

SALVATION  
AND  
THE JEWISH  
PEOPLE



MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 53/ 2007*



# MISHKAN

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

ISSUE 53 / 2007

**General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen**

**Pasche Institute of Jewish Studies · A Ministry of Criswell College**

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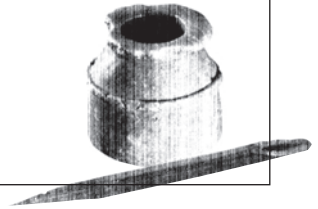
**Mishkan** is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.

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

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

# Borough Park Symposium

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



The greater part of the material in this issue of *Mishkan* stems from the Borough Park Symposium, held at a hotel near LaGuardia Airport, New York, in early October. The organizers of the symposium had wanted to hold the symposium in Borough Park, the heart of the Orthodox Jewish community in New York City. This plan failed, but the name of the symposium was kept.

Three main themes were addressed: 1) The Gospel Message; 2) Salvation and the Jewish People; and 3) Presenting the Gospel to our Jewish People.

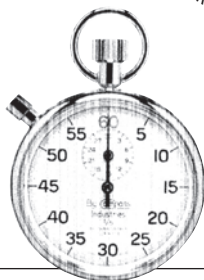
Some of the contributions from the symposium printed here have been abbreviated. The organizers plan to publish all contributions full-length in book form.

If it were not known already, the papers at the symposium made it clear that there are rather divergent views among Jesus-believing Jews – not only with reference to methods and strategy, but also in terms of theology where the salvation of Jews is concerned. A few of the speakers seemed to hint at the possibility that Jews who have not accepted the gospel of Jesus are nevertheless included in his salvation.

Apart from half a dozen observers of non-Jewish origin, the speakers and the participants were all Jesus-believing Jews. However, as a non-Jew involved in Jewish evangelism, I could not help but regret the uncertainty about such a crucial point. But this being the situation, I am pleased that there is an ongoing debate about the issue, and it is my hope that this will lead to greater clarity.

Preceding the papers from the Borough Park Symposium is the statement issued by the eighth international LCJE conference, held in August at Lake Balaton, Hungary.

A CURRENT ISSUE



# Jesus Himself Must Be Our Theme

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

*This article is part of the opening speech of the Eighth International LCJE Conference at Lake Balaton, Hungary, in 2007.*

The conferences on Jewish evangelism in Budapest and Warsaw in April 1927 were characterized by great optimism. World War I was in the past. Great economic and social progress had been made. Many Jews were leaving the synagogue. As it is said in the report from the conferences: "It is stated that in America 80 per cent of the Jews are outside the Synagogue, while in the city of Berlin approximately 65 per cent have given up Judaism ..." The Jews were seeking, looking for other answers than the ones given by Judaism. It was said that the "leaders of Judaism have complained bitterly of a desertion of worship and a disregard of authority." This observation was followed by the remark, "This is not a matter for any rejoicing on our part. It will be a bitter day if good Jews are only converted into bad Jews!"

The mood that characterized the conference and its vision is expressed in the following words: "The Ghetto and all the deplorable things it represented are things of the past. The walls of Jericho have fallen. Praise God!" And, "But the point is, for their [the Jews'] own good or ill, *they are out in the open.*" And, "This is Christ's great chance." Or, as they said in Warsaw, "We are convinced that the Church of Christ is facing a new day in Jewish missions. The signs of the times awaken new hope for the future."

The conference was aware that a new picture of Jesus was emerging. Joseph Klausner's book *Yeshu ha-Notzri* had appeared in Hebrew five years earlier, in 1922. In 1925 the English translation of it, *Jesus of Nazareth*, had been published. The general opinion was that this new view of Jesus boded well for future work among the Jews.

One of the delegates at the conference in Budapest, Professor Frederik Torm, Chairman of the Danish Israel Mission, commented that "essentially all this may be true, as it is also indisputable that new opportunities are opening for mission work, but we should be careful not to exaggerate these things."

Why this reservation on Torm's part? His answer was, "Klausner's book has not only met with approval but also with sharp protests from Jewish

quarters." And the fact that Jews can admire Jesus as the great Jew does not change their prejudices about the church and against missions.

It was important for Torm that false expectations about results not be raised; therefore he said, "Mission work requires the same patience as until now."

In his opinion, that aspect was too weak in the conference statements. As he said, "... they seemed to be afraid of weakening the appeal to the churches to take up mission work if they did not as strongly as possible accentuate the new opportunities for mission. But it is better to face reality squarely as it is."

I wonder, to pursue the same idea, if reality is always expressed in our newsletters when we describe our results. Torm did not want to contribute to the creation of false expectations, for they can break workers. Mission to Israel will continue to be a long, tough haul in the future, requiring "persevering patience." Don't forget that, says Torm.

### **Jesus Himself Must Be Our Theme**

At the conference in Budapest, A. Lukyn Williams spoke on the theme "Literature as a Means of Winning Jews to Christ." He asked, "What do Jews of today need?" His answer focused on literature, but can also be applied to other areas: "They need to see in all our writings Sympathy and Jesus. For, alas, with very few exceptions it is difficult to find either the one or the other in our literature present and past."

This is an expert speaking. Let us listen to what he says:

I have read, I think, practically all our modern, and a great deal of the early and mediæval, missionary literature, and I am always impressed with the fact that while there is in it much about the teaching of the Old Testament, and the wonderful way in which this foretells the coming and life of the Messiah, there is very little indeed about Jesus Himself. Our missionary writers have been so intrigued – to use the cant phrase – with the preparation for Jesus that they seldom tell us anything about Him as He was and is.

And yet, when you come to think of it, it was not proofs from the Old Testament which won the first Jewish converts, though, of course, the Old Testament confirmed their faith. It was Jesus Himself who attracted them; His personality, His character, His graciousness, His actions, in a word, His life, and then His death, and His further Life seen of them, and known in its effect within them.

We need, in fact, to reproduce Jesus. In our life? Yes, above all else; but also in our words, and, that our words may go far, much further than we ourselves can possibly go, we must write and print descriptions of Jesus as He was and is. There is no harm in referring to the Old Testament and to Jewish literature as we do so. Both are absolutely necessary, but they must both take a very secondary place. Jesus Himself must be our theme.



These are strong words. Some may even say they are one-sided and seek to moderate them, saying that the themes we deal with must throw light on Jesus himself. But I will leave them as they are and not diminish their challenge.

### **The Message to the Jews in 1927 – and in 2007**

Even though Professor Frederik Torm had certain reservations about the conference's optimistic expectations for mission results in the future, he wrote that the conference did not yield to the temptation to "modernize the gospel in order to win the Jewish youth's interest and approval. On this point the conference stood firm; it is the old gospel that needs to be proclaimed."

So, what is the old gospel according to Budapest and Warsaw 1927? It is described in this statement:

Our message to the Jews is the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, glorified, the fulfilment of the law and the true Messiah. He is the incarnate Word, the Redeemer of the world, the Saviour from sin, who is bringing Israel to her destiny – viz., to become a blessing to all humanity.

This message should be presented with humility and love and with self-sacrificing service, so that the Jews may be awaked from the mere expectancy of a Messiah or a dependence on self-righteousness to true repentance and confession of sin, praying for regeneration, receiving pardon through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and becoming His sincere disciples.

This statement is rather different from "Hungary's creed," which a pastor associated with the Danish Israel Mission saw on posters in the trams in Budapest during a visit in January 1927. According to Benjamin Balslev, the "creed" read like this:

I believe in a God.  
 I believe in a fatherland.  
 I believe in eternal truth.  
 I believe in Hungary's resurrection.  
 Amen.

No, at the conference in Budapest in 1927 they did not express belief in "a God," but belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They did not talk about the "resurrection" of a country, but about the resurrection of Christ. And they knew that without "spiritual power" it would all be in vain.

When the last word has been said at this conference, I hope that we will have new courage and boldness so that together we can say, "Jesus himself *is* our theme in Jewish evangelism."



## **LCJE Statement 2007**

The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) met for its 8th International Conference by Lake Balaton, Hungary, from 19–24 August 2007. The conference provided a platform for the unique network of organizations and individuals to gather information, coordinate strategies, consider trends, and stimulate theological thinking and missiological research in the cause of advancing Jewish evangelism.

The theme of this quadrennial conference was “Jewish Evangelism – Telling the Story.” Doug Birdsall, Executive Chair of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, spoke in support of Jewish evangelism saying, “The story of Jesus Christ is a message to be shared with the whole world, but especially with the Jewish people, as it is the fullest expression of God’s love relationship with His people.”

Consultation participants saw themselves in an historical context. In 1927 an international conference on Jewish evangelism was held in Budapest. Eighty years later LCJE participants met in Hungary and faced some of the same issues reported by their predecessors. The 1927 conference report spoke about Jesus’ love for His own people and the conferees’ dedication to tell Jewish people the good news. Eighty years later, the LCJE network shares that same commitment to Jewish evangelism.

Therefore, the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism calls on the whole Church to join in presenting the whole gospel of Messiah Jesus to the Jewish people worldwide.

**We affirm** the good news of Jesus is the only hope for the salvation of the Jewish people. If Jesus is not the Messiah for the Jewish people, then neither is He Christ for the nations. Either Jesus is the Messiah for all, or He is not the Messiah at all.

**We rejoice** over the reports that Jewish people are coming to faith in Jesus and that the number of Messianic congregations is growing.

**We assert** that the worst possible Christian injustice to the Jewish people would be to deny them a hearing of the gospel, which is their only hope of salvation.

**We encourage** evangelism to all the children of Abraham according to the flesh and pray for efforts toward reconciliation between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews in Christ.

**We denounce** contemporary expressions of anti-Semitism and prejudice against the State of Israel and urge the whole Church to join us in speaking against such sentiments, recognizing that they hinder Jewish people from hearing the gospel of Christ's love.

**We commend** the LCWE publication *Jewish Evangelism – A Call to the Church* (Lausanne Occasional Paper #60, 2004) to increase understanding regarding Jewish evangelism.

**We challenge** ourselves to minister with openness to God's call and a willingness to collaborate in new approaches for communicating Jesus' message in a post modern world.

**We call** on the whole Church to support and actively partner in creative, thoughtful ways to share the whole gospel with the Jewish people.

# Borough Park Symposium Background and Introduction

SALVATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



by **Mitch Glaser**

When I became a Jewish believer thirty-seven years ago, there were less than half a dozen Messianic congregations worldwide. This has dramatically changed; there are now tens of thousands of Jewish believers and hundreds of Messianic congregations in the world.

There is no doubt that we live in a different day and that the Messianic movement has grown over the last thirty years. This modern Messianic movement began with the Jesus movement in the late 1960s, continued with the growth of the Russian Jewish movement for Jesus beginning after Perestroika, and continues today with the growth of the Messianic movement in Israel.

We have witnessed the emergence of Messianic *denominations* such as the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), the International Association of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS), and several smaller groups that link congregations together. In Israel there are a number of fellowship groups that foster fellowship among Israeli congregations, and the Russian Jewish believers are beginning to develop their own fellowship organizations as well. The growth of this newer movement became apparent at a conference held in Berlin in September 2006, where the leaders of 90 Russian-language congregations met for fellowship and discussions that might well chart the future of this movement.

However, leaders within the Messianic and Jewish missions movements also understand that challenges abound and that our growing movement has many growth-related problems. The 21st-century Messianic movement is seeking to define itself, and this process has been challenging as various groups define themselves in ways that are very different from others.

We have numerous commonalities within the Messianic movement. For example, we know we are Jews. We know we love Yeshua. We know he is the promised Messiah of Israel – but how we put this all together is a perplexing pilgrimage both for individual Messianic Jews and for the movement in general.

As David Rudolph mentioned at the symposium, “Our questions unite us and our answers often divide us.”

I believe that much of what we have understood as *disunity* during the past few years is actually a sign of life and vigorous spiritual growth. If we were dead, we would not have any problems.

There has been a wide range of theological reflection and discussion, a number of books written, and lots of activity on blogs and various websites where many of these growth-related divisions have been expressed. But most of these discussions have been held among like-minded Messianic Jews and members of the Jewish missions community. Those involved with the UMJC have essentially talked among themselves, the same with the IAMCS and the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA), and discussions in the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism have primarily involved those within the Jewish missions community and not those from among the congregational movements. Unfortunately, there were very few discussions taking place among those who held divergent positions on issues of importance to our broader Messianic community. There was simply no forum where these discussions could take place.

This is why a diverse group of Messianic leaders met in a meeting chaired by a righteous Gentile, John Holbrook, a year and a half ago to see if there was any possibility of organizing a small theological symposium to discuss our very different viewpoints on the issues that are so important to many of us. We invited people from varying perspectives, and eventually reduced our group to a smaller planning team that met a number of times in Borough Park to bring this vision for the conference to reality.

## The Purpose

The planning team determined the purpose for the symposium, the essential theological positions for participants, and the initial list of participants. It was decided that Messianic Jews should be invited as participants and non-Jewish believers invited as observers. This decision was a reflection of the planning team's belief that the symposium should be indigenous in nature, although there was a deep sense of gratitude to the many Gentile believers who have been involved and committed to the growth of the Messianic and Jewish missions movement throughout the last few decades.

The purpose for the symposium was stated as follows:

The purpose of the symposium is to provide a forum for members of the broader Messianic Jewish community to articulate their beliefs with an expectation that they will receive a respectful hearing, but without the expectation that agreement concerning these beliefs will be achieved. The symposium is designed to provide an internal platform for leaders to better understand each other and the various positions held within the Messianic movement.

In addition, it was hoped that the symposium would facilitate ongoing theological discussion among members of the broader Messianic Jewish

community and lead to greater mutual understanding within the movement, providing opportunities to deepen personal relationships and foster fellowship in the Messiah.

The planning committee added,

We desire to preserve the unity and secure the future of the Messianic Jewish movement and our common mission through respectful dialogue, without acrimony even in the face of critical disagreements.

It was also determined that all participants should hold certain core theological positions in common.

Those who will participate in the Borough Park Symposium affirm the following:

- We are Jews who believe in Yeshua and in God's covenant with Israel, and as members of the Jewish community, are committed to the welfare of our people.
- We believe in the authority of Scripture and the deity of Yeshua, and that eternal life is the gift of God in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.
- We feel compelled by the spirit of God to advance the good news of Yeshua among our people.

The planning team hoped that the symposium would serve to clarify our various positions, build better personal relationships between us, and take some of the tension out of the air. We did not want to minimize or simplify our differences and the deep concerns we have with one another, both theologically and orthopractically.

However, it was hoped that the Borough Park Symposium would go a long way toward helping the participants get to know one another – both as theological thinkers and as brothers and sisters in the Messiah.

The planning committee hoped discussions would produce more light than heat, and that in general the participants – representing some of the most significant leaders within the modern Messianic movement – would leave with a better understanding of one another at this critical time in the history of our movement.

In addition, the planning team was convinced that a new generation of Messianic Jews are observing the current leaders of the Messianic and Jewish missions movement and that the younger people are not only interested in what we believe but also want to see if knowing Yeshua makes a difference in how we disagree with one another. It was the sense of the planning committee that our younger leaders want to know if we are capable of contending for truth while at the same time treating one another with both grace and respect.

For this reason and many others, it was felt that the Borough Park Symposium was a much-needed conference at this juncture in the growth of the Messianic movement.



I believe the conference proved all of the above to be true, as the 75-plus attendees listened well, had many opportunities to ask questions of one another, and also to have hours of informal discussions. New friends were made, old relationships renewed, and though theological differences and disagreements were not *solved*, the goals of the planning committee – to deepen our understanding of one another’s positions and to foster better relationships among us – were met.

According to the information compiled in our exit survey, most participants look forward to continued dialogue in the future so that our diverse movement will be able to grow without some of the previous acrimony and misunderstandings that have plagued us.

The high caliber of the participants is evident in the depth and quality of the papers. On behalf of the planning committee, I want to extend my thanks to the brave souls who worked hard to prepare and present these papers. A book, which will include all of the papers presented at the Borough Park Symposium, is currently being prepared for publication by Messianic Jewish Publications and will be available within the next few months.

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A compilation of the papers presented at the Borough Park Symposium will be forthcoming from Lederer Books/Messianic Jewish Publishers in the near future. Contact [lederer@messianicjewish.net](mailto:lederer@messianicjewish.net) for more information.

# The Condition of Salvation for Jews and Gentiles in this Age

SALVATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



By **Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum**

The purpose of this paper is to answer the question, "Exactly what must one do to be saved?" According to the Scriptures, what is it that a person must do to be saved?

The key point emphasized by the *Brit Chadashah* is that faith is the one and only condition for salvation. In more than 200 cases where a condition is given for salvation, faith or belief is stated to be the only condition.

One example is John 1:12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." This verse states that the ones who become the children of God are those who *received him*. What does it mean to receive the Messiah? The second part of the verse explains that to receive the Messiah means to *believe on his name*, to believe he really is the Jewish Messiah. Simply by believing what one must believe, one receives salvation. That is the way one becomes a child of God, and believing is the only condition mentioned here.

Another example is Acts 16:30–31: "He brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your house." In verse 30 the question is asked: *what must I do to be saved?* The apostle answers in verse 31: the only condition is to *believe on the Lord Jesus*. If they believe on the Lord Yeshua, then they will receive salvation.

Now what exactly must one believe on the Lord Yeshua? Paul spells out the full content of faith in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. In verse one he reminds them he had spelled out the gospel to them, and in verse two he reminds them it is by believing the gospel that they are saved. Then in verses three and four he goes on to spell out the full content of the gospel that involves three basic points: first, Messiah died for our sins; second, he was buried (the evidence of his death); and third, he rose again from the dead. So that is the content of the gospel one must believe for salvation, and it applies equally to both Jews and Gentiles.

## The Messiah as Substitute

What this shows is that faith must be placed in the Messiah as our substitute for the penalty of our sins and our Savior from the penalty of sin. Salvation is not merely believing that Yeshua existed. Some of the most pagan atheists believe that a man named Yeshua of Nazareth existed. Merely believing that Yeshua existed, merely believing that he died on the cross, and merely believing that he rose again from the dead does not save anyone. Rather a believer's faith must be placed in the Messiah as a substitute for and a savior from the penalty of sin.

In other words, one needs to trust the Messiah for one's salvation. One must believe that he has accomplished the work of salvation on one's behalf. To be saved, one must believe not just that he died, but that he died for one's own sins. If one believes that Yeshua the Messiah died for his sins, that presupposes that one has confessed that he is a sinner. If Yeshua died for one's sins, obviously it means that he is a sinner. So one must believe that Yeshua died for his sins as his substitute, was buried and rose again, and therefore, has provided salvation. Thus, one trusts Yeshua for his salvation.

## The Greek Words Used

There are three main Greek words which are used in emphasizing the condition of salvation:

### 1. Pistis

The first word is *pistis*, which is used 243 times in the New Testament. It always has the meaning of *faith*, with only four exceptions: Acts 17:31, where it has the meaning of *assurance*; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, where it is translated as *belief*; Titus 2:10, where it has the meaning of *fidelity*; and Hebrews 10:39, where it is translated *belief*, although some translations have *faith*. Except for these four occasions, the word *pistis* always has the meaning of *faith*.

### 2. Pisteuo

The second key word is *pisteuo*, which is used a total of 246 times in the Greek New Testament. It always has the meaning *to believe*, except for nine times: once it is translated as *believers* (Acts 5:14); and eight times it is translated as either *commit*, *committed*, or *entrusted* (Luke 16:11; John 2:24; Rom 3:2; 1 Cor 9:17; Gal 2:7; 1 Thess 2:4; Titus 1:3; 1 Tim 1:11).

### 3. Peitho

The third main Greek word is *peitho*, which means *to cause belief in a thing*. This word is used 50 times in the Greek New Testament, and it is translated in nine different ways. It is translated as *persuade* 17 times; as *trust* ten times; as *confidence* nine times; as *obey* seven times; as *believed* three times; as *assure* one time; as *yield* once; as *made free* once; and as



access once. But in spite of these nine different translations, the root-meaning of the word remains the same: *to cause belief in a thing*.

By combining these three Greek words, one can clearly determine what the condition of salvation is in reference to faith. First, it means *to believe*. Second, it means *to be persuaded of*. Third, it means *to place confidence in*. And fourth, it means *to trust*, in the sense of relying upon. These are the four facets of faith when one places his faith in Jesus the Messiah.

### The Content of Faith: Past and Present

There are three facets of salvation that always remain the same.

First, the *basis* of salvation was always Messiah's death, in the sense that from the divine viewpoint, God was always saving people based upon what Messiah either would do or did do. Second, the *means* was always faith; one had to actually believe in order to receive eternal life. Third, the object of faith was always God, as was the case with Abraham, who believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6).

But what changes based upon progressive revelation – what God had revealed up to a certain point in time – is the *content* of faith: What exactly one had to believe to be saved. That was based upon God's progressive revelation, how much God had revealed up to that point in time.

So what was the content of faith under the Law? This is spelled out in Isaiah 43:10–12. One had to believe two things for salvation: first, that the God of Israel is the only God (and if one believes this, it rules out both polytheism and idolatry); and second, that this God of Israel is the only Savior (and if one believes this, it rules out works as a means of salvation). Thus it was not essential to convert to Mosaic Judaism per se and take the obligations of the Law, though that would give the person the privileges of enjoying the blessings of the Jewish covenants. Thus, the men of Nineveh and others did not need to go so far as conversion, but they had to believe these two basic points. Israel is responsible to be God's witnesses (i.e. Jehovah's witnesses) of these truths.

However, with Messiah's coming, and with Messiah's death, the content of what one must now believe is clearly spelled out in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4.

### The Jewish Question

Does this apply to Jews today? Especially Orthodox Jews? Can they not obtain salvation by means of the practice of their own Judaism? After all, Jews did not need to believe in Yeshua prior to his coming, and were still able by grace through faith to receive salvation, so is that still possible for Jews today? On this issue the New Testament gives a decisive answer, and the answer is no.

A very good verse is Acts 4:12: "And in none other is there salvation: for



neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.”

Peter clearly declares to the Sanhedrin that there is no name given under heaven by which one could be saved other than Yeshua, and therefore, they must put their faith in that person for their salvation. It should be noted that he is speaking to Jews and not Gentiles, and furthermore, he is speaking to Orthodox Jews and not secular Jews. Thus, even the most Orthodox Jew who claims to believe in the God of Israel, if he does not also believe in the Messiahship of Yeshua and Messiah’s death for his sin, is just as lost as any pagan Gentile would be. In Acts 2–9, the gospel is consistently declared to those who are Jews and those who are proselytes to Judaism, who would certainly affirm their belief in the God of the Hebrew Bible – yet apart from Yeshua they had no salvation.

Is it true that the Bible affirms that those who believe in Yeshua are clearly saved, but leaves silent the question of those who do not believe? Especially of Jews who do not believe? Here again, the opposite is true. In John chapter 3 Yeshua does affirm several times that only those who believe have eternal life. Is he silent about those who do not believe? Not at all. “Therefore the one who believes not has already been judged, be-

cause he did not believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God” (verse 18). The one who fails to believe simply has “the wrath of God abiding on him” (verse 36).

The same truth is taught in many other passages. John the Baptist declared that those who believe in the one he

identified as the Messiah will be baptized by the Spirit; but those who do not believe will be baptized into unquenchable fire.

In John 5, clearly identifying himself as both the Son of God and the Son of Man, Yeshua points out that it is those who believe on this Son of God and Son of Man who will undergo the resurrection of life, and those who have not done so will undergo the resurrection of judgment (verses 25–29). Furthermore, their failure to recognize him as the Messiah was a failure to believe what Moses actually wrote, because had they truly believed Moses, they would also have recognized who he is and that what he teaches is truth (verses 46–47). It should be noted that he is addressing a Jewish audience, and not a Gentile one, in this context.

In John 6:40 it is those who believe on the Son that have eternal life, and they are the ones that will be resurrected into the immortal and glorified state. This statement simply does not apply to those who do not believe on him.

In John 10, still addressing a Jewish audience, Yeshua declares, “I am the door of the sheep.” Those who enter through him are the ones who are saved, and those who come in “may have life, and may have it abundantly.” But those who do not enter by that door are the ones who do not have this life (verses 7–18).

**In John chapter 3 Yeshua does affirm several times that only those who believe have eternal life. Is he silent about those who do not believe? Not at all.**

Luke 10:16 declares that those who reject Yeshua also reject God the Father who sent him; again, this is strictly a Jewish context.

In John 10:22–39, the Jews who believe in him are the ones who are his sheep, and therefore only they have eternal life and shall never perish. The promise is simply not applied to that part of the Jewish audience that did not believe on him.

In John 11:26, Yeshua declared that those who believe on him, even though they die physically, have the promise of the resurrection.

The above examples could, of course, be multiplied many times over, but I chose to limit our discussion to the gospels to keep it within the Jewish context (and even so it is not exhaustive). For example, Paul writes in Galatians 2:21, "... for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing." The fact remains that whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, without faith in the person of the Messiah who died for our sins, there is no salvation, there is no eternal life.

## Conclusion

If it is possible to be saved in any other way, especially if one provides a way of salvation for Orthodox Jews who do not accept the Messiahship of Yeshua, then we, Messianic Jews, have no special message to give. In a different context, Paul writes that if we do not believe in the resurrection, then we believe for nothing. The same applies specifically to us as Messianic Jews: Those of us who have chosen to believe in the Messiahship of Yeshua, chosen to be rejected by members of our family, by Jewish society, and especially by Orthodox Jews, have believed for nothing if there is another way of salvation.

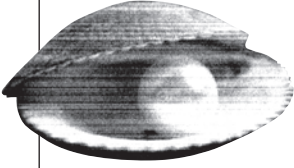
The whole reason for establishing Jewish ministries is that there is only one way of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. This is a message that simply cannot be compromised.

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SALVATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



# Motivations for Messianic Jewish Outreach

By **Stuart Dauermann**<sup>1</sup>

In 2002, I attended the meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. Riding from the airport to the hotel, a missionary to the Jews whom I hardly knew, without any foreplay whatsoever, cornered me with one question: “Do you believe that a Jew who does not believe in Jesus goes to hell?” Aside from being put off by his approach, I was mystified as to why, of all questions he might have selected, he chose *this* one to test my orthodoxy. Why this preoccupation with the population of perdition?

Of the eighteen evangelistic sermons in the Book of Acts, none uses the “find-heaven-avoid-hell” approach as a motivation for either missional engagement by the apostolic messengers or for repentance by their hearers. Neil Rees, International Coordinator for World Horizons International, forcefully reminds us that “the basic apostolic *kerygma* fails to mention hell as a motive for accepting the gospel message,” adding that “the apostles were perfectly capable of evangelizing without threatening their hearers with hell . . . [and] this is never developed in evangelistic preaching.”<sup>2</sup> He states further that using the prospect of others going to hell as a goad for missionary action or financial support “succeeds only in producing feelings of self-condemnation rather than considered and solid commitment.”<sup>3</sup> Should not these facts make us suspicious of the Jewish mission culture’s widespread fixation on heaven and hell issues?

1 This article is excerpted from Stuart Dauermann, *What Is The Gospel We Should Be Commending To All Israel In These Times Of Transition?* a paper presented to the Borough Park Symposium, Queens, NY, October 9, 2007, which will be included in a forthcoming book to be published by Brazos Press, tentatively titled *Converging Destinies: Jews, Christians, and the Mission of God*.

2 Neil Rees, “*Snatch Others from the Fire and Save Them*”: *An Examination of Belief in Hell as a Motivating Factor in Missions*. Unpublished paper, originally submitted as a term paper to William Carey International University, at <http://web.archive.org/web/20050228025757/perso.wanadoo.es/neil/Hell.htm>, accessed September 20, 2007.

3 *Ibid.*, 12. After providing a succinct and helpful historical survey of Protestant motivations for mission, Gailyn Van Rheenen traces the contemporary shift in such motivations in his aptly titled essay, “Changing Motivations for Missions: From ‘Fear of Hell’ to ‘the Glory of God,’” in Michael Pocock, Gailyn van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell, eds., *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 161–181.

## **“You Are Going to Destroy the Engine Driving Outreach to the Jews”**

I would not and do not deny the reality of hell, nor minimize its significance in Holy Writ. But I do question why this was such a focus of attention for my tram-mate and for many others, whether explicitly or implicitly, considering its total absence from the apostolic *kerygma*. It seems current vehemence surrounding this issue stems from how this doctrine has been long-used to spur missional action, support, and response, and how it is used to justify polemical sparring. Experience proves that some imagine my call to ease off on this approach to be nothing less than an attack on mission to the Jewish people, through disassembling its engine.

The reverse is true. Instead of weakening outreach to our people, I seek to strengthen it. I want to replace this non-apostolic engine with an older one – better rooted in the Bible and better suited to the road God is calling us to. This engine has four “pistons,” helpfully summarized in the opening verses of “The Lord’s Prayer.”

### *The First Piston: Sharing Our Relationship with God*

The Lord’s Prayer begins with “Our Father.” Our first motivation for missional action is to call others to the depth of relationship with God we ourselves enjoy. A moment’s reflection will suggest that this is what energized the apostles. Through their encounter with Messiah and their infusion with his Spirit, God had become so luminously real to them that they could not but tell others what they had seen and heard which had brought them this joy, this power, this intoxication. Our first missional motivation should then be to share with others the vital relationship with God that drives us. But what is *our* experience with God? The early church was awash in wonder. Are we? Or are we practiced professionals, with a Bible verse and answer for anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us, while, to tell the truth, we’re out of touch with the God of Hope? I know that when I was in my forties, I had to repent of how my relationship with God had become peripheral to me, even while I was preoccupied with “ministry.” Can anyone relate?

### *The Second Piston: The Doxological Motive*

The second phrase of the Lord’s Prayer, “Hallowed be thy name,” names what missional literature terms “the doxological motive,” a passion to see God glorified and worshiped. Contemporary scholars are nearly unanimous in emphasizing this to be the most powerful piston of all, able to drive the entire engine, and do it well.

After tracing throughout the Bible the centrality of the glorification of God, Steve Hawthorne applies his findings to the contemporary missional task, contrasting the doxological motive with others, including “find-heaven-avoid-hell.” “Guilt-based appeals to care for billions of people continue to soften our hearts a little. In practice, however, they weary and harden believers to a minimal token obedience. . . . Now



more than ever believers need to be nurtured into a jealousy for God's glory."<sup>4</sup>

John Piper is the leading advocate of the preeminence of God's glory. His perspective is a much-needed counterbalance to the task-oriented and statistically driven approaches so common among us:

Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. . . . Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God.<sup>5</sup>

Some might imagine that Piper wins adherents to his view from Reformed circles alone. However, this is not the case. In a fascinating article, fundamentalist pastor and educator Sam Horn tells how he encountered, resisted, and was eventually converted to Piper's views. Using the same metaphor of the missional engine, he makes the issue unmistakable:

I was also forced to consider that God's desire to be worshipped by men of all nations is actually the engine that drives biblical missions rather than the need of lost men to be saved from an eternal hell. In short, my perspective on missions was too man-centered.<sup>6</sup>

He goes on to highlight a related concept which Mark Kinzer and I highlighted in our flyer "The Emerging Messianic Jewish Paradigm," and not without controversy. We said this:

Such outreach proclaims the Name of Jesus, not the neediness of Jews.

Sometimes mission approaches to the Jewish people include the assumption or even declaration of the emptiness and inadequacy of Jewish religious practice and faith. In contrast, the apostolic motivation for outreach to Jewish people was driven by the realization that in Yeshua, the long awaited Messiah had come. The oft-quoted passage, "There is no other name given among mortals by which we must be saved," comes in a context where Peter and John were seeking to lift up the name of Jesus rather than put down the Jewish people: "for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:12, 20). We would do well to imitate their

4 Steven C. Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 15; found online September 24, 2007 at [www.waymakers.org/\\_files/glory/StoryGlory.pdf](http://www.waymakers.org/_files/glory/StoryGlory.pdf).

5 John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* [Second Edition] (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17.

6 Sam Horn, "The Heart of Biblical Missions," on his website *Sharper Iron*, <http://www.sharperiron.org/2006/10/05/the-heart-of-biblical-missions/>, accessed September 2007.

example and lift up the name of Yeshua without denigrating the holy things already given to the Jewish people (see Romans 3:1–4; 9:1–5).<sup>7</sup>

Sam Horn helps to silence the outcries against our call to discontinue a preoccupation with Jewish “neediness” and instead uplift the name of Yeshua:

At the heart of Biblical revelation is God’s self-revelation to man. Part of what God chose to reveal in the Scriptures concerns His primary motive for the activities ascribed to Him in the words of the Book. That motivation can be summed up in the phrase, “God does what He does for the sake of His name.” God’s primary motive in the salvation of lost men is doxological, “for the sake of His name” (Isaiah 63:7–14; Acts 15:14; Romans 1:5). The Scriptures reveal God’s primary motive in delivering His children from their troubles is “the sake of His name” (I Samuel 12:22; Psalm 106:8). God’s primary motive in showing mercy to sinning people is “the sake of His name” (Isaiah 48:9; Ezekiel 20:44). God’s primary motive in dealing with the wicked is “the sake of His name” (Exodus 9:14–16; Romans 9:17). Finally, God’s primary motive in His dealings with saved men is “the sake of His name” (I John 2:12; Acts 9:16).<sup>8</sup>

Sam Horn, John Piper, and Steve Hawthorne are right in redirecting our attention to the centrality of lifting up the name of God and the name of Yeshua. Can we deny that the supremacy of Yeshua’s name, rather than the alleged spiritual bankruptcy or neediness of the Jewish people or of a hell-bound Sanhedrin, was uppermost in the minds of Peter and John? I challenge all of us to examine deeply why it is that some of us fight so energetically to maintain our habitual preoccupation with the neediness of Jews, a habit that leads to repeatedly proving to ourselves and to others the alleged futility, vacuity, and impotence of the Jewish way of life. I suggest our wrong preoccupation is a residue from supersessionism, the church’s comfortable assumption of the cessation of Israel’s elect status and markers of that status now that the church, the “real heirs of salvation” has arrived. Alleged Jewish neediness and spiritual bankruptcy was not the engine that drove the apostles, who instead lived to glorify Yeshua and the One who raised him from the dead. Isn’t this focus and motivation good enough for us?

*The Third Piston: Hastening the Consummation of All Things*

When we speak of ourselves as “the Remnant of Israel,” what do we

7 Stuart Dauermann and Mark Kinzer, *The Emerging Messianic Jewish Paradigm* (2005).

8 Horn, *loc cit.*



mean? And what relationship does this have to the consummation of all things?<sup>9</sup>

Dan Johnson demonstrates how Scripture presents two different modalities of remnant identity, one being survivors of a time of judgment, the other being the seed from which God's continuing purposes will be realized.<sup>10</sup> Both of these perspectives are to be found in Romans 9 to 11. Johnson finds the earliest reference to the remnant as the seed and earnest of future blessing in the verb form used in Genesis 7:23, "only Noah was *left* (*vayisha'er akh noakh*), along with those who were with him in the ark," the term *vayisha'er* being related to the term *she'erit* (remnant). As Noah/Noah, his family, and the animals left with them in the Ark (as a remnant) were a sign of God's continuing purpose for the earth, and instruments for its realization, so the eschatological remnant of Israel of Romans 9 to 11 is meant to be a sign, demonstration, and catalyst of God's continuing purposes for the Jewish people – a seed of good things to come. This is our calling.

In Romans chapters nine to eleven, Paul speaks of two "fullnesses," "the fullness of the nations" (11:25) and "the fullness of Israel" (11:12). Paul calls Israel's fullness greater than the fullness of the Gentiles (*paso mallon to pleroma auton* – "How much greater will their fullness be?" [Rom 11:12]). Therefore if the fullness of the Gentiles is associated with the Great Commission, the fullness of Israel – the "greater riches" (Rom 11:12, NIV) that God will bring to pass – may be termed "the Greater Commission," as this reality affects our Remnant responsibilities.

Because we are so used to operating out of an older paradigm, these concepts and terms like "the Greater Commission" may come as a shock. However, these reflect biblical realities. The Great Commission might more properly be termed "the Penultimate Commission," for it is the magnificent prelude to something greater. The Greater Commission is our Remnant calling. God is calling us to prepare the way for the fullness of all Israel.

**The Great Commission might more properly be termed "the Penultimate Commission," for it is the magnificent prelude to something greater.**

But are we listening? If we are nearing the pivotal juncture when the gigantic wheel of God's purpose is turning toward the fullness of Israel, we

cannot simply go on with business as usual, living by older paradigms. Our responsibility is as great as our privilege.<sup>11</sup> Our role in the consummation of things is crucial and pivotal. I don't know about you, but this heats up my blood!

9 Stuart Dauermann, *Seeds, Weeds, and Walking the High Wire: The Role of the Remnant – Embodying Israel's Destiny*. Unpublished paper from the Hashivenu Forum (Hashivenu: Pasadena, CA, 2006).

10 Dan G. Johnson, "The Structure and Meaning of Romans 11," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 46 (1), (1984), 91–103.

11 "Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more" (Luke 12:48).



*The Fourth Piston: Obedience*

Obedience to God – “thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” – is our fourth powerful piston. And even if this were the only one, it would be more than enough to drive our engine. We must speak to our people about Yeshua because we have been commanded to do so. Paul’s words apply to us: “For if I preach the gospel that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”<sup>12</sup> Cannot such a piston drive our engine? Of course it can! And beyond that, should we not be passionate to “bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name” among all the people of Israel, as was Paul’s passion for the nations?<sup>13</sup>

Such a mighty missional engine roars at the curbside like a Maserati, its door open, waiting only for us to get in the driver’s seat to go from zero to sixty in five seconds flat. By comparison, the “find-heaven-avoid-hell” motivation seems like a donkey, energized by a carrot and a stick! I may be taking away our donkey, but our Father in heaven has given us the keys to the Maserati. Let’s take her out on the road!!<sup>14</sup>

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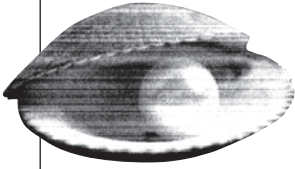
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<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor 9:16.

<sup>13</sup> Rom 1:5, 16:26.

<sup>14</sup> Johannes Verkuyl, writing thirty years ago, reached similar conclusions, naming six motivations for mission, including all four I identified. His list, in order: obedience; love, mercy and pity; doxology; the eschatological motive (where he makes mention of the Lord’s Prayer!); haste; and the personal motive – the arousing of ourselves through arousing others. Verkuyl was the pre-eminent missiologist of the mid-twentieth century (*Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 164–168).

SALVATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



# Soteriology: The View from Here

by John Fischer

The entire issue of soteriology is a highly nuanced complex of theological subject matter – or at least it should be. To some it resembles more a minefield than a reasoned enterprise. It begs for answers to questions which may not have adequate answers this side of eternity.

Initially some general observations are in order. A primary consideration in dealing with these issues is that God is fair in all he does; in fact, he is absolutely fair and just, and more fair than we could ever hope to be. Abraham based his bargaining with God on this foundation. “Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is right?” he said (Gen 18:25). God deals with all people with absolute equity and complete appropriateness.

Further, all people have some “light,” some vital information about God, whether that comes from conscience and/or creation. Some knowledge of God, or gods, naturally seems to pervade all cultures. The near universal, normal response of humans – unless expressly educated otherwise – acknowledges the Divine in some fashion. Additionally, a sense of moral “oughtness,” some standard of right and wrong, appears across cultures, and is usually connected to some set of perceived Divine expectations or guidelines. The ancient Rabbi and the Psalmist address these two perspectives in several biblical texts. “What may be known about God is plain to them ... For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made ...” (Rom 1:19–20). This apparently serves as Rav Shaul’s commentary on David’s comments about the role of creation or nature in informing humans about the existence of God: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps 19:1). The Rabbi then adds concerning the impact and role of conscience: “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them” (Rom 2:14–15). To responsive and open people, creation and conscience testify to God’s existence and to the moral necessity of behavioral standards.

Moreover, Scripture teaches that God judges people based on the “light” or information they have received. “All who sin not having the law will also be judged apart from the law, and all who sin having the law will be judged by the law” (Rom 2:12; cf. Luke 23:34). Or as Peter expressed it: “I now most certainly understand that God shows no partiality. But, in every nation God welcomes the one who fears him and does what it is right” (Acts 10:34–35). God is the judge of all people. He judges them on the basis of what they do know and what they have done with that knowledge. Yeshua addressed it this way: “An hour is soon coming in which all who are in their graves will hear His [the Son of Man’s] voice, and will arise; those who did good deeds to a resurrection of life, and those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28–29). On the whole, it appears that many people have merely set aside the truth they are aware of as it relates to God, or so Romans 1:25 intimates: “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather the Creator.”

### The Question About the Minority

However, this raises the question about the minority – regardless of how small or how large it may be. What about those who respond positively and correctly to the information they do have, and have not yet heard about Yeshua – or have not encountered a clear and accurate presentation of his message? Again the biblical texts provide some guiding principles. God makes a way to get these positively-responding individuals the information necessary to take the next step. In fact, it appears that he often “goes out of his way” to do so. In Acts 10 Cornelius had responded properly to the information and understanding he had about God. God then gave both him and Peter special visions in order to bring them together, and so Peter presented to Cornelius and his family the message they needed to hear in order to complete their journey to God. Of all the people in Jericho Rahab seems to have been the only one who understood and appreciated that God was clearly with Israel (Josh 2:11–13). So God made sure the spies arrived at *her* house. She heard the rest of the story from them and consequently was rescued from the destruction that fell on the rest of the city. Ruth lived in Moab, a place where Israelites would (and should) not normally be found (Num 25; Deut 23). Yet Naomi and her family went there and impacted Ruth’s life. Ruth had apparently been prepared for this encounter and undoubtedly had responded to God previously to the best of her ability. Already sensitized to God, she was ready to respond to Naomi (and to God) with that ringing commitment: “Your people will be my people, and your God my God!” (Ruth 1:16). Apparently God brings people together and brings the needed information – whatever or how much that might be, he knows far better than we – to those who are already in the process of responding to him. As the author of Hebrews maintains: “He is the rewarder of those who seek him” (Heb 11:6). After all, the Torah does promise: “If you seek the Lord



your God, you will find him if you search with all your heart" (Deut 4:29). In Jeremiah (29:13) God confirms this promise when he announces: "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with your whole heart." There are also contemporary examples of previously unreached, primitive peoples welcoming "missionaries" with greetings similar to "We've been waiting for you to come and tell us the news about God."<sup>1</sup> God seems quite willing to use unusual means, and to go to great lengths, to reach people who are responsive to him based on what they already do know. He is, after all, "not wishing that any should perish, but desires that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

But, are these people safe (with respect to their eternal destiny) until they have heard "the rest of the story"? They clearly are not certain, settled, and secure about this issue until they *have* heard and responded. Several examples illustrate this important perspective. Mahatma Gandhi, for all his devotion and accomplishments, stated in his autobiography: "It is a constant torture to me that I am still so far from Him whom I know to be my very life and being."<sup>2</sup> Mother Teresa, a globally-respected symbol of saintly devotion, could nevertheless write: "When I try to raise my thoughts to heaven, there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives and hurt my soul. There is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead."<sup>3</sup> A weeping Yohanan ben Zakkai said on his deathbed: "Moreover, two roads lie before me, the road to Gan Eden [Paradise] and the road to Gehinnom [Hell], and I don't know on which road I am to be taken – shall I not weep?" (Berachot 28b). No sense of certainty or assurance of a settled and secure relationship with the Almighty surfaces in these statements. In other words, a sensitive, responsive person usually senses his or her failings. Those without the gospel – regardless of their piety and responsiveness – remain in great uncertainty and many in grave danger. However, the final word may not yet have been given with respect to their circumstances and destiny.

### **An Older Testament "Theological" Context**

This raises an important question, particularly with respect to ben Zakkai. Is it just possible that he – and others – were still living circumstantially or functionally in an Older Testament "theological" context even though living chronologically in a post-resurrection historical situation? To be more specific, it would seem that many first century people actually lived during the time after Yeshua's resurrection, yet they could be accurately described – given the concrete reality of their lives and the very recent "arrival" of the gospel on the historical scene – as living in OT times

1 For example, cf. Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts*. I have also personally heard similar reports from missionaries from TEAM.

2 Quoted in William R. Bright, *Jesus and the Intellectuals* (San Bernardino: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1966), 10.

3 Quoted in the *St. Petersburg Times*, August 25, 2007.

with respect to the accessibility of, and their access to, Yeshua's life-giving message. They simply had as yet no opportunity for contact with the gospel; it had not spread to them during their lifetime. And Jews in these circumstances could still tap into the earlier covenant promises and what is described as "the gospel to Abraham" (Gal 3:8) or "the gospel" in the wilderness (Heb 4:2). The liturgical and rabbinic materials often express this same grace-based understanding. During Shacharit (the daily morning prayers) we pray: "Sovereign of all worlds! Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our supplications before you, but because of your abundant mercies." At Mincha (the daily afternoon service) we add: "Our Father, our King, be gracious unto us and answer us, for we have no good works of our own; deal with us in graciousness and lovingkindness, and save us." The Sages remind their students: "David said, 'Some trust in their fair and upright deeds, and some in the works of their fathers, but I trust in you.' Although I have no good works, yet because I call upon you, you answer me."<sup>4</sup> The rabbis comment further: "Deal with your servant according to your grace (Ps 119:124). Perhaps you take pleasure in our good works? Merit and good works we have not; act towards us in grace" (Tehillim Rabba on 119:123). Every Shabbat morning synagogues around the world pray: "Enlighten our eyes in your Scripture, and let our hearts cleave to your commandments, and unify our hearts to love and revere your name that we might never be put to shame. Because we have trusted in your holy, great and revered name, we shall rejoice and be glad in your saving power."<sup>5</sup> While this connection to God may have provided a relationship with the Almighty, it was clearly transcended by "the surpassing greatness of knowing Yeshua the Messiah" (Phil 3:8), as Rav Shaul had experienced it, and by "the life abundant" (John 10:10) Yeshua offers. Is it possible, then, that some people alive today – and many who lived in earlier generations – still live circumstantially in an OT context? If so, then God may well deal with them in the same way as he dealt with those who actually lived in the similar pre-resurrection OT situation.

Both the Bible and experience seem to indicate that there is genuine hope for a legitimate, though limited, relationship with God possible for those who genuinely respond to him based on the knowledge they have of him. And, God will see to it that they then receive whatever further information and understanding is necessary to cement that relationship. For this, we can trust God explicitly.

4 Midrash, Psa. 141, ed. M. Buber, 530–531.

5 For a further elaboration on grace and a relationship with God in Judaism, see the following articles by John Fischer:

"Torah: Can You Work Your Way to God?" *Messianic Outreach* (Autumn 1986).

"Foundations of Messianic Theology," *Mishkan*, no. 1 (1995).

"Yeshua and Halacha: Which Direction?" *Keshet* (Summer 1997).

"Jesus through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi Looks at Jesus," a paper presented at the annual convention of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 2003; available through [www.menorahministries.com](http://www.menorahministries.com).

## Further Considerations

There are some further considerations I would like to address, some of which are based on my previous reflections.<sup>6</sup> These may serve as a preliminary response to the issues at hand. The final answers we happily leave to God!

Foundationally, all of God's actions are perfect and without even the faintest hint of unfairness. The Torah makes this an unambiguous claim: "...his works are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (Deut 32:4). Therefore, we can be absolutely confident about God's character and his assessment as he deals with people. While denying that all religions are equally valid, or that all people do have an adequate relationship with God, we heartily acknowledge that God will treat every person with complete love and perfect justice. The Psalmist described God's treatment of people as "righteousness and peace kissing each other" (Ps 85:10). Or, as Elihu reminded Job: "Far be it from God to do evil, for the Almighty to do any wrong" (Job 34:10). Simply put, it is unthinkable to maintain that God will treat any person, of any time, place, or circumstance, at all unfairly. The Judge of all the earth will do what is right!

Unequivocally, Yeshua is the definitive and fullest revelation of God. In other words, God has revealed himself to some extent in creation and conscience, perhaps even to some small degree in some other religions, and certainly at least partially in historical Judaism. However, God has fully and most definitively revealed himself in Yeshua alone, as Hebrews 1:1–3 makes quite clear: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets, at many times and in various ways. But now in the end of days he has spoken to us by the Messiah, the Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the full radiance of God's glory and the flawless manifestation of his reality. He sustains all things by his powerful word. After he made atonement for sins, he sat down in the place of authority beside the Majesty in heaven." And with this authority Yeshua will judge all other claims of revelation as well as the ultimate status of all individuals, as he pointed out: "The Son gives life to all he pleases. The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:21–22; cf. Matt 13:41–42).

No other means of full atonement exists apart from what God provided through Yeshua's death and resurrection. Unquestionably, Yeshua's all-sufficient atoning work remains undeniably necessary and clearly central to the issue of man's relationship with God. The discussion swirls around whether Yeshua's sacrifice can be efficacious and applied for people who have not sufficiently known and specifically accepted his provision of atonement. This would include such people as those who lived before his resurrection, infants who die, mentally challenged individuals intellectually incapable of understanding the gospel, and people who have had no

<sup>6</sup> For this section I am heavily dependent on Daniel B. Clendenin, "The Only Way," *Christianity Today* (January 12, 1998), 34–40.

real, clear opportunity to hear an accurate presentation of Yeshua and his life-giving message, but have responded positively to God based on the information they have.

Clearly, while God is infinite and beyond full comprehension, humans remain finite and fallible. And, all too often, people speak far too quickly and dogmatically about matters beyond their purview. Job expressed it well: “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know” (Job 42:3). Therefore, we all need to cultivate a significant measure of hermeneutical humility and theological tentativeness. This is not to argue for skepticism or agnosticism, nor to plead for the cessation of vigorous interaction. Instead, it is the reminder and recognition of what God declared: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts beyond yours” (Isa 55:9). Rather than speak too definitively and quickly, we need to step back and respond humbly as Rav Shaul did. He marveled: “How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways! For who has understood the mind of the Lord?” (Rom 11:33–34). While we tend to be driven to arrive at clear-cut answers to life’s (and theology’s) complex questions, some questions have to go unanswered in this life. The rabbis remind us of this tension-relieving approach to difficult matters when they remark: “When the Messiah comes, he will tell us.” We correctly insist that the Bible remains God’s revelation. However, this does not mean that it answers every question that nags us. Furthermore, not all things in the biblical texts are equally clear, nor, by any means, are they equally clear to all readers. Certainly we can arrive at a sufficient – even if not perfect – understanding of what is vital for life with and under God. On the other hand, we should remind ourselves that while the Scriptures are infallible, the interpreter – and hence his or her understanding – is not. Moreover, a high view of divine inspiration does not automatically guarantee a high level of accurate interpretation. Thus, theological modesty remains a quality for all to cultivate.

Consequently, we retain the challenge and responsibility to disciple every people and nation. Yeshua’s charge to us all remains: “Everywhere you go, and as you are going, disciple all peoples” (Matt 28:19–20, et al). So we must guard against any loss of nerve or motivation to proclaim and explain the life-giving, life-changing message of the Jewish Messiah who remains the very source of life itself.

### **Claiming Too Much or Saying Too Little**

Based on these considerations, we need to steer a path between claiming too much and saying too little. The former can easily lead to a needlessly harsh – and over-dogmatically self-confident – position that drives people away from, rather than attracts them to, the person of Yeshua and power of the gospel. The latter may lead to subtly minimizing the uniqueness and centrality of Yeshua. To remedy this we hold two biblical principles together. God desires that no one should perish, but rather that every



person be rescued and transformed by coming to know him (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). And two, Yeshua alone is the only way to experience such rescue, transformation, and relationship with God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Exactly how these two principles fully integrate and interweave with one another only God knows.

According to many interpreters, it does seem likely that some people have been “saved” exclusively by Yeshua even though they may not have explicitly called upon Yeshua, i.e. the afore-mentioned infants, the mentally challenged, and OT types. Others will similarly add to this group those who respond faithfully to that knowledge they do have of God. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* regarding this position, “We do know that no person can be saved except through Yeshua; we may not know that only those who explicitly know him can be saved by him.”

In an interview, Terrance Tiessen, a missionary and the author of *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (InterVarsity Press), further unwraps this perspective.<sup>7</sup>

About ten years ago, I became convinced, much to my own surprise, that God may save people whom he does not reach with the gospel. For some years I expressed my thought in terms of the widely used typology of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism ... *Accessibilism* [a term from an article by William Lane Craig] struck me as capturing very nicely what I have come to believe. Salvation is accessible wherever God chooses to apply the work of Christ by his Spirit, and he can do this even where new covenant revelation is not known. ...

The good news concerning Jesus is God’s ordinary means for bringing sinners into relationship with himself and maturing them in communities of faith that provide a small foretaste of life in the kingdom of God. I believe that we should rejoice in the thought that some of God’s elect are among those whom the church, in its weakness or disobedience, has not reached with the gospel ... Few things are more exciting to a missionary than the surprise of finding that God has been at work before we arrive with the gospel and the people’s hearts are already turned toward God and eager to receive his fuller revelation. Why would it disturb us that God may have saved some of these people, particularly ones who had lived and died in the years before we got there? ...

I hear a clear biblical statement that every human being is a sinner who needs God’s salvation and that the only means by which God ever saves anyone is by grace through faith. There are no exceptions to this principle and so we have to unpack how it works in the varied situations of human existence. ...

I am not saying that the various religions of the world are agencies

7 Dan Reid, “Salvation, the Unevangelized and the Religions,” an interview with Terrance Tiessen, *Academic Alert* (InterVarsity Press, Winter 2001), 3, 5. The entire interview has direct bearing on our discussion.



that God has raised up as means of his saving work in the lives of any of their adherents. I am not saying that there is a second chance for people after death if they have rejected God's revelation up to the end of their lives, although I do postulate that some who have been previously saved by faith (including infants and other unevangelized) will first place their faith in the person of Christ when they meet him at death. I am not saying that because God can and does save some apart from the church's witness to Jesus, we need not make costly sacrifices to bring to everyone in the world the gospel, which God uses with saving power and which marvelously transforms the lives of individuals and whole communities.

Tiessen has clearly articulated here some very important and consistently biblical considerations.

Before concluding I want to quote a friend and colleague with whom I have worked and interacted for over 30 years. Dr. Michael Schiffman has very pointedly and perceptively addressed the issues under discussion.<sup>8</sup>

First, I believe that NO ONE gets into the Kingdom of Heaven without Yeshua. He is the Only WAY through which people can be saved. Having said this, I must also affirm that I do NOT believe that every Jew who does not believe DIRECTLY in Yeshua (i.e., naming the name) automatically goes to hell. This may be heretical for some of you, but I honestly do not believe that, based on Scripture as well as Yeshua's own words and actions regarding our people, as well as all the other Scriptures regarding Israel. I base this upon the fact that the Jewish people have a covenant with G-d that is still in effect, that is not based upon them, but upon G-d Himself, and do not find a setting aside of the Jewish people in Scripture. I do not believe in selling my people down the river to make my theological formulae work. I will yield to Scripture always, but not to theological constructions which are human and often blindsighted at times.

Our people have a covenant with G-d. This covenant itself is NOT a covenant of salvation; however it DOES set our people apart from the nations in several respects, among them being that we are a people with a relationship OF SOME KIND with G-d, and should not be viewed as the other peoples of the earth. ...

In my understanding, this DOES NOT mean that Jewish people have another way of salvation other than through Yeshua. I believe in John 14:6 that Yeshua is the Way, the Truth and the Life and that NO ONE comes to the Father but by HIM. But if you look at the grammatical construction and language of that verse, it could be also understood, and with the same weight be translated "BY ME" or "BY WAY OF ME." ...

<sup>8</sup> Michael Schiffman, "Another view on heaven, hell and our sense of justice," email posting on the UMJC Leaders Forum, April 4, 2000.



If you understand John 14:6 to mean "BY WAY OF ME," the imagery of Yeshua is understood not as the DOOR of salvation, but the DOORKEEPER of salvation. While Yeshua did say I AM THE DOOR in John, He is also pictured as a doorkeeper in Revelation. The value of understanding the verse in this way restores in our understanding Yeshua's right to make a judgment call. WE only see the outside, but G-d looks upon the heart.

While I do not speak here of all Jews, I know of Jewish people of faith who truly believe in, and LOVE, the G-d of Israel. They are not pagans, who worship a false G-d, but people who have a knowledge of G-d, be it a limited knowledge. Paul said they have received from G-d a BLINDNESS IN PART. Many of us in the past have understood this in a self-centered way to mean that the larger part of Israel was blind (totally), but WE, the remnant, are those who are not blind, hence there being a blindness in part. I do not believe Paul was speaking in this manner. I think he was saying the Jewish people have a knowledge of G-d, and a love for G-d, but it is a partial knowledge because they DO NOT see Yeshua.

We know that Yeshua is G-d and the agent of creation. HE is the G-d who was at Sinai and gave the Torah to Israel. He is the one who was with our people through the wilderness, in the Land, and the One to whom our people prayed and directed their worship. When the Jewish people pray to G-d, they ARE praying to Yeshua, without realizing it. This is why Mark Nanos in his *The Mystery of Romans* says the weaker BROTHERS are Jewish people who have not yet come to the knowledge of Yeshua.

During the first century many, but not most, of the world Jewish population came into contact with Yeshua, and of those who did, it would be possible to say that many rejected HIM. Since that time, as our people encountered an increasingly non-Jewish Yeshua and totally gentile movement of His followers, it can not be said they rejected the real Yeshua. In fact, their NO to Yeshua could be understood to be a YES to His Father. IT was a demonstration of faithfulness, not unfaithfulness, although it missed the mark severely. Yet I believe that G-d who knows all hearts not only judges right from wrong, but He understands when we do the wrong things for the right reasons, and the right things for the wrong reasons.

It is quite possible that on the day of Judgment, many of our people who never encountered the real Yeshua, who really loved G-d and trusted in HIM, could be speaking with a man at the door, and have the feeling they know Him and have spoken to HIM before. He knows they loved Him and some went to their deaths with even the partial knowledge they had of Him, and He says, "We have spoken before. 'I am your brother Joseph. Come near to me. I will take care of you'."

... The reason anyone should accept Yeshua is more than salvation as concept. IT is RELATIONSHIP. That is the reason for the Torah.

That is the reason Yeshua came. Atonement in concept is closeness to G-d. The whole point of the Jewish religion is that we might be close to G-d, and every mitzvah is designed to bring us closer to HIM. Yeshua brings us incredibly close to G-d, by the fact of our relationship to G-d and the forgiveness of our sins. All Yeshua's parables of the Kingdom point to this. All His critiques of the Pharisees point to this.

No one comes to G-d apart from Yeshua, but we need to give HIM room to make the call. We need to testify of Him and call others to Him because of the closeness He gives us to G-d. Salvation is not just a label or state of being. It is a relationship.

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## **Conclusion**

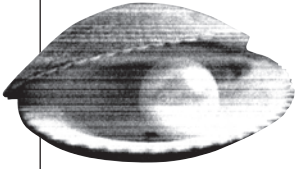
I heartily resonate and concur with Dr. Schiffman's observations.

I want to conclude with several observations. People rooted in the Western world often seem driven to have clear-cut, precise answers to specifically-defined questions, and they desire to cleanly fit sharply-bounded concepts into exacting categories. We want to analyze, organize, and systematize. Unfortunately, some issues defy this process, and reality truly is messy. The biblical texts, rooted as they are in a Semitic worldview, tend to treat reality differently. Paradox and tension thrive freely in this world; nuance and complexity flourish happily. Everything need not be reconciled nor understood. Some questions never arise, and others are intentionally and comfortably left unanswered.

I have not answered all the questions and addressed all the issues raised in this discussion; I did not intend to. I have observed and described what I felt I could accurately observe and reasonably describe; other matters simply defy human explanation. The destiny of any particular individual, or group of individuals, is simply beyond our knowledge; it is clearly God's business and not ours. Basically, that's "the view from here." More than this I cannot and will not say. After all, when Messiah comes, *he* will tell us!



SALVATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



# The Jewish People and Salvation

by Michael Rydelnik

In 1996, I received a phone call from my cousin in Israel, telling me that my father had just died. A Holocaust survivor and an Orthodox Jew, he had cut all ties with me when I became a follower of Yeshua. He moved to Israel and refused any contact with me. When he passed away, his only surviving sibling, my aunt, instructed the entire family not to let me know of my father's passing. Gratefully, one of my Israeli cousins refused this last painful demand and called me.

From 1972 until 1996, I had made repeated efforts to reach my dad, not to share my faith with him but just to restore our relationship. As a result, I had three separate meetings with him, in 1978, 1981, and the last one in 1992, when after speaking together for 10 minutes, the wife he had married in 1977 realized who I was, causing her to assault me and drive me from their house. Years later, when my cousin phoned me to relay the details of my father's passing, she noted that just one day before his death, he had reiterated that I was no longer his son and he did not want me informed of his soon coming death.

I suppose that was the very first time I began to question the particularist<sup>1</sup> soteriology I had been taught at Bible college and seminary. I had been taught and believed that apart from conscious faith in Yeshua, all people, including Jewish people, including my father, would be lost for eternity. But if ever someone could earn his way into heaven on the basis of suffering, certainly my father could. He lost his first wife, five sons, and an adopted daughter to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. He himself had suffered miserably in the Lodz ghetto and then several concentration camps. After the war, he remarried and his new wife died while giving birth to my half-brother. Then he married my mother, who was eighteen years younger than he, with whom he had a daughter, my sister Esther, who died in a drowning accident in Berlin when she was two years old.

<sup>1</sup> Particularism affirms "salvation depends on explicit personal faith in Jesus Christ." R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips, "A Particularist View: An Evidentialist Approach," in *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 214. Although sometimes called exclusivism, particularism is more appropriate because of the unwarranted negative suggestions of undue dogmatism.

After this tragedy, my parents moved to America and tried to rebuild their lives.

In 1971, my mother went public with her previously secret faith in Yeshua and my father divorced her for this. Within 1½ years, I and then my two sisters came to faith in Yeshua, so that he disowned all three of us and moved to Israel to be near his own sister, the only one of his 7 siblings that had not perished in the Holocaust.

After his death, a small voice in my head began to question how God could exclude my father from eternal life. He had suffered so much, he had kept Torah as much as was humanly possible, and then he gave up his second family out of devotion to that Torah and his people. In the midst of my doubts, I had two firm convictions: That Yeshua was truly the promised Messiah and that the Bible, both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Covenant, was the inspired Word of God.

So it was that I turned to the Bible to examine my previously held convictions, and where I still turn when I am pained by the tragic loss of my father and the continuing unbelief of the vast majority of my people. Must Jewish people consciously believe in Yeshua to have eternal life, or are there exceptions to this seemingly biblical requirement? In the next few pages, I will share what I believe the Scriptures say about the Jewish people and salvation.

Before examining those Scriptures, I offer this caveat: In what follows, I do not speak or write as one who has all the answers. I struggle and continually study. I acknowledge my own limitations and I accept the caution that Yeshua gave: that we will be surprised by who will indeed attain to eternal life with him (Matt 7:21–30; Luke 13:22–30). I recognize that others have different conclusions and respect what motivates them. What follows is my understanding of what I believe the Bible has to say about the Jewish people and salvation. I will frame this by first expressing the reasons this issue is so important, then by examining the biblical evidence, followed by addressing the objections that have been raised to my understanding of the Scriptures. Finally, I will present some needed responses to the biblical issues before us.

## The Importance of the Issue

In a pluralistic and relativistic<sup>2</sup> society, any statement affirming that one faith asserts an exclusive claim to truth and maintains there is only one way to experience God's forgiveness will certainly raise hackles. Anyone who has lost a loved one who did not trust in the Messiah Yeshua will certainly struggle with particularism. For those of us who have felt the pain of the murder of the Six Million by vicious and cruel Nazis, it is natural

2 For the sake of clarity, although I reject relativism, the idea that objective truth does not exist, I affirm pluralism in our society. Pluralism does not assert that all faiths are true but that people must be freely permitted to explore and assert what they understand to be true. A colleague of mine has said, "Relativism says that there is no right or wrong. Pluralism says that you have the right to be wrong."

that Jewish believers would struggle with any teaching that limits salvation to those who have a conscious faith in Yeshua. It is hard to assert the particularist claims of Yeshua in the face of the Holocaust. Cultural trends, personal grief, and the Shoah demonstrate why this discussion is so important – the exclusive claims of the Messianic faith are *difficult* in that they are both unpopular in society and painful to us and our people.

Besides the difficulty of the issue, it is important because it is *divisive*. Those who affirm particularism often treat those who support a more inclusive soteriology as heretics. This is decidedly unfair. Heresy in Scripture requires a denial of an essential truth that would exclude its adherent from the community of faith and the family of God. Inclusivists do not deny Yeshua's deity and absolutely believe in him as Redeemer. They are part of God's family.

At the same time, inclusivists also can divide by accusing particularists of being close-minded fundamentalists that deny the loving nature of God and fail to practice *ahavat Yisrael* (the love for our people Israel). Sometimes such opinions are expressed with an attitude of intellectual superiority and theological advancement, deriding particularists for their far too literal, old fashioned, or narrow interpretation of the Bible. This subject is so significant because it could potentially tear the Messianic movement apart to such a degree that we will wither and disappear, much as the ancient Nazarenes did.

A third reason this topic is so important is that it is a *decisive* issue. While those holding either position affirm the need to share Yeshua with our Jewish people and all people, certainly the view one takes will affect the amount of urgency there is to that proclamation. It will affect our view of outreach and our sense of "mission." In fact, the decisive nature of this issue is probably why we have gathered here to discuss it.

Since Jewish people and salvation is such an important and weighty issue, we must turn to the Bible as our supreme authority to seek answers.

## The Evidence from Scripture

The Bible does indeed address this topic, in what seem to be clear terms. There are four principles that the Scriptures appear to affirm regarding Jewish people and salvation.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Lost Condition of the Jewish People*

To begin, the Bible appears to assert that *Jewish people, in fact all people, are lost without faith in Yeshua as their Redeemer*. Generally, the Scriptures consider humanity to be dead in "trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1) and as such separated from God. Isaiah proclaims to Israel that "your

3 This full version of this section, including more biblical support and detailed exegetical discussion of these passages, can be read online at [www.boroughparksymposium.com/papers/RydelnikFinal.pdf](http://www.boroughparksymposium.com/papers/RydelnikFinal.pdf).

iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isa 59:2).

#### *The Need for Conscious Faith in Yeshua*

The New Covenant consistently seems to affirm that *Jewish people, or Gentiles, must have conscious faith in Yeshua to experience God's forgiveness and receive the promise of life in the world to come.* John 3:16 is the most basic verse that asserts the need for explicit and conscious faith in Yeshua, by stating that in love, God gave his Son so that "whoever believes in him should not perish." Beyond that, it is faith in his name that will result in not being judged for sin (John 3:18).

#### *The Absolute Uniqueness of Yeshua*

Some might acknowledge the lost condition of Jewish people and even the need for conscious faith in Yeshua. However, they would object that faith in Yeshua is but one way to enter a forgiven relationship with God, maybe even the best way, but certainly not the only way. The Bible does not seem to offer this as an option, insisting that *Yeshua is the only way to God*, especially in John 14, where Thomas asked Yeshua, "Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?" to which Yeshua responded, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14:5–6).

#### *Accountability for Unbelief*

All people in general, and *Jewish people in particular, will be held accountable for failing to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah.* This idea is found in several passages,<sup>4</sup> for instance Deuteronomy 18:19 in the Hebrew Bible, which says, "Whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in my name, I Myself will require it of him." The meaning is that should the people of Israel not attend to the messianic prophet like Moses, God will hold them to account. If Yeshua did indeed fulfill this prediction, then any Jewish person that fails to hear and obey his words is responsible for this to God.

In this evaluation of the biblical evidence, four principles have become apparent. First that Jewish people are lost without faith in Yeshua. Second, that Jewish people must have conscious faith in Yeshua to be saved. Third, Jewish people have no other means of salvation except by faith in Yeshua alone. Finally, that if Jewish people fail to believe in Yeshua, God the Father will hold them accountable. Because of the severity of these issues, some have offered alternatives and objections. To these we now turn.

## **The Objections to Particularism**

It is absolutely understandable that some have objected to the understanding of Scripture expressed above. Like Paul, whose great compassion

4 See also Psalm 2:12 and John 5:45-47.



for his own people led him to wish himself accursed if it would produce the redemption of Israel (Rom 9:1–3), so many in the Messianic movement, because of a similar compassion, are longing for a wider hope for the Jewish people rather than the narrow way described in Scripture. Those who object are motivated by love and concern and should be respected for their great desire for Jewish people to experience the world to come in the presence of God. Nevertheless, they should also be evaluated biblically, as best as finite minds are able.

### *The Possibility of Unrecognized Mediation*

Some have expressed the hope that the benefits of Messiah Yeshua's atoning death and resurrection would be applied to devout Jewish people, even if they do not recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. While accepting that Yeshua is the only way to God and that his is the only name by which salvation is possible, this view believes that perhaps God will apply the benefits of Yeshua's atonement to devout Jewish people who do not consciously believe in him.

All that was written above about conscious faith in Messiah seems sufficient to address this hope. Nevertheless, several passages of Scripture seem to speak directly to it. One example is Acts 2, in which Luke described the thousands of Jewish people present at the feast of Shavuot as "devout" (Acts 2:5). Yet, despite devotion and spiritual sincerity, Peter still called on them to repent for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38). If there is any doubt as to the object of their faith, it is evident in that Peter also calls upon them to "be baptized in the name of Yeshua." Peter is not asking for a general repentance for sins committed, but rather repentance for not believing in Yeshua and a conscious turn to him in faith.

Another case is Romans 10:1–2, in which Paul states that his heart's desire and prayer for the people of Israel is that they might be saved. Paul recognizes that his people are lost without Yeshua, even though he acknowledges "they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." It appears that devotion is an insufficient basis for obtaining any unrecognized mediation.

Some appeal to the case of the Roman centurion Cornelius, of whom Peter said, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is welcome to him" (Acts 10:34–35). These verses are claimed to show that God will save people who fear him and do what is right. If that were the case, then why was Peter directed by the Lord to preach Yeshua to Cornelius? The answer is that despite his devotion, Cornelius was not yet saved. In Acts 11:13–14, the angel is said to have directed Cornelius to send for Peter that he might "speak words to you by which you will be saved." The point of Acts 10:34–35 is not that fearing God and doing good apart from faith in Yeshua is salvific. Rather, regardless of nationality, those who seek God are welcomed by him. Therefore God will, in his sovereignty, extend greater light to such people.

As for the value of piety apart from faith in Yeshua, according to John



5:23, ultimately it is inadequate for salvation. In this text, Yeshua says, "He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him." Regardless of personal devotion to the Father, without faith in the Son, it falls short.

### *The Problem of Transitions*

This objection is that during the Older Covenant, before the coming of the Messiah, Jewish people with sincere faith were saved without conscious faith in Yeshua. Nevertheless, Hebrews 10:4 states that the blood of bulls and goats does not take away sin. Hence, the atonement of Messiah had to be applied to the faithful of Israel without their conscious faith in Yeshua. As a result, it is presumed that the blood of Messiah can be applied to Jewish people today who respond in faith to the promises of God but lack conscious faith in Yeshua. Clark Pinnock uses this argument when he writes, "People like Abraham knew God even though they did not know Jesus," and he argues for the "salvation of Old Testament saints who lived before Jesus and therefore could not have called upon his name for salvation."<sup>5</sup>

This proposal misunderstands how people have always been saved. There has only been one way of salvation and it remains so in every generation. Namely: *people are saved by grace through faith in the revealed will of God*. Under the Old Covenant, believers in Israel were saved by grace through faith in the God of Israel and the faithful practice of the sacrificial system. This was the revealed will of God for them and they were not required to have a conscious faith in Yeshua as the Messiah. However, since the coming of the New Covenant, God has revealed the truth of Yeshua's Messiahship, deity, sacrificial death, and resurrection. All people are called upon to believe this message because it is the revealed will of God today. According to the author of Hebrews, "In these last days, [God] has spoken to us in his Son" (1:2). With the inauguration of the New Covenant, it is no longer possible to rely on Old Covenant circumstances to be saved.

A variation of this objection contends that those Jewish people already saved by grace through faith in the revealed will of God at the time of Yeshua's coming, somehow would have automatically lost their salvation at the coming of Messiah – or perhaps at his death, or resurrection, or ascension – because they had not yet heard of him. Since this is an unthinkable possibility, it maintains that it is proof that even the progress of revelation does not mandate explicit, conscious faith in Yeshua.

This argument fails to see the function of Acts as a transitional book, recording the events in a period of change. It shows the progress from the Older Testament revelation to the New, by taking the good news of Messiah Yeshua "to the remotest part of the earth." As the gospel spread,

5 Clark H. Pinnock, "Acts 4:12 – No Other Name under Heaven," in *Through No Fault of Their Own*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 112–113.

those Jewish believers saved on the basis of the previous revelation would have now heard of Messiah's coming and believed in this new revelation. After the book of Acts ended and by the time of the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, there would not have been any more of these transitional believers left. Hence, the period of change just described closed and the requirement for conscious and explicit faith became normative.

### *The Fairness of God*

Ultimately, this objection rests upon the justice of God. Certainly, God would not hold people accountable for failing to believe in someone of whom they had never heard. This is uniquely true of the Jewish people and Yeshua, since for the most part, the only message Jewish people have received of Yeshua is the distorted one proclaimed by the historic church. The anti-Torah, supersessionist, anti-Jewish Jesus that the church forced upon the Jewish people for centuries blotted out the true Yeshua. According to this view, God would be unjust if he failed to overlook Jewish unbelief because the good news of Yeshua was so distorted by the church.

Plainly, the church bears a great deal of guilt for obscuring the message of the true Yeshua to the Jewish people. However, if God will hold pagans accountable for unbelief solely on the basis of general revelation (Rom 1:18–20), how much more can he expect of the Jewish people who have access to the special revelation of Scripture that predicts the Messiah. This objection could very well be answered with the words of Abraham to the rich man, "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them . . . If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:29, 31).

### *The Exception for Infants*

Pinnock chides particularists for inconsistency in that many "hope for the salvation of children who die in infancy, even though babies cannot call on the name of Jesus and the Bible never actually states such a hope clearly."<sup>6</sup> On the basis of this "exception" to the plan of God, others suggest that there may also be exceptions for people who do not believe for lack of full information about Yeshua.

In response, it is unfair to compare the lack of faith of those who are incapable of belief (infants) with those who choose not to believe (adults). Additionally, all particularists do not hold the same position with regard to infants that die before reaching an age of accountability.<sup>7</sup> Geisler proposes one possibility on the basis of Romans 5:19, which says "through the obedience of the one man the *many* (i.e. *all*) will be made righteous." He suggests that Paul does not mean that all were made righteous in the sense of forensic justification which is only by faith. Rather, it can mean

6 Ibid., 113.

7 See Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology* Vol. III (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004), 430–454 for an overview of salvation and infant mortality.

that the imputed guilt brought by Adam's sin was canceled for all humanity by the work of Messiah. Thus, people are not separated from God until such time as they actually commit acts of personal sin themselves, bringing condemnation. He then concludes, "Consequently, since infants have not committed actual sins, they could all be saved even though not yet able to believe."<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the explanation is for infants that die before they are able to believe, Yeshua did say of children that "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14). This seems to indicate that children are part of the world to come. But there is no similar promise for adult Jews or Gentiles who fail to believe for lack of a clear proclamation about Yeshua.

### *The Number of the Lost*

One final objection to the particularist position is that if it were true, far more people would be lost than saved. This seems contrary to the love of God, who does not wish that any should perish (2 Pet 3:9).

With respect to the love of God, the Bible says that multitudes from every nation will be saved (Rev 7:9). The Lord does love the world and chooses to embrace myriads of people and nations. Yet, with great sorrow, Yeshua did warn of the danger of following "the way that is broad that leads to destruction and many are those who enter by it." Rather, he taught that people are to "enter by the narrow gate . . . for the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it" (Matt 7:13–14). Although this is painful to accept, it seems that Yeshua is saying that the path to life is indeed narrow.

Additionally, in Romans 11:1–5, Paul identifies Jewish believers as the remnant of Israel. The word "remnant" (*leimma*) means, "what is left over,"<sup>9</sup> and generally, when referring to people, refers to a small group of survivors. The point is that Jewish believers form a small part of the whole of Israel. Paul illustrates the idea of a remnant in this age with the Elijah story, in which 7,000 did not bow their knees to Baal. His point is that even in the Older Covenant, the vast majority of Israel did not know the Lord. Rather, God has always worked through a remnant. Therefore, it is not surprising that only a remnant of Israel will be saved today.<sup>10</sup>

For those who know Yeshua, being the remnant and walking on the narrow path ought never to be the source of triumphalism or gloating. Rather it should break hearts and serve as motivation to bring the message of Messiah in the most effective way to the most people possible.

8 Ibid, 449.

9 V. Hertrich IV, "Leimma," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged, 523.

10 This does not end the discussion for Paul. He looks forward to the eschatological day of the Lord, when the nation of Israel as a whole will turn to Messiah Yeshua in faith and he will return as their Deliverer. Then, the remnant will become the whole (Rom 11:25–26). At that time, God's words to Jeremiah will come to pass, "'For they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive them of their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more'" (Jer 31:34).



Despite the difficulties involved in affirming a particularist view of salvation with regard to all people, and especially Jewish people, it appears to be what the Scriptures teach. If that is so, how should it effect those who have put their trust in Yeshua? The next section will address how a particularist doctrine should be embraced.

### **The Response to Particularism**

Too often particularists are characterized as arrogant or unloving toward the people whom God loves, consigning them to perdition rather than life. Unfortunately, that is how particularists may act sometimes. It seems better for particularists to adopt a different tone and attitude.

#### *Humility*

To begin, those who have experienced God's grace should be overcome with humility. Receiving salvation is certainly not a result of any merit on the part of the believer. Becoming a part of the remnant of Israel is a result of "God's gracious choice" (Rom 11:5). An attitude of humility should prevail.

Once, I appeared on the Phil Donahue Show, and as soon as he realized I was a Messianic Jew he immediately asked me if Jewish people who do not believe in Yeshua all go to hell. My response was to tell him that I am not the Judge and no one will ever stand before me to determine their eternal destiny. God is the Judge of all humanity, and I trust him to judge justly. Yet, I told him, I recognized my own sinfulness and did not feel confident to stand before a holy God on the basis of my own goodness. Therefore, I put my faith in Yeshua for forgiveness. Others may feel more confident in their own goodness and they will have to determine for themselves if they are good enough to face God's judgment on the basis of their own merit. He asked me why I was fudging and I, in turn, asked him why he was trying to make me God. Then he dropped the question.

Some of the believers present with me on the panel did not like my answer. Afterwards, they told me I should have just given a simple yes answer. Others commended me for a slick apologetic. In my opinion, neither of those comments truly understood my response. I sincerely believe that God alone is the Judge of all the earth, and it would be presumptuous and arrogant on my part to opine on the destiny of others. I can openly state that I believe that the Scriptures teach a particularist position, but still would not be brazen enough to think that I can determine the fate of anyone. God is the Judge and he is wiser than all.

#### *Motivation*

If judging the world is God's job, he has made my job clear as well. In the words of Paul, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor 5:11). God has committed to me and to all followers of Yeshua "a ministry of reconciliation." Therefore, we serve as God's ambassadors to a world that he loves, begging them to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18–20). If we

take seriously that the broad way is filled with our people, we will be motivated to fulfill our commission to bring good news to them and announce salvation, and to say to Zion, "Your God reigns" (Isa 52:7).

### *Trust*

Lastly, if particularism is true, then I need to learn to trust that God is just and knows what he is doing. It is a hard truth and I am not sure I am fully able to comprehend it. That is not to say that I do not understand what the Scriptures say, just that I do not fully grasp God's purpose and plan. But I do trust him and this is sufficient. I trust that God is supremely gracious and is always extending himself in love to a world that wants very little to do with him.

I will end where I began – with two stories about learning of my father's death. After he died, a Gentile friend of mine, a pastor's wife from Memphis, revealed to me that she had been so burdened for my dad that she had spent the previous 12 years corresponding with him in Israel, paying to have her letters translated into Yiddish. She had regularly sent him Yiddish books and tracts and several Yiddish New Testaments. She had never told me because she feared I would not approve. But I was amazed – my father corresponding with a gentile woman about Yeshua! I thought my father had never heard about Yeshua, only to discover he had heard far more than I ever dreamed. God had not left him without a witness.

And now for the second story: When my cousin called to notify me of my father's death, as we were about to hang up, she remembered one last thing she wanted to tell me. She said on the day before he died, a woman from the U.S. entered my father's hospital room to visit her own father in the next bed. She happened to see my father's name on a piece of tape on the wall. So she turned to him and asked if he was related to Professor Michael Rydelnik from Chicago. He responded by saying, "He used to be my son, but he is dead to me." I do not know who this woman is. She has never made any effort to contact me. But according to my cousin, she angered my aunt by coming to my father's deathbed and sharing with him about Yeshua. She told him that Yeshua was the Messiah who was his atonement for sin. As far as I know, my father rejected her message, and died the following day of kidney failure. Yet I can see the mercy and grace of God. To the very end, the Lord sent his ambassadors to my father, in the form of a southern pastor's wife and an unknown American Jewish believer. That is why I need to trust God about the Jewish people and salvation. He cares about his chosen people even more than I do, and he is doing much more than I ever dreamed to reach them.

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SALVATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



*Presenting the Gospel to the Jewish People:*

# An Assessment of What Is and a Plea for the Future

by **Susan Perlman**

I want to tell you about three people and how they came to faith. The first is Marilyn. Marilyn came to a church in Sacramento, California, where I was speaking on the topic of the Fall Feasts just a few weeks ago. She approached me at the book table afterwards. "I'm Jewish," said this woman in her late thirties, "and I came to know the Lord over ten years ago when someone like you came to this Baptist church to speak. I was invited by a friend who had been witnessing to me and my husband. Meeting another Jewish person who could articulate her faith in Jesus was what I needed. That meeting was the final step that brought me into the kingdom." Marilyn then went on to tell me about how our missionary met with her regularly for several years in a discipleship role. She appreciated talking with someone who was somewhat like her. Marilyn told me how grateful she was for the many visits from our staff missionary where the word of God was opened up and she grew her faith and her connection with this local congregation, which is still her home congregation.

The second person is Cynthia. Cynthia called me about a month ago and told me her story. She is a Jewish believer who has known the Lord for about a year. She had some questions of a spiritual nature, and she thought about where she could get some answers. She reasoned that searching on Google was a good place to start looking for answers. So she went and found Jews for Judaism. She assumed they would be the place to get information. She read through a lot of the material on their web pages, including proof text materials as well as their warnings about the missionary groups. Since Jews for Judaism made many references to Jews for Jesus, she became curious and decided to check out our website. She surfed our site and landed in the apologetics section. Cynthia found the answers challenging. She told me of how she would go back and forth between the two sites to see what each had to say on issues like the resurrection, the virgin birth, atonement, and particularly the Messiah. She eventually concluded that the case for Y'shua's messiahship on our website was much more compelling than the case that Jews for Judaism made, that Messiah has yet to appear.

Interestingly, she didn't get in touch with our mission agency but instead went to a local church in her area, and it was there that she pro-

fessed her faith in the Messiah. Only now is she beginning to connect with the larger community of Jewish believers in her part of the country. But she searched for the Lord on Google.

The third person is Andrew. Andrew is the son of a Holocaust survivor. He called us as a brand new believer. He prayed the prayer to receive the Lord during the tag at the end of the film *Survivor Stories*. This was five years ago. For some reason, his therapist, an unbeliever, had given him the DVD. He called us with questions and concerns, and was very cagey about meeting with other Jewish believers. Anyway, Ruth Rosen was the one to talk to him back then, so when he called our office recently, he asked for her. Andrew had been reading the Bible and it sounds like his five-year-old faith is solid. He has reached the point of wanting to feel more connected to his Jewish background and to Jewish believers.

**But she searched for the Lord on Google.**

Now, you might be thinking, *Susan, you've missed some other approaches, some methods that have anecdotes of their own*. Oh, you mean approaches like knocking on the doors of Jewish homes or apartments? Calling Jewish people by surname from the phone book? Sending out evangelical mailings to Jewish homes? Handing out gospel literature? Setting up book tables on university campuses with significant Jewish enrollment? Walking around those campuses with surveys that have questions tailored for Jewish students? Leasing kiosks in malls in Jewish areas, where you can engage with Jewish shoppers? Holding up evangelistic banners on roads and at intersections, where they can be read by Jewish motorists? Mailing evangelistic journals by subscription to Jewish seekers? (I think I know of one, called ISSUES.)

What about evangelistic books and DVDs that are offered to seekers in a variety of ways? Public Bible studies on Jewish oriented themes? Personal one-on-one Bible studies in homes? Evangelistic campaigns that employ many of these methods while focusing on a particular community for a short period of time? Public debates between apologetically savvy Jewish believers and traditional rabbis or Jewish community spokespeople? Full-page evangelistic print and broadcast ads with a Jewish theme, in major secular media? Eye-catching billboards with slogans to capture the attention of seeking Jews? Letters to the editor in secular publications that raise the issue of Jews and Jesus? Invitations to holiday events sponsored by the local Messianic congregation or mission agency?

Or perhaps the weekly Messianic congregational service as a place of proclamation? Utilizing stories of Jewish believers from different walks of life in a wide variety of ways? Booths and Chai shops at New Age festivals? Making New Testaments available to Jewish seekers in their mother tongue? Apologetics material on the web? Praying for the salvation of individuals? Delivering holiday baskets to Jewish homes? Chatrooms on the web? Utilizing social networks like MySpace and Facebook? Getting viral with a Jewish gospel message on YouTube? Messianic music concerts? Dramatic presentations? Use of Messianic prophecy to make the



case? The use of end times prophecy to make the case? DVDs shown in private homes that tell the Y'shua story? Lectures by Jewish professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.) that draw out other Jewish professionals? Humanitarian efforts? Living in community with Jews who do not believe, and developing meaningful relationships that lead to decisions for Y'shua? Providing special interfaith programs for Jewish/Gentile couples with an evangelistic edge? Gentile Christians who share their faith with their Jewish friends, college roommates, co-workers, neighbors, and acquaintances? Direct revelation from God? Meeting one-on-one at Starbucks? Radio programs? Television programs? Doing interviews with the press where you strategically look for ways to present the gospel to the listening or viewing audience? Dance ministry? Nursing home ministry? Messianic chalk drawing on the street?

Now I'm sure each of you could offer an anecdote for at least one of the approaches on the list I just rattled off, or from another list you might come up with that could easily use up all our time this morning. But what do these stories really say about effective evangelism among our Jewish people? If we took a vote and came up with the three top approaches to use, would we be accurate? I think not.

Our stories are true, but they are anecdotes. And we all have wonderful, encouraging, inspiring anecdotes that illustrate how some Jewish people have come to faith. There is nothing wrong with anecdotes, but

**There is nothing wrong with anecdotes, but they don't help us to quantify the best or most effective approaches, nor do they provide a magic bullet for effective Jewish evangelism.**

they don't help us to quantify the best or most effective approaches, nor do they provide a magic bullet for effective Jewish evangelism.

I am convinced that in our hearts, most of us believe we know the most effective ways to make Messiah known to our Jewish people. In the same way, we tend to conclude that other meth-

ods are not as effective. But to be honest, all that data out there is mostly old, and not even close to comprehensive. Perhaps the largest study done was over twenty years ago by Jews for Jesus,<sup>1</sup> in which the first 1,014 responses were used as the sample. The most common initial attraction to the gospel cited by Jewish believers was through individuals, and the most common agent directly influencing a spiritual decision was individuals as well.

The breakdown of the figures is as follows:

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Believer Survey, Demographic, Social and Spiritual Profiles of Jews who Believe in Jesus*, a statistical report (Jews for Jesus, August 1983).



## INITIAL ATTRACTION TO THE GOSPEL

Persons	468	46%
Search/Quest/Truth	109	11%
Bible	76	8%
Book/Lit.	60	6%
Supernatural Intervention	62	6%
Group	48	5%
Conviction/Holy Spirit	37	4%
Life Crisis	35	3%
Radio/TV/Movies	25	2%
Curiosity	20	2%
Afterlife/Fear	12	1%
Ideals/Condition of the World	13	1%
No answer	49	5%
	1014	

## AGENT THAT HELPED

Persons	620	61%
Group	180	18%
Conviction/Holy Spirit	30	3%
Book/Lit.	31	3%
Bible	27	2%
Radio/TV/Movies	28	3%
Supernatural Intervention	29	3%
Search/Quest/Truth	11	1%
Life Changes	9	1%
No answer	49	5%
	1014	

Michael Schiffman's 1987 survey of Messianic congregations<sup>2</sup> noted that of 52 congregations that answered the question of what activities have been most successful in making new contacts and in sharing their faith, more than half of the congregations responded with "friendship" or "holiday celebrations."

2 *Return from Exile, The Re-Emergence of the Messianic Congregational Movement*, Michael Schiffman, 137.

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ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE BEEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN  
MAKING NEW CONTACTS AND IN SHARING THEIR FAITH

Friendships	16	31%
Holiday Celebrations	13	25%
Special Activities	9	17%
Advertising	6	12%
Musical Presentations	6	12%
Literature Distribution	2	3%

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OUTREACH METHODS WHICH THE  
CONGREGATION IS MOST COMFORTABLE WITH

(57 responses)

Friendships	17	30%
Holiday celebrations	16	28%
Special Activities	9	16%
Advertising	8	14%
Musical Presentations	6	10%
Literature Distribution	1	2%

Our most recent study was tabulated in 2003, and included the question, "Who most influenced you in coming to faith in Jesus?" Only 660 of the 1183 responses used in the survey answered that question. They answered as follows: 290 said they were influenced by a believing Gentile friend and 42 by a believing Jewish friend; 48 by a parent; 10 by a sibling; 16 by one of their children; 33 by agency; and 221 chose "other." More than fifty percent were influenced by a friend, and most by non-Jewish Christian friends.

I would love to know about other surveys that have been conducted in other countries or among subsets of our people, like Hassidic Jews, postmoderns, or interfaith couples, etc. But I suspect that our market research is just not adequate to draw hard and fast conclusions. I don't think that our agencies or congregations are putting a substantial line item in our budgets for market research; but would we even know the right questions to ask if we did make this a priority? Apart from comprehensive studies, what are we doing to track our own efforts? What congregations are tracking over time those Jewish visitors who are coming to services and becoming believers? What are the responses to direct mailings to Jewish homes, not just the filling out of coupons or calling an 800 number, but actual decisions? How many viable contacts can you get through "cold-calling"? Is it different from neighborhood to neighborhood, city to city, country to country? When a debate is held and there is

a significant unsaved Jewish attendance, what follow-up apparatus is in place to track the attendees, and are we being effective? How effective are surveys? Coffee houses? Certain web sites? And how do we measure what makes these or any other methods effective or not? Some among this group might even say that the questions formulated by the planning committee as a guide to this discussion are not the right ones to ask.

But let's just say that we could figure out a scientific way to let us know which methods are most effective. And then we could perfect those methods of sharing the gospel. What would that mean to you? What if the particular way that proved "most effective" was outside your skill set, or something that just really goes against the grain of your personality? Does that mean that if you want to be effective, you need to fit yourself into the mold required by that method or approach?

While none of us wants to waste our time and resources, as long as our message is Y'shua, I'm not sure that anything we do to tell people about him could be a waste. Well, maybe if we spent all our time stuffing tracts into trash cans, hoping that Jewish garbage men would see them, that could literally be considered a waste.

Yet Y'shua said, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). In context, we see the Y'shua of the crucifixion, the scandalized Y'shua. We can talk about Y'shua the Rabbi, Y'shua the Righteous One, Y'shua the Redeemer, but we must not forget that his name is one of scandal. He is commonly known in Israel as Yeshu, the acronym for *yemach shemo vezichro*, "May his name and memory be obliterated." We must not shy away from the scandalized Y'shua. Our methods can vary, our materials can be nuanced, but our message must be Y'shua. We can give food to the poor and medical services to the sick among our people, but if it's not done in Y'shua's name, we've done a good thing, but we haven't lifted him up. We can beautifully celebrate the Sabbath, but doing so will only have its full meaning when we lift him up as Lord of the Sabbath. We can produce the most clever arguments or eloquent words to answer a point of theological minutia, but if he is not lifted up, we have just drawn attention to ourselves and our abilities.

**We must not shy away from the scandalized Y'shua. Our methods can vary, our materials can be nuanced, but our message must be Y'shua.**

We need to be Y'shua-centered in our message, but sometimes we get too sophisticated for our own good. David Brickner put it this way in a recent newsletter:

"We make things more complicated than they need to be. It is easy to become enamored with our apologetics and our fancy methodologies and forget the power of God. People need to know what the gospel is, not necessarily all the reasons why they should believe it. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment. It is the simple good news of Y'shua's death, burial and resurrection that is the power of God that changes the hearts of those who believe."



Let's stop fooling ourselves into thinking that it is our methods and our strength that convince our Jewish people of the truth of the gospel.

You might think it a mystery that God could use me to win people to himself, and I might be having the same thoughts about you. And we'd both be right. It is a mystery that God uses any of us to win people's hearts to himself. But one thing I've noticed. God seems to like courage and he seems to like humility, and those aren't methods, they are character traits. I'm not sure any of us ought to be satisfied that we've got enough courage or humility, much less both. I know I don't. It took courage and humility for Y'shua to allow himself to be lifted up on that cross, and it takes courage and humility for us to lift him up, to talk about our sin, his sacrifice, and the narrow road he asks his disciples to follow.

So, whatever our approach, are we willing to take the risk of lifting Y'shua up? I don't mean, is each of us ready to tell others to take risks that we believe are appropriate; but, is each of us willing before God to humbly accept whatever risks he may ask of us (not the person sitting next to us) in order that our people might be drawn to Jesus? Do we have enough courage ourselves to be able to pass on some boldness and enthusiasm to others? Do we have enough humility to encourage others when they don't do things the way we would?

Will we encourage one another to lift him up in diverse ways that various ones are suited for, according to our gifts, personalities, and opportunities? Or will we dismiss one another's approach as too old (passé) or too new (if it isn't broke don't fix it), and discourage anyone who doesn't do things the way we think they ought to be done?

Will we be humble enough to see that God reaches hearts in many different ways, and will we be sensitive to his leading? Or will we fool ourselves into thinking it is our methods and our strengths that win people's hearts?

Will we recognize that God is calling people to himself, and he has not dictated to us the way in which we can be used in his plans to reach our people? Or will we be tempted to call people to ourselves and our own way of doing things?

Maybe the best way for us to be effective is to be committed to encouraging each other to keep a wide variety of approaches, but to stick to the unchanging message that "if we confess with our mouth that Y'shua is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved."

## Conclusion

What can we do to enhance cooperation between mission agencies and Messianic congregations when it comes to outreach? We need to begin by believing the best of one another when it comes to wanting to see our people saved. It means strengthening one another in the equipping and training of believers for the task. It means providing cutting-edge materials that we can share. It means financially supporting the work

of evangelism locally and abroad. It means that congregations will send out congregants to the mission field with joy, and mission agencies will rejoice to see Jewish people who come to faith in Y'shua grow in local congregations. It means brainstorming on ways we can do joint outreaches.

And what do we have to offer the next generation when it comes to a vision for reaching out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Hopefully, we have ourselves as an example. We need to be passionate about reaching the lost. We need to see the urgency of the task. We need to be courageous in proclaiming the Good News. We need to be committed to encouraging one another. We need to rejoice in one another's victories and be saddened at our failures. We need to be ready to see the value of using a wide variety of approaches, remembering that if the truth could be spoken by Balaam's ass, God can use even us. If the next generation sees that in us, we will have done well.

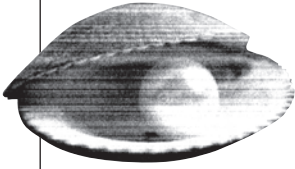
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SALVATION AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



*Presenting the Gospel to the Jewish People:*

# A Communi- cational Perspective

by **Vladimir Pikman**

This is the second time in the last two months that I am to deliver a paper to an audience, most of whom are more experienced in theology and ministry than I am, and all of whom have a settled opinion about my subject. And it is the second time I am going to approach the subject not from a theological, but primarily from a communicational point of view, for two reasons: (1) I think that this subject is extremely important, while not sufficiently considered in contemporary Jewish outreach; and (2) I learned to appreciate it by my life circumstances (in my comparatively short life I have emigrated five times and resided in four different countries/cultures).

Approaching this subject from a communicational standpoint, I assume that I am addressing an audience that consists of people who believe in the Messiah Yeshua, know how good it is to live with him, rely on the future promises concerning all believers in him, and want our Jewish people to experience peace, joy, blessing, and the new eternal life that Yeshua gives to those who believe in him.<sup>1</sup> All this normally produces a strong desire to communicate these truths to others (cf. Acts 2–7).<sup>2</sup>

With this assumption in mind, I want to propose and discuss in this paper the following exhortation for Jewish outreach, namely, “Beginning with appreciation of Yeshua, by the power of the Holy Spirit, genuinely reach out to the Jewish people through word and deeds, with the maximum life involvement possible, in unity!” I will talk about this exhortation one phrase at the time.

## **“Beginning with Appreciation of Yeshua ...”**

It seems that some Jewish believers suffer from an inferiority complex, trying to be accepted by the majority of the Jewish people at any expense and through any compromise. But what we need is healthy pride and

1 Compassion for those who do not believe in Yeshua is a high and beautiful motive for outreach.

2 If this does not describe you, you can disregard this paper, but please talk to those who appreciate Yeshua about their reasons.

overflowing joy in being “Messianic” – people who belong to the Messiah of Israel, the King of all Kings.

### *The Importance of Worship*

It is possible to be distracted from God in trying to serve God. The most crucial issue in evangelism is the centrality of God in our life. Where passion for God is weak, zeal for outreach will be weak. Congregations or individuals that are not centered on the exaltation of the majesty and beauty of God will not likely desire to “declare his glory among the nations” (Ps 96:3).<sup>3</sup>

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.<sup>4</sup> Our delight in him reflects his glory the most. It is also clearly God’s desire that our message and worship concentrate on Yeshua (John 5:22–27; Eph 1:20–23; Phil 2:9–11; 1 Pet 3:22). The one who does not appreciate the magnificence of the Messiah will not be effective in outreach to the Jewish people. Passion for God and his Messiah in personal and communal worship prepares for the offer of God in preaching.

### *The Importance of Emotion*

Our appreciation of Yeshua, our understanding of how good it is to be with him, our joyful commitment to him, being evidently expressed in our life and our words, will provoke others to jealousy and will motivate them to consider finding what we have. And our appreciation cannot be separated from our emotions.

Although much attention is given to the rational content of communication, in fact emotion is the largest part of all human communication.<sup>5</sup> When changes are sought at the deeper levels, communication should be primarily emotive.<sup>6</sup> Therefore it is important to pay attention to what our emotions represent and how.

### *The Importance of Suffering*

Suffering with joy for the sake of the great cause and our heavenly reward demonstrates the importance of our faith. Acceptance by Yeshua is more important than acceptance by our own people, friends, and family (e.g. Matt 10:37–39; Mark 8:35; 10:29–30).

The supremacy of God’s and the Messiah’s glory shines most brightly when the satisfaction that we have in them endures in spite of suffering and pain in the ministry of love.<sup>7</sup> Thus, we need to be ready to suffer in

3 Even outsiders feel the disparity between the boldness of our claim upon the nations and the blandness of our engagement with God. Cf. John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 12.

4 *Ibid.*, 26.

5 Approximately 80 percent of the information load in typical communication is carried through emotion, and 20 percent or less by reason. Both elements are present at the same time in all human communication, in varying degrees in each situation.

6 Donald K. Smith, *Creating Understanding: A Handbook for Christian Communication Across Cultural Landscapes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 300–301.

7 Piper, 112.

our outreach to our Jewish people, following the example of Yeshua, his apostles, and his faithful disciples of all ages (cf. Matt 5:10–12; 10:16–19; Luke 21:12–17; John 15:20–21; 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 11:23–26; Gal 5:11). God, Yeshua, and our people are worthy of it.

### **“... By the Power of the Holy Spirit ...”**

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in the success of Jewish outreach (cf. Matt 10:19–20; John 16:4; 1 Cor 12:3). We can often get very busy with different strategies and methods, but forget about the biblical fact that without God’s Spirit, successful communication of spiritual truth will never take place. Remembering this will help us to rely on God and to use the necessary power of prayer more often.<sup>8</sup>

### **“... Genuinely Reach Out to the Jewish People ...”**

This phrase itself looks familiar and banal. But the word “genuinely,” being uncommon in this phrase, is what I want to discuss.

#### *The Importance of Orientation*

The message that we send is not necessarily the message that will be received. A significant part of the message will be filtered by the sender and then by the receiver. Communication can be psychologically characterized as “what is important is not what you say, but what I hear/feel you say.” To love communicatively is to put yourself, following God’s example, to whatever inconvenience necessary to make sure that the receptors understand your message (“receptor-oriented communication”).<sup>9</sup>

An evangelistic question that is usually asked is, “How are we going to present the gospel to our Jewish people?” This question has “we” in the center. In order to be oriented toward other Jewish people, we should rephrase the question: “How are our Jewish people going to hear the gospel?” It changes our perspective, helping us to be less selfish. In this case we start to better appreciate the ministries of others and stop thinking in terms of only “our” programs and projects. It frees us for partnership with others.<sup>10</sup> It is also important to keep in mind that people have

8 It is important to remember that we are at spiritual war, which requires our alertness, readiness, persistence, and much prayer. Our prayer should not be only “domestic” (for personal problems or the problems of our own community, congregation, family, etc.). Cf. *ibid.*, 43, 45.

9 God shows respect toward his receptors and toward the context in which he finds us. He is receptor-oriented, seeking to reach his receptors by entering their frame of reference and by participating in their life, in order to be maximally intelligible to them. Cf. Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 15.

10 Congregations can be too much centered on “we,” emphasizing the programs, strategies, and what works the best in/for the congregation, instead of focusing on “them,” the people who are still in need of Yeshua.



to be reached not for “us” (our congregation, ministry, etc.) but for the Messiah.

### *The Importance of Genuineness*

Authenticity and integrity are especially needed today. Postmodern people will first test our sincerity before they listen to our message. They first discover attractive things in our life, then join our environment, and afterwards come to believe in Yeshua.<sup>11</sup>

Anti-missionaries often accuse those involved in Jewish evangelism or the Messianic movement of using Jewish symbols, terminology, etc. in order to allure Jewish people. And they seem to be right in many cases. Many training programs in Jewish evangelism are evidences of this (e.g. terminology as a nice-looking “wrapping” of the message, holidays as means of evangelism, etc.). It reminds me of sales-agents’ training, though the “clients” here are different and the motives are godly.

We are accused of hypocrisy, and we give reasons for this accusation by a lack of sincerity and consistency in what we are doing. This strongly damages our testimony and harms our cause. Identification with any nation is not about “playing” traditions, but about living the life of the people. This is especially important for the very sensitive Jewish people.

I believe that the sincerity of our lifestyle strengthens our testimony and advances our Jewish outreach. The “Messianic” lifestyle, in my opinion, should not be practiced in order to “attract” Jewish people, but simply because the “Messianics” consider it to be the right lifestyle for them. If somebody lives like a “Christian,” what is the reason for him to wear a “mask” and “play” Jewish?<sup>12</sup> We have to live according to the way we identify ourselves in the culture we minister in. E.g., if you call yourself a “Jew,” you should live like one in the given culture.

Acceptance depends first of all on honesty and mutuality.<sup>13</sup> Trust is the foundation of a good relationship. It is based on a deep conviction of the

**The “Messianic” lifestyle, in my opinion, should not be practiced in order to “attract” Jewish people, but simply because the “Messianics” consider it to be the right lifestyle for them.**

11 This principle is usually called “belonging before believing.” Cf. Swen Schoenheim, *Unter Offennem Himmel Bauen* (Hamburg: CGE, 2006), 68.

12 I think it is no less glorious to be “Christian” than to be “Messianic.” What was wrong with the term “Hebrew-Christian,” which indicated a Christian with Jewish background? In most cases the mission to the Jews has been designed so that the Jewish people would abandon the essential elements of Jewish life. Indeed, new Jewish believers are told that Shabbat is not necessary and keeping kosher makes life more difficult. And if you do so, it would be right to tell the Jews, “Yes, we want you to live like Christians,” and honestly explain to them why you think this is better for them. I have a friend who is 100% ethnically Jewish but considers himself to be a Christian. We enjoy arguing with each other about whether it is right for him to act this way or not. But regardless of our disagreement I highly respect him for his consistency in life. And, believe it or not, Jewish people respect him and listen to him.

13 Cf. Lianne Roembke, *Multikulturelle Teams* (Giessen: Campus fuer Christus, 2000), 96.



truthfulness, integrity, and reliability of another person. Trustworthiness is the foundation of credibility in any relationship and communication.<sup>14</sup> To be a person of integrity, who humbly tries to understand, love, and accept others, is a worthy goal.

### *The Importance of Respect*

A very common Jewish stereotype is that most Christians are anti-Jewish. The Jews can be suspicious even of those Christians who do good things for them (“they simply want to convert us”). There is an assumption that Christians want to destroy the Jewish people, if not by force then by assimilation.

Any effective outreach requires respect for the culture of the people ministered to. This is very true for Jewish evangelism. It is also important to consider that the Jewish culture is primarily linked to the Law that was given by God to the people. Even in the case of a liberal Jew, the Torah is always important for Jewish identity. Any offense against the Torah can be easily understood as anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish, leading to rejection of the entire message.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, even if a person considers himself “free” from keeping the Law and does not see advantages in keeping it, he is still obliged to respect the Law and those who keep it (this idea is biblically relevant; cf. Rom 2:9–16; 9:1–5).

This assumes adequate respect for the Law in speech, and the absence of sarcasm and jokes regarding the Law and its keepers. It concerns not only Gentiles, whose comments about the Law can be easily interpreted by Jews as anti-Semitic, but also Jewish believers in Yeshua, who are often considered by Jews not to be part of the Jewish nation any more.

### *The Importance of Identification*

In Romans 9:1–5 Paul fully identifies himself with his Jewish people. He calls all Jews (even those who do not believe in Yeshua, and even his opponents) “my brothers.” Unfortunately, in evangelistic zeal, many Jewish believers often divide the Jews into “us” and “them,” setting a border between “us,” the ones who believe in Yeshua, and the rest of the Jews. But for Paul all Jews were his “brothers.” In the whole book of Acts we can see Paul as an evidently Jewish leader, who was considered Jewish by all Jews and Gentiles around him. He not only was not ashamed to be Jewish in his lifestyle, but was always ready to demonstrate it (e.g. Acts 21:20–26; 23:1–6; 25:8). It is remarkable that even when ministering among the Gentiles, Paul was evidently identified as a Jew (cf. Acts 16:19–21). And at the end, Paul still calls even Jews who do not believe in Yeshua his “brothers,” and insists that he has always lived according to the Law and traditions of the fathers (cf. Acts 28:17). From Paul’s writings we cannot derive a commandment to do the same, but I think that Paul

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>15</sup> Torah is considered to be one of the core Jewish beliefs. Challenging core beliefs directly brings rejection of the message and often of the messenger as well.

is a good example to follow, especially due to the recognized fact that identification always greatly helps in communication.

### “... Through Word and Deeds ...”

The gospel has become uncomfortable in postmodern society. This is especially true in regard to the Jewish people, since the natural human tendency is to avoid any opposition and to be at peace with others, being accepted and recognized.<sup>16</sup> It naturally pushes us to retreat from open evangelistic work toward “humanitarian efforts” and “social work” that are well-accepted by others. However, it does not bring desirable results.<sup>17</sup>

Although social ministries are biblically encouraged and important, they are in no way a substitute for proclaiming the King, Yeshua. Evangelism and disciple-making are not social ministries, although charity may well be involved.<sup>18</sup> In “social work” situations, nothing ever happens for God until somebody presents the gospel.<sup>19</sup> The apostles did not turn the world upside-down by social work, they did it by proclaiming the King, Yeshua, and the Word of God (Acts 6:3–4; 20:20–21; 1 Cor 1:17–21; 9:16). Thus, while social work is important, it is not a substitute for the proclamation of the King, Yeshua. However, there is nothing quite so crippling to both evangelism and social action as to confuse them in definition or to separate them in practice.<sup>20</sup> It is recognized today by most of those involved in outreach that balance is needed.<sup>21</sup> But we need more than balance – we need a partnership between the two, while the leading partner is evangelism.<sup>22</sup> This is not to exalt the proclamation at the expense of

16 It has become more common to see Messianic believers rejoice in the fact that Jewish, primarily Israeli, leaders show favor to them due to social or similar programs. I can also feel joy in such cases. But the problem is that in many such cases the favor is shown at the expense of compromising our public testimony of the King, Yeshua.

17 The experience of “social gospel” tendencies world-wide indicates that such attempts bring desirable results neither evangelistically nor socially. They also usually do not grant the expected acceptance and recognition. Cf. K. P. Yohannan, *Come, Let’s Reach the World: Partnership in Church Planting Among the Most Unreached* (Carrollton, TX: GFA Books, 2004), 60–61.

18 Although evangelism is not to be confused with social service and protest against the world’s injustices, in the context of the kingdom the evangelistic proclamation was never so narrow that it became isolated from the immediate pressing needs of the poor, the imprisoned, the blind, and the oppressed. But if there is anything worse than taking the text out of context, it is taking the context without the text. In Yeshua’s and the apostolic ministry they were always combined. Cf. Samuel Hugh Moffett, “Culture, Worldview and Contextualization,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 575.

19 In every type of outreach a believer must have the freedom and time to present the Word of God clearly and openly. Cf. Yohannan, 68.

20 Moffett, 576.

21 Evangelism is best motivated by zeal for the glory of God together with a servant spirit and a heart of mercy for those involved. Otherwise it is either humanism or hypocrisy. Piper, 30.

22 Here the leading partner has definitely to be our “vertical” relationship to God and the Messiah, because it makes our ministry different from all others. Our “horizontal” relationship to our neighbor is indispensable, but is still secondary.



our actions. They belong together. But it does insist that, while without the accompanying deeds the good news is scarcely credible, without the Word the news is not even comprehensible! Besides, the real good news is not what we in our benevolence do for others, but what God has done for us all in Messiah.<sup>23</sup>

### **“... With the Maximum Life Involvement Possible ...”**

After discussing Jewish outreach through word and deeds, we will discuss some communicational considerations.

#### *Some “Myths”*

We will start with some “myths” concerning communication of the gospel.<sup>24</sup>

Myth 1: Hearing the gospel with one’s ears is equivalent to “being reached” with the gospel.

But hearing and intelligent understanding are quite distinct. And unless the hearers are already positive toward the message, deep-level understanding requires persuasion, a kind of communication not easily accomplished via superficial outreaches like preaching, “street-evangelism,” superficial uses of mass media, etc. They can be effective when the receptors already feel a great need for the message that is presented. Otherwise, there is a need for person-to-person, long-term communication of the gospel message.

Myth 2: The words of the Bible are powerful in themselves.

But though God sometimes works through his Word alone, his primary vehicle is still people, who in word and deed interpret that Word (cf. Acts 8:26–39).

Myth 3: Preaching is God’s ordained means of communicating the gospel and initiating life-change.

But it is helpful to remember that today, similar to the apostolic times, the message of the gospel itself remains “foolishness” to the majority of people (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–25). The biblical and contemporary Jewish way of teaching is not a monologue. Yeshua himself much preferred personal, interactional communication that encouraged immediate feedback and, if necessary, adjustment of the message to assure greater relevance. A monologue approach is appropriate in the case of presenting a body of

<sup>23</sup> Moffett, 576.

<sup>24</sup> The first seven “Myths” presented in this paper are adapted from the more extensive list in Kraft, 24–37.

cognitive information in a fairly short period of time for the purpose of increasing knowledge in a given area. But this approach is very poorly suited to either changing people's opinions or leading them to significant life-changes.

Myth 4: There is one best way to communicate the gospel.

But it is commonly recognized that people and situations are so different that no single style will be appropriate for all people in all situations. Adaptability is what is needed.

Myth 5: The precise formulation of the message is the key to effective communication.

But it is the receptor who has the final say concerning what is communicated.<sup>25</sup> It is important to use ordinary, highly communicative language to convey spiritual truth. In message construction personal factors are more important than impersonal, structural, and linguistic factors. It is also important to remember that a given word can have different meanings for different people and that the nature of the medium modifies the total impact.<sup>26</sup>

Myth 6: What people really need to believe in Yeshua is more information.

We can tend to think that, e.g., if we will explain the messianic prophecies or qualitatively answer all "Jewish objections," people will immediately believe in Yeshua. But the reality is that many "informed" people do not believe, or even abandon their faith. The crucial problem is mostly motivation, not lack of knowledge. We are to stimulate people to respond to the God they probably already have enough information about.

Myth 7: The Holy Spirit will make up for all mistakes if we are sincere, spiritual, and prayerful enough.

He definitely can. But this does not give us a mandate for mistakes or passivity.

Myth 8: Contemporary mass media provides a "magic" opportunity to reach all people.

Indeed, the mass media can multiply an effective message or messenger

<sup>25</sup> We need to be constantly conscious of and oriented toward the impression our messages make on their receptors. We should study the Bible from a communicational point of view because sometimes we tend to be overformal in our communication of the gospel.

<sup>26</sup> Message received = Content + Medium. Cf. Smith, 103.

in interpersonal communication. However, it is able to use fewer of the signal systems than do “face to face” interpersonal relationships. It leads to the loss of information. Also it appears impersonal and reduces the desire for involvement, while reaching only those who have commonality with the sender.<sup>27</sup> It works better in strengthening existing belief than leading people to Yeshua. There is definitely no magic in media.<sup>28</sup> We need to make sure media outreaches do not become a substitute for personal participation, because adequate gospel communication strategy must use both interpersonal and media methods, supplementing each other.

### *The Importance of “Life Involvement”*

It is recognized that a monologue approach is appropriate for public communication to sizable groups. With small groups a dialogue or discussion approach is usually the most satisfactory. As a means of influencing the total behavior of receptors, however, there is no substitute for life involvement. This method takes much more time to cover a given amount of information, but it is covered at a deeper level of understanding and application. Although Yeshua had to turn to monologue when he had something to say to a larger group (cf. Matt 5–7; 23), life involvement was his preferred method and the monologue was a last resort.<sup>29</sup>

Communication is a relationship. The closer the relationship, the better the communication. Indeed, without constantly increasing commonality in interests and experience, there cannot be an increase in understanding. When we know the recipients’ needs, we can find ways to communicate to them that Yeshua is the answer to their particular needs. And vice versa, no matter how valuable the message, no matter how much it is needed, it will not even be “heard” if the message does not seem to meet any felt needs.<sup>30</sup> Close relationship happens through life involvement. To separate an act of “communication” from a continuing involvement between equal participants is to reduce communication to a babble of symbols with uncertain meaning. Effective communication that leads to deep comprehension and response occurs only through involvement in each other’s life and interests. Thus, without involvement, the most skilled use of media and techniques may be only an imitation of communication.<sup>31</sup>

Communication is a process. A particular conversation, sermon, song, or drama never stands by itself. There is no solitary act of communica-

27 The larger the audience, the greater the diversity of interest and cultural patterns existing within that audience. Communication effectiveness normally decreases with increasing audience size. Therefore, mass communication (e.g. far-reaching media), while speaking to many people, in reality reaches only those who have commonality with the sender. In many cases “localized” media, being directed to a particular group, can be far more effective, reaching many more people.

28 Smith, 179.

29 For further discussion see Kraft, 60–66.

30 Smith, 276.

31 *Ibid.*, 39–40.

tion. It is a process without clear beginning or ending. Effective communication requires awareness of the past, present, and future dimensions for all involved in communicating.<sup>32</sup> That is possible through involvement.

Usually, the communicator chooses both content and communicative style based on his or her ideas about the audience. Thus, a step in improving communication is to gain a more accurate understanding of the audience. Good communication requires the ability to hear as well as the ability to speak. That is best made possible through life involvement.

Humans are social beings. Change in an individual produces reaction in his social group. This creates an opportunity for us to reach the whole group by reaching just one individual. And vice versa, the group can be the channel for changing the individual. In order to use these opportunities, when talking to an individual we need to keep in mind his group, sending the appropriate message to it. In any case, the group must be involved if an effective communication strategy is to be developed. Jewish people are traditionally a people of community, and tend to live in "networks." Entering these networks, with the possibilities of give-and-take that shape the form of the message, enables us to be effective participating "evangelists." This also works best through life involvement.

Thus, no techniques, no standard methods, can replace real life involvement with the Jewish people. It is the most difficult and slow, but the most genuine, godly, biblical, human, and effective way of outreach. By the way, home and small groups can also help here.<sup>33</sup>

### *The Importance of Christian Friends*

Some Messianic leaders underestimate the importance of Christians in Jewish outreach. But, interestingly, I know more orthodox and liberal Jews who came to Yeshua through the testimony of their Christian friends and in Christian churches than through Jewish missions and Messianic congregations. Christians can play a crucial role in reaching Jewish people for Yeshua if they will properly use their life involvement with their Jewish friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc. They can do this with great effectiveness as friends – an opportunity that we could never have otherwise. And we need to motivate and train them to do so.<sup>34</sup> This means that we should go to churches and Christians not primarily to raise support of

32 Ibid., 49.

33 Home and small groups are good in providing a life-involvement atmosphere. They are also effective and time-tested outreach opportunities. They can provide us with all possible ways of outreach and community that are working today. It is better, though, for the groups not to stay alone, but to be joined in a network of an existing congregation. For further discussion see Schoenheit, 70–77.

34 This surely includes the necessity to teach "Messianics" to do the same.

any kind, but with the primary goal of raising proper life involvement “evangelists.”<sup>35</sup>

### “... In Unity!”

Last but not least: according to Yeshua, the unity of believers is a necessary condition for successful outreach (cf. John 17:21–23). Therefore it is essential for all of us to cross the boundaries of our personal convictions and put aside all possible disagreements in order to make our outreach to the Jewish people more effective. It is important internally for organizations and congregations, and for the external relationships between them. Regardless of our attitude to the Law, Jewish lifestyle, preferred types of outreach, etc., we should remember that the commandments about love and unity have always been the most important (cf. Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:12, 25–27; 13:1–3; 1 Pet 4:8; Phil 1:27; 2:1–4).<sup>36</sup> Are you not tired of conflicts? I believe God is. We must stop harming our testimony with public conflicts and offensive disagreements.

Additionally, our Jewish audience does not notice the variety in the Messianic movement and Jewish missions. They consider us all to be one and the same. Therefore, in outreach, we are responsible for each other. If one of us commits a mistake, we all will be blamed. Thus, we have to think in terms of “each other.”

### Conclusion

You can disagree with some of my ideas in this paper, or consider them banal, but please do not stop learning and changing.<sup>37</sup> If you have been involved in outreach for many years, you are in danger of being caught in the traditional ways that used to work for you and others in the past, but are not effective or proper in the present. Do not be afraid to change your ministry strategy or paradigm. Usually, the longer a ministry or a congregation remains unchanged, the more difficult it is to accept any change and the higher is the probability of “dying.”

Some may ask why I have not mentioned Messianic congregations. The reason is simple: while believing in the necessity of Messianic congregations and being involved in five congregational plantings in the last 14 years, I do not see them as a “way” of Jewish outreach but as the bibli-

35 Unfortunately, in my view, although we are usually glad to come to speak to Christians, the message that is spoken is primarily to edify the believers through the recognition of their Jewish roots. It is very suitable for making Christians excited and raising necessary ministry support, but it is not what should be our first priority if we care about our Jewish people.

36 Meanwhile, some Jewish believers still consider Torah-observant believers as misguided and talk lightly about them, and vice versa.

37 I would recommend learning more about intercultural communication and methods of communication, attending some classes or courses in communication, and using the information you acquire to examine and critique the methods and ways you have used to communicate the gospel.



cal and functional form and expression of Messianic communal life. Biblical congregations are not an “outreach” in themselves; instead, they do outreach as communities of people who highly appreciate Yeshua, whose life is a good genuine testimony, and who can clearly proclaim their faith in their words.

To conclude this paper I want to repeat my key exhortation for Jewish outreach, stated at the beginning and discussed one phrase at a time: “Beginning with appreciation of Yeshua, by the power of the Holy Spirit, genuinely reach out to the Jewish people through word and deeds, with the maximum life involvement possible, in unity!”

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BOOK REVIEWS



# Recent Books Relevant for Jewish Mission

by Rich Robinson

## Contextualization in the New Testament

Not specifically about Jewish missions, but of tremendous value for Jewish or any missiological thinking. Focusing on the specific cultural and social contexts of particular New Testament passages, Fleming seeks to uncover principles of contextualizing the gospel message. Throughout, his perspectives bear on issues in Jewish evangelism. One instance: as we debate coming as “insiders” or “outsiders” to the Jewish community, Fleming remarks that “Jesus our example was an insider who never relinquished his outside status ... We will see that this tension between ‘at-homeness’ and prophetic transformation is the consistent pattern of biblical contextualization” (p. 23). Sure to stimulate discussion.

Dean Fleming. *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005. 344 pages.

## The Golems of Gotham

This fictional novel by the New York City-based writer is in the post-Holocaust genre. The story is that of a young girl who conjures up the ghosts of her grandparents along with (and rather inadvertently) the shades of several real-life Holocaust writers, all of whom were survivors but ultimately committed suicide. Not as morbid as it sounds, the novel is frequently whimsical (particularly as the “golems” – or ghosts – wreak havoc in New York City), though too often uses its characters as vehicles for didactic speech. Fiction can be a great way to enter the mindset of a community; this book is a case in point that the Holocaust is still being processed, even by younger authors.

Thane Rosenbaum. *The Golems of Gotham: A Novel*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002. 367 pages.

## A Rabbi Looks at Jesus' Parables

Frank Stern, a retired rabbi from southern California, weighs in on the Jewish conversation about Jesus. The presentation of a Jewish background for the parables provides this book's talking points. In discussing the parable of the sower, for instance, Stern digresses to fill in the rabbinic background on Satan and the Evil Inclination. The parable of the eight talents is highlighted with an explanation of rabbinic practices regarding property entrusted to a person. Of course, invoking the Jewish background does not necessarily mean that Stern's interpretations of the parables are all correct, and it's not a given that the rabbinic background he cites was actually applicable in the first century. Still, it sets Jesus firmly in his Jewish milieu. His purpose, as he states on the last page, is to bridge the gap between Jews and Christians by underscoring the Jewishness of Jesus. As far as I can see, he does not address Jesus' messiahship or the claims he made for himself. This book is part of a large volume of literature that has moved from the *differences* between Judaism and Christianity (think a previous generation's *Where Judaism Differed*, by Abba Hillel Silver) to their *similarities* and shared milieu.

Frank Stern. *A Rabbi Looks at Jesus' Parables*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. 293 pages.

## Two Nations in Your Womb

Yuval is professor of Jewish History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This book, translated from the Hebrew, focuses on the Judaism of medieval times. Quite wide-ranging, it moves from Passover to Jewish martyrdom in the First Crusade (1096 CE) to the blood libel charges. One of Yuval's key points is that when we find similarities between Judaism and Christianity, it most likely indicates that the Christian faith has influenced the Jewish faith, rather than vice-versa. Such a similarity reflects, first, a close connection between (Ashkenazi) Jewry and its Christian environment, contrary to the usual assumptions, and second, a way for Judaism to assert its self-image vis-à-vis Christianity, through counter-rituals that provided counter-stories. The accounts of Jews who killed their own children to prevent their conversion to Christianity, deeming this an act of "kid-dush ha-Shem," will surely stimulate conversation on the place of martyrdom, human sacrifice, and atonement in Judaism. A provocative and fascinating read.

Israel Jacob Yuval. *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. 313 pages.

## Jesus and Archaeology

In the summer of 2000 – when the peace process was still very much alive and prominent people were gathering at Camp David – other notable people gathered in Jerusalem for a millennium conference on Jesus and archaeology on the initiative of James H. Charlesworth.

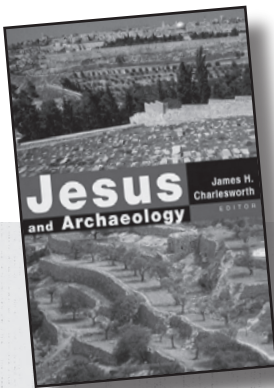
Six years later, Charlesworth was able to present some 30 papers from the conference in the 700+ page volume *Jesus and Archaeology*, featuring, just to mention a few, Avraham Biran, Sean Freyne, James Dunn, Dan Bahat, Bargil Pixner, and Craig Evans.

The papers included range from general articles on the Historical Jesus to specialized articles on the theater in Sepphoris, Qana, Bethsaida, Tabor, Samaria, and more. Some of the articles serve as introductions to their topics, while others are more (if not highly) specialized.

What I appreciate about this volume is that it underlines just how important archaeology has become in our efforts to understand the world of Jesus. While many tourists are rightfully thrilled by visiting some of the more outstanding excavations – for example, of structures built by Herod the Great – this is only the tip of the iceberg. Each year, archaeological digs increase our knowledge of life in ancient Israel.

*Jesus and Archaeology* provides us with a vivid background on which to understand Jesus and his followers – and a point from whence we can reinterpret his message for our own time, now with knowledge of some of the historical, cultural, economic, and sociological factors which history had long covered up.

*Morten Hørning Jensen*



## Jesus and Archaeology

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH  
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