



JEWISH EVANGELISM



MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

ISSUE 42 / 2005

General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen

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email: mishkan@caspari.com

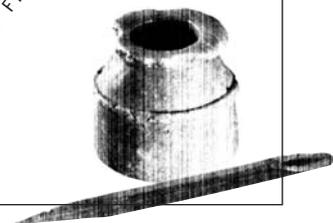
Mishkan is a semi-annual journal dedicated to biblical and theological thinking on issues related to Jewish Evangelism, Hebrew-Christian/Messianic-Jewish identity, and Jewish-Christian relations.

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

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



Much is at Stake

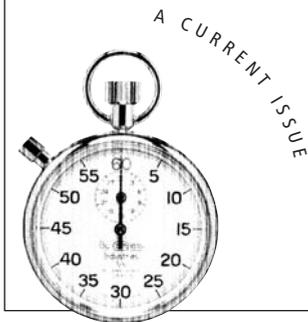
By Kai Kjær-Hansen

"Jewish evangelism is happening today but is under severe attack." These words are taken from the report *Jewish Evangelism: A Call to the Church* – a report which maintains that it is "apparent that some of the major obstacles to Jewish evangelism today come not from outside the church, but from within it." The report is the combined effort of the seven-member team that referred to itself as the Jewish Evangelism Working Session (JEWS) at the *2004 Forum for World Evangelization* that took place in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29–October 5, 2004. By the time this *Mishkan* is published, that report should be available (at least) electronically via the internet.

Contrary to most other statements, which continue to be produced regularly, on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity or the synagogue and the church, this report sounds a clear and unquestionable "yes" to Jewish evangelism. Sadly, this "yes" expresses a very "politically incorrect" viewpoint to many in the ongoing dialogue between Jews and Christians as well as among Christians working with the relationship of the church to the Jewish people.

The report summarizes what is at stake theologically and missiologically in the following words: *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.* One could wish that Christians who have difficulties expressing a clear "yes" to Jewish evangelism would reconsider their standpoint and what is at stake in light of these words.

In this issue of *Mishkan* we take a closer look at Forum 2004 and the question of Jewish evangelism.



Fooling Ourselves

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

It is one thing to be fooled by others; it is quite another to fool ourselves. When others fool us, it can be attributed to their genius and our lack thereof, perhaps combined with some wishful thinking, simple-mindedness or naiveté. When we fool ourselves and others we must accept responsibility.

Since the 1980s one of the great treasures at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem has been a thumb-sized ivory pomegranate with the inscription, "Belonging to the temple of the Lord, holy to the priests." It is the only relic from Solomon's Temple in the museum's collection.

However, at the end of 2004, the Israel Museum announced that after a renewed investigation it was found that the inscription was added in modern times, while the pomegranate itself should be dated to the Bronze Age and is about 3400 years old.

Shortly after the New Year the Israeli police filed charges against five people for being behind advanced false archaeological "discoveries" and for having performed such acts for the last quarter of a century.

Among the five people is antiquities dealer Oded Golan, who became famous in 2002 for being in possession of the so-called James ossuary with the inscription "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." Among some archaeologists this was regarded as the oldest proof that Jesus had lived. Many Bible-believing Christians rejoiced.

Israel's Antiquities Authority still recognizes that the limestone box is about 2000 years old. But the inscription is a recent forgery. If this is true the forgery was done by an expert and good enough to fool respected archaeologists. Many fear that this is merely the tip of the iceberg.

It makes one wonder if mission – including Jewish mission – is exempt from forgery and fakes. How much of what is said was once true but became false because of a recent addition? At an international conference on Jewish mission in Leipzig, Germany in 1895, Professor H.L. Strack found it necessary to point out that conversion stories ought to stick to the absolute historical truth.

This is true as well for one's own conversion story, which – as the years go by – seems to become longer and longer and consequently stand in danger of gaining false additions.

It is no less true regarding reports written about our own success and the number of people that have come to faith. The matter has been spelled out – with sharp sarcasm - by H. Lhotzky, F. Delitzsch's former private secretary, in connection with a reference made to the work of Joseph Rabinowitz. It is historically overstated, but still deserves our reflection:

Oh, those wretched mission reports ... Mission needs reports and money. Anyone who does not write reports cannot gather in money; anyone who does not gather in money cannot carry on mission. One may work in mission without spirit, but not without money.

The Israel Museum bought the above-mentioned ivory pomegranate in the 1980s for the considerable amount of 550,000 US dollars. Rather than forget the unpleasant forgery the museum has decided to continue to display it. On the museum's web page one can read that the museum believes it is important for the public to understand the process of authentication, and the techniques involved. "The pomegranate will be shown in the archaeology section as an example of this ongoing process."

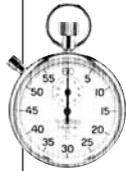
In Jewish mission as well as in all other mission we should learn from this. When we realize that we have been fooled we should not sweep it under the carpet but rather activate the alarm.

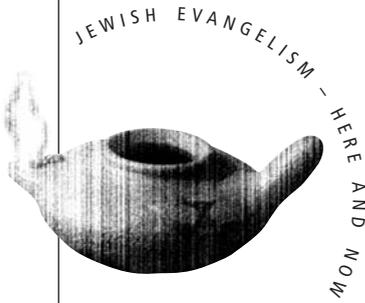
A good example to be followed was given by Moishe Rosen at the LCJE Seventh International Conference in Helsinki 2003. Rosen's words speak for themselves:

I read many of the missionary magazines and hear glowing reports and witnessing encounters that thrill my soul. David Barrett in the World Christian Encyclopedia tells us there are 300,000 Messianic Jews and I want to stand up and cheer. We seem to have great reason to be encouraged.

But when I go about seeking those Jews who have come to faith in Christ; when I look for them I don't find them and I'm sure the reason I don't find them is because they are not there. At least not in the huge numbers we are given. I feel like a party pooper or like I am making rain on the Messianic Parade. I want them to be there, I want the glowing stories to be true. I need to believe that the cause to which I have devoted my life is worthwhile.

I let myself be fooled for years believing that there were tens of thousands of Russian Jews who came to faith in Y'shua. I have no less rejoicing that it is only a couple of thousand. Nevertheless many who were reported as coming to Christ just didn't make it and are not even on the way to being saved. Most of the reports of Russian Jews being saved were exaggerated and tragically, some were entirely false. Just knowing about the exaggeration and that it is accepted as being true by my colleagues in Jewish missions makes me feel like a failure by belonging to a profession that needs these exaggerations. I am ashamed of us.





World Evangelization and Jewish Evangelization

By **Susan Perlman**

Forum 2004 can be best understood and appreciated from within the historic context of the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization. The conferences, consultations and congresses leading up to this recent gathering have meant a lot to those of us who were involved. For those who have become involved more recently, I hope that you will find it meaningful to see how we've gotten where we are today.

The Lausanne Movement came into being because of a need to put evangelism on the front burner of the church. The last major evangelical congress with that goal in mind happened back in 1910 in Edinburgh. It was about time. In 1966, Billy Graham convened the World Congress of Evangelism. Delegates numbering 1200 from 100 countries met in Berlin under the theme, "One Race, One Gospel, One Task." They formed networks to pursue the goal of world evangelism. Subsequent to this global meeting, regional congresses met in Singapore, Minneapolis, Bogota and Amsterdam.

Eight years after Berlin, the leaders regrouped to form a working congress in which the participants could articulate the strategy and theology of world evangelization. The theme for the International Congress on World Evangelization was "Let Earth Hear His Voice." This time 2700 participants from 150 countries took part, including thought leaders, practitioners, strategists, missiologists, theologians, pastors and missionaries. Press and other guests increased the number of those who came to Lausanne, Switzerland for this historic event to 4000.

Jack Dain, the chairman of the Lausanne Congress, described the landmark importance of the '74 Congress: "Lausanne is a Congress on evangelization, not a Congress on evangelism ... we need not only to think of evangelism, that is the proclamation of the Gospel, but the whole task given us by the risen Christ. This ... is called evangelization."

And indeed, the Congress not only reflected on proclamation evangelism but on the fuller meaning of what is involved in making disciples.

Everyone who participated was influenced. Jewish believers in Jesus such as Victor Smadja, Baruch Maoz and Menahem and Haya Ben Hayim played a role. Tuvya Zaretsky, the current president of LCJE, attended as a young missionary with Jews for Jesus. He reflected on that experience:

One of the key impressions that the congress left with me was how active God has been quietly in so many different parts of the world. For example, we heard about the massive number of Koreans who were coming to faith, we were just catching on to the resurgence of the gospel in parts of India and the news that central Africa was becoming Christianized and needing to address opposition from Muslims. As a Jewish believer, it was exciting to see the unique way the gospel was penetrating into non-western cultures. To hear from Indian Christians who were not willing to adopt western dress as part of their new found faith. The legitimacy of indigenous believers remaining in their culture was a great encouragement to those of us in Jewish evangelism.

Also coming out of Lausanne '74 was the Lausanne Covenant, drafted by a committee of theologians and missiologists headed up by John Stott. This statement gave theological teeth to the call to evangelize the world. It has been adopted by evangelicals world-wide, and is the basis of fellowship and joint efforts to bring the good news to those who are hurting.

The Lausanne Congress also served to establish a world-wide committee of Christian leaders who worked to foster the necessary cooperation and understanding to facilitate evangelization. Several Jewish believers have served on this committee over the years. Menahem Ben Hayim and later Judy Pex participated as Middle East representatives. I served for a number of years from North America.

The spirit of Lausanne has been observed in many ways: organizations and churches have worked together so that the earth would indeed hear his voice. Yes, much evangelism has been sparked because of Lausanne's influence. The Chinese Congress on World Evangelization (CCOWE) was formed in 1976. The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) came into existence in 1980. The Consultation of Evangelicals in Latin America (CONELA), which convened in 1982, got its impetus from Lausanne as well. A myriad of prayer networks, younger leader groups and others can trace their roots back to Lausanne.

But perhaps the most significant international consultation sponsored by Lausanne was the one that took place in Pattaya, Thailand in 1980. Six hundred and fifty participants from 87 countries met in 17 mini-consultation groups to hammer out occasional papers that would address cutting edge issues such as reaching the unreached, including the urban poor, Muslims, nominal Christians, Jews, African Traditional Religionists, Marxists, etc. The urban track was an impetus for looking at cities in a new way and focusing resources there. And the Jewish track gave birth to an umbrella organization for Jewish missions that didn't exist at that time. The LCJE network has continued for 25 years so far.

For the next nine years, LCJE met more often than any other working group of Lausanne. We organized regionally and internationally in both '83 and '87. And when the next global conference of Lausanne was set, the Second International Congress on World Evangelization, in Manila



in the Philippines in July of 1989, LCJE had a meeting within the larger meeting.

Two themes ran through the Congress: “Proclaiming Christ until He Comes” and “Calling the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World.” More than 3000 participants from 170 countries took part and produced the Manila Manifesto, which included a powerful statement for those of us in the field of Jewish Evangelism:

It is sometimes held that in virtue of God’s covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ, to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to “the Jew first ...”. We therefore reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary.

Between 1989 and Forum 2004, Lausanne continued to contribute to world evangelization on a regional level and through groups like LCJE who continued to meet internationally every four years. Other international movements like AD2000 moved forward with momentum.

So why another congress? “We don’t need another global meeting only for networking and inspiration as important as that has been,” emphasized Dr. Roger Parrott, chair of the 2004 Forum. He went on to say:

But the Lausanne movement has the integrity to call together the broadest group of Church leaders around the theological foundation of the Lausanne Covenant. And LCWE does speak with authority on issues of evangelism and mission ... The global political and cultural scene has shifted enough that now is a critical time for us to develop strategies for addressing the most critical roadblocks to effective evangelism.

The planners felt this could best be done in working groups that involved leaders with expertise in the subject areas. In addition to a convenor who would coordinate the work of the group, there would be a co-convenor, a theologian and a facilitator.

In line with Lausanne’s mission of “the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world,” 31 issues were identified that fell into these three categories (the church, the gospel, the world). This comprehensive worldwide research effort was headed by Dr. Peter Brierley of Christian Research (United Kingdom). The issues included:

- Globalization
- The Uniqueness of Christ in a Postmodern World
- The Persecuted Church
- Holistic Mission

- Hidden and Forgotten People and Those Who've Never Heard the Name of Jesus
- The Impact on Global Mission of Religious Nationalism and 9/11 Realities

Author info:

Susan Perlman has been on staff with Jews for Jesus for 31 years. Her involvement in Lausanne includes being a member of the full committee and 18 years on the international coordinating committee of the LCJE.
SuperSu1@aol.com

According to the Lausanne planning team, "Issue groups have worked to define their issue, conduct research, collect information on ministries engaging the issue and then prepare an implementation action plan for the church to address the concern."

The Issue Groups met online and through correspondence for several months preceding the conference and finally met in person at Pattaya, Thailand from September 29–October 5. More than 1500 participants from 130 countries took part in 31 simultaneous Issue Groups. A Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) of approximately 25,000 words would be produced by each group. That material would be promoted by Lausanne to encourage world Christian leaders to implement their findings over the next two years for their ministries and denominations.

Truth be told, some of these issue groups functioned more effectively than others. The resulting papers will probably be somewhat uneven or inconsistent in quality and in the contribution they will make to world evangelization. On the positive side, clearly many of the participants were enthusiastic to meet the challenges to world evangelization. Many were eager to share their findings with others. Many had not had a "Lausanne experience" before and were excited about the possibilities. And I was encouraged to see a new generation of leaders birthed at this conference. Expect to see a younger leader's conference convene in the next few years.

What effect will it have on Jewish evangelism? Time will tell. Issue Group 31 – Jewish Evangelism Working Session (JEWS) was the last group to be formed. That is most likely why it was also the smallest in size, with seven participants. The lesson here is that we must not presume that the importance of Jewish evangelism will always be apparent to the larger body of Christian leadership. It is up to all of us to keep the need of Jewish people to hear the gospel before Christian world leaders. We are a minority of minorities, easily forgotten, set aside or even crowded out by more vocal groups if we do not speak up. However, the LCWE is responsive when we make our concerns known – and in fact the coordinators were most gracious to give me a five-minute slot in the plenary to speak on behalf of Jewish evangelism. Clearly, there was not enough time for each group to have this slot, so we should all be encouraged that we had that opportunity. As for our paper, which is now in the hands of the Lausanne Committee for publication, do see Richard Harvey's article in this issue of *Mishkan* for more details.





From Pattaya (1980) to Pattaya (2004)

***A New Vision, a New Heart, and
a Renewed Call to Jewish Evangelism***

By **Richard Harvey**

In 1980 the *Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism* (LCJE) came into being in Pattaya, Thailand. Its first meetings took place as part of the *Consultation on World Evangelization* (COWE) sponsored by the *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization* (LCWE). The LCJE began its task of alerting, informing and motivating the Church to Jewish evangelism with the production of *Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 7* (LOP 7) on "Christian Witness to the Jewish People."¹ This document has had a seminal influence on the understanding and practice of Jewish evangelism in recent years.

Twenty-four years later, seven LCJE members were again in Pattaya to serve on Issue Group #31 ("Reaching Jews with the Gospel") at the LCWE Forum 2004. Three of the 2004 group had attended the 1980 consultation: the Convenor, Dr. Kai Kjær-Hansen (Denmark); Theological Consultant, Bishop Ole Chr. Kvarme (Norway); and Susan Perlman (USA). Also present were Facilitator, Bodil Skjøtt, (Denmark); Editor, Tuvya Zaretsky (USA), Richard Harvey (UK) and Theresa Newell (USA).²

The 2004 Issue Group 31, renamed as the "Jewish Evangelism Working Session" (JEWS) set itself the task of producing a similar, but updated booklet, of some 25,000 words, looking again at the needs and challenges of Jewish evangelism. The document it produced, "Jewish Evangelism: a Call to the Church" focuses on the issues facing present-day Jewish evangelism as understood by some of its practitioners and advocates. While it does not claim to be an authoritative statement, and the participants in the Jewish Evangelism Working Session ("JEWS") speak only as members of the LCJE rather than as its official representatives, the report seeks to give an accurate representation of the situation, and an effective exhortation to the task, of sharing the Good News of the Messiah with

1 This paper is available on the LCJE (www.lcje.net) and LCWE websites (<http://www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/LOP/lop07.htm>).

2 Other LCJE members were also present at the Forum, including some who had attended the 1980 consultation. See Theresa Newell, 'Pattaya 2004: A New Vision, A New Heart, and A Renewed Call' in *LCJE Bulletin*, Issue No. 78 (November 2004), 5-9 and other articles in this issue of *Mishkan* for full reports.

the Jewish people today. Hopefully it will take its place in the long line of statements on Jewish evangelism that have emerged from the LCJE and its forerunners, helping to fulfil the Great Commission and the mission statement of LCWE of “mobilizing the whole church to bring the whole Gospel to the whole world.”

The Aims of the Report

Kai Kjær-Hansen, convenor of the group, expressed the aims of the document as follows:³

- In the booklet we will be speaking to the church on the necessity of Jewish evangelism. We will do this for the sake of the church, for the sake of the Jewish people, and in a special way for the sake of Jewish believers.
- We will seek to address the topic theologically including a rebuttal of the destructive two-covenant theology and also with a critique of a similar evangelical “replacement” theology where the gospel is replaced by charity and political support for the State of Israel.
- In a descriptive part our aim is to give an overview of present-day Judaism with a brief presentation of the different trends within Judaism today. It will also include an overview of Jewish evangelism worldwide and a paragraph describing Jewish opposition to Jewish evangelism.
- Following that we will discuss the theological and ecclesiological issues being discussed among Jesus-believing Jews themselves.
- Finally we will look at methodology and strategy for the future work of Jewish evangelism.
- Our aim is to include a few appendices with a bibliography and a brief survey of the history of LCJE.
- We hope through this to make it clear also to the church that if Jesus is not Messiah for Jews, He is not Christ for the nations. It is our firm conviction that by speaking clearly and firmly on the need to share the gospel with the Jewish people we will be doing world evangelism a theological favour. What we are saying is that when the people that is closest to the living God need Jesus, then everybody else needs him, too.

Theresa Newell expressed the aims of the group thus:

In writing our paper, we asked ourselves: What scriptural mandates are there to the Church at large about the Jewish people and their need to hear the Gospel? How could we speak through this report in a tone which reflected God’s love toward His people and not just



3 <http://www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/2004/issues/issues31.htm>

theological “facts”? How could we address the errant theologies of the day that say that the Jews do not need Jesus to be saved? How could we best make it clear to the whole Church that *If Jesus is not the Messiah for the Jewish people he is not Christ for the nations?*⁴

The process of producing such a document provided a master-class in Jewish evangelism. Discussing and critiquing the draft papers produced before the group met, and the revised drafts presented throughout the week, was an education in itself, both in aspects of Jewish evangelism as understood by some of its experts, and in the complex craft of writing by committee. For this participant at least it was memorable in personal, professional and spiritual terms. Below follows a brief commentary on some of the main topics discussed in the booklet.

God’s Covenant with the Jewish People and Jewish Evangelism

Taking its theme from the conference motto, the booklet calls for “a new heart, a new vision and a renewed call” to Jewish evangelism, reminding the church of the message and maxim of Romans 1:16, beloved in Jewish ministry, that we are “not ashamed of the Gospel.” This historic, theological and missiological priority of Jewish evangelism still stands today, despite changing contexts of globalisation, pluralism and postmodernity, for “*If Jesus is not the Messiah for the Jewish people then neither is He the Christ for the nations.*”⁵

Those who oppose Jewish evangelism are “out of step with the biblical understanding of mission” because Christianity itself began as a Jewish phenomenon. “According to their understanding *the place* of revelation was the land of the Jews, *the source* of revelation was the God of Israel, *the first recipients* of revelation were the Jews and *the main character* of revelation was the Jew Jesus.”⁶ It was only as salvation came to Israel through Jesus that Good News could also be made available to the Nations and “if we lose sight of the first recipients of the gospel its significance is diminished for all peoples.”⁷ Yet since the Holocaust, Jewish-Christian dialogue has often renounced the uniqueness of Jesus and the need for Jewish people to come to know him as Messiah. This has served to delegitimize Jewish evangelism in the eyes of many.

This is not to deny that Jewish-Christian dialogue has brought many benefits, such as a willingness to see the establishment of the State of Israel as a sign of God’s faithfulness towards his Jewish people and a renunciation of Marcionism that separates the understanding of the New

4 Newell 2004, 7.

5 LOP 31, 6. Page references are taken from the pre-publication format of the booklet. These may differ from the published version which will be available Spring 2005.

6 LOP 31, 7.

7 LOP 31, 7.



Testament from its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. It has contributed to mutual understanding between Jews and Christians, and challenged the church to eradicate anti-Judaism in Christian thought. It has stressed the permanent election of Israel and God's enduring covenant with His people, denouncing the supersessionist view that the church is the new Israel or has replaced Israel in God's history of salvation. But these positive gains are severely compromised by a failure to advocate the need for all, Israel and the nations alike, to know the Messiah. "Those who insist otherwise not only oversimplify theologically, but undermine the very essence of the new covenant."⁸

The booklet has in mind here recent statements such as *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*.⁹ Here a sophisticated position is argued for, based on Franz Rosenzweig's earlier formulation of a two-covenant theology, and a willingness to maintain contradictory truth-claims about the uniqueness of Jesus in salvation history. While the renunciation of supersessionism is to be welcomed, this should not be at the expense of the Messiahship of Jesus, and the booklet alerts the church to these concerns.¹⁰ For the sake of Jewish people and Jewish believers in Jesus, for the benefit of the church, world evangelism and for the glory of God, "the church must consider these matters and again endorse and commit itself to Jewish evangelism"¹¹

"Jesus is not an irrelevant Jew nor is He a Jewish irrelevance. If He is not Messiah for Israel, then He is not Christ for the nations. *Jesus is either the Messiah for all, or He is not the Messiah at all.*"¹²

Jewish Evangelism and the Jewish World Today

The second part of the booklet surveys the world's Jewish communities, the demographic factors that affect them, and reports on the activity of Jewish evangelism in some representative locations. It concludes with a section on Jewish opposition to evangelism.

8 LOP 31, 8.

9 *Dabru Emet*, (September 2000). Online: www.jcrelations.net Books sympathetic to Dabru Emet include (1) Tikva Frymer-Kensky, David Novak, Peter Ochs, David Fox Sandmel and Michael Signer (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, (Boulder, Colorado/Oxford: Westview Pres, 2000); (2) Carl E. Braaten, Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Jews and Christians: People of God*, (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003). See the article on *Dabru Emet* in the present volume. See also Archbishop Rowan Williams, 'Two Covenants or One?' in *The Place of the Covenant in Judaism, Christianity and Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations, December 2005) now available online at <http://www.cjcr.can.ac.uk/centre/covenant/wilpres1.html>

10 See also R. Kendal Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) which rightly advocates a reframing of the biblical metanarrative to give due emphasis to the election of Israel, but renounces the need for 'mission' to the Jewish people (p. 173).

11 LOP 31, 18.

12 LOP 31, 15.

The Jewish world today is filled with paradoxes: diversity and commonality, secularism and spirituality, rigidity and mobility. The following is a snapshot of that world, a brief glimpse of Jewish missions in the past, what the field looks like today and why there is so much of an uproar over what should be normal in God's economy.¹³

Much of this material will be familiar to readers of *Mishkan* and those associated with the LCJE, but it is instructive to note the changing features and most recent demographic trends that have emerged since the 1980 LOP. Immigration to Israel, the opening up of post-Soviet Eastern Europe, the increasing pluralism within the Jewish community, the impact of postmodernity, all jostle alongside the dynamics of religious conservatism, political re-alignment and the impact of the Messianic movement as indicators of Jewish identity in the new millennium.

The traditional diversity of cultural, religious and geographical factors that affect Jewish identity is described, to which is added mention of contemporary Jewry as embracing alternative religious forms in Kabbalah (mystical Judaism), New Age, and forms of Jewish Buddhism and Jewish Hinduism. Common experiences of the Jewish people such as suffering and victimisation through anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are noted. Identification with Israel, a thirst for spirituality, concern for survival and the experience of migration all affect the Jewish people to some degree. The booklet notes patterns of generational changes and intermarriage rates, seeing these as opportunities for Jewish evangelism and grounds for "potential new initiatives to reach a diverse Jewish world with the gospel."¹⁴

A brief history of Jewish evangelism from the book of Acts to modern times is given, followed by a section on Jewish believers in Jesus and evangelism, which estimates the number of Jewish believers in Jesus conservatively at between 50,000–90,000. The estimated 5,000 Jewish believers in Israel are described in more detail, in the light of recent surveys which trace the arrival of Russian-speaking believers, increased facilities for training in ministry and theological education, and opportunities for witness.

It is a myth that evangelism is illegal in Israel. Under Israeli law, believers in Jesus are free to express and share their faith with the adult population. Evangelistic literature, books and videos are distributed. Personal evangelistic visits are conducted and gospel outreach is done at public events like the New Age festivals. Organised evangelistic campaigns are held and evangelism among Israeli Jewish and Arab students takes place on university campuses in Israel throughout the year. Youth and children's ministry is con-

13 LOP 31, 19.

14 LOP 31, 21.

ducted through bible clubs, humanitarian aid, youth camps and conferences. Evangelism efforts have not been free of harassment. Some Jewish believers face negative reaction, polarising newspaper coverage and physical harassment.¹⁵

Russian-speaking Jews in the former Soviet Union and those who have emigrated to other parts of the world are also discussed. Since the *glasnost* of the 1980's and initial openness to the Gospel there has been a decrease in openness, yet fruitful ministry is continuing.

Dozens of mission works are reaching out to the Jews in nine provinces, Ukraine, Russia, Byelorussia, Moldova, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. These ministries include street evangelism and literature distribution, personal visits, and outreach concerts along with music and dance festivals. They have been planting congregations of Jewish believers in Jesus, conducting public holiday celebrations; holding small group bible studies, discipleship, children's ministries and using radio broadcasts and Internet evangelism. They do prison outreach, Messianic conferences, literature distribution, bible translation, humanitarian aid, and medical assistance along with bible education and training in Jewish evangelism.¹⁶

Evangelism still faces the obstacles of rising anti-Semitism, post-Soviet era restrictions on liberty and freedom of speech, and organised anti-missionary activity, but it is encouraging to see a new generation of Russian Jewish believers in Jesus, who first heard the gospel in the FSU, and are currently witnessing in Israel, the USA, Canada, and Germany.

Snapshots of evangelism in Germany, the USA and Canada are given, and then a section on opposition to Jewish evangelism is included.

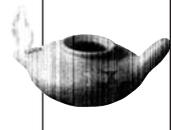
Opposition to Jewish evangelism is not new. It has roots in the spiritual realm. God chose to convey His truth to the world through the Jewish people. "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). God's character, the trustworthiness of the bible, and the promises concerning future world redemption will be demonstrated through the survival of the Jewish people and in their salvation through Christ (Romans 11:12 & 15). Therefore, spiritual forces are arrayed against God and His chosen people.¹⁷

The organisations involved are noted, and their strategies discussed, with the challenge to address opposition lovingly, humbly and effectively.

15 LOP 31, 23.

16 LOP 31, 23.

17 LOP 31, 25.



Jewish Believers in the Church

The third section of the booklet gives readers the opportunity to consider the contribution of Jesus-believing Jews, and some of the issues discussed by them as they express their faith in the Messiah from a Jewish perspective. Since the 1980's the influence of a growing number of Jewish believers in Jesus has been significant. They have made contributions to Jewish evangelism, the growth of Messianic Jewish groups in Israel and the diaspora, the worldwide church, and world mission. Jewish believers have much to contribute to the church's understanding of the Jewish roots of its faith, the Jewishness of Jesus, and the future of Israel. But questions have also been raised about the rightness of independent Messianic congregations, and the theological orthodoxy and authenticity of such groups.

The booklet discusses how Messianic Jews define themselves, engage in theological reflection, and live out their callings in the diverse religious, cultural and political settings of Israel and the diaspora. Sections on evangelism, reconciliation ministries and the nature of "authentic Messianic Jewish identity" explore the issues that practically effect Jewish believers in Jesus. The booklet examines how Messianic Jewish thought understands the Torah and its practical observance, the nature of Christ and the Trinity, and the various Messianic Jewish eschatologies and their political implications.

What was anticipated in the 1980 LOP as "attempts at contextualisation" in the early years of the Messianic movement is now seen as vitally required if the Messianic movement is to mature into a fully-developed manifestation of effective inter-cultural communication of the gospel. While controversial issues remain, the Messianic movement, either defined broadly to include all Jewish believers in Jesus, or more narrowly focusing on the Messianic congregational movement, must develop its own self-theologising and self-missionising aspects in addition to its self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating nature.

Christians who are concerned for the salvation and welfare of the Jewish people can rejoice at the increasing number of Jewish people coming to know their Messiah. They exist as a renewed expression of God's faithfulness to his ancient people. We pray that they will fulfil the vision of their destiny, commit their lives to loving service, and respond to the Lord's call to be a light to the nations as they bear witness to the Messiah of Israel. May they benefit from the theological resources, pastoral support and loving encouragement of their wider Christian family.¹⁸

¹⁸ LOP 31, 37.

Challenges Facing Jewish Evangelism

The fourth section of the booklet considers challenges facing Jewish evangelism, and how these may be overcome. It revisits the view that all that Christian mission to the Jewish people requires is dialogue, using Jon D. Levenson's critique of *Dabru Emet*. Levenson argues that it will not do to "brush under the carpet" the irreconcilable truth claims of Jews and Christians, and that "Participants in Jewish-Christian dialogue often speak as if Jews and Christians agreed about God but disagreed about Jesus. They have forgotten that in a very real sense, orthodox Christians believe Jesus *is* God."¹⁹

The booklet notes the controversy over the existence of Messianic Jews, as referred to in chapters by Wolfhart Pannenberg and Rabbi Barry Cytron in recent literature. Pannenburg states

One of the new developments made possible by the reestablishment of a Jewish state in Palestine has been the emergence of groups of "messianic Jews" within Israel, Jews who confess their faith in Jesus the Messiah without leaving the Jewish community and a Jewish way of life. Since the end of the Jewish congregation of Jerusalem in the first century, this is the first time that a Jewish-Christian church reemerges so that a Jew need not turn to a gentile church when he or she comes to believe in Jesus the Christ. The "messianic Jews" intend to remain Jews while professing Jesus to be the Messiah. Sooner or later Christian-Jewish dialogue will have to take notice of this fact ...²⁰

To which Cytron responds:

In his remarks on "messianic Jews," Prof. Pannenberg touches on a sensitive, hurtful area in interfaith relationships. To many in the Jewish community, the tactics employed by "messianic Jews" to spread their beliefs are often unseemly. Several recent books have documented these efforts at conversion and the ill-will that lingers from such attempts. The guidelines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on Jewish-Christian relationships forthrightly address this issue: "Groups such as 'Jews for Jesus' or 'Messianic Jews' consist of persons from a Jewish background who have converted to Christianity and who wish to retain their Jewish heritage and identity. Lutherans should be aware that most Jews regard such persons as having forsaken Judaism, and consider efforts to maintain otherwise to be deceptive."²¹

19 Jon D. Levenson, "How Not to Conduct Jewish-Christian Dialogue", *Commentary* (December, 2001), 31-37.

20 Wolfhart Pannenberg in *Jews and Christians: People of God*, 185 (op.cit. note 9).

21 Barry Cytron in *Jews and Christians: People of God*, 193.



Other challenges facing Jewish evangelism are continuing anti-Semitic teaching in the church; “modern Marcionism” which contrasts a “God of Anger” in the Hebrew Scripture with a “God of love” in the New Testament; and eschatological views held by Christians which polarise and polemicise against Jew or Arab, losing focus on the Messiahship of Jesus for all. Reconciliation between Jew and Palestinian through the peace-making love of the Messiah must thus be a priority in the proclamation of Good News that is brought to all the peoples of the Middle East. The challenges to Jewish and Moslem evangelism must be faced together, and the difficulties of both fields shared with mutual understanding and encouragement.

Case Studies, Strategies and Initiatives in Jewish Evangelism

A series of case studies are presented, to bring the reader up-to-date with what is happening in the field of Jewish evangelism.

Good things are happening globally in the field of Jewish evangelism. The following is a selection of current and prospective Jewish evangelism initiatives that are encouraging. It should be remembered that each of these initiatives needs the ongoing support of the body of Christ, through prayer, finances and volunteer help. These case studies, strategies, programmes and plans are signs for us that God is still at work among Jewish people and they are hearing and receiving the good news of Messiah Jesus. The continued involvement of Jewish people in Jewish evangelism is living testimony that God is faithful to His plan to make Israel a light to the nations.²²

The case studies include citywide evangelistic campaigns, local outreaches at times of Jewish festivals and direct mail to Jewish homes. Reaching specific groups, like Generation J,²³ New Agers and JuBus (Jewish Buddhists) are discussed. Hasidic Jews, postmodern Jews, Israelis in India and Bolivia are all considered. All forms of media – print, radio, television and internet – can be harnessed for the Gospel. Partnerships between agencies, and the power of personal testimonies, particularly of those who have been through suffering and persecution for their faith, are all included. Training and education for the next generation of Jewish evangelists is also emphasized. Christians are challenged to equip themselves for increasing opportunities for ministry among the intermarried in the light of demographic trends, and an appendix is devoted to this topic.

22 LOP 31, 43.

23 Cf. Lisa Schiffman, *Generation J* (San Francisco: Harper, 2000).

The single greatest challenge expressed by Jewish-Gentile couples is the struggle to find spiritual harmony. The Christian message offers couples the means to know the one true God without obliterating the ethnic distinctions of the partners. Sensitivity to provide the accurate gospel message must consider the different cultural perceptions of Jewish-Gentile partners. Already, a few Messianic congregations have effectively responded to the opportunity by providing specific ministry for the Jewish-Gentile intermarried couples.²⁴

The booklet closes with a series of appendices providing useful information on books and other resources in Jewish evangelism, statistics on the world Jewish population, information on the LCJE network, previous statements on Jewish evangelism, and other items. Its final emphasis is a call to prayer for Jewish evangelism, which includes the Lord's Prayer. This messianic development of the *kaddish* reminds us of our Lord's master plan, and offers us an intimate and ordered pattern of intercession to the Father, through the words of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit:

- Lord, give your church a *new heart* for the Jewish people, a heart which is rooted in your love for them, and which blesses this people and prays for its peace and salvation.
- Lord, give your church a *new vision*, a vision which appreciates today the presence of Jewish believers in your church, and which hopes for the in-gathering of a full number from the Jewish people and the nations.
- Lord, give your church a *renewed call* to share the good news in word and deed with Jewish people everywhere and to live out your great commission from Jerusalem and to the ends of the world.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever.
Amen.



Conclusion

"It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, nor are you free to desist from it" says the Pirkei Avot.²⁵ The 2004 Pattaya report is not the definitive statement on Jewish evangelism, nor can it hope to be. But as a snapshot of the field of Jewish evangelism today, it makes an important contribution by accurately reporting, appropriately challenging, and helpfully clarifying some of the theoretical and practical issues that concern us today. Put it in the hands of your church leader, Christian colleague, mission executive and interested friend, and it will be a useful tool to inform, equip and motivate concern for Israel and for her Messiah, and that the two may quickly meet.

Author info:

Richard Harvey teaches Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies at All Nations Christian College, Ware, UK.

r.harvey@allnations.ac.uk

²⁵ Pirkei Avot 1.21

Scattered like Salt — LCJE Members in Thailand



By **Lisa Loden**

Introduction

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) Forum 2004 provided a unique opportunity for a number of those involved in Jewish evangelism to participate in and contribute to this forum of evangelical leaders from around the world. While there was a very small Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) issue group participating in the forum, there were several members of the LCJE network who were participants in other issue groups. These included Jean-Paul Rempp in the issue group on The Uniqueness of Christ in a Postmodern World, Tuvia Zaretsky in the issue group on Non-traditional Families (Tuvia moved from this issue group halfway through to join the Reaching Jews with the Gospel issue group), Jhan Moskowitz and Lisa Loden in the issue group on Confronting Racial, Tribal and Ethnic Conflict Within the Christian Community, Heinrich Pedersen and Joseph Steinberg in the issue group on Religious and Non-Religious Spirituality in the Postmodern World and Byron Spradlin in the issue group on Redeeming the Arts. In addition to the participants in the issue group on Jewish evangelism, there were a total of six LCJE members in five of the other 30 issue groups represented at the conference. This diffusion of the LCJE members, scattered like salt in the melting pot of nations represented at the LCWE Forum, made for greater interaction with the other conference participants than if all of the LCJE members had remained in the issue group on Jewish evangelism.

Those who participated in these issue groups, besides their interest in the particular subject of the group with which they were involved, saw themselves as representing the focus of Jewish evangelism within their respective groups. In his report in the *LCJE Bulletin*, No. 78, November 2004, p.12, Jhan Moskowitz states, "The other reason I attended the focus group was to make sure and represent the cause of Jewish evangelism among the greater church body."

Common Experiences

In general, the experience of those in the various issue groups was that the groups had little or no understanding of, or even acquaintance with,

the issue of Jewish evangelism. There was widespread ignorance regarding the necessity of Jewish evangelism and almost no awareness of the extent of Jewish evangelism worldwide. The fact that Jews are coming to faith in Messiah in record numbers was revelatory for many in the various issue groups.

Although each group had theologians as members of the group, there was a need to remind them of the Biblical basis of Jewish evangelism. Jewish evangelism was certainly not on the agenda of the participants in other issue groups. I personally had discussions about the issue of Jewish evangelism with a Norwegian, a German and a Chinese American theologian from my issue group. While these theologians were committed to the cause of world evangelism, they were uninformed about the particular need for Jewish evangelism.

I met a number of African brothers who had made pilgrimages to Israel and who regularly prayed for the salvation of the Jewish people

An experience shared by many of the LCJE members in the various groups was the reception of the LCJE perspective of Jewish evangelism by issue group participants from African countries. Tuvya Zaretsky, in the Non-traditional Families issue group, together with Jhan Moskovitz and Lisa Loden, in the Confronting Racial, Tribal and Ethnic Conflict Within the Christian Community issue group, all experienced warm interest from African participants. I met a number of African brothers who had made pilgrimages to Israel and who regularly prayed for the salvation of the Jewish people.

Contributions of the LCJE Members to Their Groups

Coming from a Jesus-believing Jewish perspective, rooted in the Old Testament scriptures, the contributions of the LCJE members in the various forums were significant. In the Non-traditional Families issue group that was struggling for a definition of family, the Old Testament biblical theology definition of the family was perceived as new and particularly helpful. In the words of Tuvya Zaretsky, LCJE president and co-convenor of the issue group on non-traditional families, "It was a remarkable discussion." Seeing beyond Genesis 1 and 2 to the concept of the Abrahamic family was a useful reminder of the biblical basis of Jewish evangelism and the place of the Jewish people in the coming of the Messiah.

Issues of justice and shalom (peace and wholeness) from an Old Testament perspective were a part of discussions in the Racial and Ethnic Conflict issue group. A theology of reconciliation was discussed at length with the LCJE members actively participating in the discussions. As this group focused on areas of conflict around the world, the Middle East was one of the areas represented. The group's discussion about the Middle East was not without tension, but the LCJE members sought to bring the mandate for evangelism (both to Jews and Arabs) to the center of the discussion. Jhan Moskovitz writes, "The nature of our discussion concerning

reconciliation never touched on the need for evangelism. I was happy to see that all those who attended were committed to the Lausanne covenant, and to worldwide evangelism. I did however find myself addressing the issue of the Jewish people and their place in the body of Christ and in the land of Israel.”¹

Heinrich Pedersen, who participated in the issue group on Religious and Non-religious Spirituality in the Postmodern World, reported that the members of his group had no knowledge of Jewish people being involved in the New Age movement. He was able to inform the group and hopefully sensitize them to the need for a specific evangelistic outreach to Jews and Israelis caught up in this new spirituality.

Jean-Paul Rempp, who participated in the issue group on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Postmodern World, reported that he had no opportunity to express the mandate for Jewish evangelism in his very large issue group.

Challenges for LCJE Members

World evangelism was the focus of LCWE 2004. The need is at once common and specific as evidenced in the 31 different issue groups represented at the conference. There are many shared areas of concern and similarities of approach in the work of evangelism. For example, the New Age Jew is very similar to any other New Ager. Methods of evangelism in the New Age context worldwide need little adaptation in a Jewish New Age framework. This meant that Heinrich Pedersen from the LCJE network could gain much from, and likewise contribute much to, his issue group.

In the context of non-traditional families, the importance of an Old Testament based theology of the family is of great value. However, non-traditional families in general have little in common with the western non-traditional Jewish/gentile family.

There are of course, common principles of cultural sensitivity in evangelism that are equally applicable in every context but they vary greatly as to how they are applied from east to west and north to south.

Evangelism as a fundamental part of the solution in issues of racial and ethnic conflict and reconciliation is of primary importance in every context of conflict. Again, how this is worked out varies greatly from place to place. The experience of the LCJE members in the issue group focusing on this issue was to highlight and emphasize a gospel-based proclamation in addition to the implementation of a human rights agenda.

Perhaps the biggest challenge faced by the LCJE members at LCWE

Perhaps the biggest challenge faced by the LCJE members at LCWE Thailand was the widespread general ignorance of the mandate for Jewish evangelism by the majority of those present



¹ *LCJE Bulletin*, No. 78 (November 2004), 12.

Thailand was the widespread general ignorance of the mandate for Jewish evangelism by the majority of those present. Jewish evangelism is not a priority on the agenda of the Lausanne movement. This was seen in the ignorance and attitudes of many of the conference participants. All the LCJE members who attended the conference experienced this to varying degrees.

The issue of extreme Christian Zionism was heard being discussed and condemned in various table discussions. The excesses of pro-Israel Christian Zionism served to obscure the issue of Jewish evangelism, as did a counter focus on the sufferings of the Palestinian people perceived to be solely at the hands of the Jewish state. Particularly in the current context of the Middle East conflict, although there is lip service given to the need for the gospel to all, the Jewish people's need for the gospel is generally neglected and certainly not given priority.

General Interaction

The conference was organized so that the majority of time was spent in the various issue groups. However, as in similar frameworks, many things happen "around the edges." This conference was no different in that all of the LCJE participants had multiple conversations with individuals from their groups and with numbers of the general conference participants. Jhan Moskowitz writes, "It was during the meal times and informal fellowship that I had a chance to share my burden to see Jews come to faith. It was during these informal times that I could get a sense of what God was doing in the larger Body with regards to the proclamation of the Gospel among our people."² These conversations frequently led to discussions of the work of LCJE and Jewish evangelism in general. On a one-to-one basis there was much openness to hear the need for particular evangelism of the Jewish people.

There were also several opportunities for representatives from three different issue groups to meet for "synergy groups." The purpose of these groups was to discuss areas of overlap of vision and strategy among the different issue groups represented. I was sent to one synergy group meeting and Ole Kvarme and Theresa Newell from the Jewish Evangelism issue group were sent as representatives to two synergy group meetings. Writing about her experience in two synergy groups, Theresa Newell comments,

In the first we found mutuality in several areas: working through the ethical issues of taking the Gospel to children without parental consent; the opportunities to work with people in mixed marriages (particularly where one spouse was Jewish); unchurched families; and

² *LCJE Bulletin*, No. 78 (November 2004), 12.

those seeking spiritual answers to life. The use of narrative, the telling of the story of salvation of all age groups, and the re-introduction of the Bible as an Eastern, Jewish book opened up ideas for each group ... In the second synergy group we found a great deal of sympathy for Jewish evangelism among those reaching out to Muslims!

The problem of discipling new believers – Jewish and Muslim – and helping them find suitable worship styles that are culturally sensitive while not becoming syncretistic was a topic which needed further discussion.”³

These combined forums were places in which the LCJE members were visible and were able to represent the mandate for Jewish evangelism in a wider framework.

Conclusion

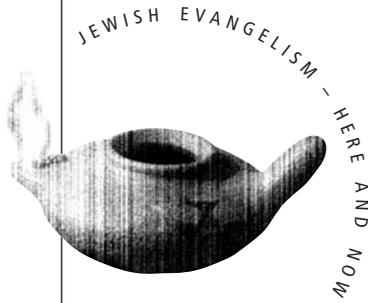
A positive initiative that was begun at the conference was a future e-mail newsletter that would be an update on what’s going on in Jewish Evangelism. Many e-mail addresses were collected by the LCJE members and passed on to Theresa Newell as a first stage in this project. Making information available about Jewish evangelism to those in the third world, now being called the majority world, is an exciting prospect. The major growth of Christianity is happening in these parts of the world and it was from that quarter that much interest was expressed about Jewish evangelism.

One can only hope that the presence of LCJE members in issue groups not connected with Jewish evangelism will have served to increase awareness of the need for Jewish evangelism around the world since Jewish people are found in every country and social context. The LCWE Forum 2004 conference was an excellent venue to expose the ongoing need and mandate to bring the gospel to the Jewish people worldwide.

Author info:

Lisa Loden serves as Managing Director of Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, Jerusalem. She is a member of the International Coordinating Committee of the LCJE.
lloden@caspari.com





The Role of the Gentiles in Jewish Evangelism

By **Baruch Maoz**

We are not here concerned with the general duty that all Christians have toward their unconverted and unredeemed fellow-humans, the Jewish people included. The duty of gentile Christians toward their fellow humans who are Jewish is equal to that which they have toward those who are not Jewish. Our task here is to discover whether or not Christians from among the gentiles have a specific evangelistic role with regard to the Jewish people. My purpose in this article will not be to work out the details of that role but to try and indicate its very existence. It appears to me from the biblical data that gentiles do indeed have a role in Jewish evangelism and that this aspect of the ministry of the church must be undertaken by the disciples of Jesus with dedication, commitment, sacrifice and a humility born of the gospel.

It is a sad symptom of our times when there is need to think on a topic such as the one now before us. It is one of the unhappy products of the accentuated focus on the difference in Christ between Jews and gentiles.

Surely, the whole church should be engaged in evangelism of the whole world, regardless of whether the preachers or those to whom the gospel is preached are Jews or gentiles. Surely, the church should be as concerned for the evangelization of the Jews at least as it should be for the evangelization of any people on earth. Sinners among the Jews are as much in need of the gospel as are sinners from other nations.

Surely the church recognizes the fact that it has entered into the promises and blessings originally given to Israel. Surely the church also recognizes the biblical truth that it now has the joy and exquisite duty of sharing those promises and blessings with those to whom they naturally belong by virtue of the divine decree. Surely the church recognizes that, if Israel's being set aside for a time has proved to be such a blessing to the world, their being brought back can be compared to nothing less than a resurrection. Surely the glory of God is dear to the church, and it would therefore long for the day when God will be glorified through the grace and salvation he will bestow on his beloved, erring people.

Liberal humanism has crept into the church under the guise of a devout kindness and respect for those who differ. The result has been a dilution of Christian conviction. The hubris that informed much of Christian endeavor before the two World Wars has collapsed under the burden of humanity's horrific ability to sin.

Wisely, evangelical Christians no longer consider themselves better than others.

But they have unwisely dragged the truth of their faith down with their former pride and now tend to imply (while denying) that the faith they affirm is no truer than that of others. This is a major error which has contributed to the reticence of evangelicals to proclaim the gospel with conviction, confidence and a humility that relies on God for its consequences. Many evangelicals unconsciously look upon the faith as a relative truth that purportedly brings more happiness, makes more sense and motivates toward a better society. Consequently, many evangelical Christians have engaged in debate, image-creation, self-promotion, social support and emotional manipulation in an effort to win more converts, rather than confidently declaring, "This is what the Lord has said," and leaving the results with him. These attitudes are nowhere evident than in the relations established by many evangelicals between themselves and the people of Israel, particularly the Jewish State.

The Messianic movement has become a significant contemporary major influence on the church's relationship to the Jewish people, including the church's view of the evangelization of the Jewish people. This movement has challenged the church's understanding of itself, of the scriptures and of the scriptural message. It has rightly called upon the church to reconsider the frequently arrogant attitude of its adherents toward Israel. It has mistakenly sought to impose a rabbinic grid on the church's understanding of the scriptures, and it has insisted on the truthfulness of the error that claims that only Jews and those versed in Judaism can truly understand the message of the Bible.

The topic for our discussion is not the contribution made by the Messianic movement to Jewish evangelization, nor that of the loss of evangelical nerve. Although an understanding of those distinct contributions can help us discover the roots of some of our difficulties, they should be the topic of some other paper. Our present task is to remind ourselves from the pages of holy writ of the role of the gentiles in Jewish evangelism.

To this we set our minds with an eagerness to grow more into the image of him who made us, to please him better and to serve him and his cause in accordance with his wishes. We therefore pray, "your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven – in this area of Jewish evangelism as much as in any other." Our theology, we hope, is born out of a passionate desire to love God and serve him better by discovering what is desirable in his eyes. Our aspiration should be to do what God desires.



Historical and Theological Considerations

Obviously, none of us has the dubious luxury of theologizing in a vacuum. We are children of our times and called upon by God to address the issues of our times. History, both the history of truth understood and of error promoted, plays a large role in the framing of our questions as well as of our answers.

Recent history, the spread of evangelical liberalism and the emergence of the Messianic movement, have impacted our discussion. The view, common among Christians for many years, that Israel has been superseded by the church, plays no small role in the framing of our question. The history of the Holocaust and of the church's moral failure is another important contributor that, we suspect, plays a larger role in the minds of European readers than in that of others.

Exegetical Considerations

Obviously, the sole grounds on which we can determine the church's role as well as that of any member of the church is God's declared word in scripture. We are at liberty to recognize no higher authority. God has spoken in his word and it is for us to study that word in order to discover his will.

In so doing, we are faced with a fascinating challenge. The Hebrew Bible, known among evangelical believers as the Old Testament, is replete with idiom, analogy, superlatives and other valid literary devices. These devices serve to give us a sense of what they cannot analyze or describe in detail. They are often also necessary because of the terms with which the original hearers could be addressed. Future realities were largely unknown, and where they were known they could only be perceived faintly, in broad outline and in terms of the realities of the day. The familiar contemporary terminology was the only means of communication available to the Holy Spirit as he framed the revelation of that future.

For example, Isaiah speaks of a time when the land overgrown with thorns and thistles, the forsaken palaces of Jerusalem and the depopulated countryside will be transformed. He says that this will happen "when the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high." Then the wilderness will become a fertile field, and the fertile field will become a forest (Isa 32:13-15). Where here is the literary device? Does the land represent the people (on whom the Spirit, Isaiah tells us, is to be poured out), now rendered blessed, spiritual and holy? Or is the pouring out of the Spirit on the people itself a literary device meant to indicate God's blessing on the land?

So too in Isaiah 44. God promises Israel, his chosen servant, a blessing in the teeth of the nation's sin (Isa 43:22-25). He has assured the people of punishment, but the day will come when, having punished them (43:26-28), he will work for their salvation (44:1-8). That salvation is then described as the pouring of water onto dry ground, the pouring out of his Spirit and of his blessing on the seed of Jacob. The seed will then blossom

among the wheat like willows planted beside plentiful water sources. God does not change and is not subject to change. Man's sin cannot alter his decisions. Israel should remember these things and be comforted by them. He will wipe their guilt away like a cloud is wiped away from the sky, like a mist from a mirror. This is to be a source of joy to all creation. The heavens are invited to sing and the very foundations of the earth to shout for joy, the mountains and all the trees to break forth with singing, because God will have forgiven Jacob and been glorified in Israel (44: 21-23).

Which are the literary devices – God's saving sinful Israel in spite of its sin, or the joy of creation? God pouring out his Spirit on unworthy Israel or the people's grain blossoming among the wheat?

I here posit the question but do not have space to defend the answer preferred. For the sake of continued good terms with my affectionately regarded editors at *Mishkan*, I can here only state the case as I see it. The need for me to do so will become apparent as we proceed to answer the question our article has been asked to address.

The literary device, I think, is obvious: God describes a spiritual blessing in highly material terms. I believe that the Old Testament provides us with what were then (some of which still are) future realities in consistently Old Testament terms, and that the literary devices employed in sample texts given above are descriptions of spiritual realities. In other words, both Isaiah 32 and 44 speak of the fruition of the souls of Israel in terms of the fruition of the land. The wonderful joy attributed to nature is primarily if not wholly that of the people.

Crass literalism does little justice to the text of the Bible. It leads its adherents astray, as has been evidenced in much eschatological speculation. Such speculation affirms strict fealty to the meaning of the text but often fails to discover that meaning because it is so focused on attributing literal meaning to every detail that it cannot see the whole.

Piecemeal exegesis will inevitably impoverish those who engage in it because it will mask the wider, fuller, more substantial message of scripture by being taken up with literary minutiae.

Our Texts

I propose to discuss the role of gentile Christians in the evangelization of the Jews on the basis of two texts, with some reference to others as we proceed. Our two texts are Isaiah 66 and Romans 9-11. Shortage of space will not allow an extensive exegesis. We shall need to rely on the substantial work done by others and on the reader's acquaintance with these texts.

Isaiah 65-66 and Its Implications

Chapter 66 is the closing chapter of Isaiah's stupendous book of prophetic messages. The prophet, serving as a mouthpiece for God, has pointed out the nation's sin and the inevitably dire consequences of such sin be-



cause the God who rules the world is holy. The pride that motivated the people will be crushed and God alone will be exalted. But that exaltation is remarkable in its nature as well as in its extent: a sinful people will be brought back to God.

The Gentiles in Isaiah's Prophecies

In that connection, Isaiah is prominent among the OT authors in his frequent reference to God's kind intentions toward the gentile nations. In chapter 2:1-4 he speaks of a day when all nations will serve God and submit willingly to his rule. This is meant to serve as a motivating call for the people of Israel, which is why the next verse goes on to address the people, with the invitation, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob." If the nations to whom the covenanted promises have not been given are to serve God, all the more so should the children of Jacob joyfully undertake his service.

In 19:18-25 God goes on to speak of the day when the Egyptians will call out to the Lord because of their oppressors (19:20), and he will hear them and send them a savior. The Lord will be known to the Egyptians, who will serve him and vow by his name (v. 21). An amazing threesome will be established: Israel, Egypt and Assyria will be a blessing in the earth, themselves blessed by God and described by him as "Egypt my people," "Assyria the work of my hands" and "Israel my inheritance" (19:24-25)!

In chapter 25 Isaiah goes on to describe the celebration of joy that will follow the preceding judgment (24:1-23, 25:2), which will teach the proud never to exalt himself again (25:3). At the same time, God will be a shelter to those who recognize themselves as weak and unworthy (24:4-5). He will remove the veil now covering the eyes of all the nations (24:6-7), overcome death forever, tenderly wipe away all sorrow and remove the sinful shame of his people (24:8). These deeds will bring forth praise: "Look, such is our God, the God on whom we put our hope for salvation. This is the God in whom we hoped – we rejoice and are glad in his salvation" (24:9).

Isaiah 56:1-8 is an extraordinary promise regarding the gentiles. It contains all that the letter of the Hebrews has to say about the no-longer-binding ceremonial elements of the law, without releasing them from the joy and duty of keeping God's eternal Law as reflected in the Ten Commandments. God calls upon mankind as such to maintain a just and holy life, including the keeping of the Sabbath (56:1-2). Not Israel, nor even Judah, nor the two are addressed here. Man as man, be he Jewish or gentile, is called upon to live as God has commanded. The prophet's next words prove this beyond doubt: the stranger, even the eunuch, is no longer to say, "God has set me apart from his people" (56:3). Those among them who live as he would have them live, who keep covenant with him although not part of the original covenant people, will be accorded in God's house a name better than that given to sons and daughters, who would naturally expect to be blessed! These non-Israelites will be joined to Israel and accorded an eternal name (56:4-5) perhaps later hinted at in

Revelation 2:17, never to be taken from them. The body of the faithful will be one, although made up of both Jews and gentiles.

What is more (56:6-8), the gentiles will be accorded as free access to God's presence as is accorded the historical children of the covenant, their service will be as acceptable to God and their prayers as welcome in his house because the very One who will re-gather the dispersed of Israel will also gather others alongside that nation. (Remember Jesus' words: "I have other sheep ... not of this fold... I must bring them also and they will hear my voice and they will become one flock with one shepherd" John 10:16.)

The Context of Isaiah 65-66

It is in this light that we must read chapters 65-66 of the book of Isaiah's prophecies. Judah has mourned its just and punitive destruction (64:2-11), acknowledging the righteousness of God's dealings with the people (64:4).

Judah has confessed its sin: "None of us sought you, so you caused us to melt in the heat of our own evil ways" (64:5-6). This is a picture of Israel today, as it is of Israel since Isaiah's days onward. Israel is a rebellious people, constantly angering God by their conduct and by their false and unbiblical worship. Israel still justly deserves to be the object of God's anger. As was true of our forefathers, Israel today has no grounds on which to hope, no fulcrum by which to move the heart of God, no right to mercy but this: we know God to be an amazingly merciful God, our Father and our Maker – and we know ourselves to be his people in spite of our sins (64:7).

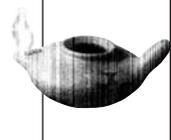
On those grounds the people are depicted by Isaiah as turning to God and daring to request that he limit his just anger. In light of the horror of the punishment he brings, the people beg for divine compassion. This is nothing less than the gospel. It is man recognizing his sin and his unworthiness before God, recognizing he has no grounds on which to beg for mercy, recognizing that God is just to punish. Man therefore appeals to God's grace in spite of his sin.

Any supposed conflict between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the exclusive product of a prejudiced or uninformed mind.

Isaiah 65

What is God's answer to the plea? We find the answer in chapters 65-66 of the prophet's message: God begins by saying he has been found by those who did not seek him, that he has revealed himself to a nation that has not called on him.

On the other hand, he has repeatedly and incessantly appealed to a rebellious people who followed their own thoughts rather than the way he set before them (65:2), who constantly anger him by their false worship (vv. 3-5a). God will recompense them for their evil. He will not rest until he has paid them back to the umpteenth degree (65:5b-7). God con-



trasts the gentile nations with Israel, and his grace to the former with the latter's lack of obedience.

God has more to say about how he will treat the people of Israel. He promises to carry out his just intentions and punish Judah, but to exercise his right to mercy in so doing. He will not fully destroy Israel nor fully cut them off (v. 8). Have they fallen to be destroyed? No, by no means. The God of justice is also the God of sovereign, undeserved, unilateral and amazing mercy. He will bring a remnant out of the people, an offspring that will enter into the promised inheritance (65:9). Those among the people who do not turn to the Lord will be punished while the others will enjoy mercy (65:10-12). Rebellious Israelites will remain hungry while others are fed (65:13-14), the name of the rebellious will be a sad memorial to the consequences of evil in God's world, while those who serve God will be known by a new name (Rev 2:17).

Those thus blessed will share in a new creation that God is preparing. In this new creation all the ultimate joys of true life are to be found. The very essence of nature will be transformed back into what it was from the beginning, when there was no sadness, no need to contend with briars and thistles requiring the sweat of one's brow to obtain bread from the ground, no carnivorous animals. God will be very close, so much so that he will be discovered to be near even before a prayer can be framed or voiced. There will be no suffering and no evil in this new world (65:17-25).

Isaiah 66

God is above his creation, in need of and subject to none. Everything that exists is the product of his divine fiat (66:1-2). This is a declaration of God's right to deal with the sinners in Israel as he sees fit, to show mercy to whomever he wishes and to visit the just reward of sin on those sinners with whom he sees fit to deal in justice. Those who humbly tremble at his sovereign decree will find him to be favorable toward them (66:2b). Those who rebelliously exalt themselves will have him to deal with. They chose their ways, now God will choose their punishment (66:3-4).

As to the humble who presently suffer at the hands of the rebellious, they should not despair. God will call the evil into account and accomplish all his declared purposes in and for Zion. It is inconceivable that God would begin a work without bringing it to completion (66:5-9).

This assurance should be a source of joy and a motivation to action. But for whom? For those who love God's purposes, cherish his will and rejoice in his mercies among those found of the Lord who had not sought him (65:1) and among those to whom mercy had been shown in spite of their national sin. All such should rejoice in the knowledge that God is sovereignly merciful (after all, if he is not, they too might perish for their sins). They should long to share in the richness of his blessing, to be satisfied with the same gospel comforts and find pleasure in the beauty and glory granted by grace (66:10-11).

God declares that he will show sinful, suffering Judah mercy as plenti-

ful as an overflowing river. Those who love Judah will be comforted with her. They will themselves be blessed because God's hand will have been revealed in both justice and mercy (66:12-14). God will display his justice to all the world by punishing the sinful, be they among the strangers who have never called on his name or those of the covenant people who have forsaken him and his covenant (66:15-18).

That is not all God will do. Out of those so blessed he will call people to himself, yes, out of the nations far and wide who have never heard of his name nor seen his glory. They will declare that glory to the nations (66:19). They will also bring the people of Israel back to the Lord as one brings an offering to the Lord, with joy and gladness (66:20). They will spare no effort to do so (66: 20). They will serve God alongside the people of Israel, and they will do so as equals (66:21 - cf. Isa 56:1-8). All flesh will serve him. Judah will be eternally restored and God's justice eternally established.

It is now time for us to summarize our findings in relation to the role of gentile evangelicals in the evangelization of the Jewish people. We have purposely conducted our discussion in the broader context so that we could see it in its wider biblical perspective. Israel's salvation is a matter of God's honor and will. It is not the product of national desert but of sovereign grace. The same grace which reached out to gentiles who did not seek him is the grace by which God chooses to save undeserving Jacob. All who have been recipients of such grace will inevitably cherish and rejoice in it. The redeemed gentiles are therefore called upon to rejoice in the hope for Jerusalem. They will be used by God to bring the people of Israel, now scattered and as distant from him as ancient Lydda, Pul and Tarshish were from the temple in Jerusalem, to serve the Lord together with their gentile fellow believers. The church is one, made up of both Jews and gentiles, caring for each other and serving God together.

This is Isaiah's view of things. This is his answer to the question, should non-Jewish recipients of grace proclaim that grace to Jews? Should gentiles be engaged in Jewish evangelism? The prophet's answer is simple: if they have been recipients of grace, how can they not proclaim it to fellow sinners from among the Jews?

The church has traditionally bought into the prideful idea that Israel had proved so unfaithful to God that, true to his word, he turned away from them. He now has exclusive interest in the church. On those grounds, how can the church be confident that God will not treat her in a similar fashion? Has she proved more faithful to him than Israel? Is her record any better? Is her security due to her purported achievements, or is salvation by grace? If by grace, on what biblical grounds can we affirm that this amazing grace does not extend to Israel?

The church is to labor to bring sinners in Israel back to God, however far they may have wandered from him, for God is Israel's Father, Maker and

The church is one, made up of both Jews and gentiles, caring for each other and serving God together



Redeemer. They are to bring the gospel to the Jews and the Jews to the gospel as one brings an offering to the Lord. They are to rejoice in Judah's fortunes of grace, which become all the richer as they flow more widely.

Romans 9-11 and Its Implications

It is not clear whether the parallels between Isaiah 63-66 and Romans 9-11 are intended or that Paul was simply informed and unconsciously influenced by Isaiah when he penned his letter to the Romans. The similarities are remarkable. Paul makes explicit reference to Isaiah 65:1 in Romans 10:20.

The issue discussed in Romans 9-11 is similar but not identical to that which occupied Isaiah's mind so many years earlier. Isaiah was addressing the Jewish people, calling them not to despair but to put their hope in God in spite of their sins, and seeking to broaden their perspective so they could understand that they are not the sole recipients of mercy. The extension of mercy is, by its very nature, a sovereign act unilaterally and undeservedly applied. It can never be the product of desert. It can never be owed or claimed. In his letter to the Romans the shoe is on the other foot and the issue is not mercy *per se* but divine faithfulness in the teeth of sin (Rom 7:24-8:39). If God is truly and sovereignly faithful, how can it now appear that he has broken Israel off and turned to the gentiles? The answer Paul provides is the same framed by Isaiah, from a different angle.

Space will not allow us to deal as extensively with Romans 9-11 as we have with Isaiah 63-66. We shall focus on a number of salient points that illuminate our subject.

First, Paul has not written Israel off because God has not done so. He is deeply saddened by their present spiritual state (9:1-5). He recognizes that the gospel and all its harbingers, not to speak of Christ himself, have to do (note the present tense – 9:3-5!) with Israel. But God has the right to decide to whom he will show mercy (9:14-24). He did so in Hosea's day (9: 25-26) when he showed Israel favor in spite of their sin (Hosea 2:1-3 Heb.). He did so when Isaiah described the terrible punishment due to Israel (9: 27-29), and then intimated the mercy of God by referencing the remnant God had left for himself.

Paul goes on to summarize the dilemma. Gentiles, described earlier in his letter as the objects of God's grace (2:7-11, 3:21-30, 4:9-25; see also 9: 23-24, 10:10-13), are granted righteousness through faith while not all Jews are granted such righteousness.

Paul first responds to this dilemma with a revelation of his heart: He longs and prays for Israel's salvation. Is this a longing prayer from which his gentile readers are excused? Dare we not pray for what the apostle longs, and dare we pray without translating our prayers into action? Salvation comes through faith, and faith from hearing the gospel (10: 11-14). How can the people of Israel believe if they do not hear? How can they hear if no one preaches to them? Of course, none are to preach unless they are sent (10:15), but Isaiah had already addressed that issue

when he spoke of the wonder and the glory of preaching the good news of God's sovereign grace (see also Isa 52:6-10).

Israel has rejected the gospel. It has turned its back to God (10:16-21). But does this mean that God has turned his back to Israel in any final sense (11:1)? May it never be! Evidence to God's insistent faithfulness is to be found in the fact that Paul himself is Jewish. He is a harbinger of what is to come, part of the remnant that exists and that has always existed within the nation (11:2-4), the product of the same divine and sovereign grace we have been discussing (11:5-6).

Israel's rejection is not final (11:11). In fact – strange as this might sound – that rejection has their salvation in view because they are to be provoked to jealousy by the favor now shown to gentiles. Israel's salvation is also in the highest interests of the world because, if their rejection has been such a blessing for the world, surely their being restored will have still greater, still more glorious implications (11:12). Consequently, while Paul is engaged in the execution of his own ministry among the gentiles, he always has his eye on the salvation of the Jewish people. He chose to emphasize the grace shown to the gentiles with a view to exciting some among the Jewish people to spiritual jealousy, and thus to save some of them (11:14).

Second, Paul turns to address a very human propensity that had shown signs of raising its ugly head among the non-Jewish believers of his day. Although redeemed by grace, they were inclined to think that salvation was, at least to some extent and in some manner, attributable to them. The Jews, according to this view, deserved to be rejected but we in some way deserve to be accepted. Paul warns his readers not to think themselves in any way better or more secure than the people of Israel. The only way to salvation is through faith in the sheer mercy of God, unearned and undeserved. Israel ceased to exercise that faith and fell – and you, beloved gentile reader, are liable to the same kind of fall if you think that you are in any way better than those rejected (11:14-22).

What is more, those once rejected are to be restored if they do not continue in unbelief. God is fully capable of undoing their unbelief (11:23). It is natural to expect him to do so precisely because he is faithful, as Paul had been telling the Roman believers. The apostle acknowledged their sin (7:14-23) by identifying with them in their struggles with it, and yet assured them that God would never forsake them and that nothing could ever separate them from God's love (8:1-39). Now he affirms the same for Israel. God's faithfulness assures us that he is working among the gentiles with a view to Israel's salvation, and that the day will come when he will forgive their sins and turn ungodliness away from his people (11:23-27). Israel's unbelief will, by the grace and power of God, become enduring faith and Israel, too, will enjoy the favor of God.

God is fully capable of undoing their unbelief. It is natural to expect him to do so precisely because he is faithful



Here follows another short summary: With respect to the gospel, the Jews have been made enemies so that the gospel will go out to the world, but they remain God's beloved because God is unchangeable and his love is not contingent. What he has covenanted to do he will indubitably and unquestionably perform. Jews and gentiles will stand before him on the same grounds: grace rather than purported obedience, faith and not works (11:28-32). Surely, God deserves to be praised beyond all measure. Salvation and judgment are both his perfect work, carried out for his glory and to his eternal worship (11:33-36)!

What follows from this? That gentile Christians have a gospel duty toward God and toward the Jewish people. Because the salvation of Israel has to do with God's glory, they should ever have an eye on Jewish evangelism. They should ever be conscious of their duty and privilege of preaching the gospel to their fellow sinners from among the Jews. They must recognize that God's faithfulness to his covenant promises to Israel are the grounds for their own confidence in his continued mercy toward them.

Some Brief Comments on the Contemporary Scene

Each of the issues raised below deserves a full discussion. We can only accord them passing reference.

Has the Holocaust Changed Anything?

The Holocaust has made it clear to all who can see that the church has no grounds on which to boast before Israel. Its moral failure is plain for all to see. It can and should now preach the gospel with the kind of humility that suits recognition of unworthiness before God, a fellow *sinner*ship with the Jewish people and a dependence on grace for salvation. The thrill of sins forgiven should drive it to love God more, and therefore to cherish every opportunity to proclaim and to display his grace to others.

The Messianic Movement

Certain modern emphases have tended to emasculate Jewish evangelization by insisting that a thorough knowledge of and identification with Jewish traditional custom and understanding are essential for effective evangelism. The sovereign grace of God teaches us that God can (and does) use the unsuited, the ill-equipped and the unlikely to achieve his purposes, and that "effectiveness" in evangelism is a matter of his will and work. He alone can open the eyes of the blind to see.

It is unquestionably true that an acquaintance with Jewish traditional custom and understandings is helpful in presenting the gospel to the Jews, as it is true in the evangelization of any nation. But a thorough understanding of the gospel is far more essential to that end, and without a heartfelt confidence in its power we might as well remain silent.

Identification with Jewish traditional custom and understandings is not only unnecessary, it is unhelpful. Much of Jewish tradition rejects Jesus

with a firmness that has been articulated with increasing clarity through the centuries. One cannot identify with what seeks to subvert.

Gentiles and the Indigenization of Evangelism

There is little doubt that indigenous evangelism normally meets with less difficulty than evangelism that is conducted by those who do not belong to the society being addressed with the gospel. For that purpose, one important role of the gentiles should be to equip, encourage and promote the indigenization of evangelistic outreach to the Jewish people. But indigenization is not everything.

First, the church is one and the gospel should be presented in terms of that unity as to who preaches the gospel, why and how he does so, as well as to the distinctive lifestyle that gospel preaching will promote among those Jewish people who will have been brought into the faith. There must be no reconstruction of the dividing wall between Jews and gentiles. Rabbinicism is not an option for faithful disciples of Jesus.

Second, in an area of need and opportunity, where a suitable Jewish person is not available and a gentile Christian is, there should never be a reticence on the part of the latter to undertake the task of preaching the gospel to Jews.

Third, cultures and theologies isolated from the challenges of other cultures and theologies inevitably develop a tendency to isolationism, arrogance and an authority beyond what is right. No single culture can discover or display the fullness of Christ. Jewish Christian culture and theology need to be challenged by the give and take of highly significant, compelling relations with those of other cultures and theology in order to protect itself from the dangers mentioned above. This requires a constant engagement of gentiles in the work of evangelizing the Jewish people.

Fourth, Jewish Christians will naturally want to preserve their national identity. They have every right and reason to do so in the context of their private lives. Jews do not cease to be Jews by believing in Jesus any more than gentiles cease to be gentiles. From that distinct vantage point, Jewish believers have a distinctive contribution to make to the church's weal. The intermeshing of Jews and gentiles in the work of evangelism and in the corporate worship of and obedience to God in the context of church life will enable them to make that contribution while giving Christ the preeminence he deserves in the community of those who believe.

Evangelical Liberalism

A disconcertingly growing number of evangelicals who consider themselves to be friends of Israel have been satisfied with political and social support, often allying themselves with the more extreme elements of Israeli society. We all need to be reminded of the biblical priorities. Israel ensconced over all the Middle East, with the Palestinians at its feet, a temple in Jerusalem, and all the riches of the world available to it is still Israel in its sin, doomed to sin's just rewards. Only through the gospel



will Israel find what it truly needs: forgiveness of sins, a new heart with God's law written on it and a right spirit.

Eschatology

Modern evangelicalism's fascination with eschatology has done both the church and Jewish evangelism a great disservice. It has all-too-largely displaced a spiritual and moral engagement by an attempt to identify the assumed eschatological implications of world events and to forward those events to their expectations. The result has been an irrelevant message, often at times of extreme need.

Eschatology has tended to displace the evangelization of the Jewish people by an offer of political and economic support that ignores moral issues and allows Israel to restrict freedom of religious expression, particularly Jewish Christian religious expression. Its reward has been the dubious privilege of posing for photographers while handing to one Israeli celebrity or another a cheque or expressing fawning support of his or her political platform. The result has been the erosion of civil liberties in Israel, particularly for Jewish Christians, an encroaching restriction of evangelism in the country and, in the minds of Israelis, increased disrespect for both the gospel and those who claim to represent it. After all, if evangelicals dare not make the gospel their first priority, why should the Jewish people accord that message consideration, let alone their sincere attention?

The Glory of God as Our Goal

If we believe Isaiah, if we believe Paul, we must believe in the gospel and in its power to save. God reveals himself to the world through the gospel, and he will reveal himself to the Jewish people in the same manner. The role of gentiles in Jewish evangelization begins with their believing the message and following the biblical pattern established so many years ago: We ... believe, and therefore speak (2 Cor 4:13). If our gentile brethren do that, everything else will fall into place.

Author info:

Baruch Maoz serves as Pastor of Grace and Truth Christian Congregation in Rishon leTzion, Israel, and Editor and Field Leader for HaGefen Publishing – CWI in Israel.
bmaoz22@attglobal.net

Inclusivism and the Task of Making Jewish Disciples



By **Derek Leman**

Yeshua warned, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many” (Matt 7:14 ESV). Yet influential voices in the evangelical world and in the Messianic Jewish world are busy broadening the gate to paradise.

Ideas that broaden the gates of salvation include:

Universalism	All humankind will be saved in the end.
Eschatological Evangelism	All will hear the gospel at or following death.
Inclusivism	At least some will be saved by Messiah without knowing him specifically.

Within Messianic Judaism universalism is rare to nonexistent, yet both eschatological evangelism and inclusivism are widely accepted ideas.¹ To some degree, this is nothing new. Dan Juster said years ago, “The preaching of the Good News maximizes the opportunity of salvation. However, we cannot preclude the possibility of Jews responding in faith to God’s revelation in the Tenach.”² Yet there is a recent surfacing of inclusivism among Messianic leaders, many of whom were formerly exclusivist.³ This

1 Wide is a relative term. My knowledge of the views of Messianic leaders comes from correspondence within the organization I affiliate with, the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations. Approximately a dozen leaders affirmed inclusivism and/or eschatological proclamation during a debate on soteriology via email correspondence. Less than a dozen affirmed exclusivism (that salvation is limited to those who consciously trust Messiah before death). This was no scientific sampling, but rather an informal debate.

2 *Jewish Roots* (Rockville: Davar, 1986), 172.

3 Exclusivism is the view that only those who consciously trust in Messiah in this lifetime will be saved. Again, my statement that some Messianic leaders were formerly exclusivist comes through personal knowledge and not through a survey. I call this a recent surfacing because the prevalence of inclusivism in Messianic Jewish leadership became widely known following a controversy over an interview by the *Jerusalem Post* on July 3, 2003 (see below).

may reflect a recent trend in evangelical thought epitomized by such books as *No Other Name* by John Sanders.

According to Sanders, and others, many people will find that they knew Messiah all along without realizing it:

Salvation for the unevangelized is made possible only by the redemptive work of Jesus, but God applies that work even to those who are ignorant of the atonement. God does this as people respond in trusting faith to the revelation they have. In other words, unevangelized persons may be saved on the basis of Christ's work if they respond in faith to the God who created them.⁴

John Sanders gives an example of inclusivism in the thought of C.S. Lewis:

In his well-known *Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis tells of a man named Emeth (truth) who had been raised in a country where the chief god was named Tash. Emeth fought against the country of Narnia with its God Aslan (the Christ-figure), whom Emeth thought was evil. Through a series of circumstances Emeth has a vision of the god Tash and realizes that Tash is the evil one. Repulsed by the vision, he wanders into the woods. There Aslan meets him and following dialogue ensues: "Alas, Lord, I am no son of Thine but the servant of Tash." He answered, "Child, all the service thou has done to Tash, I account as service done to me."⁵

Thus inclusivism is a unique challenge to the particularity of the gospel. Unlike universalism and pluralism, inclusivism does not deny the centrality of the atonement, only the requirement of conscious faith in the atonement.

I can't pretend to know the motives of Messianic leaders who espouse inclusivism, yet I think it fair to observe that inclusivism is a doctrine especially appealing to those of us who love Israel. Having found much truth and beauty in rabbinic forms, who has not wondered if at least some practitioners of rabbinic Judaism are saved apart from faith in Messiah? The same impulse applies to Jewish thought which sometimes comes very close to New Testament truth. Who has not wondered if Levinas or Heschel might have been close enough to the truth without Messiah to be accepted by God?

Yet inclusivism is far from a friend to the work of making disciples in Judea and Samaria. Not only is inclusivism antithetical to the scriptures, but it is also a great de-motivator to our task of making Messiah known

4 John Sanders, *What About Those Who Never Heard?* (Downer's Grove: IVP, 1995), 36.

5 Sanders, 45. The quotation is taken from C.S. Lewis's *The Last Battle*. Notice, contra Sanders, that in the Lewis passage, Emeth first turns away from Tash before coming to Aslan, a process of conversion.

to our Jewish brothers. My aim is to provide a concise critique of inclusivism and to note the dangers to Jewish outreach.

A Few Arguments Against Inclusivism

Inclusivism is not the same as universalism or pluralism. Inclusivism recognizes the centrality of the atoning death of Yeshua. Inclusivism also differs from eschatological evangelism in that a knowledge of the gospel is not necessary to be saved. Inclusivism posits that salvation through Messiah is possible without knowledge of Messiah. People are saved by responding to the light they have through General Revelation. There are a number of biblical, theological, and practical problems with inclusivism, of which I will briefly list a few:

1) Inclusivism reverses the order of God's grace and judgment. As Sanders puts it, "God includes all in grace before there is an exclusion in judgment."⁶ This formulation should sound remarkably different from the long-held view that all are under judgment unless they respond to God's grace revealed in Yeshua. Texts such as John 3:18 teach clearly that "whoever does not believe in him is condemned already," and, as Ronald Nash declares, "I am unaware of one place in his writings where Sanders deals with John 3:18."⁷

2) Inclusivism fails to account for the rejection of what can be known via General Revelation. Sanders argues that people will be judged for the revelation they have.⁸ Yet, as Ronald Nash points out, General Revelation includes such doctrines as God's creation of the world, the personality and moral law of God, as well as our own failure to follow God's moral law. Many of the world's religions deny one or more of these truths evident in General Revelation. Thus, it is not true that people of other religions have accepted even the light of General Revelation.

3) Inclusivism when applied in the Jewish context overlooks the rejection of God's Special Revelation in the Hebrew Bible. Some ideas in modern Judaism are antithetical to a literal reading of the Hebrew Bible. Jewish universalism (all Israel has a share in the world to come) is overthrown by numerous texts, most notably the wilderness narrative.⁹ Jewish reliance on community prayer, charity, and good deeds for atonement also misses the point of numerous Torah and prophetic texts. How can it be said that Jewish people rejecting Yeshua have responded to the light they have?

6 Sanders, 35.

7 Sanders, 65.

8 "God does this as people respond in trusting faith to the revelation they have." Sanders, 36.

9 The faithless in the wilderness were not allowed to enter the land.



4) Inclusivism should be evidenced in the mission field. If inclusivism is true, and there are in fact, numbers of people who have come to saving faith in the true God without knowing Messiah, then why aren't these people turning up in world missions? Why aren't missionaries to pioneer fields meeting Buddhists and Hindus who say, "This faith you proclaim is what I have believed all along. Now I know who the God is I was trying to serve." Why in Jewish outreach are we not finding faithful religious people who say, "This Yeshua is the one I have been serving without realizing it?" Turning to faith in Yeshua involves rejecting some previously held falsehoods, as even Emeth did in C.S. Lewis's story cited above. These falsehoods should not be minimized, but should be seen as the tragic barriers keeping people from God's love.

5) Inclusivism fails to account for Paul's evangelistic urgency in Romans 9:3 and 10:14. Sanders argues that evangelization is still vital because the unevangelized who are nonetheless saved are "not experiencing the fullness of salvation in Christ."¹⁰ In other words, we may not have to worry about their eternal destiny, but we do want to see them living in the power of Messiah. Yet this does not explain Paul's willingness to be accursed if his brothers could be saved. Nor does it do justice to Paul's radical call, "How can they hear without someone preaching?" (Rom 10:14 ESV).

6) Inclusivism fails to take seriously Paul's statement of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Sanders says, "Paul does not say one has to know these facts to be saved, only that he had proclaimed this information to the Corinthians."¹¹ Ronald Nash calls this "a serious dilution of Paul's meaning."¹² The gospel of 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 is not only what Paul preached, but also that in which the Corinthians stand (1 Cor 15:1). In other words, their salvation is in that very message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Messiah.

The Practical Results of Inclusivism for Jewish Outreach

I have observed with sadness the attitudes of some Messianic Jewish leaders to Jewish outreach. I came into the world of Messianic congregations after serving for more than five years with a Jewish mission.

Prior to making the move, I was already aware of tension between missions and congregations. I knew that to some degree the tensions had to do with disagreements about methods. Obviously, congregations would tend to prefer communal and relational models of outreach while missions would be largely limited to confrontational means. Missions lack the requisite communities to evangelize any other way than going out and confronting Jewish people in the streets and through referrals.

¹⁰ John Sanders, *No Other Name* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 267.

¹¹ Sanders 1992, 215.

¹² Sanders 1995, 110.

What I imagined was a disagreement about methods turned out to be an emotional repulsion for confrontational evangelism. I was shocked and dismayed when a respected Messianic leader expressed his disdain for Jewish missions with mocking and anger. What sort of world had I left and what sort of world was I coming into?

I pondered and tried to understand the vehemence of the reaction against Jewish missions. I saw the mocking and anger in more than one place in congregational circles. It did not occur to me that part of the problem was an actual disagreement about doctrine and not merely methodology.

The realization that doctrine was the real issue came in July 2003 when Jamie Cowen and Rich Nichol were interviewed by the *Jerusalem Post*. The reporter asked, "So, are Jews who don't believe in Jesus doomed to hell?" Cowen and Nichol responded, "No, absolutely not." The reporter went on to say, "He said that the UMJC does not believe that Jews who have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah are doomed to hell."¹³

A debate ensued via email between leaders in the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations. Some expressed the eschatological evangelism position, some inclusivism, some remained agnostic on the issue, and a small number argued for exclusivism. My eyes were opened. The tension between congregations and missions is more than methodological. In many cases the tension is doctrinal as well.

I am not aware of any Jewish mission organizations who espouse inclusivism. Yet I am aware of a significant number of Messianic congregational leaders who do. I cannot help but think that the theological divide increases the fellowship divide.

Inclusivism will hurt Jewish outreach, not only because it is untrue, but because it erodes motivation for evangelism. John Sanders' protest aside, those who believe that Jewish people can be saved within Judaism will not be motivated to challenge their Jewish acquaintances to consider Yeshua.

Inclusivism could possibly reverse that motivation. Our deep love for a religious Jewish friend might lead us to speculate that they are included by God without faith in Messiah. We might fear to find out the truth by challenging them to see Messiah. It is more comfortable to let them be saved without Messiah than to risk them rejecting Messiah and being lost for certain.

Theology makes a difference on the street and in the congregation. Theology is not merely an academic exercise. Our theologies of salvation have a bearing on people we know and love.

Inclusivism will hurt Jewish outreach, not only because it is untrue, but because it erodes motivation for evangelism



13 Radoszkowicz, Abigail. "Zaka Gets Donation from Messianic Jews." *Jerusalem Post*. July 3, 2003.

The issues involved in soteriology are too precious to ignore. Too much is at stake for people on opposing sides of these issues to be quiet and hope the tensions go away. The community of people who love Israel and want Israel to know Messiah is too small to lack cooperation and fellowship. If we will not work together, our work will be less effective, as we are already experiencing.

It is my prayer that these theological issues be attended with much dialogue from differing positions. Maybe there is more common ground than we think. Maybe some will think more clearly as a result of dialogue. Surely open discussion about the doctrine of salvation and the Jewish people is possible among those who call on Yeshua as Lord.

Author info:

Derek Lemman is the leader of Hope of David Messianic Congregation in Atlanta, Georgia, and is a member of the International Coordinating Committee of the LCJE.
derek4messiah@yahoo.com

Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity

– *Some Lessons from a History Project*



By **Oskar Skarsaune**

This essay is a “report on findings” from the international project *A History of Jewish Believers in Jesus—The First Five Centuries* (edited by myself and Reidar Hvalvik, henceforward abbreviated *HJB* 1, forthcoming, we hope, in 2005). I am not going to present the narrative story on Jewish Believers that resulted from the project; that story will be told in a later issue of *Mishkan*. I am rather going to present my personal reflections on some of the main questions raised by the phenomenon of “Jewish Christianity” in Antiquity, and some tentative conclusions to these reflections. I emphasize the words *personal* and *tentative*; given the nature and extent of the available evidence, any claim at full objectivity or final certitude would be very immature. We were 16 contributors to the *HJB* 1 project, and tried as best we could to profit from each other’s contributions and the feedback given to our own. But there are not many points on which there would be full agreement even among us, and I see this as a strength rather than a weakness of this project. The following reflections represent my own way of looking at things, and cannot claim the full agreement of any other scholar within the project.¹

On the Definition of Terms

This point is – strictly speaking – not about findings, but about the main heuristic tool to make findings: how do we define the people we are looking for? It is not by accident that most histories and many studies on Jewish Believers in Antiquity have preferred another main term for the object of investigation: Jewish Christianity, Judaeo-Christianity, *Judenchristentum*, and the like. Common to these terms is a basically *ideological* definition of the people we are talking about. The term *Jewish* is given an ideological-theological meaning. Sometimes, and in recent times very often, the main element in Jewishness is seen to be *continued*

¹ Here and in the following, I refrain from giving references to primary sources and relevant secondary literature. Once and for all I refer the reader to the forthcoming *HJB—The First Five Centuries*, in which full references and extensive argument for the points of view presented in this essay are given.

observance of the Law, or to be more precise, observance of those elements in the Law that were considered obligatory for Israel alone, and not for gentiles. Sometimes, in recent times more seldom, a theological criterion is added: since the “high” Christology of the predominantly gentile church was thought to be essentially non-Jewish, a “low” Christology was thought to be typical of Jewish Christianity.² Some scholars would like to make one or both of these criteria the only ones, so that a Jew by birth who as a believer in Jesus abandoned his or her observance of the Law, should be regarded a gentile Christian. Born gentiles who adopted the theology and practice of Jewish Christianity should then be regarded Jewish Christians. Other scholars would prefer to include the criterion of ethnicity, so that “Jewish Christian” designates a believer in Jesus who (1) is a Jew by birth, *and* who (2) maintains a Jewish identity by continuing to observe the Law in a Jewish way. According to this way of thinking, born Jews who – as Christians – abandoned observance of the Law, should no longer be characterized as “Jewish Christians,” but only as “Christian Jews.” Gentiles who adopted a Jewish way of life should then be regarded as “Judaizers,” not Jewish Christians.

The latter way of defining the terms has gained some following in recent years, and has been adopted also in our project. But we decided very early in the process that to us “Christian Jews” were as interesting and relevant as “Jewish Christians,” and that we needed a term which covered both groups. This term would make ethnicity the one and only decisive criterion: the people we were interested in were *all those Jews (by birth or conversion) who in one way or other believed in Jesus as their savior*. We decided to call these people “Jewish Believers in Jesus.” This term has the advantage not only of being inclusive of different types of Jewish Believers, but also of being free of the ideological difficulties in terms like “Jewish Christian.”

As is well known, many modern Jewish Believers consider “Christian” a term indicating a non-Jewish way of life, and perhaps also a non-Jewish (if not to say anti-Jewish) way of formulating faith in Jesus. “Jewish Christian” therefore sounds very much like “square circle” to many modern readers, especially within the community of Messianic Jews. That was also one reason to avoid it as much as possible in our project, and to prefer “Jewish Believers in Jesus.” Even so, “Jewish Christian” is such a well-established term for a specific type of Jewish Believer in Jesus that we could not discard it completely. Besides, there is no adjective corresponding to Jewish Believers in Jesus. Here, “Jewish Christian” as an adjective is as good as indispensable.

One could also add another consideration. Using “Jewish Christian” as a modern scholarly term could be seen as an effective strategy in reclaiming the original meaning of “Christian.” In Antiquity “Christian” simply

2 Since this Christological criterion has been accorded little if any weight in the most recent definitions of Jewish Christianity – in my view rightly so – I will disregard it in the following discussion.

meant “follower of (the) Christ,” regardless of the ethnic origin of the believer. It was the common name in Greek of all believers in Jesus, just as *nozrim* or *nazoraye*, “followers of the Nazorean,” was the common name of believers in Jesus in Hebrew and Aramaic/Syriac – regardless of ethnic origin. (More on this below.)

Not “Gentile Christianity” and “Jewish Christianity”

In defining a Jewish Believer who adheres to a Jewish way of life as the more authentic *Jewish* Believer, one assumes a clear criterion of Jewishness: *observance of the Law*. One also easily conjures up a total picture of early Christianity along the following lines: in the beginning, there was Jewish Christianity, and Jewish Christianity only. The only difference between Jewish Believers in Jesus and other Jews was that Jewish Believers believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Then came Paul, and with him gentile Christianity began. Paul taught gentile believers that they should not become Jews; they did not need to get circumcised and observe the commandments peculiar to Israel. Thus arose a new type of Christianity that had little in common with Jewish Christianity, but which soon eclipsed it numerically. When this happened, Jewish Christianity faced a dilemma not foreseen by Paul, who himself had remained a Law-obedient Jew throughout his life: (1) either to remain Law-observant, but become isolated and marginalized; or (2) to assimilate into the dominant non-Jewish church by abandoning a Jewish lifestyle, and hence to disappear as *Jewish* Believers. According to current wisdom, both processes took place simultaneously, but the latter option was the most common and the one that prevailed after the fifth century C.E., when Jewish Christianity, defined by the first option, more or less became extinct.

If this picture were correct, one implication necessarily would follow: assimilation of Jewish Believers into predominantly gentile communities was something that was *forced upon* these believers by the triumphant gentile church. It was rarely if ever the result of their own free choice. And if they made this choice voluntarily, many modern Jewish Believers deem it a wrong choice, a choice they would never have made, had the gentile church allowed them to remain Jewish.

I have no intention of contradicting this picture on all points and establishing its stark opposite as the historical truth. As I see it, this picture is in need of nuance rather than outright contradiction. But on the last point mentioned above, the one concerning forced assimilation, I come very close to a direct contradiction. Let me elaborate this point by saying a few words about Paul.

I sympathize with the recent trend in Pauline studies which makes Paul more Jewish than he has been painted traditionally. I agree that Paul himself – normally – continued a Jewish way of life after he had come to faith in Jesus, and that he did *not* encourage other Jewish Believers to break with this lifestyle. The accusation that Paul did in fact discourage Jewish Believers from a Jewish lifestyle, reported in Acts 21:21, is obvi-



ously thought by Luke to be a *false* accusation. But this is not the whole story. In the good interest of making Paul a good, Law-observant Jew, one should not suppress the clear implications of what Paul himself says in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the Law I became as one under the Law (though I myself am not under the Law) so that I might win those under the Law. To those outside the Law I became as one outside the Law (though I am not free from God's Law but am under Christ's Law) so that I might win those outside the Law.

Paul obviously took great pride in being a strictly Law-obedient Jew – before his calling outside Damascus and after. But after the encounter outside Damascus, this was not his ultimate and final standard of behavior. It had been subordinated to an even greater and more final standard: to obey in all cases the Law of God as it had been incarnated anew in the person of Jesus. In certain circumstances that meant to become like a gentile to the gentiles. There is an undeniable element of “assimilation” here, in the original sense of this term: becoming like, *similar*, to someone. And notice carefully that this was not something peculiar to Paul. According to what he says in Galatians 2:14, when Peter came to Antioch (and before “certain people came from James”), Peter, “though being a Jew, lived like a Gentile and not like a Jew.” In other words, when living in a mixed community of Jewish and gentile believers, *Peter*, like Paul, abandoned Jewish practices – presumably those which made full table fellowship and full social integration between Jews and non-Jews difficult.

I find it extremely difficult to avoid this conclusion, unless one resorts to strained exegesis of these and other similar passages. And this is my first point here: assimilation, becoming a “Gentile to Gentiles,” was not something forced upon Jewish Believers by a triumphant gentile church. It was a missionary strategy followed by the early Jewish Believers themselves, be they Peter, Barnabas, Paul, or other envoys from the Mother Church at Jerusalem.

My second point is this: this strategy did not make them un-Jewish. There was nothing un-Jewish about it. Did Peter or Paul – in acting like this – have any consciousness of *abandoning Judaism* or becoming un-Jewish? I would say certainly not – rather the contrary.

There are traces in rabbinic literature of a doctrine that has mostly been suppressed in this literature (because it is contrary to its dominant tendency): *in the Messianic age there will be changes to the role as well as to the contents of the Torah*. One midrash explicitly refers to the abolishment of dietary laws. This doctrine was by no means un-Jewish. It was not un-Jewish to think that the Messianic age would mean radical changes to many things. When Peter and Paul made compromises with those commandments in the Law that prohibited full table fellowship be-



tween Jews and gentiles, they did *not* thereby abandon Judaism. On the contrary, they took the full consequences of the eschatological dimension of their Judaism. Acting like they did, was something deeply Jewish. The most profound difference between them and their non-believing Jewish compatriots was not the question of the Law's interpretation, but the question of in which time period they were living – the Days of the Law or the Days of the Messiah.

For Jewish Believers thinking along these lines, observance of the Law, and the degree of observance, would be *a question of circumstances much more than a question of theology*. In areas where local communities were mainly made up of Jewish Believers one has to imagine that customs and lifestyle remained Jewish, not only on an individual level, but also on the communal level. This would be the case regardless of which school of theology the community in question adhered to: Pauline, Petrine, Matthean, Johannine, or otherwise. We observe evidence of such communities in the Land of Israel until and beyond the Bar Kokhba war, but gradually declining during the latter half of the second century and through the third.

We seem to have evidence of a more vigorous presence of such communities in the Transjordan and Syria from the second through the fifth century C.E. Epiphanius in the 370s, and Jerome a few decades later, call them *Nazoreans*, probably using the common Syriac name for Christians (in general) as the name of these groups which were known by no specific sect-name, because they were not sectarian. Jerome, who is best informed concerning these people, and knows and quotes some of their literature, knows nothing that is wrong with their theology. They apparently have a normally “high” Christology, and seem to recognize the apostleship of Paul. Jerome seems genuinely puzzled that this could be so, considering that they still practiced an entirely Jewish lifestyle. To Jerome this was a contradiction, but we need not go any further than to his contemporary Augustine to find a theologian who accepted that this – under certain circumstances – was possible and even theologically defensible. We have every reason to believe that acceptance of this was even greater on the grass-root level within the gentile church than it was among its leaders. In the second century we find the layman Justin saying that as long as Jewish Believers did not force gentile believers to keep the Law, it was quite okay for the Jewish Believers themselves to keep the Law like other Jews. Justin adds that there are some Christians who agree with him on this, while others take a stricter view.

observance of the Law, and the degree of observance, would be a question of circumstances much more than a question of theology

In mixed communities of Jewish and gentile believers – and such communities would be the norm rather than the exception throughout the Mediterranean diaspora – the practical compromises necessary for full table fellowship between Jewish and non-Jewish Believers would be the

overruling concern. As Jewish Believers increasingly became the minority, and often a small minority at that, it was probably more often the case that *they* had to make the greatest concessions in this compromise situation. Practicing a fully Jewish lifestyle would be a near practical impossibility under these circumstances. Let me emphasize once again: this did *not* necessarily imply that these people had a different theology with regard to the Law than had the Nazoreans of Transjordan and Syria. It needs not imply more than that their circumstances were different. The Nazoreans had every reason to be "Jews to Jews"; the Jewish Believers of the Greek diaspora had very often every reason to be "Gentiles to Gentiles."

This is not to say that each and every Jewish Christian community in the East, and each and every mixed community in the Greek diaspora, shared the same Pauline theology. The available evidence rather points in the direction of a quite wide range of different theologies and different profiles in different areas, and even in the same areas at different times. But the *practical conclusions* that followed from Pauline theology with regard to Jewish practice in a Jewish environment, and accommodation and assimilation in a gentile environment, were probably shared by other communities with other theological profiles than Paul's.

The net result of these considerations is that the traditional theological construct of a Pauline "Gentile Christianity" versus a partly anti-Pauline "Jewish Christianity" more or less evaporates as inadequate. Instead of one big fault line between these two segments of the early church, one should probably envisage many, but lesser, criss-crossing fault lines that followed other formations in the varied terrain of early Christianity.

What has been argued in general terms in this paragraph, will perhaps become more concrete by the examples given in the following.

The Jerusalem Network and Paul's Network Were Extensive and Interlocking

In *HJB* 1 Richard Bauckham presented a review of the persons we know by name (from the New Testament and early Patristic writers) who belonged to the Mother Church in Jerusalem before 70 C.E. In addition to the twelve apostles, they were at least the following. (1) Hebrew or Aramaic speakers: Mary, the mother of Jesus; James, Joses, Simon and Judas, brothers of Jesus; Clopas and Mary and their son Simon, Jesus' relatives; others were Addai, Ananias and Sapphira, Joseph Barsabbas Justus, Joseph of Arimathea, Matthias, Nicodemus, Thebouthis; (2) Greek speakers (or bilingual): (a) the Seven: Stephen, Philip (the Evangelist and his four daughters), Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolaus; (b) others: Andronicus and Junia, John Mark and his mother Mary, Simon of Cyrene and his family, Barnabas, Judas Barsabbas, Manson, Rhoda, Silas. That is about 50 names, and if we include their families as believers, we get a group of people associated with these names only of about 200 people. The Greek-speakers were mostly diaspora Jews resident in Jerusalem; in the above list they make out a third of the total group. This

could well be typical of the ratio between “Hebrews” and “Hellenists” (diaspora Jews) in Jerusalem as a whole in those days. This at once corrects one popular notion about the Mother Church in Jerusalem: it did *not* keep apart in isolation from the vibrant communities of diaspora Jews all around the Mediterranean and also in the East. On the contrary, Jerusalem was the natural center of diaspora Judaism. There was much traveling and much migration in both directions between Jerusalem and the different diaspora communities. This was true for Jews in general, and also for the community of believers in Jesus, as testified extensively in the Book of Acts. To portray the Mother Church in Jerusalem as some kind of isolated backwater, living its own life completely isolated from the Christian communities in the diaspora, betrays lack of historical insight.

The same point is illustrated from the other side if we make a corresponding list of persons named either as co-workers or as acquaintances of Paul (in his letters and in Acts). One is struck by the significant *overlap* between this list and the list above. Of the 17 diaspora Jews named as members of the Mother Church in Jerusalem, we find five (one third) mentioned as co-workers of Paul: *Andronicus and Junia, John Mark, Barnabas, and Silas*. In addition we can add the names of some 20 persons among Paul’s co-workers that were also Jewish Believers, but from a diaspora background. Whether any of these at some period were members of the Jerusalem community, is unknown. This brings the total number of Jewish Believers who were acquaintances and co-workers of Paul to 25; the total number of individuals named as acquaintances and co-workers in the Pauline letters and Acts is about 88. In other words, among the great number of persons in Paul’s network, supporting and assisting him in his mission, close to a third were Jewish Believers, and among these at least five were members of the Jerusalem community and network.

The point I am making here corresponds to and supports the point made above. Not only was the Mother Church in Jerusalem not isolated from the diaspora; the mission of Paul and associates in the diaspora was by no means isolated and separate from the greater community of Jewish Believers, in the diaspora as well as in Jerusalem. This in itself may seem trivial, and the kind of evidence listed above may seem strikingly “untheological.” But that is, historically speaking, the strength of this evidence. The map of the “Jerusalem network” and the “Pauline network” that we extract from the sources, and the overlap between the two networks, is evidence uninfluenced by any theological tendency in the sources. The tendency of Paul himself in his letters, and of Luke in Acts, is to some extent to isolate Paul and put him in a category all by himself, as if he were the one and only missionary to the gentiles. When modern scholars construe a “Pauline Christianity” that is the dominating antithesis to the “Jewish Christianity” of the Jerusalem community (and its daughter communities then and later), they fall prey to this ten-

among the great number of persons in Paul’s network, supporting and assisting him in his mission, close to a third were Jewish Believers



dency, and even exaggerate it beyond what the sources say. The existence of the two interlocking networks within which Paul operated, is sufficient to question in a fundamental way the isolation into which Paul and his “Law-free Gospel” are often set. When read carefully, and with attention to this problem, the Pauline letters and Acts tell basically the same story as the name-lists presented above.

A Regional Case Study: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia

If the picture indicated above – mixed communities of gentile and Jewish Believers being quite “normal” in the diaspora – is accurate, we would expect some evidence of the continued influence of Jewish Believers in many diaspora communities, especially in those areas where they made up a substantial element. It seems that this was the case in Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia (Babylonia) more than anywhere else, and I shall comment briefly on possible evidence of this influence in these areas.

It is a well known fact that in the late second century there was a heated discussion between the leading bishops in Asia Minor and the leading bishop of the West, the bishop of Rome, concerning the right term for celebrating Passover. The believers in Asia Minor celebrated Passover on the same date as the local Jews, though probably extending their celebration throughout the night until early next morning. The believers in Rome celebrated Passover the evening and night before the first Sunday after the Jewish Passover eve, and had their main celebration during the regular worship Sunday morning. The traditional way of interpreting this has been to think that both ways of celebrating Passover among Christians were early, and that they had been competing for quite some time when this debate erupted. In recent years, scholars have re-evaluated the whole question, and many have come to the conclusion that the Roman practice was quite new in the last two decades of the second century, and that prior to this date, the practice in Asia Minor was the only existing one. You either celebrated Passover on the same date as other Jews, or not at all. In areas where Passover was not celebrated, the common understanding among believers would probably have been that they celebrated Passover on a weekly basis, each Sunday, and that this supplanted the Jewish custom of Passover once a year. Since there seems to have been a tendency among gentile believers of thinking that Jewish festivals in general were no longer obligatory for them, this should be considered a typical gentile Christian practice.

In other words: the “quartodeciman” (celebrating Passover on the eve of 14th Nisan) practice of Asia Minor is very likely the result of the strong influence of Jewish Believers in this area. And in one of the documents from the debate between Asia Minor and Rome, ca. 195 C.E., which Eusebius has preserved for us, there seems to be direct evidence that this was in fact the case. The document in question is a letter from bishop Polycrates of Ephesus to the bishop of Rome. In this letter, Polycrates

points to the fact that he is by no means alone in celebrating Passover on the 14th. He is himself the eighth bishop in an illustrious succession of seven predecessors, whom he enumerates as follows: the Apostle *Philip*; *John* (the author of the Fourth Gospel); *Polycarp* of Smyrna; *Thraseas* of Eumonia; *Sagaris* of Laodicea, *Papirius*; and *Melito* of Sardis. Polycrates calls these seven his *syngeneis*. This could either mean they were all his relatives; or, more probably, his *countrymen* (this is the meaning in which Paul applies this term in Rom 9:3). In any case, the inclusion of Philip and John in this list clearly indicates that *all of the seven were Jewish*, as was Polycrates himself.

When this implication of Polycrates' letter was first pointed out to me, I felt an almost instinctive disinclination to accept it. Was the well-known bishop Polycarp of Smyrna really a Jewish Believer? And the (in)famously anti-Jewish Melito of Sardis – was he himself Jewish? But then, when I approached the literature connected with these two figures with this new question on my mind, there were in fact some features in Polycarp's martyrdom; and in Melito's *On the Pasch*, which made excellent sense on the assumption that the conflict with the Jews in these writings was *intra-mural*; that is, a conflict between Jews believing in Jesus and Jews who rejected this faith. This seems to me to be especially clear in Melito. The whole question of which polemic against Jews and Judaism is intramural, and which is external, is extremely interesting in itself, and of great consequence in assessing the problem of early Christian "anti-Jewish" polemic; but I cannot go further into that here.

Another interesting aspect of the quartodeciman practice of Asia Minor, is the fact that – apart from Rome – other churches with another practice seem, by and large, to have considered the problem of how and when to celebrate Passover as a question where differences of practice were no major problem. This is the position of Irenaeus of Lyons, and he was probably more representative of the Western communities than the stricter bishop of Rome. In other words, a "Jewish" practice concerning Passover was widely tolerated by other churches with another practice.

It is interesting to notice that something similar is attested for Asia Minor at a much later period, in the latter part of the fourth century, the 370s. At that time, some of the bishops of the Novatian church in Phrygia, Asia Minor, decided that (presumably) local tradition of celebrating the Christian Easter (Saturday/Sunday) within the Jewish Week of Unleavened Bread should be kept, in spite of the ordinary practice of the Novatian church elsewhere (which followed the Nicene calculation of Easter, designed to separate Christian Easter from Jewish Passover). This resulted in a synod of Novatian bishops. They pronounced that the question of date for Passover was "indifferent"; each community was free to follow the practice they saw most opportune. One of the Novatian church leaders to defend the more "Jewish" practice was Sabatius, himself a Jewish Believer. Nobody found fault with his practice, only with the fact that he did not himself tolerate others who acted differently.

In Syria and Mesopotamia quartodeciman Passover seems to have been



even more universal than in Asia Minor, and during a longer period of time. In the normative and "orthodox" Church Order called *The Didascalia of the Apostles* (preserved in Syriac, mid-third century) it is said to the gentile Christians that they should observe Passover at the same time "as your brethren from the People," that is, the Jewish Believers, who celebrated at the same time as their non-believing fellow Jews. Towards the end of the fourth century we hear Christians from Mesopotamia saying to their fellow believers (presumably in the West): "You abandoned the fathers' Paschal rite in Constantine's time from deference to the emperor, and changed the day to suit the emperor."

This is not the only evidence of a strong and continuous influence of Jewish Believers on church life in general in the regions of Syria and Mesopotamia. For further details and argument I refer the reader to the forthcoming *HJB* 1 volume.

How Sectarian Were Jewish Believers?

The net result of the evidence and argument presented above is no doubt this: most Jewish Believers were not sectarian at all, but surprisingly well integrated into local communities of mixed composition. In areas where they were numerically significant, they were even allowed a greater amount of "Jewish" practice than elsewhere, and gentile believers were often encouraged to follow suit. Viewed from this angle, how are the reports on Jewish Christian sects contained in the writings of the Church Fathers to be evaluated?

I said in the introductory paragraph of this essay that the views expressed here are my personal ones, and not anything like a consensus position. This applies particularly to what I say in the following.

Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius and Epiphanius all speak of a Jewish Christian sect they call *Ebionaioi*, Ebionites. This Greek word is partly a rendering, partly a misunderstanding, of the Hebrew term *Ebionim*, "The Poor Ones." If this term had been fully understood, it should have been translated into Greek *Hoi Ptochoi*. The way *Ebionaioi* is constructed, its normal meaning would be "followers of Ebion," and this was how the term was understood by Tertullian, possibly also by Irenaeus himself, who is the first to use it. In this way the "father" of this sect, the man "Ebion," came into being. Among later fathers, it is only Origen and Epiphanius (who both spent many years in the Land of Israel) who knew that *ebion* really meant poor. The following points seem to have been typical of the *ebionim* described by Irenaeus: (1) exclusive use of Matthew (not of the other gospels, especially not of John); (2) the claim that Jesus, in order to be David's royal son, was the biological son of Joseph, who, according to Matthew's genealogy, was David's royal son; (3) the claim that Jesus had been elected and anointed to be the Messiah because of righteousness; and (4) the doctrine that all Jesus' disciples (Jewish or gentile) should follow their Master's example in obeying the whole Torah fully. There is hardly any doubt that a group of Jewish Believers holding

these views really existed, because there is evidence in Justin Martyr (ca. 150–60) to corroborate it. But interestingly, Justin does not name these Jewish Believers by a sect-name. He does not call them *Ebionites*, nor anything else. On the other hand, in the usually well-informed Origen, a hundred years later than Justin, there are clear indications that Origen could use *Ebionites* as a general term for *all* Jewish Believers, adding that some of them did *not* hold the doctrines of the group usually called *Ebionites* (that is, called *Ebionites* by Irenaeus and those dependent of him). This all makes sense based on the following assumption: *Ebionim* was originally a self-designation that was common among many, perhaps all Jewish Believers in Semitic-speaking areas (the Land of Israel and Transjordan/Syria). They took it from the many passages of the Hebrew Bible in which “the poor” are that part of the people of Israel who are persecuted and downtrodden by the rich and mighty and the leaders of the people, but are also those to whom God promises his salvation. They may also have been inspired by the first of the Matthean beatitudes: blessed are the poor...

Irenaeus had some knowledge of the same type or group of Jewish Believers that Justin had described before him, but in Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses* a sect-name (and preferably a sect-founder) was needed for them, in line with the scheme of the book. Since Irenaeus knew no such name (none existed), he chose to call them by the only name he knew to be specific for Jewish Believers: *ebionim*, rendered *ebionaioi*, “followers of Ebion,” in Greek. Once invented as sect-name for this specific type of Jewish Believers by Irenaeus, the “sect” of the Ebionites was to have a long literary after-life, reaching its peak in Epiphanius. He heaps upon the poor Ebionites each and every document he suspects of being Jewish Christian in character and origin, resulting in a confused and contradictory picture of their practice and doctrines. Epiphanius is aware of this, but puts the blame for the contradictions, not on himself for poor scholarship, but on the *Ebionites*. They contradict themselves all the time! Surprisingly often, modern scholars take Epiphanius’ construction of Ebionite history, practice and doctrine more or less at face value. But if anything in the ancient sources is in need of deconstruction, it is Epiphanius’ picture of the Ebionites. In the *HJB* 1 and elsewhere I have argued that neither the Pseudo-Clementine writings, nor the Elchesaite writings, nor the so-called Ebionite Gospel – all of which Epiphanius used as primary sources to Ebionite teaching – have anything at all to do with the Ebionites (as defined by Irenaeus). When the necessary source criticism is done, Epiphanius’ Ebionites evaporate and stand forth as his own fanciful construction. By implication, there is also a modern monograph which becomes exposed as without sufficient basis in careful source analysis: Hans Joachim Schoeps’ *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*. Following Epiphanius, Schoeps made the Pseudo-Clementines his main source of evidence on the “Ebionites” whom Schoeps thought were the most immediate successors of the *Urgemeinde* of Jerusalem of the first century. My personal opinion is that the so-called “Jewish Christianity” of



the Pseudo-Clementines is, for the greatest part, entirely artificial (except for the passage *Rec.* 1.27–71). These writings appear “Jewish Christian” because of the following factors: (1) According to the literary fiction of these writings, the spokesmen for the author’s point of view are Jesus’ disciples, led by Peter and are made to speak as Jewish Believers. (2) The great opponent addressed in these writings is often Marcion, whose spokesman in the literary fiction had to be a contemporary of Peter, hence Simon Magus of Samaria. In attacking Marcion, Marcion’s great authority Paul is unavoidably part of the package attacked, and in defending the Twelve Jewish “Ur-Apostles” and James, the author often comes out as very “Jewish” and anti-Paul. In reality, he is often more anti-Marcion than anti-Paul. (3) The author’s own position is so close to the known position of the Syrian teacher Bardaisan, that he could well be one of the latter’s disciples. Bardaisan was violently anti-Marcion, but himself had some gnostic leanings, which would explain the gnostic flavor of some of the doctrines in the Pseudo-Clementines. Bardaisan was not a Jewish Believer, and the echo of his views in the Pseudo-Clementines does by no means mark them out as Jewish Christian.

By what I have said already it has become clear that I do not regard the Book of Elxai and the Elchesaite movement as Jewish Christian. With regard to the second Jewish Christian sect named and discussed at some length by Epiphanius and Jerome, the Nazoreans, I have already indicated my view early in this essay. Epiphanius knew that in the Transjordan and Syria there existed Jewish Believers who were not Ebionites dogmatically speaking and they probably had an entirely orthodox Christology. Since Epiphanius could not call them Ebionites, he called them by the common name for Christians in this area: *nazoraye* in Syriac, which he rendered *nazoraioi* in Greek. Jerome accepted this as the name of Jewish Believers in this area, and had such regard for the doctrinal and exegetical value of some of their gospel versions and other writings that he quoted from them in his own commentaries. Thus arose the “sect” of the Nazoreans. In reality, they may well have been entirely “orthodox” Christians in their theology, but living in circumstances which made maintenance of an entirely Jewish way of life the only natural option.

With this I have to conclude these very selective remarks on some of the findings I personally found interesting and often surprising during our work with the *HJB* 1. One other area that would have been rewarding to go into, is the surprisingly rich literary legacy left behind by the Jewish Believers of Antiquity. But once again I must refer the reader to the forthcoming *HJB* 1. (If remarks like this serve as appetizers for the forthcoming volume, I am, of course, not inclined to complain.)

Author info:

Oskar Skarsuane is professor of Patristic Studies and Early Church History at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, Oslo. He is Chief editor of the Caspari Center project “The History of Jewish Believers in Jesus.”
skarsaune@mf.no

First "Organized" Bible Work in 19th Century Jerusalem (1816-1831)

Part II: Christoph Burckhardt in Jerusalem, 1818

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



In the first article in this series the year "1816" was questioned as the year for the "Beginning of organised Bible work in Israel." The assumption that Henry Lindsay, Chaplain to the British Embassy at Constantinople, visited Jerusalem in 1816 on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), cannot be substantiated.¹

Henry Lindsay can thus be left out of consideration, which leaves us with two candidates, namely Christoph Burckhardt and James Connor. Both visited Jerusalem, and there is no doubt about the sequence. First Burckhardt, in 1818, then Connor, in 1820. That means that Burckhardt (at least until otherwise proved) must be regarded as *the first Protestant Bible-man in Jerusalem*. This, however, does not substantiate that he was also the first one to organize a Bible work in Jerusalem.

Burckhardt's Arrival at Malta

Christoph Burckhardt² was a Swiss Clergyman, who came to Malta from Geneva, January 5, 1818. He had not been sent out by a missionary society but was supported by Henry Drummond.³ In the minds of the contemporary public, Burckhardt's brief career as a missionary – it was to be less than eight months – was linked with the work being done by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Bible Society.

Burckhardt's task in the Levant had been defined *prior* to his arrival at Malta. Under the date of January 5, 1818, William Jowett, CMS' representative in Malta, writes the following words in his journal about Burckhardt's planned "Bible Mission": "He is to visit Egypt, Jerusalem,

1 See *Mishkan*, no. 41 (2004), 21-30.

2 In English sources "Christopher"; not to be confused with the famous Swiss traveler John Lewis (= Johann Ludwig) Burckhardt, who died 33 years old in Cairo in 1817.

3 Cf. *Missionary Register* (1818), 286. Henry Drummond (1776-1860) was a wealthy English banker and politician, who was deeply concerned with Bible work as well as with Jewish mission (and many other things); together with John Bayford Drummond was also patron for the renowned Jewish missionary Joseph Wolff, when the latter began his work in 1821. The formation of the Malta Bible Society in 1817 was "very much due to the zeal" of Drummond, who visited Malta that same year; cf. *Missionary Register* (1817), 352.

Asia Minor, and Greece; and wherever he goes, he is to aim at forming Bible Societies."⁴

The task which Burckhardt has been set was clearly very ambitious and accompanied by great expectations, for at this time there was only one Bible Society, the Malta Bible Society, in the Levant. The following quotation from Jowett's Journal, also under the date of January 5, 1818, gives an impression of these expectations:

Mr. Drummond's and his [Burckhardt's] idea of a Bible society is very simple. It is, two or three people sitting down together, signing a set of Rules, and then saying, 'We are the Bible Society of __,' and immediately acting as such. The only objection to this system is its want of APPEARANCE, in the eyes of its neighbours: this, however, is, in some degree, its security. The more I reflect on the miserable state of these countries, the more am I persuaded that Mr. Drummond has hit the mark. – Be something. Do something. Call yourself something. A single individual, in any of the principal cities of Syria, for instance, who should say, 'I AM THE BIBLE MAN,' or two, who should say, 'WE ARE THE BIBLE SOCIETY,' would be worth their weight in gold; and Mr. Burckhardt is going the right way to find them, or make them.

The following days, January 6-9, Jowett assists Burckhardt in his plans.

January 17, 1818, Burckhardt departed for Alexandria with 755 copies of the Scriptures (Bibles and New Testaments) in thirteen languages, provided by the Malta Bible Society. During his journey he corresponded primarily with Dr. Cleardo Naudi, one of the three secretaries for the Malta Bible Society.

Burckhardt's Activities Before and After Jerusalem

Due to lack of space I cannot give a detailed description of Burckhardt's activities in Egypt and Lebanon/Syria – the former prior to, the latter after, his visit to Jerusalem. In order to assess the significance of his stay in Jerusalem a few remarks are necessary.

*Burckhardt's Work in Egypt Prior to His Visit in Jerusalem*⁵

Burckhardt's Bible Mission in Egypt took place in the period January 26 to mid-April, 1818. He worked in Alexandria as well as in Cairo. From the pretty accurate numbers he mentions in his letters, it appears that

4 Cf. *Missionary Register* (1818), 296. In "Malta Bible Society Report 1818" the same point is expressed with the following words, although the word "forming" (Bible Societies) is not used – perhaps because this had not happened when the report was made: "His object being to travel in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, solely to make known and promote the object of the Bible Society." Cf. *Missionary Register* (1819), 72.

5 Described in the following letters:

"Letter from Alexandria, February 19, 1818"; in *Missionary Register* (1818), 245-247.

"Letter from Alexandria, February 28, 1818"; in *Missionary Register* (1818), 247.

when he left Egypt, he had sold at least 400 copies from his stock, maybe more. He asked earnestly that further supplies of Scriptures be sent. He also established contact with church leaders. Even if he did not succeed in forming a Bible Society, he did not give up the hope that Alexandria "will become an important Bible-Depôt to many nations of Africa," as he writes in "Letter from Alexandria, February 19, 1818."

Burckhardt's work in Egypt is considered a success by Jowett, who writes this to the BFBS: "We reap now, in the successes of our admirable co-adjutor, Mr. Burckhardt, in Egypt, in the formation of the Smyrna Society, and in the pledges of co-operation given us in various parts of Asia Minor and Greece, an ample reward of our first year's pleasing toil! Can we be otherwise than greatly thankful?"⁶ When it comes to Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem, the tone will be a different one – as we shall see.

*Burckhardt's Work After His Visit to Jerusalem*⁷

After his visit to Jerusalem Burckhardt is back in Jaffa May 20, 1818. He sets out from Jaffa for Lebanon/Syria and dies on August 14, 1818, in Aleppo. On his journey he makes contacts with church people, as he did in Egypt, and collects books and manuscripts in Arabic and Carshun (Arabic in Syriac characters), which are sent to Malta. He hands out a couple of Syriac Testaments, but in stark contrast to the description of the time in Egypt there is no information in the published material about the sale and distribution of Bibles and Testaments on this journey – presumably because there was nothing to write about. There is no earnest appeal for Scriptures to be sent, as was the case in Egypt. That he can still supply Bibles and Testaments in Syriac and Hebrew – but not Bibles in Arabic – is mentioned in his "Letter from Jaffa, May 20, 1818."

Burckhardt's Death in Aleppo

Naudi reports that Burckhardt "had scarcely arrived Aleppo, when a fatal fever, then raging in the neighbourhood, put an end to his most valuable life."⁸ This information had come from the British Vice-Consul at Aleppo,

"Letter from Alexandria, March 2, 1818"; in BFBS *Fifteenth Report* (1819), 228.

"Letter from Cairo, March 21, 1818"; in *Missionary Register* (1818), 389-390; mistakenly dated as May 21; the correct date is March 21.

"Letter from Cairo, March 25, 1818"; in BFBS *Fifteenth Report* (1819), 229.

"Letter from Jaffa, May 20, 1818"; in *Missionary Register* (1818), 73-75.

⁶ BFBS *Fifteenth Report* (1819), 209.

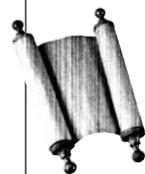
⁷ Described in the following letters:

"Letter from Tripoli, June 14 (?), 1818"; in *Missionary Register* (1818), 75-76; it is doubtful whether the date is correct; in the letter it is also said that Burckhardt departed from Beirut on June 14.

"Letter from Latachia, June 29, 1818"; in *Missionary Register* (1818), 76; here is an editorial addition: "his last Letter to his friends".

"Letter from Antioch (?), July (?), 1818"; in a letter of November 12, 1818, Naudi claims (in BFBS *Fifteenth Report* [1819], 211, that he forwarded to Burckhardt's father in Switzerland "the last Letter that his Son wrote to us, which was from Antioch." – Or is it possible that Naudi confused Antioch with Latachia?

⁸ BFBS *Fifteenth Report* (1819), 209.



who had written that he “had the melancholy task of burying him, on the 14th of August.”⁹ That Burckhardt on his arrival in Aleppo still had a supply of Scriptures with him is attested, two years later, by Connor, who writes the following from Aleppo June 26, 1820: “I have received from the hands of the French Chancellor here, the effects of poor Burckhardt; and among other things, a Case of Bibles and Testaments. These I shall leave in Aleppo: the private effects I shall send to Malta.”¹⁰

After this brief description we shall follow Burckhardt on his journey to Jerusalem, which he had anticipated with great expectations.

Burckhardt on His Way up to Jerusalem

Some time in the middle of April, 1818 Burckhardt succeeded in finding a ship in Alexandria bound for Haifa, “not having been able to find any ship which was going direct for Jaffa. But our Captain landed us at Sour [Tyre], having for excuse the contrary wind.”¹¹

By sea Burckhardt comes to Acre “where the Chancellor of the Austrian Consul procured for me a firmân from the Pasha, which cost me nothing.” Together with the travel permit was also the right to enter the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem free of charge, “without paying the customary expenses of Pilgrims,” as Burckhardt adds. From here he sails to Jaffa, “where I rested a few days at the house of the Austrian and Russian Agent.” This is the first time it is mentioned explicitly in the written material available that Burckhardt enjoys the hospitality of a consul, something which future Bible-men and missionaries enjoyed in rich measure. In Egypt he lived under primitive conditions.

In Jaffa Burckhardt sells Bibles and New Testaments “to different Convents, and to several individuals here, and also to an inhabitant of Acre.” He also mentions sales to Jews: “there came a Rabbi, and several other Jews, who purchased copies of the Hebrew New Testament.” About the “Fathers of the Latin Convent” Burckhardt comments that they “spent almost a whole morning in reading the Spanish New Testament, to see (as they said) whether there was not some heresy in it.”

It may very well be that they did not find “heresy” in that same day, and perhaps Burckhardt never heard what happened to the Scriptures he had distributed among Roman Catholics in Jaffa. Two years later Connor knows, and writes: “All the books which Mr. Burckhardt sold or distributed in Jaffa, were collected and burnt by some Priests, who threatened with excommunication those who secreted them.”¹²

From here the journey continued to Jerusalem.

9 “Postscript to Malta Bible Society’s Report 1818”; in *Missionary Register* (1819), 73.

10 Connor in William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London: Church Missionary Society, 2nd edition, 1822), 453.

11 Described in “Letter from Jaffa, May 20, 1818” – immediately after Burckhardt has been to Jerusalem.

12 Connor in Jowett 1822, 426. Other Bible-men were later to experience a similar book-burning – also by Jews of Hebrew New Testaments.

Burckhardt's Visit to Jerusalem – May 1818

A visit to Jerusalem had been planned even before Burckhardt's arrival at Malta. According to the itinerary that was planned at Malta it would seem that he aimed at a visit during Easter, 1818. In "Letter from Alexandria, February 19, 1818" Burckhardt had not completely given up the idea of making it to Jerusalem by Easter (even though such an idea in retrospect seems unrealistic given the means of transportation of that age). It also failed. He did however get to Jerusalem immediately before Pentecost.¹³

When in Jerusalem and for how Long?

The question of when and how long Burckhardt was in Jerusalem can be answered more precisely than e.g. Sherman Lieber does.¹⁴ For Burckhardt opens his description of his stay in Jerusalem with the following words: "From Jaffa I went in eighteen hours to Jerusalem, going during the night on horseback; and arrived on the eve of the Feast of Pentecost." According to the Gregorian calendar, Whitsunday fell on May 10.¹⁵

In other words, Burckhardt arrived in Jerusalem on Saturday night, May 9, 1818. He is back in Jaffa on May 20, although it is not said explicitly that this was the day when he returned to Jaffa from Jerusalem. This means that Burckhardt's stay in Jerusalem did not exceed ten days (including one or two days in Bethlehem).

Against this background some questions become pressing. Why was the stay so short for the *first* Bible-man who came to Jerusalem? Did something perhaps not go as well as expected?

Burckhardt's Description of His First Visit to Jerusalem as a Bible-man

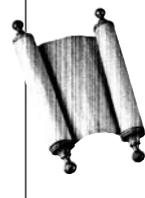
Burckhardt's activities the first five days after his arrival can be reconstructed, in outline, as follows:

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday (May 10-12): Burckhardt opens his description of his stay in Jerusalem thus: "Is [sic] was a joy to me to distribute at Jerusalem the Holy Scriptures, in twelve or thirteen languages, precisely during the three days of the Festival ..." – This distribution was presumably done to pilgrims in Jerusalem. No number is given of the distributed Bibles and New Testaments. But the distribution took place with "joy," which indicates that something did succeed.

13 Described in "Letter from Jaffa, May 20, 1818" – immediately after Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem.

14 Sherman Lieber's only mention of Burckhardt in *Mystics and Missionaries: The Jews in Palestine 1799-1840* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 160, is rather unfortunate since Burckhardt died on August 14, 1818: "...the brief visit to Jerusalem in 1818-1819 [sic] of Christian [sic] Burckhardt, an agent [sic] of the British Foreign [sic] Bible Society, who died of fever near Aleppo shortly after distributing Bibles in the Holy City ..."

15 In terms of calendar 1818 was an unusual year. Easter fell on the earliest date possible, March 22, and will not do so again until 2285.



Wednesday (May 13): A number of people from Bethlehem come to Burckhardt's lodgings in Jerusalem; however, he does not say where he had taken lodgings. He says explicitly "that the men of Bethlehem were the first to receive the World of God." When people from Bethlehem contact him, it is because he, in his travels, "rendered some small services to a poor old man of that place." In Bethlehem this man announces Burckhardt's arrival in Jerusalem, which explains why people from Bethlehem go up to Jerusalem. However, he does not have much to offer them, which is brought out by the following: "But, as I have no more Arabic Bibles, having had the weakness to sell them all in Egypt and at Jaffa, to persons who instantly besought me to grant them a copy, I had nothing to give the Bethlehemites but some of the Epistles of St. Paul to the Romans and Hebrews, in Arabic" – not exactly the best conditions for success in Jerusalem and surroundings, when a Bible-man is practically unable to deliver Scriptures in Arabic to the local population.

Thursday (May 14): He sets out for Bethlehem. It is not quite clear if he returned to Jerusalem that same day. Burckhardt takes time to visit the Church of Nativity. In Bethlehem he "presented the Priests and Superiors of the Greek and Latin Convents with New Testaments, in Spanish and Greek." And Burckhardt continues in his letter to Naudi/the Malta Bible Society: "I consigned upwards of fifty Greek Testaments to the Priests of the Greek Convent, and left with them your address." We have no certain knowledge if Naudi in Malta used the address to ship more Testaments to Bethlehem, but a contact had now been made. The fact that Burckhardt consigned about "fifty Greek Testaments" indicates (perhaps) that he had given up hope of distributing them in Jerusalem; it also indicates that some Greeks in Bethlehem were more receptive to the Scriptures than the Latins. Presumably, it also reveals that Burckhardt did not manage to make contact to influential persons among the Greeks in Jerusalem.

There is little doubt that Burckhardt returned to Jerusalem from Bethlehem. From the extant material it is not possible to reconstruct precisely what he then did. Nor can it be ruled out that he forthwith went down to Jaffa. It is certain, however, that as Bible-man in Jerusalem he visited at least one convent, even though he does not mention it himself (see below). Apart from what has already been said, Burckhardt mentions only two incidents from his work as a Bible-man in Jerusalem. First, he writes that he met a sick Ethiopian pilgrim who said that he possessed a copy of the Ethiopic Psalter. "His countrymen were all gone. I was very glad, therefore, to have left nearly all the Ethiopic Psalters at Cairo, in the hands of the English and French Consuls." (According to "Letter from Cairo, March 25, 1818" he had left "about seventy copies.") Secondly, he sold a Hebrew New Testament to a Jew who, although he was desirous of buying one, did not "venture to do so till he had shewn it to one of the Procurators" (see note 17 below). If he had sold Hebrew Testaments to others apart from that one Jew, one must assume that he would have mentioned it. It is, however, certain that he was able to deliver.

Burckhardt as Researcher in Jerusalem

Apart from informing about his work as Bible-man, Burckhardt mentions in his letters three matters, which in the published material are placed as separate subjects.¹⁶

1) *Proposed Publication for the Jews.* Burckhardt suggests that a book be published with "choice pieces of History, containing memorable actions and sufferings of the Jews since the time of Christ." The book must be written with "a compassionate heart" and with "reflections on the goodness of God – His goodness, even when crowned with thorns; and on the ingratitude of men, who know not His benefits." The author of the book "should seek to prepare the mind of the reader for the idea of an Universal Religion, in contradistinction to the National Religion of the Jews." The proposed book should "touch the heart" and might "by instructing the mind, produce great fruit in favour of that memorable race, the Jews." But he also voices his skepticism whether it will be possible to find such an author.

2) *State of Jews at Jerusalem.* It is briefly reported that the Jews of Jerusalem "are under Seven Chiefs, called Procurators or Deputies, who are nominated by the Jews themselves. These persons settle causes at law among their countrymen ... Their religious affairs, in general, are under the government of the Rabbis."¹⁷ Concerning the number of Jews in Jerusalem he writes: "It is said that the total number of Jews amounts to 12,000; but this varies, as many of the Jews come to Jerusalem to stay only for a limited time." Burckhardt adds that there are many "old men" among the Jews who have come to Jerusalem to die and be buried there. Although Burckhardt has made certain reservations, the information about 12,000 Jews in Jerusalem is, however, out of proportion and has no basis in reality.

3) *Remarks on Holy Places in Palestine.* In a lengthy passage Burckhardt reflects on the subject of "Holy Places." In this he says, among other things:

Of course, I did not fail to visit several Holy Places; such as, the Holy Sepulchre, and the Place of the Nativity. If you should ask me whether I felt any thing very great at the sight of them, I must answer, "No." ... All this curdling of the blood, this trinket-selling, and these holy perfumeries, seem to me not to have the value of one single truly religious thought ... I think that a good Sermon, of half-an-hour's length, on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is better suited to excite and keep up a lively devotion, than fixing the eye

16 Cf. *Missionary Register* (1819), 77-78.

17 What Burckhardt has in mind with the "Seven Chiefs, called Procurators" is a High Court of seven judges; see Lieber, 101.



for a whole day on the Holy Sepulchre ... We may observe, also, that we never read of Jesus Christ's having consecrated an Altar, or an Image, or any material substance: which proves to me that such things ought not to be considered as essential or necessary ... All this notwithstanding, I am in no wise disposed to depreciate the pious sentiments felt by those devout souls who kiss a hundred times the Holy Sepulchre – the greater part of them, perhaps, with a sincere love for Jesus Christ ... Suppose even that Europeans were entirely expelled from Jerusalem and the Holy Land, the loss would not be great. We may well lose the Sepulchre, without losing Jesus Christ, or the smallest essential point of his religion.

Such words were valued as "pious" reflections by some people at that time,¹⁸ and they were probably also meant that way, but his last remarks in the excerpt above are not easy to understand if placed in the context of a carefully planned strategy for the Bible work in Jerusalem.

Contemporary Assessments of Burckhardt's Visit to Jerusalem

None of the parties involved said that Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem was a failure. But was it a success? Opinions about this were divided. How did Burckhardt sum up his visit? And how did Naudi and Jowett respectively – two men who had primary information at their disposal – see Burckhardt's visit?

Burckhardt's Assessment

Burckhardt keeps his cards close to his chest on the question of his own view of success or the lack thereof in Jerusalem. Two matters are mentioned in his "Letter from Jaffa, May 20, 1818." First, that he is prepared to continue his Bible Mission to Syria "if it please God, to Beyrout, and perhaps to Aleppo, with the intention of selling there Hebrew and Syriac Testaments." Second, he makes it clear that he did not succeed in forming a Bible Society in Jerusalem. He takes comfort in the reflection that he has been a sower, which can be seen in the following note to Naudi: "I beg you to communicate this Letter to Mr. Drummond. I ought to apologise to him for not writing to him direct. Although his intention is not yet realized, of seeing Bible Societies established in the Levant, they may, in time, be formed; as it is written, *One soweth, and another reapeth.*"

¹⁸ Cf. what is said in *Christian Observer*, July (1820): "His Remarks on Holy Places in Palestine will have forcibly impressed every reflecting mind." Here quoted from *Missionary Register* (1820), 371.

Naudi's Assessment

Naudi describes Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem as an unqualified success. In a letter of November 12, 1818, written short time after he received the "distressing and melancholy news" of Burckhardt's death, he says:

From Cairo he [Burckhardt] went to Jerusalem, where he visited all the convents and public places, and furnished them, every where, with the words of God. He there commenced, for the Bible Society, a collection of books printed at Mount Lebanon, either in Arabic, Syriac, or other tongues, but particularly manuscripts, as printed works are rare.¹⁹

Jowett's Assessment

Jowett describes Burckhardt's visit as a "small success." He partly bases this assessment on oral information given to him in the summer of 1818 from an English traveler, Dr. Richardsson. Immediately before embarking for Malta in June 1818, Richardsson had met Burckhardt in Tripoli. Burckhardt seems to have communicated more to Richardsson than he did in his letters. In any case, Jowett announces publicly his assessment of Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem (before he heard of Burckhardt's death) in the following words: "but with small success, comparatively, owing to the Latin Fathers."²⁰ This begs the question as to how to understand these differing assessments of Burckhardt's visit in a historical perspective.

Was Burckhardt's Visit to Jerusalem a Success?

It is tempting to reduce Naudi's assessment of Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem to the kind of language used in a "pious" obituary. Before this is done, we need to ask one question: How many copies of the Scriptures did Burckhardt distribute in Jerusalem and its surroundings? The answer is somewhere between 100 and 200 copies.²¹ Even provided it was "only" 100 copies (a little more than half of which had been distributed in Bethlehem), this would have been considered a success – if it had been the result of one week's journey in *Egypt*. In light of this, some concluding remarks about Naudi's and Jowett's assessments are in order. They seem



19 BFBS *Fifteenth Report* (1819), 210; *Missionary Register* (1820), 370. In this connection it is of minor importance that the purchase of the books mentioned did not take place in Jerusalem but in Lebanon, cf. "Letter from Tripoli, 14 (?) June, 1818."

20 *Missionary Register* (1818), 390.

21 I refrain from giving a detailed account of this, but the number is based on information from Burckhardt in his letters. We know that Burckhardt at his arrival in Aleppo still has a case of Scriptures. (When he left Malta he had six cases with a total of 755 Scriptures.) The uncertain factor is how many Scriptures Burckhardt sold on his journey through Lebanon and Syria. He hardly mentions any. In other words, the fewer copies sold during this journey in Syria, the more copies distributed in Jerusalem.

to be using different success criteria in their evaluation of Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem.

Comments on Naudi's Assessment

Naudi's statement that Burckhardt "visited all the convents" in Jerusalem seems to be a more appropriate description of visits to convents in Bethlehem than in Jerusalem. How many convents in Jerusalem he did visit is, admittedly, an open question.²²

Naudi's main point, that Burckhardt "furnished" Jerusalem "every where with the word of God," is objectively and historically grossly exaggerated and gives a distorted picture of Burckhardt's success as a *Bible-man* in Jerusalem. It is couched in enthusiastic language. But Naudi seems to be using the same success criteria for Burckhardt in Jerusalem as in Egypt. Judged by the *number* of Scriptures distributed in Jerusalem and surroundings, Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem is, according to Naudi, a success. At least one hundred copies of the Scriptures were distributed, which is cause for rejoicing!

Comments on Jowett's Assessment

Jowett, however, seems to apply a different success criterion than Naudi. Jowett only allows himself little pleasure in what Burckhardt achieved in Jerusalem. He seems somehow to have fallen prey to his own high expectations for success in Jerusalem. His dream to find one person who would say, 'I AM THE BIBLE MAN,' or two, who should say, 'WE ARE THE BIBLE SOCIETY,' was not fulfilled.

The fact that Burckhardt – as indicated in Jowett's words – met with opposition from "the Latin Fathers" is hardly the sole explanation for the lack of success. The question is rather if Burckhardt's Bible Mission to Jerusalem did not lack proper planning.

In retrospect it is tempting to say that Burckhardt's visit to Jerusalem went almost as could be expected. That he met with a certain amount of opposition from Roman Catholic quarters can hardly surprise anybody. That Jews were not standing with their arms wide open to get a Hebrew New Testament is no great surprise either. That he was only able, to a small extent, to supply the local population with Scriptures in Arabic did not provide the optimal conditions. And perhaps most important of all, Burckhardt arrived unknown and without letters of introduction to prominent church leaders in Jerusalem. Connor carried such a letter of recommendation and it engendered results (as we shall see in the next article), so that Connor could leave Jerusalem with the knowledge that now there was a highly placed church leader in Jerusalem who said: I AM THE BIBLE MAN.

²² It is a historical fact that Burckhardt at least was in touch with the Abyssinian convent in Jerusalem. This is attested to by Connor, who during a visit to the library there in 1820 found two Ethiopic Psalters, donated by Burckhardt; cf. Connor in Jowett 1822, 433.

Concluding Remarks

There is no denying that Burckhardt was *the first Protestant Bible-man in Jerusalem* in the 19th century. There is no reason to depreciate his work. As a pioneer he had many odds against him. He had great expectations of his work as a Bible-man, but he seems to have learned that the sower may not see the harvest. As a Bible-man in the eastern part of the Levant he was remembered in his own day for being an undaunted fiery soul with great vision. He does not appear to have been a great mission strategist. He gave his life for the Bible cause. Others were to follow and also give their lives. Connor expresses what many friends of the Bible cause felt at Burckhardt's death. Under the date of June 26, 1820 Connor writes the following words from Aleppo:²³

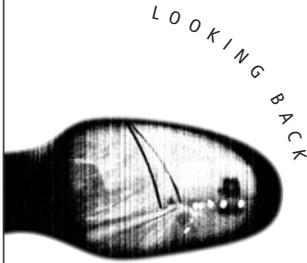
I have visited the grave of Burckhardt, with mingled feelings of sorrow and gratitude – sorrow, at the loss sustained by the Church of Christ by his death – gratitude, at the reflection that I have come out uninjured from that ordeal of fatigue and privations, to which he most probably fell a victim. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!* A large uninscribed stone marks the grave of our departed friend. Before I leave Aleppo, I shall cause some short memorial to be engraved thereon.

Author info:

Kai Kjær-Hansen (D.D., Lund University) is General Editor of Mishkan and serves as International Coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE). He is chairman of the Danish Israel Mission. lcje-kai@post4.tele.dk



23 Connor in Jowett 1822, 453.



Looking Back

By **David Stern**

I was born in Los Angeles in 1935; all my ancestors were Jewish, and two great-grandparents who came there in 1853 were among the first Jews in the city (then a town of 2000). I was raised in classical Reform Judaism, did my undergraduate work at UCLA and received a doctorate in economics from Princeton University in 1960. I taught at UCLA but was unhappy. In 1972, after having sought happiness in psychoanalysis and the truth in about two dozen religions, I found both in Yeshua. I earned a Master of Divinity degree at Fuller Theological Seminary and studied for a year in the graduate program of the University of Judaism. I married Martha Frankel in 1976, and we made *aliyah* in 1979 with our four-month-old daughter. Our son was born in Tel Aviv in 1981. Besides my doctor's dissertation, "Bargaining Experiments," and a co-authored book, "Surfing Guide to Southern California," I have written five books in the area of Messianic Judaism, all published by Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc. (Clarksville, Maryland, USA); the titles are mentioned in the main body of my article.

Getting Involved in Jewish Evangelism

My main inspiration for getting involved in Jewish evangelism was the Lord! I came to know him at age 37. Fitting my faith to my academic background, my Jewish upbringing and my experience with other religions was a process that took some time; however, some three months after discovering that I believed in Jesus, the Lord spoke to me, saying, "You will be an evangelist." My picture of an evangelist was Billy Sunday pounding a pulpit inside a sawdust-floored tent. My reaction was, "God! That's not me!" But God answered and said, "What you imagine has nothing to do with it. I will make you an evangelist in a way that fits who you are."

Till then I hadn't even thought about what it means to be Jewish and believe in Jesus (I write "Jesus" because at that time it hadn't occurred to me to seek out his Hebrew name, Yeshua). But over the following months I came to see the conflict between the Church and the Jewish people as the central crisis of history, and that Jewish evangelism, along with educating the Church about its connection with the Jewish people, was

the key to resolving it. I knew then that my life would be devoted to exploring this topic as a researcher and writer, making use of my academic training and predilections. Through my writings I would be an evangelist. No sawdust. God had been right (as usual).

This Kept Me Going

What has kept me going since then is simply the inevitability, magnitude and importance of the task. I am a very ideological person; ideas move me. Here's an instance: in classical Reform Judaism I was raised not to think of Israel as a place any Jew would choose to live – except Jewish refugees with nowhere else to go. But in 1974, on my first visit to Israel, I was talking with a former German Lutheran who had converted to Judaism and was studying to become a rabbi. I told him of my faith and my desire to see every Jew in the world become Messianic. He did not oppose this, but he commented that no new movement centered in the Diaspora would ever grab the attention of world Jewry again, now that the Jewish state of Israel exists. Didn't I realize, he asked, that "out of Zion will come forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"? I got his point instantly, and from that moment knew I would one day live in Israel – in complete opposition to my desire at the time. That day came five years later.

But I have gotten ahead of myself. I need to add another characteristic of mine – I am a visionary. I have a very broad vision of what the Messianic Jewish movement needs to become. In our private life our family tries to model what it means for a believer in Yeshua to stay Jewish. We choose to have the kitchen in our home be kosher by normal rabbinic standards – separate milk and meat dishes for 51 weeks of the year, and other separate milk and meat dishes for Passover. We celebrate Jewish holidays in a normal Jewish way. At Passover we burn the *hametz* with our neighbors in the morning; at the *Seder* that evening we read the entire *Haggadah*, even the parts where Rabbi Akiva expands the number of plagues to 250 – but we relate the whole service to Yeshua. Our son's *bar-mitzvah* was celebrated at the Western Wall, as is commonly done in Israel. We build a *sukkah* in our yard and invite believers and nonbelievers to come, sit and eat in it with us. We see Jewishness as largely defined by what you do, not by who your grandmother was, and not by a creed; and this is part of our evangelistic message, although we don't do it to be evangelistic. We're not Orthodox Jews, but we do respect the traditions – it's simply part of who we are.

Writing as Evangelism

I expressed this and more in my book *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, which I outlined in 1975 but didn't publish until I had already been working for years on the *Jewish New Testament* and the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, books I was sure would prove useful both in evangelism and in educating the Church. In 1987 I turned the outline of a talk into



Restoring the Jewishness of the Gospel: A Message for Christians, and immediately realized that in so doing I had written one-third of *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, which I consider my “seminal book” on Messianic Jewish history, identity, theology, ideology, practice and program. So I wrote the other two-thirds and published both books in 1988. The *Jewish New Testament* appeared in 1989 and the commentary in 1992. I took a three-year break but knew that eventually I would have to supply my “fans” with a *Tanakh*. This work I began in 1995 and finished in 1998, when the *Complete Jewish Bible* (my *Tanakh* plus the *JNT*) was published.

Over the years I have received reports from various Messianic Jews who attribute their faith in Yeshua to reading one or another of my books. This positive feedback to my evangelism also helps to keep me going.

Ups and Downs

In general I didn’t have “ups and downs” in my ministry or in my personal life after becoming a Messianic Jew – until 1997, when I entered a season of dealing with personal issues. For five years or so I lacked the emotional energy to write more than a few articles. My experiences during this time deepened me as a human being and deepened my understanding of what Messianic Judaism needs – and this can be seen in the eight points of my discussion below of the challenges facing our movement.

Just as this period was coming to a close, our daughter met a young man at the gym who was *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox). Romantic interest began to develop, but Martha and I had taught our daughter that her life partner should be a Messianic Jew. To make the story very short, she, Martha and I led him to the Lord. This was certainly an “up!” With the evangelistic fervor of a new believer he told some of his *haredi* friends about the Lord and introduced them to us; six of them too prayed with us to receive the Lord. This was another “up!” But as we suddenly found ourselves responsible for their spiritual life, we made a number of mistakes, and all six fell away, which was definitely a “down.”

Rather than let ourselves sink into depression we decided – partly, you could say, as therapy for ourselves – to join the National Evangelism Committee’s outreach at New-Age festivals, which have become popular in Israel. At the “Boombamella” festival during Passover Week, we joined some 70 believers who manned two booths and gave out nearly 2000 Hebrew New Testaments to the 30,000 teens and 20-somethings who are open and searching for something spiritual. (In comparison with Israel’s population, this event was three times the size of Woodstock.) So our “down” was replaced by another “up.” We’ve been to four of these festivals and found that they all give wonderful and fun-filled opportunities for witnessing.

And the most recent “up” is that a secular cousin of our son-in-law who had prayed a sinner’s prayer with us a year-and-a-half ago, but not done much about it, is now following the Lord.

Meanwhile, a “down” began at the end of June, 2003. I suddenly began to experience intense back pain, and the medicine which relieved it had the side-effect of leaving me utterly exhausted, without physical or mental energy to write or do much else. I have three projects in mind: (1) publishing *Messianic Jewish Manifesto* in Hebrew; it’s translated and ready for the printer under the title, *Yehadut Messhichit – Mahu?* (Messianic Judaism – What Is It?); (2) getting the *Jewish New Testament Commentary* translated into Hebrew and published; and (3) writing a book to explain Messianic Judaism to Jews who haven’t yet come to trust Yeshua. But while my head feels like writing, my body feels like doing nothing. I am seeking the Lord’s solution and the medical treatment that will enable me to start working more vigorously once again.

The Challenge for the Future

I have been challenged to say what I see as “the main challenge for the Messianic movement and for Jewish evangelism today and in the near future.” Let me begin with a quibble: the term “Messianic movement” does not imply anything Jewish, since the word “Messianic” by itself is just the Hebrew-based synonym for the Greek-based “Christian.” Therefore I always speak of the “Messianic Jewish movement.”

I wrote an article in 2003 called “The Future of Messianic Judaism,” which appeared in a book edited by the late Louis Goldberg, *How Jewish is Christianity?* (published by Zondervan). In this article I called attention to several needs the Messianic Jewish movement should address, and most of what I said there is still relevant. To summarize:

1. We must avoid triumphalism, which is the assumption that we have achieved the goals of our movement. If we think we have arrived, we are not motivated to move on! In fact we have barely begun the journey, but sometimes we believe our PR and fool even ourselves.
2. If there is any truth in speaking of the young people who were prominent in the movement in the 1960’s and 1970’s as the “pioneers” and “founding fathers,” then the movement faces a generational crisis. Many of the pioneers’ children lack the excitement and enthusiasm of their parents and are therefore not interested in leading the movement. The challenge to the current leaders is to inspire the young generation of believers to carry forward the movement’s vision.
3. We must seek emotional and spiritual healing rather than hiding the need for it. Many of us, including more than a few of our leaders, are handicapped in their lives and ministries by sin or by the underlying hurts causing the sin. It may be that too narrow a focus on Jewishness has kept us from advancing with the rest of the Messianic community (I mean the Church) in a number of areas, but most importantly this one.
4. We must define community and pursue it. The Jewish world has a better record here than we do, because we have tended to follow



a Protestant, individualistic approach to the faith, neglecting its communal aspects. Recently many churches have tried to rectify this deviation with cell groups that encourage relationships, which are the essence of community. In addition, think of schools, old-age homes, charities, community centers ...

5. We should continue developing appropriate expressions of Jewishness with richness and depth, based on traditional materials – without neglecting the centrality of Yeshua.
6. We must engage in evangelism in every aspect of our lives. I see five obstacles to evangelism that need to be overcome:
 - (a) failure to give evangelism the urgency and priority it deserves – if it doesn't really matter to you, you won't do it!
 - (b) lack of creativity – doing the same old same-old, and thus scratching where Jewish people don't itch.
 - (c) being satisfied with too low a level of accomplishment – and this is often accompanied by a version of triumphalism: patting ourselves on the back for doing more than we have actually done.
 - (d) failure to follow up an initial decision for the Lord with proper discipleship.
 - (e) fear of rejection or unpleasant reactions. These will come – get used to it!

We must stay mindful of the overwhelming importance and breadth of what we want to bring people into. Every one of these eight points has implications for evangelism.

7. We should prepare for the Land of Israel to become the center of Messianic Judaism. This involves more than I can deal with in the present article. But one aspect I can't refrain from emphasizing, especially for the Diaspora, is the need to keep the call for Messianic Jewish *aliyah* front-and-center.
8. We need to refine our theology, with the goal of bringing to an end the world's greatest schism – that between the Church and the Jewish people. In my view, the primary text here is Ephesians 2:11-12, in which Paul tells gentile believers that they have been joined to the Jewish people. Christians are virtually never taught this! Jesus is Jewish? Of course! Jewish roots? Yes! But being taught that through faith in the Jewish Messiah they have become part of the Jewish people (without themselves being Jews) is not found in the theology books or on the flannelgraphs. Ruth got it right when she said, "Your people are my people," even before she announced her acceptance of the God of the Jews. A Christian who believes anything less is a heretic and should be educated as to the dangerous state of his soul.

Author info:

David H. Stern is the author of *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, *Jewish New Testament* (his translation) and *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. He lives in Jerusalem. dstern@netvision.net.il

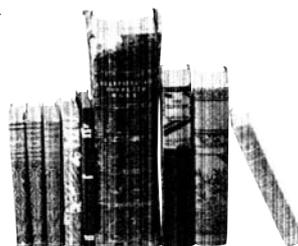
Messianic Judaism Is Not Christianity

– A Loving Call To Unity

Stan Telchin has made quite a Kingdom impact in his 30 years of ministry. His first book *Betrayed!* is one of the most widely read Jewish testimonies in the world as it has now been translated into more than 30 languages. Countless numbers of Jewish believers have cited *Betrayed!* as an instrument in their coming to faith in Yeshua. His second book, *Abandoned*, although not as acclaimed as his first book, powerfully exposes how the Church has failed to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy throughout its history and how it can improve upon those failures.

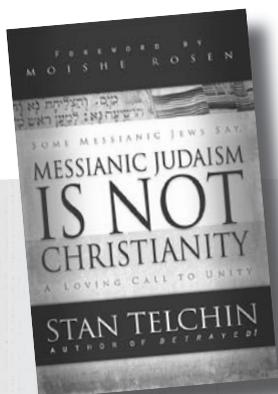
The jury, however, is still out on the impact of Telchin's latest book, *Some Messianic Jews Say, "Messianic Judaism Is Not Christianity": A Loving Call to Unity*. Telchin, who is not an advocate of Messianic Judaism, has taken upon himself to question the legitimacy and effectiveness of Messianic congregations who practice Messianic Judaism. Although Telchin acknowledges that there are many theologically balanced Messianic congregations, he is concerned with those congregations that he believes are causing division within the community of faith as a result of

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their overemphasis on Jewish identity and the use of rabbinical form. It is Telchin's hope that his objections and challenges to the proponents of Messianic Judaism will help bring about theological and systematic reform within the modern Messianic movement.

How effective Telchin's admonition will be is, in some measure, dependent upon the reader's willingness to do some sincere self-examination. Telchin urges his readers to wrestle with some honest and thought-provoking questions: Is there a biblical basis for Messianic Judaism? Is it a divisive force in the body of Christ? Is it effective in reaching Jewish people? Is it stressing Jewish identity over identity in the Messiah? Telchin also appeals to Scripture and examples from his and others' personal experiences to make his case that Messianic Judaism fails to measure up. In the end, it will be contingent upon the reader to decide if his arguments validate his conclusions.



Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity A Loving Call to Unity

STAN TELCHIN
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WWW.CHOSENBKOOKS.COM

On several points I found myself sympathetic with Telchin's concerns; however it would have been helpful if he had provided a litmus test to determine what constitutes a biblically acceptable form of Messianic worship and lifestyle. The lack thereof could cause uncertainty among those readers who are uninformed or inexperienced concerning Messianic congregations, leading them to avoid Messianic congregations altogether. If that were to happen, it will be division, not unity that this book leaves behind.

Telchin's appeal for unity in the body of Messiah is certainly commendable and biblically justified, but in some cases the criterion that he uses to disqualify Messianic Judaism could also be used to disqualify any denomination or ethnic group that emphasizes one doctrinal characteristic over another or that expresses its faith through the lens of their cultural distinctiveness. If applied across the board, Telchin's rationale would seem to argue for one homogenous church worldwide that adheres to one form of worship.

Collectively, this book presents one person's opinion on the Messianic movement. Whether you agree or disagree in full or in part with Telchin's assessment, this book will help you wrestle with God's heart for unity among Jewish and gentile believers in the body of Messiah. For additional perspective on this subject, refer to the book edited by Dr. Louis Goldberg, *How Jewish Is Christianity?: 2 Views On The Messianic Movement* (Reviewed in *Miskan*, Issue 40).

Justin M. Kron

NEWS FROM THE ISRAELI SCENE



Reported by **David A. Smith**

Arafat out; Abbas in

The death of Yasser Arafat, and the election of his successor, Mahmoud Abbas, has dominated headlines and conversations in Israel since October. Reactions have been varied, but most political analysts are guardedly hopeful that the change will result in improvement.

Paul Wright, director of Jerusalem University College, said in the Middle East this reaction is typical. "There always seems to be a new challenge or opportunity coming down the pike. That most end up just being a rehash of the last doesn't seem to deter the hope that maybe this time, what's different may actually be a change for the better." Still, Wright insists that once Palestinians and Israelis realized that Arafat was nearing death, there was an "almost immediate feeling among those whom I know that whatever was coming, it had to be better than the status quo."

Palestinian reactions to Arafat's death ranged from "What did he ever do for us?" and "Let him die and go to Hell" (heard in personal interviews) to Naim Ateek's eulogy entitled "A Word of Respect and Esteem for a Great Leader" published on Sabeel's homepage. Ateek, director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, overlooked charges against Arafat regarding terrorism and personal corruption and focused on his



role as a symbol. "He came to personify the struggle of his people. The Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular saw Arafat symbolizing and epitomizing the spirit of Palestine."

Beyond Arafat, questions of Palestinian elections and Abbas' challenges curried attention. The January 14 edition of the Jerusalem Post weekend supplement featured Khaled Abu Toameh's article "What Now?" He encourages that "the Palestinians have already confounded cynics by embarking on a relatively smooth transition of power immediately after Yasser Arafat's death and later holding the Arab world's first free presidential election."

That same weekend Ha'Aretz carried an article on recent findings by Professor Khalil Shikaki, director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, maintaining that "For the first time in four years, his surveys have found a readiness for conciliation with Israel, optimism and a more positive approach to issues connected to the peace process." Shikaki said "We are now seeing things that seemed unthinkable six months ago in terms of how the public perceives issues of negotiations with Israel, the Israeli leadership and the willingness of the Israeli leadership to accept or to be a partner to the Palestinians."

Ha'Aretz summarized "that Shikaki attributes this dramatic change, which he calls a 'new reality,' primarily to Arafat's death and to a lesser extent, Abu Mazen's [Abbas'] resurrection." Still, Shikaki cautions that this should not be interpreted as a Palestinian condemnation of violence and the intifada, warning that Hamas and the other terrorist organizations still hold a critical role.

Most Mid-East observers agree. Daoud Kuttub, director of the Institute of Modern Media at al Quds University in Ramallah, writes in Jerusalem Post (January 17), that Abbas' ability to rein in the Islamic terrorist groups will be the real test of his leader-

ship. Calling that challenge the "greater jihad," Kuttub writes, "That will be the time when his inner soul will be challenged." He continued, "Will he stay neutral if the radical militants violate understandings, or will he find the inner strength to defend the supreme interest of the Palestinian people, even if it means taking on these militants?"

As the deadline for this column draws near, Jerusalem Post (January 25) reported that Abbas had secured a verbal commitment from the terrorist groups to suspend operations for one month in order "to give him a chance to finalize a cease-fire with Israel."

Ateek ends his eulogy with a prayer "that the new Palestinian leadership that has assumed responsibility will resume a unified struggle by walking the way of peace with justice." That assumed responsibility must manifest itself in "Abbas' commitment ... to bring the various Palestinian factions in line," according to Wright.

Benny Hinn Holds Crusade in Tel Aviv

Ha'Aretz reported on November 19 that thousands went to hear "controversial Christian faith healer" Benny Hinn earlier that month in Tel Aviv's Nokia stadium. According to the article, those "devout followers" included "foreign workers, messianic Jews, and Christian Arabs." Touting the crusade as an indication of Jesus' Second Coming, Hinn preached "Jesus is not dead. He's alive and his Holy Spirit will fill this room and touch your life and make it whole again. You don't have to change. Tonight, all you have to do is call his name."

Hinn, born in Jaffa in 1953, taught "The people of Israel gave the world the Bible and now they need it more than ever." The article offered some details of Hinn's life such as his born again experience in 1972 and move to the Pentecostal Church as well

as charismatic ministry and penchant for controversy in the Evangelical community.

Presbyterians Reconsider Divestment from Israel

A group calling itself "Presbyterians Concerned for Jewish-Christian relations" is lobbying the Presbyterian Church USA to reverse its July decision to withdraw its support of companies that do business with Israel, as reported by Jerusalem Post, December 15. The group urges the denomination to postpone divestment until after its 2006 meeting when the lobbyists hope to have the decision reversed. The Presbyterian Church USA with its more than 3 million members constitutes the ninth-largest denomination in the USA.

Demonstrations Against Pavilion

The Orthodox Jewish weekly HaModia reported that demonstrations accompanied the October opening of the Pavilion, a downtown Jerusalem worship center available for various Christian groups to use. "The demonstration, organized by Yad L'Achim anti-missionary organization, was held at Davidka Square, across the street from the Clal building, where Kings of Kings, a group of 'Messianic Jews' and Christians, are dedicating a center," according to the article. "The keynote address was delivered by Hagaon Harav Sholom Dov Lipshitz, *shlita*, founding chairman of Yad L'Achim, who called on all Jews to shake off their indifference and wake up to the dangerous spread of missionary activity in the heart of Jerusalem."

Israel and the Rise of the Christian Right

Michael Freund, a policy and communications advisor during the Netanyahu government in Israel, wrote an extensive

article published December 3 in Jerusalem Post regarding Israel's "Christian friends." Freund begins by stating "George W. Bush wasn't the only big winner to emerge from [the] presidential election," impressing that the Christian Right also won, and, by extension, Israel won as well.

He admitted, "While some American Jews view this development with mounting concern," his reaction is optimistic. "Israel should be thanking God for the rise of the Christian Right. They are the best hope for ensuring long-term US diplomatic support for the Jewish state in an increasingly hostile world."

He specifically cites organizations such as Bridges for Peace, the International Christian Embassy and the International Christian Zionist Center which have been great promoters of tourism to Israel and contributors to charitable projects. Freund commends Pastor Robert Stearns of New Jersey for starting an annual "Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem" and Pat Robertson for being "outspoken on Israel's behalf."

"Hence it is about time Israel and American Jewry put aside many of their reservations and doubts and started to engage evangelical Christians more candidly and openly."

If you would like to contribute items to this column, please send them to israelnewsmishkan@hotmail.com for consideration.