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Conference Theme

**Jewish Evangelism  
Telling the Story**

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**22 August 2007**

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**LCJE  
Networking  
Jewish Evangelism**

**LCJE**  
**Lake Balaton 2007**

Edited by  
Kai Kjær-Hansen

Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism  
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## Morning Session

### Keeping the Law: freedom or obligation?

Vladimir Pikman, Executive Director, Beit Sar Shalom, Germany

#### **Introduction: “To keep or not to keep: that is the question”**

Most of us have a theological answer to this question. Most of the people in the messianic movement and Christianity have answer to this question. And the funniest thing is that the answers are very different. Is there a reason to discuss it now? Is there anybody here really willing to get an answer? I do not know. But I got this subject and is crazy enough to agree to speak on it.<sup>1</sup>

Actually everybody, including all Christian denominations, has a “law” that is considered to be obligatory. Every “antinomian,” if he will honestly look at his life, will recognize a significant number of “commandments” that he keeps. Thus the question “Keeping the Law: freedom or obligation?” has to be specified to the question “What law to keep?” In our context “the Law” is understood as the commandments that we find in the Torah.<sup>2</sup>

Before I will deal with these issues I want you to understand my life-story in this regard. I was born and raised in a liberal Jewish home. At first my worldview was that there is not God and therefore the Law is obsolete. Later I became a strong Zionist and considered the Law as a crucial part of the Jewish culture. Then I believed in Yeshua and joined a Hebrew-Christian congregation, where I was taught that, though the Law is to be respected, it is not necessary to observe. Afterwards I became a missionary and was considering the Law, more precisely – some parts of it, as means to attract Jewish people. Finally, I met some messianic believers arguing that the Law is necessary to observe. Thus, you can see I have lived all possible attitudes concerning the Law. I know

arguments in support of most possible views – from “orthodox” messianic though conservative “dispensational” (I got my ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary) – and can argue for them academically. It was actually my first reaction on this subject – to approach it theologically. But then I was reminded that I am going to speak not to a theological but rather to a mission conference.<sup>3</sup> The conference theme is *Jewish evangelism – Telling the Story*. I think that we are gathered here by the desire to bring the gospel to Jewish people. It is also my major concern. Therefore I will put aside my theological ambition and concentrate on answering the given question in relation to this conference theme.

In order to do this I will start with some conceptual considerations about relation of the Law to the gospel and to the Jewish life. Then I will remind us about some essential general missiological guidelines for effective outreach in relation to the Law and the Jewish people. And finally I will suggest some applications.

#### **Conceptual considerations**

The phrase “Jewish evangelism” includes two components – the gospel and the Jewish people. Therefore, taking about the Law in this regard, we need to consider the relation of the Law to the both – the gospel and the Jewish people.

#### *The Law and the essence of the gospel*

The gospel contents nothing about keeping the commandments. In the common definition the gospel neither says that commandments are important nor that they are obsolete. The gospel is a completely different dimension of biblical ideas. The

Willowbank Declaration says in this regard: *"It is important to identify what is at the heart of the gospel. We recognize as central the themes of God as Creator, the universality of sin, Jesus Christ as Son of God, Lord of all, and Saviour through his atoning death and risen life, the necessity of conversion, the coming of the Holy Spirit and his transforming power, the fellowship and mission of the Christian church, and the hope of Christ's return."*

Salvation, entrance to the God's kingdom, peace with God, and the Holy Spirit people receive not due to their observance or not-observance of the Law but solely due to the grace of God in Yeshua the Messiah (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom 1:16; 3:21-28; 11:6; Gal 3:2, 5; Eph 2:8-9; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 3:4-7). Therefore the Law and its observance are not essential messages of the Jewish and any other outreaches.

*The Law and the essence of the Jewish life*  
In the broadest sense, significant elements of the world Jewry in the modern era have defined, and are defining, Jewish identity as a community of history and destiny of those who still feel their involvement in this community or about whom others feel strongly that these people belong to Jewry.<sup>4</sup> Here the Jewish people are undivided from the Judaism, which is unique in that it is both a culture and a religion.<sup>5</sup> Even nonreligious Jews usually identify themselves at least with the culture. At the heart of the Jewish religion lies the existence of a covenant between God and His people. From circumcision to the keeping of the Sabbath, signs of the covenant abound in Jewish culture and religion. And the Torah is at the core of it. The Torah has been always essential for the Judaism and the Jewish people during their entire history.<sup>6</sup> Jewish history does not know of a Torah-less Judaism, even though the interpretations of what is meant by Torah differ widely. For a Jew rejecting the Torah has been equal to the rejecting of God of Israel, nation of Israel and the future hope. Although there were

disagreements how to keep the Law, in the Bible and the Jewish Tradition it has been always an essential attribute of a pious Jew (cf. Deut 6:24-25; Heb 2:2; 10:28).

Historically considered Judaism is an amalgam of three ideas – belief in God, God's revelation of the Torah to Israel, and Israel as the people which lives by the Torah in obedience to God. The interpretation of these ideas has varied from age to age, but the ideas themselves have remained constant.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the Torah is at the undivided core of the Jewish religion and culture.

All Jews know that their history is a study of almost thirty-five hundred years of persecution. Because of such history Jewish people usually live with the eyes fixed on the past. When they are called on to make fundamental choices, they turn for guidance to the past, where they find persecution, genocide, and fight. There is an assumption that non-Jews always persecute Jews. The history taught Jewish people also to assume that other nations want to destroy them either by force or by assimilation. Especially Christians fall historically under this suspicion.

### **Important considerations about communication**

I think it is important to remind us now of some basic facts concerning communication.

Human communication is the process through which individuals respond to and create messages to adapt to environment and to one another.<sup>8</sup>

The message that we send is not necessarily the message that will be received. Significant part of the message will be filtered by the sender and then by the receiver. Communication can be psychologically characterized as "important is not what you say but what I hear/feel you say."

### *Stereotyping*

The major barrier to credibility is the human habit of stereotyping. We can either conform to the stereotype and function with

little, if any, credibility or imitate Jesus in being receptor-oriented and personal in seeking to earn the kind of credibility and respect that the stereotype could never give. Therefore, in order to communicate a message, we need to start with overcoming stereotypes.<sup>9</sup>

### *Setting*

Communication is a dynamic process. In its ongoing activity it is like a motion picture – a word or action is immediately replaced with another word or action. All elements of communication interact with each other. Communication is symbolic and it is important to keep in mind the fact that the symbols you use are discretionary and subjective. Communication does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is part of a larger system that includes setting, location, occasion, time, number of people, and cultural setting. Therefore we need to pay attention to the messages not just of our words but also of our actions, symbols and settings.

### *Worldview*

Human perception is selective because people allow only selected information through the perceptual screen to the conscious mind. This selection is culturally determined. Perceptual patterns are learned and culture gives meaning to most of our experiences.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in order to communicate successfully, we need to consider one's culture and to understand the issue of intercultural communication.<sup>11</sup> Although many aspects of culture are subject to change, the deep structure of a culture, being the subjective roots of reality, resists major alterations. Therefore, to better understand any culture, we need to appreciate that culture's deep structure that has its roots deep in the basic institutions of the culture. Deep structure institutions (like religious community, family and state) of any culture carry usually a culture's most important beliefs. Its message endures and is deeply felt by the people of a culture, and it supplies much of human identity.

The most core of deep structure is worldview that influences all aspects of our perception and consequently affects our belief and value systems as well as how we think.<sup>12</sup> Religion is predominant element in every culture that has for thousands years given people their worldview. Probably there is no group of people without a religion.<sup>13</sup> Therefore considering religion is crucial for intercultural communication.

History of a people also needs to be considered for effective intercultural communication because historical events help to explain the character of a culture. Also, what a culture seeks to remember and pass on to the next generation tells us about the character of that culture.<sup>14</sup>

### *Avoiding misunderstandings*

Misunderstandings are based on ignorance of the beliefs, feelings and values of another culture. Our first task as we enter another culture is to learn how it works. When we first encounter other cultures, we find it hard to see the world through other cultural eyes. Our defense is to avoid the issue by concluding that our culture is better and other people are less civilized (in Jewish case – “not free”). We tend to judge another culture too quickly, before we learn to understand and appreciate them.

The Scripture is often falsely used in this judgment being interpreted from our cultural perspective. In order to avoid it we need (1) to recognize that we have our cultural biases while interpreting the Bible (in Christian-Jewish case – the “bondage” of the Law) and (2) we need to study the culture to which we minister and our own in order to compare and evaluate the two.<sup>15</sup>

If we are to witness effectively, we have to speak and behave in ways that honor the way of life they have ever known.<sup>16</sup>

### *Building trust*

Acceptance depends first of all on honesty and mutuality of an evangelist.<sup>17</sup> Trust is the fundament of a good relationship. It is based on the deep conviction in

truthfulness, integrity, reliability, and justice of another person. Trustworthiness is the foundation of credibility of any relationship and words.<sup>18</sup> Therefore a goal of an evangelist is to be a person of integrity who humbly tries to understand, love and accept others.

#### *“Incarnation” for intercultural communication*

It is evident that communication is done not just with words but also with life. Responding to this fact, a new approach that gains more appreciation in intercultural ministry is called “incarnation.” It is based on a fundamental doctrine of Christianity: the Son of God himself became flesh and dwelt among humans. He identified totally with those to whom he was sent, calling himself “the Son of man.” He was a 200-percent person – 100% God and 100% Jew (cf. John 1:14; 20:21; Heb 1:1-3; 4:15; Phil 2:3-8; Luke 2:52). Similarly to Jesus, evangelists are expected to become incarnate in the culture and thus in the lives of the people they wish to serve. Following example of Christ, they must enter a culture as if they were children – ignorant of everything, from the custom of eating and talking to the patterns of work, play, and worship, while doing it without sin.<sup>19</sup> They must be learners and let the natives teach them in order to effectively introduce them to the gospel. A mistake that an evangelist can make is to consider that he knows a culture so well that he can stop learning it. Missionaries have to make the first step of incarnation in order to break the pattern of excluding others. In incarnation there is no difference between the message and the Messenger.

Thus, the essence of evangelistic ministry is not self-preservation but incarnation. The examples of Jesus and Paul teach us that their main goal was to present the message in the way for the message to be clearly understood. They were free to adjustment. Their teaching was in relationship.<sup>20</sup>

Ministry “incarnation” actually does not mean “going native” but indicates that an

evangelist is worthy of trust and relationship investment rather than a person who has only an “pragmatic” interest in “conversion.” In this case the evangelist will be taken if not as an insider than at least as a precious enrichment for the people.

Identification means immersion in a culture when a person learns to think like the natives, to feel like the natives, to deal like the natives.

Incarnation thinking follows this definition: Cultural adaptation is the removing of the cultural obstacles that hinder clear, trustworthy communication of the gospel.<sup>21</sup>

The full incarnation is only possible if somebody is born and grew up in the culture. Therefore our goal can be described as becoming 150% person. In order to achieve it we must love the people to whom we minister in order to enter their culture as children. Aiming the incarnation definitely requires self-denial. But in this case such acts of self-denial are the first steps of freedom in the Messiah (cf. Matt 16:24).<sup>22</sup>

#### **Some applications**

##### *Do not preach a different “gospel”*

One of the common evangelistic stereotypes is that Jewish people are under the “yoke” of the Law and passionately desire to get free from this “yoke.” But, with rare exception, it is not true. Orthodox Jews do not consider themselves under a “horrible yoke” but find a delight in keeping the commandments. The majority of the Jews are liberal and do not keep the Law without being conscious-stricken. It is impossible to speak about any “bondage” in this case. Therefore Jewish people in fact do not feel a need for preaching about freedom from the Law and this preaching is not a “gospel” for them or for anybody else (see discussion above). Talking about “freedom” is more necessary in attempt to defend our attitude or habits. As we could see above, even in case of a liberal Jew, the Torah is always important for the Jewish identity. Any offence against

the Torah can be easily understood as anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish. By the way, using the word “freedom,” it is important to remember that it also means freedom to keep the Law. Thus, do not preach a different “gospel” related to the Law that is not necessary and can be easily misinterpreted.

*Respect the Law and those who keep it*

Very common Jewish stereotype is that most Christians are anti-Jewish. The Jews can be suspicious even to those Christians who do good things to them (“they simply want to convert us”). There is an assumption that Christians want to destroy Jewish people if not by force then by assimilation. And the Torah plays an important role in such attempts in their view.

As we could see above, effective evangelism requires respect for the culture of the people ministered to. It is also very true for Jewish evangelism. Additionally, it is important to consider that the Jewish culture is primarily linked to the Law that was given by God to the people. Therefore, even if somebody considers himself “free” from keeping the Law and does not see advantages of keeping it, he is still under obligation to respect the Law and those who keep it (this idea is biblically relevant; cf. Rom 2:9-16; 9:1-5).

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

*Be sincere and truthful*

Anti-missionaries often accuse those involved in the Jewish evangelism that we use Jewish, symbols, terminology and etc. in order to allure the Jewish people. And they seem to be right in many cases concerning many Jewish missions. Many training programs in Jewish evangelism

are evidences of it (e.g. terminology as a nice-looking “wrapping” of the message, holidays as means of evangelism, etc.). It reminds me sales-agents’ training, though “clients” here are different and the motives are godly.

We are accused in hypocrisy and we are giving reasons for this accusation by lack of sincerity and consistency in what we are doing. It strongly damages our testimony and harms our cause. Identification with any nation is not “playing” traditions but living the life of the people. Especially it is important for the so much sensitive Jewish people. If you are taking the “load” you need to carry it consistently.

I believe that sincerity of our lifestyle strengthens our testimony and advances our Jewish outreach. If somebody lives like a “Christian,” what is the reason for him to wear a “mask” and “play” Jewish? I think it is not less glorious to be “Christian” than to be “messianic.” What was wrong with term “Hebrew-Christian” that indicated a Christian with Jewish background? In most of the cases the mission to the Jews has been designed so that the Jewish people would abandon the essential elements of the Jewish life. Indeed the new Jewish believers will be told that Shabbat is not necessary and kashrut makes life more difficult. And if we do so, it would be right to tell to the Jews, “Yes, we want you live like Christians” and honestly explain them why we think it is better for them.

I have a friend who is 100% ethnically Jewish but considers himself to be a Christian. We enjoy arguing with each other whether it is right for him to act this way or not. But regardless of our disagreement I highly respect him for his consistency in life. And, believe it or not, Jewish people respect him and listen to him.

Thus, we have to live accordingly to the way we identify ourselves in the culture we minister in. E.g., if you call yourself a “Jew” you got to live like one in the given culture.

*Identification with the Jewish people*

1. Jewish believers in Yeshua – Paul’s example



In Rom 9:1-5 Paul fully identifies himself with his Jewish people. He calls all Jews (even those who do not believe in Yeshua and even his opponents) “my brothers.” Unfortunately in our evangelistic zeal we often divide the Jews in “us” and “them,” setting a border between “us,” believing in Yeshua, and the rest of the Jews. But for Paul all the Jews were his “brothers.” In Acts 28:17 we find the last words of Paul in this book. These words demonstrate Paul’s consistency in his lifestyle and convictions. Indeed in the whole book of Acts we can see Paul as an evidently Jewish leader, who was considered Jewish by all Jews and Gentiles around him. He was not only ashamed to be Jewish in his lifestyle but also was always ready to demonstrate it (e.g. Acts 21:20-26; 23:1-6; 25:8). It is remarkable that, even ministering among the Gentiles, Paul was evidently identified as a Jew (cf. Acts 16:19-21). And at the end Paul still calls even Jews who do not believe in Yeshua his “brothers” and insists that he has always lived according to the Law and traditions of the fathers (cf. Acts 28:17). The same was true for Peter and for other Yeshua’s disciples.

From Paul’s example we cannot drive a commandment to do the same but I think that Paul is a good example to follow.

2. All believers – certain level of “incarnation”

I would encourage all Gentile believers who want to evangelize the Jewish people to consider the “incarnation” ministry approach discussed above. Think about it and pray about God’s guidance to find the right ways and level of your “incarnation” in the Jewish life.<sup>23</sup> Continuously learn from the Jewish people. Win their trust (you actually cannot do it by telling them to abandon the Law). Try to feel and to think like the Jewish people. Do not think that the healthy “incarnation” is not possible. I know several Christians who have done it. And their testimony is great.

### **The Law and unity of the believers**

The last but not least: unity of the believers is a necessary condition for the successful

evangelism (cf. John 17:21-23). Therefore it is essential for all of us to cross the boundaries of our personal convictions and put aside all possible disagreements in regard of the Law in order to make our outreach to the Jewish people more effective. It is important internally for organizations involved in Jewish evangelism and for the relationship between different organizations.

Regardless of our attitude to the Law, we should remember that the commandments about love and unity have always played the most important role (cf. Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:12, 25-27; 13:1-3; 1 Pet 4:8; Phil 1:27; 2:1-4). Meanwhile, some of us still consider Torah-observant believers as misguided and talk lightly about them, while the same is often also true in the opposite way. Are you not tired of these conflicts? I believe God is. We got to stop harming our testimony by thinking and acting this way.

### **Conclusion**

Unfortunately, it is time to conclude this discussion. I know that I have not answered the question “The Law: freedom or obligation?” in the way it was expected by some of you. I assume that many can be unsatisfied or even upset about my presentation. I understand that it inflames even more questions, especially, of practical character. That was actually my objective – to provoke us to think about this issue from a (new to many) standpoint of intercultural communication. And I hope that it was a certain starting point for the future discussion and strengthening of the Jewish outreach.

To love communicationally is to put yourself to whatever inconvenience necessary to assume that the receptors understand (“receptor-oriented communication”).<sup>24</sup> God shows respect toward his receptors and toward the context in which he finds us. He is receptor-oriented, seeking to reach his receptors by entering their frame of reference and by participating in their life, in order to be maximally intelligible to

them.<sup>25</sup> I think that, regardless of our theological position concerning the Law, to follow His example is certainly our *obligation* and definitely our *freedom* – real evangelistic freedom.

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## Notes

1. This subject is heavily disputed among Jewish believers (extremely broad spectrum) and Christians. E.g., simply put, those from the Lutheran perspective could say that the law is “evil,” those from dispensational camp - the law is terminated, those from Pentecostal and Charismatic camps - the law is mostly useless, those who belong to the Reform tradition - the law is partly necessary (the “moral” law).
2. The term generally used in the classical sources for the whole body of Jewish teaching (cf. “Judaism,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* [Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972], 10:383). It is important to notice that the original and traditional meaning of the “Torah” (“teaching, theory”) is much broader and different from simply “the Law” as “the number of commandments.” I am going to use this last oversimplified definition because it is the most commonly debated.
3. In any case many books were written and it was said enough to discuss this subject from all possible perspectives.
4. Cf. “Jewish Identity,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972), 10:65.
5. Judaism is the religion, philosophy, and the way of life of the Jews, while being not monolithic due to adapting to changing circumstances throughout its long history (cf. “Judaism,” 10:383).
6. According to the 13 principles of Maimonides (traditionally define the essence of the Jewish faith) it is essential to believe in that the Torah is divine and unchanging. Although in some rabbinic writings the number of the principles was reduced (e.g. Joseph Albo, Isaac Arama), the Torah’s divine origin always remained

part of Judaism’s essence. Torah is essential also to Jewish mysticism.

7. Cf. “Judaism,” 387.

8. Cf. Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, *Communication between Cultures*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA:

Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001), 22.

9. Cf. Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, Rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 23; Lianne Roembke, *Multikulturelle Teams* (Giessen: Campus fuer Christus, 2000), 32-33.

10. Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world. An attitude is a combination of beliefs about a subject, feelings toward it, and any predisposition to act toward it. Beliefs (our convictions in the truth of something – with or without proof) and values (enduring attitudes about the preferability of one belief over another) are crucial for our perception. For more discussion see Samovar and Porter, *Communication between Cultures*, 53.

11. Culture is the anthropologist’s label for the sum of the distinctive characteristics of a people’s way of life. Intercultural communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event.

12. Cf. Samovar and Porter, *Communication between Cultures*, 92.

13. *Ibid.*, 94.

14. *Ibid.*, 123-24.

15. Cf. Paul G. Hiebert, “Cultural Differences and the Communication of the Gospel,” in *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: a Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 379.

16. Charles H. Kraft, “Culture, Worldview and Contextualization,” in *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: a Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 386. Definitely we need to avoid syncretism, namely, mixing of biblical

assumptions with those worldview assumptions that are incompatible with the sound belief so that the result is not biblical belief. But is the Law ungodly or unbiblical? Absolutely not (cf. Ps 19:7; Rom 7:12, 14)!

17. Cf. Roembke, *Multikulturelle Teams*, 96.

18. *Ibid.*, 37.

19. Cf. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin Keene Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: an Incarnational Model for*

*Personal Relationships*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 22-23.

20. Cf. Roembke, *Multikulturelle Teams*, 67-69.

21. *Ibid.*, 101.

22. Cf. Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 25.

23. You do not need to go “native” what can only upset many Jews in many cases.

24. Cf. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, 15.

25. *Ibid.*, 16.

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## Believers' relation to the Law: not obligation, but fulfillment

Jim Congdon, Senior Pastor, Topeka Bible Church, Kansas, USA

Torah-observance has long been accepted as *permissible* for Jews who have come to faith in Yeshua, and even for Gentile believers as well.<sup>1</sup> But recently some messianic leaders have asserted that Torah-centered living is *normative* for messianic Jewish congregations.<sup>2</sup>

In an atmosphere of requirement, it is helpful to remind ourselves that God's people are no longer under obligation to the Law of Moses. We will briefly pursue two lines of evidence linked by the enigmatic word “fulfill.” Jesus said that He came to “fulfill” the Law; Paul wrote that believers “fulfill” the Law. We will argue that both statements indicate that the believer is free from the Law.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Jesus “fulfilled” the Law by inaugurating a new age

To summarize: Jesus teaches in Matthew 5 that He is the new and living Torah – the realization of the Old Testament, the culmination of the Law of Moses. Paul affirms the same truth in Romans 10:4.

#### a. *Matthew 5:17-48*

Matthew 5:17-20 is the critical text for the question of the abiding force of the Mosaic

Law in the life of the believer. It is often summoned as the expert witness to prove the Law-obligation view, but the witness itself destroys the case, for it says “too much” for that view, whether offered in its Reformed theological form or its Jewish Torah-observant form.

Matthew 5:17-18 says “too much” for the traditional Reformed view which would neatly resolve this *crux interpretum* by dividing the Law into “abiding” (moral law) and “abrogated” (civil, ceremonial) parts--for Jesus is declaring that the *entire* Mosaic Law remains in force. This idea that Jesus was referring only to the moral laws (especially the Decalogue) within the Torah is unable to handle the all-embracing sweep of Jesus' next words (v. 18), which gather “every iota and dot” of the Law into that which, he declares, will not pass away “until all is accomplished.”<sup>4</sup>

Similarly Matthew 5:18 says too much for the messianic Jewish view that compliments itself on correctly noting that the Law is an indivisible unit – for confronted with the actual 613 laws themselves, Torah-observant believers are compelled to ‘take the absolute value’ of each, removing multiple iotas here, dots

there--of sacrifices, purifications, and penalties for disobedience--for much of the Law requires Temple, priesthood, and presence in the Land.<sup>5</sup> Westerholm is right to ask: "How can Christians be said to 'fulfill' the law when a significant number of its commands are disregarded?"<sup>6</sup> Once again, this is a reductionist interpretation of v. 18 which fails to honor the inclusive sweep of Jesus' words.

Instead, Jesus must be saying that the Mosaic Law *in toto* remains in force. But how can this be, since we are told that He abolished the food laws (Mark 7:19), and that the sacrificial system is abolished (Hebrews 8:13; 10:1-18)? The explanation must be "eschatological": Jesus is claiming that he is the climactic figure of history, and that the Law and Prophets remain in force *in Himself*. He has come to inaugurate a new age in salvation history -- not an age in which the old age is abolished, but the age to which it pointed and in which it is fully realized.<sup>7</sup> One may compare how a graduate student looks back on his undergraduate years of schooling. Are those university days now abolished? Never! They will always be cherished, yet only as the preparation of the advanced study to which they intentionally pointed.

Two textual witnesses support this exegesis: the verb "fulfill" (v. 18) and the six "words" that follow (vv. 21-48). Our Lord's choice of verb (pleroo, "fulfill") is critical: "The antithesis is not between 'abolish' and 'keep' but between 'abolish' and 'fulfill.'"<sup>8</sup> While many interpretations have been suggested, the best is the one that sees it as part of the promise-fulfillment theology of Matthew which pictures the entire OT as promising and anticipating Jesus.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it mirrors Jesus' statement a few chapters later that "The Law and Prophets prophesied until John" (11:13).<sup>10</sup> It is *in Christ* that all that the Law anticipated is about to be "accomplished" (v. 18 -- in His teaching, his ministry, and especially in his death and resurrection.

"Jesus does not conceive of his life and ministry in terms of opposition to the Old

Testament, but in terms of *bringing to fruition* that toward which it points. Thus, the Law and the Prophets, far from being abolished, find their valid continuity in terms of their outworking in Jesus. The detailed prescriptions of the Old Testament may well be superseded, because whatever is prophetic must be in some sense provisional. But whatever is prophetic likewise discovers its legitimate continuity in the happy arrival of that toward which it has pointed."<sup>11</sup>

This interpretation of Matthew 5:17-18 is also confirmed by the six "words" which follow (vv. 21-48), in which Jesus sets Himself up as the new Torah-giver. Those who view the Law as still binding argue that Jesus is simply giving the "deeper, original meaning" of the ancient laws here, but while this explanation will do for His third word (on adultery), it will not suffice for the others. Others respond that Jesus is "expanding the meaning" of the old laws, but while that will do for his first and second words (on murder and adultery), it will not suffice for the others. Instead, the point which Matthew wants us to see, by repetition, is that Jesus is the new Law-giver, who alone has the authority to say "you have heard that it was said...but I say unto you."<sup>12</sup>

The Transfiguration story (17:1-8; cf. Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) is probably meant to illustrate this replacement theme. Moses had gone up into a high mountain on the seventh day (Ex 24:16); "after six days" Jesus goes up into a high mountain. Moses had been accompanied by Aaron and a pair of brother priests, Nadab and Abihu; Jesus was accompanied by Peter and the brothers James and John. As Moses had entered the cloud and divine light with the result that his face shone, so Jesus shone with heaven's light; and before Him appeared Moses and Elijah, the only OT saints to receive a revelation on "the mountain." As tents had been part of the ritual of Moses receiving revelation (Ex 33), so Peter suggests that tents be erected for the three recipients of revelation. But at this juncture there is a sharp

discontinuity meant to catch our attention. At Sinai God had revealed himself with “I am Yahweh,” and then given the Ten Words to Moses; but here and now, God introduces his son, “This is my beloved Son,” and then says, “Listen to *him*.” The gospel writer could not present it more clearly: Jesus has become the revealed Word. The old Torah has given way to One who himself is the new and living Torah.

Where, then, is the code of conduct for “life in the kingdom” here and now?

According to vv. 19-20, our ethic is found in “these commands” of Jesus, which assume and advance the Old Testament law, and last forever (cf. 24:35; 28:20).<sup>13</sup> The Law and Prophets no longer govern God’s people directly – only Christ does that – but provide principles “for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16), when filtered through the lens of Jesus’ works and words. This exegesis explains the relatively few number of times that Jesus cites the Law to support His demands, as well as statements such as “the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28), and the fact that Jesus leaves his disciples with the command to take *His* teaching to the world (Matt 28:20).

#### *b. Romans 10:4*

In his most famous statement on the Law, Paul affirms that Jesus is the goal and end of the law. He writes: “Christ is the end of the Law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4). The Apostle seems to be declaring a “full stop” to the law of Moses, but both of the words in the phrase *telos nomou* are debated, and the study leads us to the same conclusion as in Matthew 5.

Some proponents of Law-obligation deny that Romans 10:4 refers to the Law at all. Instead, they say, Paul declares that Christ is the end of *legalism*, the Law’s misuse as a way of salvation. But this escape route is closed, for Paul nowhere else uses *nomos* to mean legalism, while its normal use is the Mosaic law.<sup>14</sup>

Most proponents of Law-obligation

instead note that *telos* can take the meaning “goal” rather than “end,” and argue that this is what Paul means here.<sup>15</sup> The Law could then remain in full force for believers today. These two options are sometimes presented as stark contrasts: Either Christ has terminated the Law, or the Law remains in full force.

We do not need to choose between these two opposite poles, however, and should not do so here. In this context Paul seems to be saying that Christ is both “goal” and “end”: Christ is the “goal” of the Law, in the sense that the Law has always looked forward to him (10:2-3). But He is also its “end” in connection with righteousness, because through Him comes faith as the new means to righteousness (9:30-32; 10:4b).<sup>16</sup> By *telos*, then, he means that he is the Law’s “point of culmination.”<sup>17</sup> (p. 207, Moo, *Continuity and Discontinuity*)

Therefore Paul is saying the same thing about Christ that Christ said about himself - He is the culmination of the Law. Its permanence is guaranteed, yet not in its own continued existence but rather in its fulfillment in his teachings and in the new age of life in the Spirit.

## **2. Believers “fulfill” the Law, even while they are free from it**

To summarize: Paul is adamant that believers are no longer subject to the Law of Moses; yet he also expects that believers must comply with the moral demands of the Law. This conundrum is resolved by the apostle himself, who declares that believers comply with the Law’s demands not by “doing” the Law but by “fulfilling” it, when they walk by the Spirit in love.

#### *a. Believers are free from the Law*

A heavy burden of proof rests those who would teach Law-obligation today, for Paul declares unequivocally that believers are no longer subject to the Law: they have “died to the law” (Rom 7:6; Gal 2:19); they have been “set free” from the law (Rom 7:6); they are no longer “under” the law (Rom 6:14-15); they have been

“redeemed” from the law (Gal 4:5).

As a Pharisee, Paul had understood the Torah to be the highest revelation of the will of God to man. But in his vision of the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul recognized in him a fuller, eschatological revelation of God. In other words, Christ, the bearer of the image of the invisible God, has superseded the Torah as the revelation of God and of his will for mankind (2 Cor 4:4-6). The age of the Law has been replaced by the age of Christ (Gal 3:19-4:5). And so while the Jews to whom he preaches are under obligation to observe the Law’s demands, Paul says that he is not (1 Cor 9:20).

Finding scant support in Paul, those who teach Law-obligation often sift the early church narratives of Acts for help. Finding Torah-observance by Peter, James, and even Paul himself (!), they commandeer it as ground for the doctrine that believers--at least the Jewish ones--are still subject to the Law.<sup>18</sup> But early church practices will not bear this heavy theological weight. Thoughtful readers of Luke/Acts will remind themselves that: (1) the early church of the Gospels and Acts occupied a kind of salvation-historical transitional phase as the Old Covenant was still in effect even as the New was in the process of inauguration; (2) the Jewish Christian therefore belonged to two communities – to the new covenant people as a believer, but to the Old Testament civil and social legislation as a Jew; (3) according to Luke, the early church merely rolled on in the well-worn grooves of Jewish piety, only working out the full implications of the new covenant gradually; (4) Stephen and other early Christian were accused by antagonistic Judaism of challenging the centrality of the Law and the temple for God’s people, and they did not deny it; (5) the gospel was preached beyond the boundaries of Judaism, and those who believed were admitted to the church without becoming proselytes; (6) Peter opposes nomism in Acts 15:10-11 with a programmatic statement which dismisses the imposition of Torah-

observance as “a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear”; (7) the Sabbath, holiday, and purity practices of the apostles are therefore best seen as arising not from Law-obligation theology, but from one or more of the following factors: habit, religious conservatism, social pressure, avoidance of persecution, and missionary policy (“to the Jew I become as a Jew,” 1 Cor 9:20).<sup>19</sup> We conclude that the continuing first century practice of the Law by believing Jews falls into the category of liberty, not law. The Willowbank Declaration agrees: “We affirm that Jewish people who come to faith in Messiah have liberty before God to observe or not to observe traditional Jewish customs and ceremonies that are consistent with the Christian Scriptures.”<sup>20</sup>

Paul’s certainty that believers are free from the Law would be perfectly straightforward were it not also clear that he expects believers to comply with its moral demands (Rom 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal 5:14). How is this resolved?

*b. Believers who walk by the Spirit in love automatically “fulfill” the Law*

Paul says that believers must “fulfill” the law (Rom 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal 5:14). But nowhere does he require that believers “do” the Law. This distinction is more than semantic. To “do” the Law, the believer would need to perform its individual and specific commands (Gal 5:3). To “fulfill” the law – described by Paul as walking by the Spirit in love--does not require performance of the specific legal requirements. Yet, says Paul, it completely satisfies what is required. But how is it possible to “fulfill” the Law without actually “doing” the Law?

Consider an illustration. A foreign exchange student from Greece enrolls in Introductory Greek at a school in the States. The instructor soon realizes that the student more than adequately “fulfills” the requirements of the course, and releases her from “doing” the assignments.<sup>21</sup> According to Paul, the Christian who walks by the Holy Spirit in

love bears a similar relationship to the Law. He “fulfills” its demands without ever actually “doing” its specific requirements.

Romans 7:5-6 is definitive.<sup>22</sup> Believers have been set free from the Law (the “moral” law is included, v. 7), so that they now serve God in the new way of the Spirit rather than in the old way of the written code.<sup>23</sup> Paradoxically, the results of the new way – fulfillment of the Law, service in love (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:13) – are better than the results of the old way – sinful passions, disobedience, and death (Rom 7:5; 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 3:19).

To summarize: Both Jesus and the believer are said to “fulfill” the Law. In neither instance is “doing” the Law in view; yet in both instances, the demands of the Law are fully satisfied. In the case of Jesus, the whole Law finds fulfillment – complete satisfaction and permanent validity--in his person and words. In the case of Jesus’ followers, the whole Law finds fulfillment – complete satisfaction of all requirements – in their submission to the person of words of Christ.

Christ, then, is the heart of New Testament ethics. He is everything that Judaism has claimed for Torah, and much more. He, rather than the Law, is the Wisdom of God, the Bread of Life, the Word, the Instrument of God’s creation, the Light of the world, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Glory, the Shepherd, and the Teacher. God speaks: “This is my beloved son; listen to him.”

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## Notes

1. That Gentiles often greatly outnumber Jews in their synagogues poses an added theological difficulty for messianic rabbis who preach law-obligation; David Klinghoffer, in a recent issue of the Jewish women’s magazine *Hadassah*, names a messianic rabbi in Seattle who admitted to him that only about 2% of his Beit Tikvah congregation of 200 are Jewish-born (*Hadassah*, May 2007; vol. 88, no. 9).

2. This is the argument of Mark Kinzer,

*Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*, Brazos, 2005. The use of *Judaism* is deliberate by Kinzer, for whom Jews in rabbinic Judaism rest under God’s redemptive favor and may be saved through Jesus, even if they do not believe in him (p. 25).

3. This does not mean we are lawless, of course. To broadly summarize, using distinctions as old as Thomas Aquinas: (1) *Everyone* is under the law of Nature; (2) *No one* is under the Law of Moses; (3) *Believers* are under the law of Christ. See J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: A Case for Natural Law* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. When referring to the Law of Moses in this article, we capitalize “law,” to distinguish the Law of Moses from the laws of God, nature, and Christ.

4. Paul is unaware of the threefold division of the Law upon which much of the modern argument for the continuing validity of the Law is based. This division would have been repugnant to the Jews, for whom all 613 commands were moral, and it is spurned by them to this day. While general comparisons were drawn in biblical times between “weightier and lighter matters of the law” (Matt 23:23), sharp lines were not drawn until post-biblical times. When the NT refers to “the law,” it generally means the entire Mosaic corpus of law.

5. “For the most part, the emphasis is on holy days, Sabbaths, and festivals, with perhaps some attention given to other parts of the Law. In essence, these are not so much Torah-observant as festival-observant groups.” Rich Robinson, *Havurah*, winter 2005, vol. 8:4, p. 2.

6. Stephen Westerholm, *Israel’s Law and the Church’s Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 202, citing E. P. Sanders in support. He adds on p. 221 that “it was Paul who realized that when the sanctions of the law have been removed, its demands have no force.”

7. The first thorough delineation of this “salvation-history” interpretation is usually attributed to Robert Banks, *Jesus and the*

*Law in the Synoptic Tradition*, SNTSMS 28 (Cambridge: CUP, 1975).

8. D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 243.

9. Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 347-353.

10. It may be helpful to observe that for Matthew, Jesus is here thinking of the Hebrew Scriptures, and especially the Torah, not as a "code" or even primarily as an "ethic" but as a "promise"--a promise which reaches forward to its fulfillment in himself, the new and living Torah. See Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), p. 39, who draws these distinctions in the Third Gospel.

11. D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), p. 37.

12. Moo, *Five Views*, 347-350.

13. By "these commands" Jesus must not be referring not to Old Testament law *per se*, to which the Pharisees and scribes who will not enter the kingdom (v. 20) adhere, but to his own words in their fulfillment of the law (vv. 18-19), words will never pass away (Matt 24:35; 28:20). See A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 1982, p. 219, n. 82; followed by D. A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, p. 78.

14. Douglas J. Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983) 73-100.

15. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979], 2:516-19; Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel/Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 82-85; Frank Thielman, *Paul and*

*the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 207.

16. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 818-18.

17. Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books), 1988, p. 207.

18. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*, is the most recent example of resting one's case for abiding Torah-observance on the narratives of Acts, rather than the teaching of Jesus and Paul.

19. Max M. B. Turner, "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 121-26; Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1994), 648.

20. In a nice turn of phrase, the position statement of Jews for Jesus "affirms Jewish believers who, for the sake of honoring our heritage and developing a Jewish testimony, *choose to give up some of what grace allows* to conform to dietary standards and various other Jewish practices." (italics mine)

21. Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, p. 203, uses the illustration of a concert pianist who enrolls in an undergraduate music course. The argument here is indebted to Westerholm, ch. 10.

22. This is the text that, Mosaic law scholar Frank Thielman confesses, finally "converted" him to the view that "Paul considered the Mosaic covenant obsolete"; see *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 242.

23. Space does not permit discussion of the essentials of the new covenant ethic: the central command of love, the law of Christ, walking by the Spirit.



# Assimilation and intermarriage: the glass is half full

Tuvya Zaretsky, President of LCJE

Survival is a universal core value of world Jewry. Assimilation and intermarriage have historically been regarded as threats to Jewish survivability. And, in August of 2007, these two characteristics are widespread within Diaspora Jewry and matters to reckon with for Jewish evangelism.

Jewish public policy discussions about assimilation and intermarriage reflect serious concerns. Early this year, sociologist Gary Tobin worriedly asked, "What difference does it make if Jewish survival is threatened by genocide or by the freedom to choose one's marriage partner, if they both result in severe population loss?"<sup>1</sup> Seeing that Jewish survival is at risk, communal planners generally agree that the glass is half empty and draining quickly.

I would suggest that missiologists, students of Jewish evangelism and mission practitioners, should see the same glass as half full. At this point in Jewish history, we have before us a window of opportunity for strategic outreach to Jewish people worldwide. So, what are the current reports about Jewish assimilation and intermarriage? What are some of the missiological implications from both issues?

## Intermarriage

Ten years ago, two American Jewish writers put a focus on the effects of Jewish intermarriage. Author and law professor, Alan M. Dershowitz wrote *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century*. His book reflected on the findings of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). That was the demographic bombshell that reported more than half of American Jews had married gentiles since 1985. It tracked an ominous upward trend that had doubled in just one decade.

Dershowitz speculated in his book that the result of intermarriage would be that,

"The chances of young, contemporary Jews having Jewish grandchildren and great-grandchildren, with the exception of the Orthodox, are increasingly remote."<sup>2</sup> Dershowitz suggested that Jewish education would be the salvation of American Jewry. That was at the same time that a son was marrying an irreligious Irish Catholic woman.

Elliot Abrams, wrote *Faith or Fear* in that same year.<sup>3</sup> His solution for the only hope to stem the tide of American Jewish intermarriage was a return to Judaism. Religious culture was, in his view, the answer to a waning desire to be Jewish. However, in the face of his solution was the documented trend that American Jewry no longer wants an unambiguous connection to Judaism. Fully 63% of American Jews were unaffiliated by 1990 and the rate was trending downward. Intermarriage and religious disaffiliation were already common symptoms of a change in American Jewish life.

The 2000/2001 National Jewish Population Survey further showed that the Jewish trend toward intermarriage in America had not abated. Even after adjusting the criteria for Jewishness, in an apparent attempt to slow the reported intermarriage rate, the percentage of American Jews who married gentiles had changed little.

In response, Jewish policy focused on how to encourage intermarried Jews to "make Jewish choices." In 2004, Sylvia Barack Fishman chaired a Brandeis University study that, for the first time, acknowledged the new social reality: Out marriage (exogamy) is the preferred American Jewish norm in spite of calls for the opposite from communal leaders.<sup>4</sup>

The Brandeis study sought to understand the ways in which couples negotiated ethnic and religious characteristics of their households. The goal of the study was to find out how these new families are *coalescing*, forming a new

normative form of Judaism that is composed of American and Jewish cultures. The only acceptable denominator for determining Jewish identity, according to the Barack Fishman study, is some relationship to *Judaism*. Working with that assumption, there is no room for a category called *Jesus-believing-Jews*. The Brandeis study sought solutions to intermarriage that were limited to possibilities from within the domain of Judaism.

In the same year, I published a research study into the challenges faced by intermarried Jewish-gentile couples.<sup>5</sup> Five key challenges were identified as threats to marital stability and survivability for Jewish-gentile couples. Two of those challenges in particular, have been identified as appropriate points for strategic mission to the Jewish people. We highlighted an inability to find spiritual harmony and some of the tensions over the spiritual enculturation of children for mission response.<sup>6</sup> The appropriate application of Gospel ministry in these two areas of Jewish-gentile family life is where our energies ought to be focused.

Traditional Jewish communal responses have debated whether to cut off American intermarried couples as a drain on precious financial resources or to take an inclusive approach for the sake of enlarging the metaphorical tent. In November 2006, prominent Jewish sociologist, Steven M. Cohen has argued that, based on data of the 2001 National Jewish Population Survey, the Jewish community in America has divided into two distinct parts. Jews who marry out, he said, will lead to a diminished Jewish community and an irrelevant Judaism. Jewish-Gentile couples and their families are a quantitative threat to Jewish survival.

Therefore, he called on Jewish policy makers to throw all community funded responses to those who qualitatively support the ethnic and religious dimensions of Jewish life. This controversial approach advocates abandoning the Jewish intermarried, their

children and extended families. More than marginalizing the intermarried, Cohen advocates turning a back to their spiritual needs.<sup>7</sup>

Here it is helpful to note that Jewish-Gentile intermarriage, declining Jewish birth rates and disaffiliation from Judaism are all characteristics of Diaspora Jewish life. All three are symptoms of the larger issue – assimilation. Turning to this subject, we are no longer reporting mainly from the American Jewish context.

### **Assimilation**

A 2005 demographic study reported on a worldwide trend toward intermarriage, predominantly outside of Israel.<sup>8</sup> Global figures reflect an international trend that is similar to what was found taking place in America.

According to the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment, during the last 25 years, Jewish people in the former Soviet Union (FSU) have intermarried at a rate of 80%. The *Jerusalem Post* reported in May this year that the rate was closer to 90%. Even an experiment with “secular Judaism” among FSU Jewry had failed.<sup>9</sup> Evidence of an assimilation trend continues to follow FSU Jewry as they migrate to Poland and Germany.

During that same period of time, European Jews have married gentiles at a rate between 40 and 60 percent depending on the country surveyed. Recent studies have reported that Jewry in Australia have intermarried 55% of the time. We have already mentioned the intermarriage rate of 52% in the United States. In Latin America the Jewish-gentile intermarriage rate is 45%. In the context of assimilation, we are just observing the intermarriage rate as one symptom.

The Jewish homeland is not concerned with the same sort of assimilation as an internal threat. The impact of any potential repatriation of Arabs into Israel is the subject for another paper. However, two years ago, the Israeli paper *HaAretz* reported that 10% of all Israelis are

intermarried. That is not the *rate* of intermarriage, just the overall population figure. It becomes noteworthy when compared to the United States, where the total of Jews who are intermarried is 34%.

Jewish-gentile marriages are now a global phenomenon of world Jewry. As just one symptom of assimilation, sociologists are right to investigate the survival of the Jewish people. Recently, Binyamin Netanyahu gave voice to a broad sentiment within Israel when he said that the Jewish homeland is the only hope for Diaspora Jewry.

Beyond intermarriage, we have to consider Jewish birthrates and affiliation to Judaism to take a measure of assimilation trends. For figures regarding declining Jewish birthrate I return to the vibrant context of the United States. Over the past 25 years US Jewry has been unable to produce enough babies to keep up with the death rate even with support of immigration from the FSU. In spite of absorbing Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Israel, the US Jewish population has been dropping by over 50,000 per year since 2000.

That rate of Jewish population decrease in the United States, coupled with a Jewish population increase in the State of Israel, resulted in a demographic shift last year. In 2006, the Jewish population of Israel became the largest of any other country in the world, finally surpassing that of the U.S.

Disaffiliation from Judaism is a third indicator of assimilation. The 1990 NJPS reported that 63% of American Jews were no longer affiliated with any Jewish institutions. Jewish communal leaders have lamented that the trend is evidenced by a waning will to be Jewish. Felix Posen, reflecting on the 2001 American Jewish Identity Survey concluded, "Secularism is a serious source of conviction for some Jews...(and)...a serious existential condition for a great many more." While 80% of American Jews may say that they observe some form of Passover ritual, rabbinical forces carry diminishing

authority as social opinion makers. Even in Israel, where a substantial number of Israelis declare themselves "traditional" adherents of Judaism, rabbinical authority is waning, as evidenced by the ebb and flow in the political arena.

### **Some missiological implications**

First, we should affirm that survival of the Jewish people depends on the will of God according to His word. The Jewish people did not create, sustain and preserve themselves through their own vitality or ingenuity. The purpose for the Jewish people is ensured by the grace of our sovereign, covenant-keeping God.<sup>10</sup> His promise to the descendants of Abraham that He will preserve a people, for His own namesake, is the assurance for Jewish survival.

Who could do a better job, than the Lord has done for more the three millennia, in preserving the lineage of Israel's children? To clarify then, Jewish survival is not our foremost mission. Jewish evangelism does care about the Jewish people in their historical settings. In a time when assimilation and intermarriage increasingly characterize Diaspora Jewry, what should be the focus of our missiological response?

Jewish evangelism is first of all concerned with the spiritual state of the Jewish people? Assimilation and intermarriage are not necessarily outcomes of alienation from God in all cases. However, they could indicate the spiritual estrangement of some. How should we focus our ministry? The Lord's answer for spiritual alienation is the salvation of all people, Jewish and gentile, in His son Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

This is not the first historical period during which Jewry has been diluted by intermarriage. This is also not the first time that Diaspora Jewry has been challenged by assimilation. No doubt the same concerns were raised when the "mixed multitude" came out of Egypt with the sons of Israel.<sup>12</sup> Survival, assimilation and intermarriage were issues after the first

dispersions among Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian populations; again in the days of the Hasmoneans; and at the time of the Roman occupation and subsequent dispersions that have lasted nearly two millennia until now.

We agree, survival of the Jewish people depends on the covenant grace of God. The salvation of the Jewish remnant, as with any people group, depends uniquely on Jesus. He is the only hope for eternal life. I suggest then that the primary missiological response to the issues of assimilation and intermarriage is a focus on evangelism. Our message is that God, who has been the shield of Israel, has provided salvation to the remnant of His people.

A second missiological implication is that intermarriage is from our perspective an *opportunity*. We understand the fear and uncertainty voiced by Jewish writers like Lawrence M. Reisman, who said “we are obsessed with intermarriage.”<sup>13</sup> We should be empathetic with the intense interest in Jewish survival. Yet, our mission goal ought not to be in helping Jewish-gentile couples and their families make “Jewish choices” (as is the primary effort of the Interfaith Family network). Jewish-gentile couples are facing complex sociological challenges. Moreover, they are hurting spiritually. Our emphasis should be on helping Jewish-gentile couples and their families find the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his Savior Jesus. The integration of two ethnic worlds is possible through spiritual harmony and eternal life in Him.

The third missiological implication is that as Diaspora Jews are assimilating we have an opportunity to extend holistic ministry to their families as well. We need to think in terms of strategic efforts to reach the children of Jewish-gentile families with the gospel. We are staring at open doors to speak spiritual hope to a younger generation. Some have already responded to this opportunity.

We can offer children an appreciation for their Jewish heritage. Bible study is an

entry point by which we can offer children a firm spiritual foundation for their lives through faith in Messiah Jesus. We are already witnessing a generation of Jesus-believing Jews growing up in Israel as a product of summer camps and youth fellowships over the past 30 years.

Evidence of that same sort of fruitfulness is visible in the Diaspora, especially in the United States. It is a direct result of camp ministries like Jews for Jesus Camp Gilgal, youth fellowships coming through the Messianic congregational movement and backyard Bible ministries like Club Maccabee.

Indeed, the glass is half *full* if we recognize the strategic and specific missiological opportunity that is present amidst the issues of assimilation and intermarriage.

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#### Notes

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2. Alan Dershowitz. *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century*. (New York: Little, Brown & Co.) 1997. 26.
3. Elliott Abrams. *Faith or Fear* (Riverside, NJ: Free Press Publisher) 1997.
4. Sylvia Barack Fishman. *Double or Nothing?: Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press) 2004. 13.
5. Tuvya Zaretsky. *The Challenges of Jewish-Gentile Couples: A Pre-Evangelistic Ethnographic Study*. Submitted to the faculty of Western Seminary in partial fulfillment of the doctor of Missiology degree. 2004.
6. Enoch Wan and Tuvya Zaretsky. *Jewish-Gentile Couples: Trends, Challenges and Hopes*. (Pasadena: William Carey Library Publishers:2004) 96-98.
7. Steven M. Cohen: *A Tale of Two Jewries: The “Inconvenient Truth” for*

*American Jews*. (New York: Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation) November 2006.

8. Source: Sergio DellaPergola, Yehezkel Dror and Shalom S. Wald, *Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment 2005*, (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2005) 12.

9. Haviv Rettig. "A new Zionist community." Online at *Magazine.JPost.com*, May 17, 2007

10. See Deuteronomy 7:9 for example.

11. Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

12. Ex. 12:38 And a mixed multitude also went up with them.

13. Lawrence M. Reisman, "Our Intermarriage Obsession." *Jewish World Review*, October 20, 1998.

# The impact of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism on the story about Jesus

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We are all acutely aware of the impact of anti-Semitism on our ministries but there is something almost bizarre about the fact that at a conference of this nature we consider “anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism” to be major “issues impacting the story about Jesus”. We don’t have the time to examine in depth how such a state of affairs has come about but those of us engaged in telling Jewish people about Jesus must bear some responsibility for failing to convince the Jewish community that our story is not anti-Semitic and for failing to persuade the Church to be more positive in its attitude to the Jewish people and Israel.

Nine years ago, when he published *Abandoned*, Stan Telchin argued that the modern Jewish rejection of Jesus was largely due to historic Christian anti-Semitism. The Jewish collective memory is long. Most Jewish people are aware that Church Fathers such as Origen and John Chrysostom denounced the Jews as Christ-killers and anathematised them as children of the devil. From their earliest years European Jewish children learn of the horrors endured by their forefathers: the massacres perpetrated on Jewish communities by the Crusaders; the anti-Jewish measures introduced by pious Catholic monarchs; the forced conversions of Jews and their expulsion from Christian lands; the Inquisition; the blood libels; the vitriolic diatribes of Luther; the pogroms of Tsarist Russia and, of course, in the mid-twentieth century, the Shoah. All these, plus the teaching that God has rejected the Jews for killing their Messiah and has transferred their election, blessings and privileges to the Church, “impact” our ministry by reinforcing the perception that Christianity is anti-Jewish and that it is therefore an act of treachery for a Jew to confess Jesus as the Messiah.

Though it is far from the truth to say

that all Christians at all times throughout the last two thousand years have been anti-Jewish, nevertheless the legacy of Christian anti-Semitism stands as a powerful psychological and emotional barrier separating the Jewish people from their Messiah. Try telling the story of Jesus to a resident of Golders Green in North West London, which is home to a large segment of London’s Jewish community, and they may well respond that they have “six million reasons” for rejecting Jesus.

For many Jewish people it is beyond dispute that Christian mission to the Jews is an expression of anti-Semitism. The Canadian anti-missionary Rabbi Immanuel Shochet, for example, insists that missionaries are worse than the Nazis and that the four Gospels make *Mein Kampf* seem like “a nice decent nursery rhyme”. The predominant Jewish perception of the New Testament is that it demonises the Jews. Therefore those enlightened Christians who are positive toward the Jewish people and Israel must be so because they have managed to rise above their sacred text either by “re-interpreting” it or by selectively choosing the bits they believe.

For some Jewish believers the memory of the Church’s treatment of the Jews remains traumatic. CWI is working in conjunction with the Board for Israel of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations to publish a Hebrew edition of The Heidelberg Catechism. One of the catechism’s proofreaders became deeply upset when reading the questions relating to the Roman Catholic Mass and the baptism of children because they stirred up images of the forcible conversion of Jewish children and the subsequent removal of them from their parents.

## **Anti-Israelism**

There is little purpose in pressing the point further. We know from experience that

anti-Semitism has a negative impact on Jewish mission but what about “anti-Israelism” or “anti-Zionism”? Until the mid nineteen-eighties I knew of no Christians who did not admire the state of Israel and believe that in some sense the Jews were still “the people of God”. Israel’s victories against overwhelming odds in the Six Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and the daring rescue of Jewish hostages from Entebbe airport in 1976 reinforced Christian admiration for the Jewish people and the feeling that God was indeed with them.

Opinions about Israel began to change in the evangelical community in 1983, following the publication of Colin Chapman’s hugely influential *Whose Promised Land?* Since then anti-Zionism has percolated down into the various branches and denominations of the Christian Church and has acquired theological respectability. In 2004, following a declaration issued by the World Council of Churches, the 216th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) condemned Israel’s construction of a security wall across the West Bank, disavowed Christian Zionism as a legitimate theological stance and approved measures opposing “the Israeli occupation of Palestine”, which included selective divestment of holdings in multinational corporations who did business in Israel/Palestine. Within weeks of the PCUSA’s decision, the Anglican Consultative Council in the UK had not only spoken out against what it saw as Israeli oppression of Palestinians but also voted to withdraw investment from companies doing business with Israel, most notably the Caterpillar bulldozer company.

In October 2006 the Anglican parish of Virginia Water in Surrey, England decided to withdraw £120,000 (more than US\$250,000) from the Church of England’s Central Board of Finance investment account because the CBF refused to disinvest from companies such as Caterpillar, which were “profiting from

Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestine”. The Revd Dr Stephen Sizer, insisted, “This is not an attack on Israel or the Jewish people but a non-violent response to an unjust and intolerable situation. Western companies are profiting from the colonisation of Palestine and construction of the illegal Separation Wall . . . How can we profit from policies which we believe to be both threatening the viability of a Palestinian state and also damaging prospects for peace and security for the Israeli people?”

Stephen Sizer is an ardent and eloquent critic of both Israel and the Christians who support it. When his book *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* was published in 1984 it was enthusiastically endorsed by some of the big names in the worldwide evangelical community. Although ostensibly a critique of the ultra-literalistic hermeneutics and the uncritical support for the state of Israel expressed by some dispensationalist writers, in order to demonstrate that Israel is unworthy of Christian support *Christian Zionism* presents a perspective on Israel that is opposite in the extreme to the view held by those with whom Stephen Sizer takes issue. If Pat Robertson, Hal Lindsey and John Hagee can find no fault with Israel, Stephen Sizer can see nothing good in the nation.

*Christian Zionism* is replete with historical inaccuracies, misrepresentations, libels and citations from Holocaust-deniers, neo-Nazis and anti-Semites; it also relies heavily on the disputed scholarship of “leading Jewish academics” such as Noam Chomsky, Norman Finklestein, Uri Davis and Israel Shahak. Although Sizer strenuously denies the allegation that he is an anti-Semite, he is highly regarded by anti-Semites, and links to his articles and websites appear on several neo-Nazi, white supremacist and militant Islamic websites. Sizer’s anti-Israel agenda reveals its insidious nature most clearly in a footnote on page 251 of *Christian Zionism* where he subtly insinuates “Israeli complicity in the 9/11 tragedy”, a bizarre

theory that has been touted in various forms by anti-Semites the world over.

Another British evangelical anti-Zionist whose articles appear not only in mainstream Christian journals but also on Islamic websites is Dr Anthony McRoy. In an article that appears on the website of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, McRoy charges David Ben Gurion with personally ordering in 1948 the ethnic cleansing of what is now the site of Ben Gurion International Airport. McRoy urges his readers to “flood their MPs with letters demanding that the UK and EU ban all flights to and from 'Ben Gurion Airport' until the refugees and their descendants are repatriated and compensated for their ordeal. If any Zionists soldiers are still alive, they should be hunted by the War Crimes court at The Hague... Local Arab and Muslim communities in Britain should send delegations to all their local travel agents demanding that they refuse to handle booking [sic] that involve landing at the airport, warning them that unless they do so, they will face organised communal boycotts and pickets.”

McRoy's writings also demonstrate the depths to which anti-Zionist pseudo-scholarship is prepared to sink in order to delegitimise the claims of the Jewish people to their historic homeland. At the *Al-Quds: City of Three Monotheistic Faiths* conference, held in London in March 2003, McRoy presented a paper entitled “The Status and Condition of Israeli Arabs”. In that paper, available at the IHRC website, McRoy makes the incredible claim: “The Palestinians are the descendants of everyone who ever lived in the land... Indeed, *Palestinians are largely of Israelite stock – they are simply culturally Arabised*” (my emphasis).

At the end of 2006, ex-US President Jimmy Carter, who has long been respected by evangelicals for his Christian commitment, and by non-Christians for the excellent work carried out by The Carter Centre, published *Palestine: Peace or Apartheid?* Carter's book immediately attracted strong criticism from a number of

academics, including Alan Dershowitz:

The Carter book is so filled with simple mistakes of fact and deliberate omissions that were it a brief filed in a court of law it would be struck and its author sanctioned for misleading the court. Carter too is guilty of misleading the court of public opinion. A mere listing of all of Carter's mistakes and omissions would fill a volume the size of his book.

Even though fourteen members of staff at The Carter Centre resigned following the publication of *Palestine: Peace or Apartheid?* the former US President remained impenitent. On the US TV show *Hardball* on 28th November 2006, Carter stated his opinion that the “oppression of the Palestinians by the Israelis” was worse than the situation in Rwanda during the civil war and went on to liken Israel to South Africa under the Apartheid regime:

The persecution of the Palestinians now, under the occupying territories – under the occupation forces – is one of the worst examples of human rights deprivation that I know . . . Israel . . . [has] taken away all the basic human rights of the Palestinians, as was done in South Africa against the blacks. Some of Carter's Jewish critics have accused him of being an anti-Semite, and none of them are unaware of his conservative Baptist association.

#### **Legitimate criticism**

This is not to say that Israel is beyond criticism; some of the country's strongest supporters are among its most stringent critics. Rabbi Yehuda Levin, for example, calls the two million abortions that have been performed in Israel since 1948 “the silent Holocaust” and makes the chillingly ironic point that since the Jewish state was founded more Israelis have been killed by abortionists than by terrorists. British journalist Melanie Phillips, who is well known for her feistily eloquent defences of Israel in the media, is also fiercely critical of Israel's settlement policy. We could add to the list of Israel's shortcomings the corruption that appears to be endemic at



the highest levels of Israel's political life and the fact that in Arad and Beer Sheba the police have, for over a year, turned a blind eye to the harassment of Messianic Jews.

It is one thing, however, to criticise Israel when criticism is due; it is quite another to persistently single out Israel for condemnation, especially when some of the nations which issue the strongest condemnations are themselves worthy of greater censure. Stephen Sizer speaks loudly and often of the sufferings of Palestinian Christians and draws attention to the fact that the Palestinian Christian community is diminishing at an alarming rate, for which he blames the Israeli government. However, a recent monograph by Prof Justus Reid Weiner, a former Visiting Assistant Professor at Boston University Law School, reveals, "The current massive emigration of Palestinian Christians from the territories can be demonstratively linked to the political empowerment of the Palestinian Authority in those areas".

Since November 1975, when the United Nations ruled in the infamous Resolution 3379 that "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination", anti-Zionism has gradually become the respectable face of anti-Semitism. Every time Israel is singled out for criticism for human-rights abuses when nations guilty of far worse crimes are overlooked; every time Israel is accused of being the sole cause of instability in the Middle East; every time Israel is labelled an apartheid state when it bears no resemblance to pre-Mandela South Africa; every time Israel is charged with responsibility for global terrorism while the actual perpetrators of terror are excused or sanitised; every time Jewish people are denied their own sovereign homeland; this is not only anti-Zionism, this is also anti-Semitism. One rarely hears Israel's Christian detractors speak out against the appalling human rights abuses suffered by their brothers and sisters in North Korea, China, the Sudan and, indeed, the Palestinian Authority.

Jewish suffering in the last two thousand years has invariably been fuelled by popular perceptions about them. If the Jews are the killers of God, they must be uniquely and irredeemably evil and no wickedness is beyond them. Therefore, if a child in the community has gone missing, the Jews must have sacrificed him for the preparation of their matzah.

Is there pestilence in the land? The Jews must be poisoning the wells.

Is the economy failing? It's the fault of the Jewish bankers.

Is the moral fabric of society disintegrating? This is the precise strategy outlined by the "Learned Elders of Zion" in their infamous "Protocols".

Does global terrorism threaten the peace and prosperity of the western world? It is because Israeli Jews, with the tacit approval of diaspora Jewry, are ethnically cleansing the Holy Land of the Palestinians and, with their nuclear capability, are destabilising the Middle East. *Ipsa facto*, the greatest threat to world peace is Israel.

In an article entitled "The Spiritual Roots of Anti-Semitism", Sara Yoheved Rigler observes that "Jews were hated for 2,000 years because they didn't have their own state; now they're hated because they do".

According to the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Jonathan Sacks, a "tsunami" of anti-Semitism is sweeping Europe. A poll conducted in early 2007 revealed that 59% of all Europeans regard Israel as the primary threat to world peace. Another poll revealed that almost one in five Italians believe the state of Israel should cease to exist. It would appear that Rabbi Sacks' tidal wave of Jew-hatred is linked to anti-Israel sentiment.

### **The impact of Christian anti-Zionism**

Christians who allow themselves to be swept along by the current tide of anti-Jewish venom, unprecedented since the days of Adolph Hitler, strike a blow not only at the Jewish people but also the kingdom of God.

Melanie Phillips, in an article that

appeared in *The Spectator*, called anti-Zionist churchmen “Christians who hate the Jews” and specifically named the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem Riah Abu El-Assal, Naim Ateek and Stephen Sizer as Jew-haters. Whether or not she is right, Ms Phillips is not alone in thinking that exclusive condemnation of Israel is an expression of anti-Semitism. How can we expect Jewish people to listen to the message of Jesus if they hear Christians persistently and unfairly condemn the Jewish homeland? If the Church joins with those who would make the Jewish state responsible not only for the loss of Jewish lives at the hands of Palestinian terrorists but also for the deaths of multitudes of innocent non-Jewish civilians in the United States, Europe and Iraq, are the Jews not entitled to think that Christians hate them?

Anti-Israelism also impacts Jewish mission negatively by reducing or eliminating Christian concern for the souls of the Jewish people. In our own ministry we have seen that whenever Israel receives a bad press it is accompanied by a decline in our income. I have occasionally been approached by pro-Palestinian Christians who, when they know I work with a Jewish mission, want to tell me how bad the Israelis are. My standard response is to say that if the Jewish people are so wicked, that is all the more reason to share the gospel with them. That usually takes the wind out of their sails but the point is that when Christians believe the Jewish people are forsaken by God, are intrinsically evil and present the greatest threat to world peace, they are unlikely to support Jewish mission. Although Stephen Sizer castigates Christian Zionists for their lack of concern for the salvation of the Jewish people, there is no evidence on the links page of Sizer’s church website that they support any Jewish mission.

What, I wonder, would Israel’s evangelical denouncers do if Israel was forced by international pressure to pull down their security fence without conditions, to withdraw to pre-1967

boundaries without any concessions being required from the Palestinians, to allow a right of return to Palestinian refugees to areas now populated by Jewish Israelis, to compensate those returnees at the expense of Israeli taxpayers and to then respond “proportionately” (whatever that might mean) to the deluge of Palestinian terror that would inevitably follow? What would evangelicals who accuse the Jewish state of ethnic cleansing do if a holocaust were perpetrated on the Jews, this time on their own soil? There would be wringing of hands, no doubt, after the Jews had resumed their proper role on the world stage as victims rather than as a people able to defend themselves. But how would the Church ever be able to hold up its head, look Jewish people in the eyes and tell them of the love of Yeshua?

The Church in Germany is still reeling from the Holocaust and many German Christians still feel unable to reach out to German Jews with the gospel. If the church in the West fails to speak up for Israel as it failed to speak up for the Jews of Germany in the 1930s, or if that church joins in the howls of the anti-Zionists, how can it ever expect the Jewish people to listen to the story of Jesus?

### **Standing up for Israel**

Brothers and sisters, it is our responsibility – especially those of us who are gentiles – to address this issue. How can we say we love the Jewish people, if we do not raise our voices in their defence when they are unjustly pilloried in the media and in our churches? In 2002 I corresponded electronically with Howard, whose email name was “jew4truth”. Howard’s attitude to Jesus was, on his own admission, “politically incorrect” and the mildest opinion he held of Jesus was that he was the most evil man who had ever lived and made Hitler look like “a piker”. In May 2002 I mentioned to Howard that I had been present at the Israel Solidarity Rally in Trafalgar Square in London, a gathering at which the fear of suicide bombings had been palpable. After Howard learned that I

had been present at the rally, the tone of his emails changed and he became far more reasonable. When Jewish people believe Christians are *for* them rather than *against* them, they are more likely to be open to “the story about Jesus”.

As the people of God, the Lord requires that we do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. If we stand by Israel when an unjust, merciless and godless world is turning against her, we may gain the right to be heard when we speak of Jesus; but if we do not support Israel and the Jewish people in their time of need, we may forfeit all right to speak to them about the Saviour.

It is the prerogative of the Most High alone to love Jacob and “hate” Esau; it is the duty of Christians to love all human beings, including Jews and Palestinians. If the Church is perceived to be “against” any people, culture, community or group, it will be severely hindered in its witness to those people, cultures, communities and groups. However, in order to walk humbly with our God, we are required to “do justice” and “love *chesed*”. If Israel does indeed persecute its Palestinian citizens, it is our duty to protest but if Israel is falsely accused of ethnically cleansing the land of its native population, we must expose the falsehood, particularly if that falsehood is propagated by our Christian brethren. Those who are concerned for the souls of Jewish people must also be concerned for the *soul* of the Jewish people. We cannot say that our ministry is evangelism and that “politics” are beyond our remit.

We are all familiar with Edmund Burke’s maxim: “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing”. The Shoah occurred because too few good people spoke up for the Jews when they were made the scapegoat for Germany’s economic ills. If Christians in this generation fail to speak up for the Jewish state when its government and citizens are routinely demonised and when the international community makes light of the Iranian president’s threat to wipe Israel off the map, we may end up as witnesses to

an even greater Holocaust in which our Messianic colleagues and friends perish. If we do not speak up for Israel and the Jewish people, how can we expect them to listen to us when we try to share Messiah with them? If we do nothing when the rest of the Church is turning against Israel, we may well help to increase Jewish enmity towards the Messiah. Instead of saving Jewish people we will be helping to consign them to a conflagration beyond the deranged fantasies of Adolph Hitler or Mahmoud Ahmedinejad.

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# Obstacles to Jewish evangelism

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As First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill thought he saw a way to bring World War I to a swift conclusion. History has proven him correct. His plan, if successful, would have ended the war years earlier and would have saved countless lives. He had seen that by taking Constantinople and driving in a northwesterly direction to Austria, the Allied Powers could outmaneuver the Central Powers and achieve a relatively swift victory. In order to capture Constantinople, British ships would have needed to successfully navigate the Dardanelles, laced with mines and bracketed with cliffs surmounted with heavily reinforced gun emplacements. Churchill had vision, but he had obstacles. No one can hope to succeed who is not aware of the obstacles that must be overcome.

Those of us who have a vision for the salvation of the Jewish people must consider the obstacles, as well. Due to the scope of this paper, I will be able only to suggest some of the more obvious ones and point to some resources for further study. I must also confine my remarks to conditions in Europe and the United States, as the obstacles in Israel would require a separate treatment.<sup>1</sup>

## Western multiculturalism

Multiculturalism makes Jewish evangelism politically incorrect in the West. Multiculturalism is the idea that modern societies should invest distinct cultural groups with equal social acceptance. To state it in different terms, multiculturalism is the view that all cultures, from that of a cannibalistic tribe to that of an advanced industrial civilization, are equal in value.

What is at issue is whether a value judgment of a culture is ever justified. Should every culture be equally affirmed without subjecting it to any evaluation at all? Or, should some aspects of a culture be affirmed and others condemned?

Should differences between cultures be subject to value judgments? Or, are we prepared to equate a culture that has been shaped to some extent by Christianity with one that has not? Must we jettison values such as those of hard work, of honesty, of concern for the welfare of others? Must we forsake the ability to distinguish good from evil, to distinguish that which is life-promoting from that which is life-negating?

Actually, multiculturalism operates with a double standard. Every culture and religion is to be affirmed, except Christianity. That's why multiculturalism affirms "artistic" displays that are deeply offensive to Christians, but immediately rejects cartoons that poke fun at Islam. That is why copies of the Koran are allowed in public schools, but not copies of the Bible.

In such a context, evangelism becomes proselytism. Rather than seeing evangelism as a proclamation of the good news of salvation, multiculturalism sees it as an unjustified attempt by Christianity to snatch someone from a different, but equally valid culture or religion, in order to increase the number on its membership rolls – which is proselytism.<sup>2</sup>

## In American Christianity

In America, the major obstacle, as I see it, is not theological, but hermeneutical. The inspiration and authority of the Bible is affirmed, but there is confusion between the meaning of a text and its application; or, to put it another way, there is too much haste in moving to application. The meaning of the text is defined in terms of personal relevance, rather than of original intent. Thus, from the beginning, real possibilities for understanding are severely restricted.

Too often, Christian faith is built on a kind of Gentile midrash—that is, on a manner of understanding Scripture that is superficial, devotional, and spiritualizing. Consequently, every promised blessing to

Israel is applied to the life of every believer as though that were its original meaning. Therefore, II Chronicles 7:14 is talking about *my* land; Jeremiah 29:11 is speaking of the plans God has for *my* life; and Acts 1:8 is speaking of *my* Jerusalem. The situation is not significantly improved in most pulpits, where superficial, topically-oriented sermons have taken the place of more substantive, expository sermons. In such a context, motivation for Jewish evangelism is severely weakened, for the voice of Scripture has been muffled.

### **In European Christianity**

Evangelism, in general, has fallen on hard times in Europe. This is due primarily to theological obstacles. Generations ago, the authority and inerrancy of Scripture were abandoned by many, and today, the two major theological obstacles to evangelism of any kind are: 1) the denial of the need for explicit faith in Yeshua for salvation and 2) the denial of any eternal, conscious punishment for those who die in their sin. So, there is neither positive nor negative motivation for evangelism of any sort, much less for Jewish evangelism.

### **Theological issues**

Of course, regardless of our nationality, there are theological obstacles to Jewish evangelism, even in countries like the United States, where many Christians are not particularly theological. For now, I want to focus our attention on three areas of theology: Bibliology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.

### **Bibliology**

Ever since the Serpent asked Eve, "Did God *really* say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden,'"<sup>3</sup> there has been an unrelenting attack on the authority of the Bible. The assaults of liberalism, higher critical theories, and sensational novels (such as the *Da Vinci Code*) have all contributed to a societal distrust of Scripture.

The last quarter of the past century saw conservatives in a number of

denominations, energized and motivated to regain ground that had been lost. In some cases this has resulted in the redirection of entire denominations, and in other cases, it has resulted in a "loyal opposition." Of course, it is no surprise that support for Jewish evangelism comes from the most conservative elements in each denomination.

As we speak of the Bible, it is worth noting that even among conservative Evangelicals, confidence in the use of messianic prophecy has been seriously eroded. Some conservative scholars, such as John Sailhamer, have launched a counter-attack, but much more needs to be done in this regard.<sup>4</sup>

### **Soteriology**

The doctrine of salvation, that is, the gospel itself, has not remained unmolested. The so-called "wider hope" view was first promoted in England in the mid-1800's in academic circles by Frederick D. Maurice<sup>5</sup> and Frederick W. Farrar.<sup>6</sup> In America, similar ideas had already been taught by Joseph Smith to his "latter day saints."

In the mid-1900's, a Jesuit priest, named Karl Rahner, espoused similar ideas and spoke of "anonymous Christians." By this term, he meant those who would not call themselves Christians, and who may actually be active adherents of other religions, but who, through their piety or morality were actually saved by "common grace." They are Christians, but they don't know it.<sup>7</sup>

In our day, "inclusivism" is the more common term for similar ideas. Inclusivism claims that, while Christianity is true and the death of Christ provides the only means of salvation, explicit faith in Yeshua is not necessary for salvation. It claims that an implicit faith response to general revelation can be salvific. In contrast, the Lausanne Covenant says:

We affirm that there is only one Saviour and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognise that

everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness.

Inclusivism is driven by religious piety and emotion more than by Scripture. However, as someone has said, "It is a case of trying to be nicer than God." It is easy to see how the "wider hope," the "anonymous Christian," and inclusivism lead not only to a "post-missionary Christianity," but also to a "post-missionary Messianic Judaism."

### **Ecclesiology**

The doctrine of the church may not seem to be as theologically significant as the doctrines of the Bible or of salvation; however, in terms of the overall impact on Jewish evangelism, one teaching concerning the church has had disastrous effects and poses a significant obstacle to Jewish evangelism. Of course, I am speaking of supersessionism, or replacement theology. Its impact can scarcely be overstated.

This view, that the Church has replaced Israel in the purposes of God, has a long history that stretches back to the end of the first century. It is so deeply embedded in the subconsciousness of Christians that it is often not even articulated, but simply presumed. However, R. Kendall Soulen has correctly observed, "While it may be possible to imagine a god who is indifferent to the existence of the Jewish people, it is impossible so to imagine the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, the God of Israel."<sup>8</sup> He goes on to note that when we claim to worship the *God* of Israel, but neglect the *people* of Israel, we introduce confusion and contradiction into the heart of our confession. To deny God's interest in the Jewish people is to deny the God of Israel.

Others have presented papers at previous LCJE meetings that have addressed replacement theology<sup>9</sup> and *Mishkan* has also given attention to this teaching.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, many of you have read and studied the issue significantly and

some of you have written against it.

### **Missiology**

Of course, poor theology leads to poor missiology. Perhaps more than any other theological issue, supersessionism has negatively affected our understanding of the mission of the Church. The foundational storyline of the Bible, which provides the basic impetus for missions, is understood in such a way that Israel and/or the Jewish people are largely neglected in mission enterprises. Most often, it is assumed that Israel was God's failed "Plan A," which has now been rendered irrelevant by the Church. Indeed, according to many, Israel's is a double failure: In the Old Testament they failed to go, and in the New Testament, they failed to receive.

At most, the Jewish people are simply one of thousands of other people groups, with absolutely no biblical, theological, or missiological uniqueness. Supersessionism renders most Christians oblivious to the fact that the two most basic ethnic categories in Scripture are "Jew" and "Gentile" and to the fact that the two forms of missions in the New Testament are Jewish missions and Gentile missions.

At worst, the Jewish people have had their chance and are no longer to be on the agenda of the Church at all. The phrase in Matt. 28:19, "*panta ta ethne*," is read by some as, "all Gentiles," instead of "all the nations."<sup>11</sup> Even if judgment is withheld on this textual issue, there is a suspicion that God Himself is not interested in the Jewish people.

This neglect of the Jewish people by mission leaders is reinforced by Western pragmatism that often reduces missions decisions to a "cost-per-soul" type of calculation. In such a calculus, resistant groups, in general, and the Jewish people, in particular, do not generally fare well. It is not viewed as good stewardship of mission resources to invest in groups where the anticipated "return" is not very great.

How very foreign this entire mentality would be to the prophets of Israel or to the apostles of the early church! Ezekiel went

to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel, not because he anticipated a significant responsiveness to his message, for the Lord had already told him that his message would not be received at all. He went out of obedience to the Lord, “that they may know that a prophet has been among them.”<sup>12</sup> The Apostle Paul always went “to the Jew first,”<sup>13</sup> not out of expediency, but because it was “necessary!”<sup>14</sup> This was not merely his practice, as though it were his peculiar quirk, without significance for others. On the contrary, Romans 1:16 and other passages indicate that the priority of Jewish missions is to be normative for *all* Christians throughout the centuries.

### Conclusion

In his monumental, three-volume biography of William Churchill, William Manchester tells about the naval attack on the Dardanelles on March 18, 1915. When the mines had been cleared, the fleet moved into the Dardanelles, firing artillery at the gun emplacements on either side. The ships were receiving small arms fire, but the shells bounced harmlessly off of the thick steel plates of the ships. Victory was in their grasp, just as Churchill had known it would be. Unknown to the Allies, the Turks were virtually out of ammunition; Constantinople had already been abandoned. Nevertheless, the stress of battle had frayed the nerves of the commander of the lead warship and just as the Turks were firing their last rounds of ammunition, he ordered that the ship turn around and retreat.

Ten years after the war, the British officer who had devised the battle plan for the attack had the opportunity to steam through the Dardanelles under peaceful conditions. Manchester says, “His eyes filled. He said: ‘My God, it would have been even easier than I thought. We simply couldn’t have failed . . . and because we didn’t try, another million lives were thrown away and the war went on for another three years.’”<sup>15</sup>

Dear friends, I have tried to survey our

obstacles, and they are real, but our greatest obstacles may prove not to be external, but internal. Our Commander-in-Chief has assured us of victory. It will not come without struggle, but we must not lose heart.

### Notes

1. Since the majority of our members are from North America and Europe, and since these are the regions with which I am more familiar, my remarks will primarily reflect the situation in these two areas of our world. This is not to slight any other region; however, it is merely to acknowledge my own limitations.

2. For more on multiculturalism, cf. Dennis McCallum, *The Death of Truth:*

*Responding to Multiculturalism, The Rejection of Reason, and The New Postmodern Diversity.* Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1996. Regarding the differences between proselytism and evangelism, Rainer Riesner says, “The very name makes clear that the proselyte is one ‘coming to’ Judaism. According to the Great Commission the Christians ‘go out’ ‘to all nations.’” [“A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?” in Jostein Adna and Hans Kvalbein, eds., *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 250.]

3. Genesis 3:1 (*Holman Christian Standard Bible*), emphasis added.

4. Cf. John Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) and his article, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 44/1 (March 2001): 5–23. Cf. also, Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Messianic Prophecy Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Michael Rydelnik, “The Promise of Messiah,” unpublished dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1997 (especially pages 28–68), and his anticipated new book, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really*



*Messianic?* Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, forthcoming, 2009.

5. Frederick Denison Maurice, *Theological Essays*, Michigan Historical Reprint Series (Ann Arbor, MI: Scholarly Publishing Office, University of Michigan Library, 2005).

6. Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope: Five Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey, November and December 1877* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1885).

7. His *Theological Investigations* filled 23 vols., but cf., Daniel Pekarske, *Abstracts of Karl Rahner's Theological Investigations 1-23* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2003).

8. R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 4.

9. Philip Bottomley, "Replacement Theology," 1989, 8 pages; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, "Replacement Theology," 1993, 23 pages; and Art Glasser, "Spiritual Obstacles in Jewish Evangelism," 1996, 14

pages.

10. Cf. especially issue no. 21, 1994, on "Replacement Theology."

11. For an excellent discussion of this issue, see the articles on "The Gospel of Matthew and the Great Commission" by Peter Stuhlmacher, Hans Kvalbein, Ulrich Luz, and Oskar Skarsaune in Adna and Kvalbein, 17–83; Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 98–101; and the discussion in Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 361–367.

12. Ezek 2:5.

13. Rom 1:16.

14. Acts 13:46.

15. William Manchester, *The Last Lion, Winston Spenser Churchill: Visions of Glory, 1874–1932* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983), 542.

## Evening Session

### Pollak/Lucky— a law-observing Jesus-believing Jew from Galicia

Kai Kjær-Hansen, International Coordinator of LCJE

#### Jewish believers from the past

Tonight we are going to talk about Lucky, a law-observing Jesus-believing Jew from Galicia (a historical region in East Central Europe, currently divided between Poland and Ukraine), a man with many names and many facets.

A friend of Lucky's, the Lutheran clergyman Max Weidauer writes in 1923 that if you wanted to know something about Lucky's life and development, you had to "pump him for information". About Lucky's life I shall have to confine myself to a minimum. He loved Jesus. He loved his people. One of his concerns was that the (many) Jews who had forgotten that they were a people and just regarded themselves as, for example, Germans of Jewish persuasion might also see themselves as God's people. He wanted to take Jesus into the synagogue. He was a Jesus-believing Jew and lived to the end of his life as a law-observing Jew. And he was a bitter opponent of Jewish mission.

Lucky was born in 1854 near Stanislau in Galicia. He came to faith while he was studying in Berlin in the mid-1870s. He and another student had been given the assignment to compare Hillel and Jesus. So he had to study the New Testament, which he did in Delitzsch's Hebrew translation. And he came to faith. He is in the USA for some years during the 1880s; in this period he is co-editor of the English periodical *The Peculiar People* and the

Hebrew *Eduth le Israel* (Testimony to Israel). When he returns to Europe in 1889, he is offered a post at the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig, which he declines.

Lucky then settles in Stanislau in Galicia. In 1916 he sets off for the USA in order to renew his citizenship there. I do not know why this is so important for him. Due to the First World War he finds himself stranded in neutral Holland. Politically he sides with Germany, as he hoped that a German victory would make a massive Jewish immigration to Palestine possible. In Holland he falls ill and is taken to the hospital Eben-Ezer near Berlin. The law-observing Jesus-believing Jew dies there on November 25, 1916, at the end of the Sabbath – after having been nursed by Methodists.

#### A death notice

I do not know any other Jesus-believer in the past with so many names. In the death notice for Lucky there are six: "Chajim Jedidjah (Christian Theophilus) Pollak called Lucky." An examination of these names, where and when and in what contexts he used them, could be an interesting approach to a study of his character and life. Did he, for example, in the company of *Jews* use the name "Christian", one who belongs to Christ? Or the Latin name "Theophilus", God's friend? He also used other names such as Elik, Elk, Lucki (one source says it is pronounced Luzki).

In the death notice he is described as "a member of the original apostolic Messianic church in Jerusalem, one who was zealous for the law of his fathers and

a witness of Yeshua for Israel. It says further: "There remains, then, a rest for the people of God." The notice says that burial will take place in the Jewish graveyard in Plau, and is signed by B. Fliegelman on behalf of the law-observing congregation of Christ-believing Jews in Lemberg and by August Wiegand on behalf of friends of Christians of the nations. It is also announced that Lucky will be buried on November 27. Where? In the *Jewish* graveyard in Plau in Mecklenburg, the town where the Lutheran August Wiegand was a clergyman. For more than 25 years Wiegand has fought for Lucky's cause and been his mouthpiece.

I have not clear picture of how it was possible that the Jesus-believing Lucky could be buried in a Jewish graveyard. Wiegand maintains that it did not imply a denial of Lucky's faith in Jesus. I would, nevertheless, like to have known what was said when Wiegand and the rabbi discussed Lucky's burial. I am not convinced that Wiegand tells the whole story. I do not know if a headstone was put on his grave. And if so, did it then say approximately the same as in the death notice, for example, that Lucky was "a witness of Yeshua to Israel"? The way Yeshua's name was written on Yechiel Lichtenstein's headstone in a *Christian* churchyard in Leipzig. And I do not know if it was mentioned that Lucky had been baptized. The way I read the sources, he had indeed been baptized – even three times. Be that as it may, Lucky did not advertise his baptism. For him baptism was a private matter. In this way he avoided being considered a meschummad – an apostate. I will leave it to you to decide whether he deserves praise or criticism for that.

#### **Architect of a new mission strategy**

Lucky loved Jesus and his people, I said. But few, if any, have like Lucky fought against Jewish mission. He became the principal architect behind a new mission strategy that was later to be known as the Leipzig program. He befriended people

who had been at the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig and spent much time with them.

This program deserves a paper of its own, but here is a brief sketch.

The Leipzig program is a mission strategy that confronted the traditional organized Jewish mission that was quick to offer interested Jews baptism, education in a proselyte home and sometimes money so they could travel to Western Europe. In its most radical formulation the Leipzig program said that no persons of Jewish descent should be paid missionaries to the Jews. The use of paid Jewish missionaries was – it was said – counterproductive when witnessing to Jews. The traditional mission was criticized for de-nationalizing Jews who came to faith in Jesus. In Western Europe there was no need for special missionaries to the Jews or for Jewish mission or a special training for people to reach Jewish people with the gospel. This was for the churches to do. Talmud Jews were the primary target, and the majority of those were in Eastern Europe. So the missionary candidates should first of all have a training that could help them to meet the East European Orthodox Jews. But not even in Eastern Europe should they engage in direct mission. The first task of a missionary to the Jews was to work for the formation of living, evangelical Christian congregations – in contrast to the Roman Catholic and Greek/Russian Orthodox churches; this would generate interest among Jews. The vision was to fight anti-Semitism and to call forth love for Israel in these "Gentile Christian" congregations. In other words: a missionary to the Jews should work out from such a "diaspora mission", associate with, for example, congregations in the German colonies and make them ardent and zealous for the cause of Israel. One motivating factor was the salvation of all Israel at some time in the future. The few Jews who accepted the gospel were seen as a prerequisite for this future.

To sum up: Struggle against all mission humbug. No direct Jewish mission and no paid Jewish missionaries, and for the

Jesus-believing Jew, no national breach with his Jewishness.

Lucky won quite a few Germans and some Danes, Norwegians and others who had been at the Institutum Judaicum over to his side. It should, however, be mentioned that not all advocates of the Leipzig program were as pronounced in their views and mission practice as Lucky was.

### **Lucky and the money of the mission**

Lucky wanted, as already said, have nothing to do with organized Jewish mission. He does not want to be paid by the mission either. But it is not easy to be consistent, not even for a Lucky. In the light of history he is not quite “kosher,” which emerges from the following story.

Back from the USA Lucky plans to publish the periodical *Eduth le-Israel* in Galicia. He approaches the Jewish-born G.M. Löwen, employed as a missionary in the Berlin Society, and asks Löwen to be in charge of the publication. Lucky assures him that he will be doing most of the work. But, says Löwen, without money such a project is not feasible. “Does that mean that your Society will not help?” Lucky retorts. And Löwen continues: “What? Should a mission society support a work which is hostile to organized mission work?” Eventually the new *Eduth le Israel* did get published. But then Löwen withdrew. Lucky had required of him that he should live in the same way as himself, namely be a law-observing Jew that lives by rabbinical law, something Löwen was neither able nor willing to.

How Lucky fended for himself without getting money for his work is quite a riddle. Max Weidauer says that Lucky never begged. He often stayed at friends’ houses and had his meals there. Christian housewives often dreaded his visits. Weidauer’s comment on Lucky seems to be spot-on: “He believed that he was the most undemanding person, but in demanding something special for himself he was indeed demanding. He also believed that he was the most independent

person, but really he was very dependent on other people.”

And then it should be added that this Lucky who did not consider himself an “exelyt”, who had not withdrawn from the synagogue and who lived by rabbinical law, did not in the least mind celebrating Christmas with Christmas presents and Christmas tree when he visited Christian friends. At Christmas 1911 he paid a visit to Mrs Petra Volf not long after she had lost her husband, the Danish missionary Stefan Volf. Mrs Volf writes this about those Christmas days:

“I still have many memories about Lucky from those same days, for example how he sang with us all our Danish Christmas hymns; I think it was because he wanted to be a Dane to us Danish, and it was amazing how well he understood them; he had an unusual gift for languages.”

### **What did Lucky really want?**

The Lutheran clergyman August Wiegand had defended Lucky and pleaded his cause from approximately 1890 – for example at the mission conference in Leipzig in 1895 and in Stockholm in 1911. The problem was especially Jesus-believers’ attitude to the law. Wiegand had come to Stockholm with a declaration and was given five minutes to present it, but there was to be no subsequent discussion! There is, not least in the German sources, a rich material that we could benefit from when we today deal with this important question. Well, I have to leave that alone here. When Wiegand presents the question, he stresses the *freedom* to keep the law that the gospel gives. But the question is if this *freedom* did not for Lucky imply an obligation. When he worked closely together with Jewish-born Jesus-believers, he seems to have demanded that they should live like him.

What did Lucky really want? Wiegand helps us to answer that question. In 1917, the year after Lucky’s death, Wiegand says as follows:

“It should not be concealed, however,

that what was presented in Lucky's name in Leipzig [1895] and Stockholm [1911] did not really express his *innermost thoughts*. What he wished and wanted was, at bottom, not a group of Jewish Christians who were faithful to the law inside the gentile church but a *congregation of Jews who were faithful to Jesus inside the synagogue*. That is what he worked for in the end and he almost regretted that he spent so much time and energy on the German candidates instead of dedicating himself completely to the internal Jewish work. His proper Jewish followers should therefore remain in the synagogue and also commit themselves to the rabbinical interpretation of the law to the extent that it was recognized in the synagogue.

Consequently they should only differ from the other Jews in regard to faith in Jesus."

The question is if such a vision was not an illusion. It is one thing what you yourself would like. It is a different matter what the other side, the synagogue, wants. Of course the synagogue will not be defined by a Jesus-believing Jew; it defines itself and defines itself in relation to Jesus.

Löwen is aware of that point. He writes: "Lucky's exaggerated love of his Jewish

people destroyed, unfortunately, what he had laboriously achieved. He led the souls to Christ and then drove them back into the synagogue, the same synagogue where they daily recite Moses Maimonides' confession which consciously defame Christ as an idol."

Then it is up to the individual to reflect on and apply this assessment – if there are any Luckys in the messianic movement in our time.

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#### *Texts on the internet*

See Jorge Quiñónez' Messianic Archive Page at <http://www.afii.org/jorge.htm>

# God called me to identify with his own dear Jewish people

Theresa Newell, LCJE Coordinator for North America

*“Give thanks to the LORD and call upon his Name;  
make known his deeds among the peoples.  
Sing to him, sing praises to him,  
and speak of all his marvelous works.”  
Psalm 105:1,2*

My story in Jewish evangelism is, from start to finish, a story of the sovereign grace of God. At the age of 32, I was lost, but He found me. He used several friends to tell me the Good News – two good women who walked in the peace and love of God because they had Him in their hearts when I had not a clue.

On April 4, 1974, I received the Lord Jesus into my life at Princeton University Chapel under the ministry of an Anglican priest, Dennis Bennett. That night was total GRACE! I could not have planned it or made it happen. Only He could have – and He did!

At that time, I had never heard the phrase: Jewish evangelism. I had been raised in Birmingham, Alabama, in a neighborhood with a few Jewish families whose kids were some of my best friends.

A year went by after that Princeton evening – filled with prayer meetings, Bible reading and still no word on JEWISH EVANGELISM. I quit my reporting job at the local newspaper and spent time sharing the Gospel with whoever would listen. I could not keep from telling people how God had saved me from destruction. I didn't know that this was called EVANGELISM.

A year later our family moved into the Washington, DC area. I prayed for a Bible teacher. A few months after our move, I went to a Christian teaching conference. God again touched me with a deep brokenness of spirit and called me to surrender everything to Him – to make Him truly LORD of my life. I wept and I prayed and, by His grace, I gave everything over to Him. During that same conference, the

name of a woman who taught the Bible was mentioned several times in my hearing. “What is she teaching?” I asked. “Second Corinthians on Tuesday morning at 10.”

The next Tuesday, I was at Dulles Airport meeting a flight from England. Sitting next to me in the waiting area was an older woman. I was reading a small pocket sized New Testament. She said, “That's the smallest Bible I have ever seen!” I smiled and turned to her and nodded. Then I turned again and said, “You're a Christian.” She nodded this time. “You're a Spirit-filled Christian and you know the Scriptures” I heard myself say boldly to this stranger. She handed me her card – she was the woman Bible teacher whose name had been given to me three days earlier! “You started 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians this morning” I told her – and we both knew we had met by Divine Appointment. More sovereign Grace!

Every Tuesday after that encounter, I attended this woman's Bible Study. About five months later she said, “It's time to plan our yearly trip to Israel.” I assumed this had nothing to do with me – the mother of four children. But soon it was apparent that I was to be on this trip. So in June, 1976, I was on a plane to Tel Aviv. While I had been studying the Bible diligently since that day of salvation, I had been taught little about God's plan for the Jewish people.

The first morning in Jerusalem, our group was taken to the Western Wall. After the Guide gave his schpiel, we were told we could pray at the Wall. Suddenly, God was there – present as strongly as I had ever experienced. I froze in place. After a moment, I felt a release to move forward toward the mammoth golden stones before me. I put my arm over my head and leaned my forehead against the cool stones. Immediately, a wailing sound came from my innermost being. It was a loud and disturbing sound. When it ended, I heard myself say out loud: “Father, I am here.”

And I heard back, “And you’ll be back.” I was in awe before my Father and hid these words in my heart for years, telling no one. Sovereign Grace.

As I reflected on that experience, I knew that that Divine encounter was my call to His Jewish people. Once home, I was impressed to begin to study Hebrew. An ad appeared that week in my Reston, Virginia newspaper stating that the Reform rabbi in town would be offering Hebrew from “High Holy days until Pesach” – what?? – like, give me a date! So I began “Aleph, bet...”

Just before Pesach that year, the Zeffereilli film, “Jesus of Nazareth” was shown on US television. Pesach fell that same week – and I was the only person who showed up on the last night of class. That night the rabbi asked me about Jesus. He went into his inner study, brought out his Bible – the whole Bible and we read together through John 3 – Nicodemus coming to Jesus in the night. He said he had been thinking a lot about Jesus and had always wondered if He could be for the Jews. It was my first opportunity to share the Gospel with a Jewish person! I was so glad that no one had told me that I should NOT share Jesus with a rabbi!

That same year the then International Director of CMJ, the Rev. Walter Barker, made his first visit to the United States. He had one contact person in the Washington area – my Bible teacher!! He was introduced to me at her church meeting. Two years later, Walter was invited to speak at my Episcopal parish in Fairfax, Virginia, and was brought to me again. By that time I had returned to Israel for a month as a teacher with a group of high school students. Walter asked if I would be a contact person for CMJ in the USA. Within a year, an American Board of CMJ was formed and I was asked to be the national coordinator. The rest is history, as they say.

When Walter shared how it was that he had come to the United States at just that time, he told me that in June of 1976 he

had attended an Anglican mission conference in Amman, Jordan. We realized that we had been on opposite sides of the Jordan River at exactly the same time that God had met me at the Western Wall and spoken His word of call to me!! Amazing Grace!

Through CMJ, our church was taught how to witness to Jewish people and to welcome Jewish visitors into our midst. One Sunday a CMJ UK director was preaching there. He wore a tallit and a yarmulke in the pulpit – not what one sees in your normal Episcopal church on a Sunday! A Jewish man had been invited by a friend to attend – and that day he received Jesus as His Messiah!

Every year I led a group from our church to Israel; they learned Hebrew and Jewish songs and read Jewish history and woke up to the call to take the Gospel “to the Jew first.” Jewish believers in the area began to find one another in our small groups and outreach events. We gave dinners and special event evenings with speakers like Stan Telchin to which many Jewish friends were invited.

Messianic congregations began to spring up around the beltway area of Washington DC, such as Beth Messiah in Rockville, Maryland. I often worshiped on Shabbat with our brothers and sisters there – Dan Juster, Paul Wilbur, Paul Liberman, Eitan Shishkoff, Asher Intrater – who were all in leadership there.

In 1984 the Liberated Wailing Wall and the New Jerusalem Players of Jews for Jesus came to Washington, DC for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration on the Mall. Half a million people gathered to hear The Beach Boys perform that steamy hot day in the capital of the United States. It was my first experience in street evangelism. David Brickner was my mentor! Wearing my “Goyim for Jesus” t-shirt and jeans, I handed out hundreds of broadsides that day, had people curse at me, scream at me and ask, “Does your mother know you are doing this?!” It was wonderful and I was hooked. Jewish evangelism on the streets of our large cities is still one of my

favorite ways to proclaim the Gospel of Yeshua.

In September 2005, the Behold Your God campaign came to my city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For 2 weeks teams of us were on the streets of Pittsburgh. One morning I was standing downtown when a woman stopped to talk with me. She was a gentile who didn't know Jesus. After a time of sharing, she prayed with me to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior. "...to the Jew first, and then to the gentile..."

One of my best stories about training in evangelism is how God brought me and my husband Bruce together – we met because he was my Evangelism Explosion teacher! We have rejoiced to lead many people to the Lord, Jew and gentile, together over the years. Evangelism Explosion taught me the importance of being trained to both share the Gospel with others but also to lead them to faith – to ask the questions – what would you say to God if you should stand before Him today and He asked you: why should I let you into heaven? I am grateful that Bruce was my best evangelism trainer. Eighteen years after Bruce's evangelism training class, I wrote my Doctor of Ministry thesis titled: "Preparing the Church to Evangelize Jewish People."

Since 1999 I have had the privilege of serving as the North America coordinator of LCJE. While we in North America have a long way to go in getting the Gospel out to half of the Jewish population of the world who live between our shores, the friendships that have been made through the network of LCJE have led to more open sharing and cooperation for the sake of the Gospel among the many agencies working in the US.

Since 2006, I am again chairing the work of CMJ/USA. In a way, I feel I have come full circle in the last 30 years of Jewish ministry, having opened that first CMJ

office in the US in 1980. Jewish evangelism is not an easy or quick task. Thirty years is a short time for what I consider the most important call one could have on one's life. I am encouraged by the "great cloud of witnesses" which surrounds us, cheering us on. In my 30 years with CMJ, I think of William Wilberforce, Charles Simeon and Lord Shaftsbury.

I will close with a story told about Charles Simeon, that great don of Cambridge and firm supporter from the beginning of CMJ in 1809. Here is the story as recorded by CMJ historian W.T. Gidney:

"It is said that when Simeon had concluded an address at a missionary meeting by saying they had met together that day 'for the furtherance of the most important object in the world, viz, the conversion of the Jews'. When Simeon sat down, the Rev. Edward Bickersteth, former Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, wrote on a slip of paper – *eight million Jews, eight hundred million heathens, which of these is the most important?* This paper he handed to Simeon, who at once turned it over and wrote on the other side: *Yes, but if the eight million Jews are to be as "life from the dead" to the eight hundred million heathens, what then?* Bickersteth later became a most ardent and loyal supporter of the Jews' Society."

Simeon had it right: The key to world evangelism is Jewish evangelism. The Scriptures teach it just that way: to the Jew first and then to the Greek. There are many reasons I have to sing praises to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, but my greatest reason is that He called me to identify with His own dear Jewish people and by prayer, faith and work, to be an instrument to call a few of them to himself.

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# Stories from France

Jean-Paul Rempp, Pastor, Christian Witness to Israel, Lyon, France

It is a joy and a privilege to share with you a number of aspects relating to Jewish evangelism in France. These will be my "stories from France".

In order to understand Jewish evangelism in France and the difficulties associated with it, it is essential to understand something about France itself. France has a population of 63 million, out of which 1.5% are Protestants and 0.5% are Evangelicals.

It is important to be aware that there are three kinds of country in Europe. First, there are the Eastern European countries which, until comparatively recently, were Communist; secondly, there are countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, which have a Protestant background; thirdly there are countries such as Spain, Italy, Belgium and France whose backgrounds are Catholic.

It should be noted that France was the only European country whose elite classes had been touched by the Reformation to remain Catholic, so terrible and long-lasting were the persecutions at the time of the Reformation and after.

Although French Evangelicals have noticeably grown in number over the last thirty years<sup>1</sup>, they still experience the same difficulties as other religious minorities. This is because the prevailing philosophy of secularism, in which laity has transformed itself in laïcism, refuses all public expressions of religion.

But an even stronger expression of intolerance is on the rise in France. In the Montreuil district of Paris, on the morning of Sunday 6th February 2005, the authorities interrupted services at four different Evangelical churches and turned out two of congregations for no legitimate reason. The sociologist Jean Baubérot and others protested against these "serious events", denouncing them as "a real hindrance to liberty of worship" and reminding the French public that such

events had not occurred for over a century in France.

"This is all the more worrying", said Baubérot, a professor at *l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*, "in that it is not an isolated incident. We find ourselves as it were back in the 19th century, when certain forms of worship were recognized and others not. There were then the Wise Protestants and the Unwise ones; the latter being, even then, the Evangelicals."

Now, the Unwise Protestants are those who actively spread the Gospel, in other words the Evangelicals.

On 17th December 2006, French Television Channel 1 broadcast a report called *Proselytizing from Cults* during the 8pm News programme. The report was filled with inaccuracies that revealed the presenter's ignorance, and presented Evangelical churches as "a sectarian movement". The French Evangelical Federation (FEF) was very shocked by the report and reacted strongly to it.

On 24th January 2007, the Chairman of the French Protestant Federation (FPF) protested publicly against a report by the Parliamentary Enquiries Committee for Cults, which affected *Associations Cultuelles*, a privileged structure under which Protestant churches and/or Evangelical assemblies generally choose to register.

On 5th April 2007, the same FPF Chairman expressed dismay at an enquiry launched by the security branch of the police force, in order to list all Evangelical associations. "The security authorities' mission, said the chairman, is to prevent all forms of terrorism, city violence and threats to French society. No incident linked to church services can ever be included in such a mission."

The need is great indeed, and it is within this cultural context that we seek to take the gospel to the Jews of France. May I remind you that the French Jewish population numbers 700,000 and ranks

third in the world after the USA and Israel. May I also remind you that there are as many French-speaking Jews in Israel as in France, this being partly explained by the massive immigration to Israel of French Sephardic Jews from Tunisia and Morocco, after the 1954 to 1961 "events" in North Africa. Algerian Jews preferred to immigrate to France, as documented on pages 237 to 243 in the second volume of Philippe Bourdrel's *The History of the Jews in France*<sup>2</sup>.

More than two thirds of French Jews are of Sephardic origin, and 77% of the total Jewish population never attend a synagogue service.

What difficulties do we meet as we seek to reach Jews in France? They vary in nature:

- First of all, we encounter the common misconception (as Stan Telchin makes clear in his book *Betrayed*), which has developed as a result of two thousand years of history, that when a Jewish person becomes a disciple of Messiah Jesus they betray their ancestry, their roots and their family.

- Secondly, there are the difficulties linked to *The Shoah* in the European and French context in particular. During World War II, the French Authorities and French Policemen handed thousands of Jews over to the Nazis, 76,000 of whom died in deportation. President Jacques Chirac has officially acknowledged the French State's guilt in this matter.

- Thirdly, there is a very important practical element: most non-observant Jews in France do not wish to be identified openly as Jews. Some go as far as changing their names to hide the fact that they are Jewish. An engineer who regularly attends our *Shepherd of Israel* Bible Study Group is Jewish, but most of his work colleagues are not aware of it. The experience of being hidden from the Nazis during the Holocaust era and told never to reveal to anyone that he was Jewish deeply affected him.

This creates a great problem because,

except for in those few areas where fairly large numbers of observant Jews live, you can never be entirely sure whether anyone you talk to is Jewish or not. It is important, therefore, that in our evangelism we sow widely in the hope that by so doing we will reach Jewish people with the gospel.

- Fourthly, we have to overcome the traditional biblical and theological differences between Judaism and Christianity. The Jewish people with whom I am in contact reflect the varied forms of Judaism in France. In my discussions with Jewish people, particularly with observant or believing Jews, I am increasingly struck by the general tendency on their part to deny the radical reality of sin as it is revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures and is received in evangelical Protestantism.

In order for Jewish people to grasp the truth that it is impossible to be saved except by the grace of God, and to understand what genuine faith and repentance really means, let alone acknowledge that Yeshua is God's true Messiah, the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit is really necessary.

The average Jewish person's lack of knowledge of the Scriptures is obvious, and the weight of Jewish Tradition, even if it is rather vague in certain cases, proves to be preponderant.

- Fifthly, there are the difficulties in connection with Post-Modernism. Nowadays, in general, it is increasingly difficult to speak of the uniqueness of Messiah Jesus as the one and only way of salvation. This is true also in relation to the various currents within present day Judaisms, which tend to be universalistic and, in some cases, syncretistic.

- Finally, there are Jewish ways of thinking that tend to be linked to Sephardic Judaism, which is the most influential current of Jewish religion in France. In the opinion of Jacques Guggenheim, the Sephardic mentality is one of the most severe barriers to Jewish evangelism in France.

This Sephardic way of thinking, at least as one perceives it in France, tends

to be emotional and psychological and anti-rational. The result is that many Sephardic Jews are gullible and superstitious, and are therefore open to New-Age ideas and Eastern mysticism.

Having said that, some affinities do exist between the Jewish and Protestant communities in France, not least because they have a common history of persecution and many similar reference points. Jean Baubérot, Chairman for Higher Studies at the Sorbonne, has shown very well, in his work called *Anti-Protestant Hatred*<sup>3</sup> the similarities between the hatred directed against Protestants and that expressed against the Jews. For instance, until the First World War, the antisemitic press was also anti-Protestant. Cartoons in the media caricatured Protestant pastors with ropes round their necks and on boards the accusations: "Outsider", "Traitor", or "Jew".

The recent work by Patrick Cabanel, *Jews and Protestants in France, Elective Affinities, 16th-21st Century*<sup>4</sup>, shows very clearly that these affinities between the Jewish and Protestant communities clearly exist. Two examples of this : During the infamous Dreyfuss Case (1894-1906) French Protestants expressed solidarity with the Jewish community, the Protestant population of Chambon-sur-Lignon saved the lives of 5,000 Jews during the Second World War. If I am not mistaken, I believe Le Chambon-sur-Lignon is the only township in the world to have been awarded the Medal of the Righteous from Israel.

This kind of privileged position is an asset for promoting the gospel. That is why I think it is important for me to be more and more involved in associations such as the International League against Racism and Antisemitism (LICRA), and in developing contacts with other Jewish associations. This includes participation in historical, artistic, cultural and intellectual events.

Over the last few months, as a Pastor and the representative of the Lyon Evangelical Fraternal (APPEL) to the

Jewish communities and organizations, I have attended a number of meetings and commemorations. For example, I was present at a ceremony in the Lyon Town Hall for the posthumous presentations of three Medals of the Righteous. I was invited to the annual dinner of the Rhone-Alpes section of the CRIF (Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France), which was also attended by the new Israeli Ambassador. I was also invited by one of the main leaders of the Lyon Jewish Community to his Legion of Honour ceremony, at which he was decorated in the Rhone Prefecture Hall in Lyon, and on *Yom Hashoah* I was asked to read a text and a list of names of Jewish people deported from France. I was one of about twelve representatives – Jewish, political, Catholic and Protestant – taking part in this way. In Paris I attended the Bicentenary of the Great Sanhedrin, held under the patronage of the French Republic President. Also in Paris, I went to the Shoah Memorial and to various events linked with the exhibition *Underground Archives of the Warsaw Ghetto*. I took this opportunity to officially offer a DVD recording of the film *The Hiding Place* and the book *The Hidden Child* to the Shoah Memorial Library.

My participation in such events gives me the opportunity to extend my sympathy to the Jewish people and to show solidarity with them. It is a form of Christian love for one's neighbour. I could give many examples of how these expressions of support also open doors for contact with other neighbours or with well-known personalities, according to the circumstances.

This is all the more important, as we live at a time when we witness a resurgence of various kinds antisemitic activity.

This being said, however, I wish to take the opportunity to say that France is not antisemitic, as such. We have the sternest laws against antisemitism in the whole of Europe and the present rise of antisemitic acts in France committed by extremists or

unbalanced people of all kinds is rather an echo of the conflicts taking place in Israel between Palestinians and Jews.

The number of Messianic Jews in France is estimated to be between 500 and 600, which is about one in a thousand of the French Jewish population. Ninety-five percent of these Messianic Jews are integrated into Evangelical Protestant churches or assemblies. The other 5% are affiliated to the few small existing Messianic assemblies. But it must be recognised that these assemblies are not well received by the French evangelical circles, possibly because they don't seek too much contact with the other evangelicals and also because they don't appear to be soundly grounded theologically.

I believe there is a definite need for theological education directed towards all those who have a heart for the Jewish people, or who show interest in Israel. Some current ideas need to be replaced by solid Bible-based teaching and, in this respect, I think LCJE can play a uniting, as well as deepening part. In fact, the 7th European LCJE Conference in Dijon in 2001 took a very important first step in that direction.

Having said that, it is worthwhile mentioning that in the last eighteen months three meetings have taken place, (the first in Paris, then two others in Lyon) which gathered together the leaders of nearly all

the Christian organizations in France which have a heart for the Jewish people. At the most recent one, at the end of March in Lyon, four of those attending were appointed to further reflect on the possibility of a deeper cooperation between the societies we represent. Those four are respectively from Chosen People Ministries, Christian Witness to Israel, Jews for Jesus and The Messianic Testimony. The possibility of a French LCJE Committee was mentioned. Therefore please pray for the important meeting in Paris planned in the months to come to discuss this proposal further.

Thank you for taking on board the information I have shared with you; above all, thank you for your prayers for France and for the spread of the gospel among the Jewish people of this country.

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#### **Notes**

1. In 1970, there were only 760 Evangelical churches in France. In 2004 one could count around 1,850; an increase of over a 1,000!
2. Albin Michel, revised and enlarged edition, 2004.
3. Albin Michel – E.P.H.E, 2000, 332 p.
4. Fayard, 2004, 351 p.

# The tenants in the vineyard

Wayne Hilsden, Pastor, King of Kings Community, Jerusalem, Israel

Parables are powerful. Just think about that parable Nathan told King David (2 Samuel 12). Nathan told David the story about the rich man and the poor man. The rich man had everything. The poor man had nothing-- except one little ewe lamb that "ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him." One day a traveler came to visit the rich man. But instead of taking a lamb from his own fold, he took the poor man's lamb to make his dinner.

Well, when David heard this story, his anger was so aroused that he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! "

David, the high and mighty king is brought down by a 'harmless' little parable.

Parables have the "gotcha!" effect. So no wonder Yeshua spoke parables.

I was asked to speak on the *parable of the tenants* found in Mark 12. This is one of the most significant and controversial parables of Yeshua.

It's a *significant* parable because it is possibly the the final straw that broke the camel's back of the religious leaders in Jerusalem and set them on an irreversible course to bring Yeshua's life and ministry to an end.

This parable is also one of the most *controversial*, because many Christians have erroneously interpreted the parable to mean that God is finished with the Jews; that God has taken away the Kingdom from Jewish stewardship and bequeathed it to Gentiles instead.

So now let's hear with fresh ears Yeshua's *parable of the tenants*

## Mark 12:1-12

1 Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and

set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 2 Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. 3 And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. 5 And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. 6 Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7 But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. 9 Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. 11 This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes?'" 12 And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

## The parable

On first reading, it is strange to read, "*Then He began* to speak to them in *parables*." "Was Mark mistaken? I mean, Yeshua told this parable in Jerusalem probably three days before His crucifixion. With three years of public ministry under his belt He had already told many parables.

But Mark was not mistaken at all. We're mistaken. Instead, we should put the emphasis on the right word. Now let's read it again: "Then He began to speak to *them* in parables..." Up till now Yeshua told his parables to his disciples and sometimes to

the masses and at other times in the hearing of the Jewish leaders as well--but here in Jerusalem just a few days before his death and resurrection, Yeshua *begins* to aim his parables *specifically at the Jewish religious leaders*. Looking at the context in which Yeshua told this parable, we see who his listeners are: "...And as He [Yeshua] was walking *in the temple*, the *chief priests, the scribes, and the elders* came to Him. And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?" (Mark 11:27ff)

This parable leaves no mystery. He's not speaking in riddles this time. It was crystal clear to the religious leaders who Yeshua was speaking about. This is revealed in the verse 12: "And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, *for they knew He had spoken the parable against them.*"

Knowing who Yeshua addressing and who he is not addressing is crucial, as we'll see later.

Many Bible scholars say that this is one of the most allegorical of Yeshua's parables. The character, the setting and the various details of the story point to real people in a real place. Other parables, on the other hand, usually have one main point, and the details of the story are there simply to add color and make the one main point even more memorable.

So knowing that this is an allegorical parable, let's look at the details of this parable verse by verse and try and make sense of it.

Beginning in the second part of verse one we read: "A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country."

It should be clear to one and all--The landowner is God. The vineyard He plants is the people of Israel.

These conclusions are backed up by an allegorical parable explained in Isaiah 5. Isaiah 5:7 says: " For the *vineyard of the LORD* of hosts is the house of *Israel*..."

Now who are the tenant-farmers in Yeshua's parable? We know what the religious leaders who heard this parable first-hand understood by the tenant-farmers. Yeshua was talking about themselves. Verse 12 says, "And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, *for they knew He had spoken the parable against them....*"

These leaders are the ones who tend the vineyard – i.e. tend to the affairs of the people of Israel.

It's interesting that in both the Targum and the pre-Christian Dead Sea document 4Q500, Isaiah's parable of the vineyard is applied specifically to matters related to the temple. Could it be that Yeshua had the parable of Isaiah 5 in mind when He told His own parable at the temple to "the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders...." (Mark 11:27)

Some Bible interpreters see the *hedge* around the vineyard, the digging of a place for wine vat and the tower as having a direct relation to the Jewish religious system. The hedge, could mean the ceremonial and moral law--something was to serve as a protective wall to preserve the Jewish people and keep them separate and free from the sinful influences of the pagan world.

The *digging of a hole for a wine vat* where vinedressers would stomp on the grapes may point to the altar in the Temple where wine made from crushed grapes was poured out as drink offering. The *watch tower* in the vineyard might actually point to the Temple itself – for in the Temple the priests were on their watch day and night.

There's one other detail in verse 1 that we shouldn't overlook. It says that the landowner "*leased* it to vinedressers and went into a far country." God delegated responsibility and authority to the Jewish leaders to steward the nation of Israel. And while God might seem to have gone away to a far country, being invisible to the naked eye, God is still the King and still very much the Landlord. Thus the religious leaders need to be reminded that they are

tenants, not owners.

Early in this parable Yeshua is already giving broad hints that the religious leaders' days may be numbered--that the Landlord may at any moment reclaim His rights, remove them from His property and lease out his vineyard to other tenants.

Now let's take a look at the next section, verses 2-5: Now at vintage-time he [ie. the Landlord, or God] sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some.

The *Landlord* sends various servants to collect his rent from the tenants. Clearly, Yeshua is bringing to remembrance those many occasions when God sent prophetic messengers to Israel's leaders to collect His share of the harvest in lieu of rent.

Now what kind of fruit does God expect from His tenant farmers? I suggest that one of the main things God expected from the religious leaders was a harvest of souls for His Kingdom. I'm reminded of Proverbs 11:30: "The *fruit* of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who *wins souls* is wise."

A major reason that God chose the people of Israel was to be a light of salvation to the Gentiles. As the Landlord of the whole earth, the fruit God expects from His servants is a good harvest of souls from the nations.

But too often in history Israel's spiritual leaders actually setup roadblocks in the way of the gentiles to join the people of God. They made the wall around the vineyard higher and higher. Entrance was permissible only after the gentile was discouraged three times from taking this step. So instead of being a light to the nations, most Jewish leaders snubbed the gentiles as unwelcome outsiders.

They had forgotten the words of Isaiah 57:19 where God says: "I create the *fruit of*

*the lips*: Peace, peace to him who is *far off* and to him who is near ..." (the term "far off" usually referring to non-Jews). Rather than producing a harvest from the nations, the vineyard became increasingly barren and unproductive.

But the fruit God expected was not only from the fruit of their lips but also the fruit of their lives. Isaiah 3:10 reads: " Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat *the fruit of their doings*." The fruit of their doings, if they are righteous doings serve as a shining light that attracts the nations to Israel's God. In the words of Yeshua Himself to the Jewish people in Matthew 5:16: "*Let your light so shine before men*, that they may see your *good works* and glorify your Father in heaven."

If Israel could only produce this kind of fruit, the nations flock to taste that fruit and see that the Lord is good.

But when each messenger arrives to inspect and gather fruit for their Master what happens to him? They shoot the messenger. In verses 3-5 we read: "...they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some."

We could recount many cases where leaders of Israel dealt severely with those messengers God sent to His tenants to settle accounts. We read in 2 Chronicles 24:20, 21: Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He also has forsaken you.'" 21 So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD."

And we read how Jeremiah the prophet

was treated by the leaders in his day: Jer 38:6 says, "Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that [was] in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon [there was] no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire."

We all know Yeshua's agonizing words of Luke 13:34,35: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate."

So long before Yeshua made His apparent blasphemous claims that aroused the vicious anger of the religious leaders, there was already a tradition of shooting God's messengers.

The religious leaders were not merely rejecting Yeshua. No. They were being consistent with their long-held tradition--To reject God's servants whenever they are sent demanding fruit worthy of the King.

Now let's move to the last part of this parable. When servant after servant is rejected, sometimes beaten and other times even killed, here's what the Landlord decides to do. Reading from verses 6ff:

Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'

Could it be any clearer who the son is? It says in verse six that the Landlord has "one son." And then it says that he is the "beloved" son. At both his baptism and his transfiguration God spoke from that far away country of heaven: "This is My *beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased." At his transfiguration the heavenly Father adds: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. *Hear Him!*"

The religious leaders didn't *hear* the prophets before when they called them to account. Nor would the religious leaders "hear Him," – God's own beloved Son?

And not only did the religious leaders refuse to "hear Him," but it in verses 7 and 8 we read: "But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, *let us kill him*, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard."

The law at the time provided that if a Landlord had no heirs then the property would be passed on to those in possession of it ( They say, "possession is nine tenths of the law").

Somehow the religious leaders had come to think of themselves as more than just tenants with delegated stewardship over Israel; They had come to think of themselves as the heirs and possessors of the people. How unlike King Solomon who had the wisdom to know that he was not the owner, but God's tenant. Solomon said to His Landlord: "give your servant a discerning heart to govern *your people* ...For who is able to govern this great *people of yours?*" (See 1 Kings 3:5ff]

After God delivered to his tenants many warnings through His prophets, God now sends His only beloved Son to the vineyard. Yeshua, even more than the prophets who proceeded Him, demonstrated a power and authority that was perceived as unprecedented threat to the religious leaders at the temple. Under the light of Yeshua's divine presence they were being exposed for who they really were; leaders who were fixated on their high *position* rather than on their *calling* as tenant-servants to bring in a harvest of souls from the nations into God's Kingdom.

This parable became the final straw that broke the camel's back. The religious leaders must now find a way to remove Yeshua from the their territory.

This reaction came as no surprise to the Son of God. Like the messenger-prophets before Him, Yeshua peered three days into the future and spoke prophetically concerning His suffering and death that would come at the hands of these men.

In verses 9-12 we see the response of the Landlord to the tenants' rejection of His



beloved son and their plan to have Him killed and cast outside the vineyard:

Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes?'" And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

Unfortunately, it's this part of the parable that has been used so often by those who teach "replacement theology" and by others who go as far as to try and give biblical justification for their anti-Semitism.

Using this parable, here's their twisted logic: "The Jews have rejected God's only beloved Son and chief cornerstone. Therefore God has rejected the Jews.

The problem with this interpretation, however, as I've tried to show, is that this parable was not directed at the the Jewish people as a whole. It was directed at Israel's unbelieving spiritual leaders. God has indeed taken away the stewardship of His vineyard from the Jewish leaders who reject His Son, but God will not reject Israel as a whole. God is removing the Israel's unfaithful shepherds from leadership, but he is not removing His chosen people from His love.

There was a time when God gave the religious leaders a powerful position of leadership and authority. We read in Matthew 23:1-3: "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples, saying, *"The scribes and the Pharisees sat on Moses' seat. All things therefore whatever they tell you to observe, observe and do, but don't do their works; for they say, and don't do."*

Today there are those in the Messianic community that tell Jewish believers that they must place themselves under the authority of the orthodox rabbis. But when Yeshua said that the scribes and

Pharisees sat on Moses' seat and they are to be obeyed, He was probably speaking about their role in overseeing civil legislation and judgments. He wasn't speaking about attending yeshiva, learning Talmud and Kabbalah.

In Yeshua's day, the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees made up the judges of the courts. They also created civil laws for their towns and their cities, just as legislators do today.

But in some ways this is besides the point. For even if Yeshua was saying in Matthew 23 that the religious leaders continued to have authority over the people, this parable of the tenants makes it very clear that this reality was now coming to an abrupt end.

It's not that these tenants weren't given adequate warning to change their way and produce fruit fit for the Kingdom. Sure God demonstrated great great and patience by providing warning after warning through His messengers. But now, having sent His own beloved Son, and He too is being rejected, God now has no choice but to "give the vineyard to others." (Verse 9)

It's important to point out, that following the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Yeshua not a single word is spoken in the New Testament about the rabbis sitting on Moses' seat or a single case in which believers were told to submit to the authority of unbelieving rabbis.

Rather, what we see in the New Covenant is the establishment of a whole new governmental regime-- a human Kingdom authority not characterized by lordship, but servanthood. Under the New Covenant a radical change takes place in the realm of spiritual authority. In fulfilment of the prophetic hope of Exodus 19:6 ("And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests") and echoing Yeshua's parable of the tenants, 1 Peter 2:7-10 declares, "'The stone which *the builders rejected* has become the chief cornerstone," and " A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense."

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But *you are a chosen generation, a royal*

*priesthood*, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

When it comes to the work of the Kingdom, we are all true believers are tenants in God's vineyard--in a vineyard now much more expansive and inclusive, including Israel as well as her gentile commonwealth. As God's tenant-priests we have the awesome privilege and end-time task of bringing in a harvest of souls

into the Kingdom.

Yes, in the New Covenant there is still a need for a special leadership and spiritual authority. And most of us at this conference serve in some kind of leadership capacity. But God's new leadership model is the inverted pyramid. The model of Ephesians 4 is not a leadership standing in a lofty position as lords *over* the people, but are those who take the low seat to *undergird* others to do the work of Kingdom ministry (See Ephesians 4:11,12).

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