with a Lutheran organization from outside the Nordic countries.

Relationships with the Messianic Movement

Relationships between mission agencies and local churches have often been regarded as relationships between strong donors and weak recipients. This has sometimes created a dependency that hinders the growth of the local church. It is very important that in our relationships with Messianic congregations and institutions we create partnerships based on equal responsibilities, and stimulate independence with regard to finances and management.

There is no time to develop this topic here, but allow me to raise a question: How do we, as mission organizations, involve our Messianic partners in our own decision-making processes? Are we satisfied with just sending money and personnel, or are we also open to including our partners in developing our own strategies and giving them a voice and vote when decisions are made?

In the future, we should aim at more equal and transparent partnerships and relationships, and encourage the mutual exchange of resources. I am quite convinced that we as an agency have much to learn and receive from the Messianic movement today.

Challenges for the Future

The geographical focus of Jewish evangelism has changed in the last decades. In the 1980s there was a strong focus on the growth of Messianic congregations in the USA. In the 1990s the focus switched to the former Soviet Union, and also to South America. Today we have a strong focus on Europe, and especially Germany.

I don't think I am wrong to guess that in the coming years the state of Israel will be much more important for agencies involved in Jewish evangelism than it has been so far. If this is correct, will it have any impact on LCJE?

The Messianic movement in Israel is still small, but recently there has been a tremendous interest in establishing new institutions. It seems that every Messianic ministry or congregation needs to have an institution in Israel, serving the whole body of Messianic Jews. I question whether this



is a good strategy. It almost seems like owning or running an institution in Jerusalem is a certificate of success.

Is it possible to see LCJE as the new network, in which we can share a common vision for the Jewish people and join in common efforts to fulfill our dreams and visions? Would the establishment of the Ebenezer Home or Caspari Center be possible today? Do we see our own organizations, ministries, and agencies as goals in themselves, or are they instruments for realizing a common biblical vision for the Jewish people: That all Israel might be saved?

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Yad Hashmona: The Messianic Village Near Emmaus

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL



By **Gershon NereI**

The Finnish-Israeli cooperative *moshav* (village) Yad Hashmona is located in the Judean Hills, near biblical Emmaus, between Neve Ilan and Abu Ghosh, 15 km west of Jerusalem and about 30 km from Ben-Gurion Airport.

The Founders

The founders of Yad Hashmona were Protestant pioneers from Finland, who in 1974 moved to the site to begin building the barren area. During the 1960s they had worked as volunteers in different Israeli kibbutzim, where they learned about the communal lifestyle that they adapted to Yad Hashmona. As believers in the fulfillment of biblical prophecies, the Finnish pioneers desired to contribute their share to the Zionist movement in the land of Israel.

The Name

“Yad Hashmona” means Memorial to the Eight. The name was given by the founding settlers in memory of eight Jewish refugees who escaped in 1938 from Austria to Finland, and who were surrendered by the Finns to the Gestapo in November 1942. It was a time when the Finnish government collaborated with Nazi Germany in opposition to the Soviet Union, in an attempt to recover the Karelia region which Stalin had “stolen” from the Finns in the Winter War of 1939–40.

The eight refugees were taken to Auschwitz, where seven of them were murdered. The lone survivor, Dr. Georg Kolman, made *aliya* to Eretz Israel. The founders viewed their contribution to the land of Israel as a public request for forgiveness. In Helsinki, the Finnish government and church leaders dedicated a memorial to the eight only in November 2000. On that occasion a monument was erected opposite Helsinki’s harbor from whence the refugees embarked on the death ship *S/S Hohenhörn*.

Population

There are about 150 residents currently living in Yad Hashmona, made up of families, singles, children, volunteers, and students in the IBEX project. Some of the elderly founders still live here. The volunteers, who rotate constantly, come from all over the world. They are accepted after careful consideration and are a unique blessing to Yad Hashmona. In their homelands, these volunteers become goodwill ambassadors for Israel.

Messianic Jews

The Finnish founders realized that they could not progress and develop as a settlement of only Scandinavians. They therefore sought to absorb Israelis and become a regular Israeli village that would also include Finns.

The first Israeli volunteer to arrive in Yad Hashmona was Eli Bar-David, in 1978. He was followed by the families of his two brothers and sister. Other Israeli families joined later. It was they who actually determined the present character of the village as a center of Jewish Yeshua-believers.

Jewish Lifestyle

Moshav members observe the Hebraic calendar and accept the validity of the Old Testament because Yeshua himself declared that he did not come to abolish it or the Prophets, but rather to fulfill the Torah and the Prophets. Thus, a qualified *moheh* (circumciser) performs the male children's circumcisions, and all on the moshav keep *Shabbat* (seventh-day Sabbath) as a day of rest and worship. Additionally, only kosher food is served in the guest house facilities.

The festivals of the *Tanach* are observed in light of the New Testament, according to the teaching of Yeshua. At Passover the moshav members celebrate the *Pesach* (Passover) meal, focusing on the Messiah as the Paschal lamb and in connection with the Lord's Supper. Throughout the feast only *matza* (unleavened bread) is served in the dining room. People fast on *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) as an act of solidarity with Israel. For *Sukkoth* (Tabernacles) a central *sukka* is built near the restaurant along with those in the residential yards of the members.

Parents & Children

Some Jewish members of the moshav are married to women from Finland who have cast their lot with the Jewish people living in Israel, like Ruth the Moabitess. The common colloquial language is Hebrew. No private school is used. The children study at the Ein-Harrim regional elementary school in Ein Kerem near Jerusalem. High school studies take place at the neighboring village of Mevasseret Yerushalayim.

Upon completion of their schooling, the youngsters join the IDF (the

Israeli army), motivated to be an example to the soldiers around them in any needed role. Nowadays, part of the second generation of moshav members are returning to Yad Hashmona, setting up their homes at the moshav and continuing with their parents' biblical faith.

Guest House

Following the footsteps of the Finnish founders, the guest house is the largest economic enterprise at Yad Hashmona. The first tourist houses were simple hostel-type structures, and are still in use mainly for students, campers, and the yearly Messianic children's camps that are held at the moshav.

At a later stage, new higher-standard guest rooms were constructed of Finnish pine. Israeli guests and their families often visit the moshav, in pursuit of mountain air and the village atmosphere, and to enjoy the Judean landscape. Yad Hashmona hosts most of the Messianic conferences in Israel: families, music, youth and golden-age, and local congregations. On Fridays only, dairy brunch meals are served.

Carpentry

The carpentry at Yad Hashmona is a high-quality furniture factory. It has gained a reputation for producing high-quality pine furniture in the rural Scandinavian style. Various wooden products are displayed in the gallery. Customers are both individuals from the local area and representatives of institutions around the country who are interested in well-made furniture.

The carpentry also functions as the moshav's builder, providing furniture for local homes and the guest house. Additionally, workers from the carpentry provide skilled maintenance and other services to the guest house and other moshav facilities.

Biblical Park

The biblical park was dedicated in the year 2000, in collaboration with the Swiss Beit Shalom Society and the Israel Antiquities Authority. Stone terraces were built on the hill's northwestern slope in order to collect soil and water. With these terraces, agriculture is possible even in a rocky and sloping area. The trees planted on the site are mentioned in the Bible: olives, vines, figs, pomegranates, date palms and almonds. Some of these trees carry a symbolic meaning, such as the olive, the fig, and the vine that often represent Israel.

Arched Gates

Two white stone arches, facing the eastern and western slopes of the hill, stand as twin gates leading into the biblical park. Both arched entrances form the shape of a half-circle symbolizing the rainbow, which is



mentioned in the first and last books of the Bible. According to Genesis 9:16, when the rainbow appears in the sky it is a sign that brings to memory the everlasting covenant established between God and every living creature on the earth. In Revelation 4:3, a rainbow is depicted around the heavenly throne of the Holy One, like a precious emerald in appearance.

Inside the western arch one can see the central capstone with its outstanding form. This chief stone is instrumental in holding together all the other stones of the arch, so that if it is removed, the entire arch will collapse immediately. This is a figurative symbol of Yeshua. Spiritually, in the faith and life of his followers, Yeshua is the keystone (Luke 20:17).

Wine Press

Alongside an area planted with vines, two wine presses demonstrate wine production in antiquity, first for domestic use and secondly for industrial purposes. Near the treading surface one can see both collecting and fermentation vats, a screw press made of an oak tree, and pottery jars. In the Old Testament, the vineyard and the grapes represent the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah, as well as all those who know the God of Israel.

According to this imagery, the master and judge of the universe – i.e. “the owner of the vineyard” – is disappointed when, instead of good grapes, he gets wild and sour grapes, finding oppression instead of righteousness (Isa 5).

The vine and its fruit also convey a variety of symbolic messages in the New Testament. Yeshua employed vine imagery to explain that “as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (John 15:4). He also warned not to put new wine into old wineskins, which break and spill the wine, but rather to put new wine into new wineskins, preserving both (Matt 9:17).

Olive Press

At the olive press one can visually learn about the two basic stages in olive oil production. The first involves crushing the olives into a paste, both pit and soft fruit, with a large round millstone. The second stage is the placing of the pulp into flat round baskets which are piled under a massive wooden beam. The further pressing of the paste is implemented by the power of hanging weights. Heavy stone blocks are attached to the other side of the beam, expressing from the paste a substance containing the oil and vegetable liquid, which flow into a collecting vat under the baskets.

In antiquity olive oil was a desired commodity in the lives of people, both for daily use and for special occasions. It was used not only for food, illumination (torches and lamps), hygiene (soap), medicine, cosmetics, and lubrication, but also for anointing the priest, prophet, and king. Messiah, in Hebrew *Mashiah*, means (the) “anointed one.” In his parable about the ten maidens, five wise and five foolish, Yeshua focuses on the symbolism of the olive oil (Matt 25:1–13).

Watchtower

A spiral stairway leads to the top of the round watchtower, built of bright local fieldstone. This is a two-story building with a small guard area under a roof of palm branches. The watchtower is functionally situated in a higher place, good for keeping an eye on the surrounding area. During the vintage season and harvest time, the watchman watches over the surrounding fields against thieves and animals.

Biblically, if the watchman sees invaders coming upon the land and does not blow the trumpet, he bears the responsibility for people's death. Likewise it is with the prophet, appointed by God to be a spiritual watchman, who is responsible to hear the divine word and proclaim it to the people. The Lord says that if the prophet remains silent and the unwarned wicked shall die in his iniquity, "his blood I will require at your hand" (Ezek 33:2–8).

Threshing Floor

A flat bedrock platform is at the center of the round threshing floor (*goren* in Hebrew), illustrating where the threshing of the ripe wheat and barley took place. This area is surrounded by a small amphitheater. Two heavy wooden sleds, one with small stones and the other with iron teeth, were placed on the grain in order to separate the kernels from the straw. The sleds were pulled by a donkey or ox, which was free to eat as it worked.

A wooden pitchfork was used in the winnowing process that followed the threshing. Usually the afternoon breeze carried the chaff and straw away, leaving the heavier grain to fall to the floor. Also displayed are various millstones that were used for manually grinding wheat kernels.

Burial Cave

The burial cave is a recent replica of ancient models. Displayed inside are authentic Second Temple-era sarcophagi, of both stone and metal, received from the Israel Antiquities Authority. Authentic stone ossuaries are also exhibited. A heavy, moveable rolling stone is located by the entrance to the cave.

In the first centuries BC and AD, second burials in ossuaries became the common practice in Jerusalem and around Judea. In this custom, the body was first placed in the tomb, wrapped with strips of linen and with spices, as was the case with Yeshua (John 19:40). Then, after a year, the family would gather the deceased's bones and transfer them to the ossuary, a small stone coffin. This was placed in a niche carved into the stone wall or on a shelf inside the burial cave.

Mikveh (Ritual Bath)

In Hebrew, *Mikveh* means the gathering of water. It refers to public ritual baths for the purposes of purification and cleansing of the body. Traditionally, the *Mikveh* must be filled with running water, but the local *Mikveh* is filled only occasionally with water brought by a plastic pipe.



The entry into the *Mikveh* is on the right side, with seven stairs, while another stairway exits on the left.

The *kohanim* (priests) that slaughtered and sacrificed animals at the bronze altar of the Jerusalem temples were required by Jewish law to bathe in the *Mikveh*. Lepers were required to immerse upon healing. Today, pious Jewish men and women immerse their bodies in the *Mikveh* in connection with special events, such as in preparation for holy days and before the rabbinical blessing at wedding ceremonies.

Goat-Hair Tent

Around its four sides the tent is enclosed with curtains of woven black and gray goat hair, pieced together. On top it is covered with palm branches. Inside the tent is a plain replica of the ark of the covenant, as an ornamental piece. During the summer most of the tent flaps are rolled up to let in the refreshing breeze.

As seen from the inside, the tent's exit faces the east, called *Kedem* in biblical Hebrew, as the warmth of the early morning sun comes from the east after the cold night. It means both east and "in front of you" (*Kadima*). Therefore "behind you" (*Ahora*) means west, while "on the left hand" is north, and "on the right hand" is south. The tent at the moshav is used for quiet time and prayer, meditation, study, singing, and Communion.

Basalt Synagogue

Uniquely sited in the park is a reconstructed Byzantine-era Galilean synagogue. It was brought to the moshav from the northern region of the *Kinneret*, the Sea of Galilee. The basalt stones stand out against the background of the bright Jerusalem stone.

In his time, Yeshua often taught and healed sick people in the synagogues. On Shabbat he went to the synagogue, as in *Kfar Nahum* (Capernaum) and in Nazareth, where he read portions from the Torah and the Prophets and explained the messianic passages.

Ancient Craftsmanship

There is a center for ancient craftsmanship in the park. There are rooms for workshops for clay and pottery, brass-working, and coin-stamping. Among these occupations there is also a hand (mechanical) loom for preparing colorful carpets.

Four Room House

A model of a four-room house will be built on the slope below the goat-hair tent. It is characteristic of an Israelite house from the 10th to the 6th centuries BC. It has three parallel rectangular rooms, with the fourth room attached in the opposite direction.

Heritage and Restoration Center

On the western slopes of the Biblical Park a Roman villa is planned, pat-

terned according to unearthed remains found in Eretz Israel that date to the 1st century AD. The massive building will contain a two-story house, with a large central *atrium* (courtyard/hall) and a tiled roof. Southwards, an outer garden (*peristylum*) will be attached to the building. Typical colonnades (pillars) will be placed inside and outside, for both functional and decorative purposes.

A Roman house in Eretz Israel makes one think of the place where Jews and gentiles reconciled according to God's commandment. It was at Caesarea, in the house of Cornelius, a devout Roman centurion, where Peter, the leading Jewish apostle, was told to associate with a formerly pagan family (Acts 10). This was the first time that Jews were divinely authorized to eat together with non-Jews and not to disassociate from them.

This "Roman compound" is designated for a museum, a library, an archive, and an auditorium, focusing on the heritage of Jewish believers in Yeshua in Eretz Israel as well as on their prophetic restoration in modern times. This study/research center will function for documentation, seminars, lectures, conferences, and presentations via the internet.

Open Air Theater

About 400 seats are available at the open air stone theater which is situated on the lower level of the western slopes of the park. In front of this theater there is a large area of green grass, and it faces the range of hills called *Har Haruach* (Wind Mountain). An additional 400 people can sit on the grass. The theater can host public concerts, plays, and special receptions in a peaceful and quiet atmosphere.

Tour Center

Several members at Yad Hashmona are professional tour guides. They specialize in the roots of the faith in the land of the Bible. The Finnish founders worked as guides for Scandinavian tourists and laid the foundation for a reliable guiding tradition at the moshav.

Today, the new Tour Center offers tailor-made travels, tours, and study programs, both short and long term. Special courses are organized and taught by moshav members on site, such as the modern history of the Messianic Jewish movement and Messianic music. Field trips throughout the country, as well as in Sinai and in Jordan, are also conducted.

Management

The moshav is run by two committees: a five member secretarial committee and a seven member business committee. Committee members are elected for two years, and they meet to discuss issues of daily life. Major issues are brought to the general assembly of the moshav members for a vote. Prayers are always said at the beginning and at the end of meetings.



Currently new ideas are being considered regarding structural changes for the future.

Spiritual Vision

Moshav Yad Hashmona was established, and still exists, around a spiritual vision. The principal common denominator for the members lies in a combination of personal faith and communal activity, with roots in the Tanach and the New Testament. In daily life, the people continue to apply the founders' motto: "We came not only to receive, but also to give."

Communism is not a visionary ideal in itself for the members of Yad Hashmona. Community life attempts to focus on biblical principles. However, communal life among believers is not easy. In fact it is a miracle that strong individualists can share a communal system. Much grace and prayer are needed to follow God's will. His faithfulness and blessings never fail.

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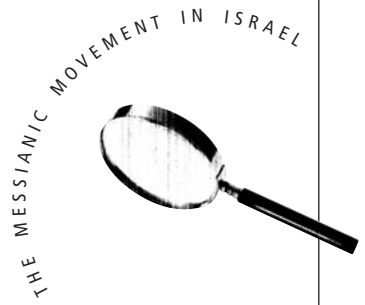
For more information see the website www.yad8.com and also G. Nerel, A. Suomela, A. Ronen, I. Nerel, *Yad Hashmona: Far and Near in the Wooden House – An Encounter between Finns and Israelis in the Judean Hills* (Jerusalem: Academon, 2004; Hebrew).

Children and Youth Camps in Israel

The past of the Messianic movement in Israel is characterized by a rich heritage of ministries for children and youth. Regardless of whether they have been organized by individual congregations or other organizations, children, youth, and parents have been blessed by those who have invested in our children of all ages, seeking to teach and encourage them as part of the body of Messiah.

One of the ways that children and youth have been blessed has been through the camps called *Keitanot Clei HaYotser* (Tools of the Potter Camps). These camps were begun at the request of elders in the Gush Dan area, to serve children from Messianic Jewish families throughout the country. The goals of these camps are: 1) To present the gospel and give opportunities for children and youth to come to faith in Yeshua as Savior and Lord; 2) To teach children and youth how to share their faith with non-believing peers; and 3) To provide opportunities for youth to serve as counselors and in other roles as they mature in their faith.

The camps also provide opportunities for children and youth to come together and celebrate who they are in Yeshua as Savior and Lord of their lives. Some come from house groups where one or more families come together on a regular basis to worship. This is due to the distance between their home and a local congregation of believers, or due to theological or ideological differences with a neighboring congregation. Other campers come from local congregations. Still others are not a part of any gathering of believers, but have one or more parents that have been part of a congregation at one time. Although congregational backgrounds may differ, most children and youth from believing families find themselves with little to no contact



By **Marsha Smith**

with other believers during the week, in their day-to-day life.

Whether these children and youth worship in a congregation with peers their age, or whether they are the only child/youth in a house group, camp is a great opportunity to make new friends and renew friendships made over the years.

Most congregations with a number of children do their best to provide teaching. Congregations with very small numbers of children struggle to provide teaching that is age appropriate, and will often group wide age ranges in the same class. Some feel that the only teenager in the church should be the one to teach. Each congregation has its own struggles in seeking to provide age appropriate teaching for each child and young person. The Shabbat School Seminars sponsored by Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies twice a year provide teaching, and seek to meet the needs of the wide variety of congregations in the country. Professionals and experienced teachers lead sessions with great sensitivity and thoughtfulness.

The attendance at these seminars has grown over the years, proving that congregations are deeply aware of their need to continually learn as they meet the ever-changing needs of the children and youth in their care. The Shabbat School Seminars empower those called by God and

allay their fears that they are not skilled or qualified to teach our children and youth.

What drives Shabbat School teachers to constantly improve the experiences of children and youth? They are compelled by heart-rending stories about how peers ostracize young people for being believers in Yeshua. While many choose to keep their faith a secret, more and more are being bold in their witness. While some do experience rejection, ridicule, and mockery, others are being accepted and respected for speaking out. Several of these responses can happen simultaneously, depending on relationships with a variety of friends. Each day can bring a myriad of responses. This pressure and self-awareness can prove stressful, but at times encouraging. The congregations are wise to provide sound teaching and an attitude of celebration of who we are in Yeshua! This encouragement provides sustenance to our children and youth who are in daily contact with non-believers.

Testimonies From Campers at the 2006 Passover Camp

Katia is 15 years old and lives in the southern part of Israel. She has been coming to the camps since she was in 3rd grade. She has participated in youth camp and served as a helper in the children's camp. In Katia's home congregation there are no programs for youth. During the congregational meetings she helps the teacher in the children's class. When asked what she likes about camp she has this to say:

When I am at camp the messages enter my heart. I am reminded that God loves me and I

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know I'm not alone. When I return home I feel that the Bible is hard for me to understand. I ask my mom to read the Bible to me. I do pray at home and feel God's nearness.

Simon is 18 years old and lives in the center of the country. He has lived in Israel all his life, and has been coming to the camps since he was a young child. He attends a youth group during the middle of the week. His congregation has a meeting for youth after the worship service, in which approximately 8–10 youth take part. He loves camp because he gets to meet other believers his age. Camp strengthens his relationship with the Lord. He feels encouraged at camp and renews old friendships.

Sarah is 16 years old and lives in the center of the country. Her congregation has a mid-week youth group of about 10 people who attend several congregations. On Shabbat, 6–7 youth meet at her congregation. Sarah likes that in camps she renews friendships. She finds that she learns new things in camp and enjoys the fellowship she has with other campers. She feels that she gains from the spiritual influence. She has a lot of questions, and at camp she can get answers.