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Conference Theme
Jewish Evangelism
Telling the Story

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LCJE
Networking
Jewish Evangelism

LCJE
Lake Balaton 2007

Edited by
Kai Kjær-Hansen

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Morning Session

Jewish evangelism in Israel

Dan Sered, Israel Director, Jews for Jesus

It is a great honor and privilege for me to be able to be here at the LCJE and to share with this group. While many of you were working on your degrees and developing your ministries, I was barely a gleam in my mother's eye. But I do have the privilege of being a sabra, born in Hertzliyah and living at a time when serving the Lord and proclaiming Y'shua to our people in Israel is an increasingly fruitful and encouraging endeavor.

This paper does not contain any history on evangelism in Israel. For a look at a historical summary of evangelism in Israel one can look at Mishkan Issue 46 / 2006. Instead I will discuss the current state of Jewish evangelism in Israel while highlighting 3 main issues: some current problems, current mission efforts and my current vision for the future.

Current problems

Obviously the problem (which can also be looked at as an opportunity or as a challenge) is that the people of Israel do not know the Lord. I think that we will agree that it is not up to us to convince anyone; all we can do is present the Gospel and have people decide for themselves. Therefore in my opinion there are two main issues when it comes to the current problem: Israel is still mostly unreached with the Gospel and there are basic problems in communicating the Gospel in Israel.

Unreached – The vast majority of Israelis have never considered if Jesus is the Messiah. They have not been confronted with the claims of Jesus. Israelis are ignorant and are hanging to many preconceived ideas and wrong impressions of Jesus. Remember he is still

officially called Yeshu! This is a problem that I hope all of us here would like to see changed. *Wouldn't it* be wonderful if every person in Israel would be confronted with the issue of Jesus being the Jewish Messiah? Is this possible? I think that it is and I think that this is our higher call and goal.

Communication – Fortright communication is the key to effectively sharing the Gospel with all people. However in Israel we are faced with centuries of a distorted Gospel message and an unwillingness to listen on the part of the people. One of the greatest obstacles we face in the Land today is what I call the Yeshu dilemma. Jesus in Hebrew is called Yeshu, which is an acronym for "May his name and memory be blotted out," which the average Israeli is completely unfamiliar with. When you correct people and say to them his name is Y'shua, the average Israeli understands Y'shua to mean Joshua. Y'shua is not a name that is recognized by the average Israeli. When they hear the name Y'shua they immediately think that you are mispronouncing Joshua. Now I am not going to get into the root of this problem but the bottom line is that even when we tell people about Y'shua they don't know who we are talking about. You need to say Y'shua the one that is referred to as Yeshu. Still in Israel the official name for Jesus is Yeshu. That is what appears in all the media, and textbooks. Even the subtitles that we all read while watching our televisions and movies say Yeshu. Maybe somehow we can get the word out to journalists and authors to start using Y'shua not Yeshu? I don't know how things could change regarding His name. Other

than if people keep hearing Y'shua, Y'shua, Y'shua maybe eventually it will sink in just who we are talking about and why it is an important issue.

Current efforts

I want to highlight in this section several projects that I am aware of: the Jesus film project, Congregational evangelism, New Age festival evangelism and other special efforts.

The Jesus Film Project – There has been a nationwide campaign since 1998 putting into mail boxes invitations for people to order a free VHS copy of the Jesus Film in Hebrew. This campaign has yielded hundreds of Israelis accepting Jesus and thousand of Israelis who saw the film. Now, this nationwide project is being redone this time offering a free DVD copy of the Jesus film. I have been involved in both the distribution of the invitations in mail boxes and in the follow up (both in delivering the film to people's houses and then continuing in ministering to those who ordered the video) I am very excited about this project continuing.

Congregational Evangelism - The congregations in Israel continue to have programs and projects that are reaching out to their communities. Some of these efforts are traditional and have stood the test of time. This may involve going out on a certain day of the week to share with people in the community, inviting people to come to services, putting ads in local free papers and on local bulletin boards for people to receive a free copy of the New Testament.

New Age Festival Evangelism – The New Age festivals (there are 2 main festivals: Beresheet which occurs during Sukkot & Boombamela which occurs during Passover) that arrived in Israel in 1999 have brought with them a unique opportunity for the body in Israel to share the Gospel. I have been going to these festivals since the year 2000 and have seen an amazing growth in the number of believers who participate in order to share with the Israelis who go there.

At that first festival in 2000 there were only 7 believers. In the last new age festival there was an estimated number of 300 believers who went to evangelize. There have been different methodologies that have been used in reaching the crowds that go to these festivals. I do want to mention that we have been seeing that now the crowds at these festivals are getting younger. The majority of the participants are now turning as high school age which presents an ethical dilemma for mission workers. Also in the past they have had 2 main festivals (one in the spring and one in the fall) but this year they have canceled the new age festival that was going to take place during Sukkot.

Is this the beginning of the end for new age festivals in Israel? Only time will tell, but sooner or later all good things come to an end....with the exception of heaven.

Special efforts

Evangelistic literature continues to be produced locally in large quantities and high quality. Each year thousand of evangelistic books and Bibles are made available to the Messianic community for distribution by the Keren Achvat Messichit, Ha Gefen Press and Maoz Publishing. There are many congregations and ministries that make use of this literature.

Use of Electronic media boards – several years ago one of the congregations in Jerusalem took out an advertisement on one of the largest and most visual electronic boards in the country. It was at one of the most traveled intersections, Gelilot Interchange in Tel Aviv. Tens of thousands of people saw the advertisement that featured the web site- WWW.YESHUA.CO.IL. This web site normally gets between 80 to 90 hits per day. During the 12 days that it was advertised the hits rose to 280 to 300 hits per day.

Recently in the Tel Aviv area, during Hanukah Jews for Jesus conducted a four-day telephone campaign. We did "cold calling" from Tel Aviv area phone books. We told people we were from Jews for

Jesus, and offered them a Hanukah gift, a free New Testament. We called over 3,400 homes and 417 people requested the Hanukah gift. This effort caught the attention of the anti missionary group, Yad Lachim who issued an emergency warning through the pirate religious radio station, Arutz Shevah (Channel 7). They warned people that they might get a phone call from the missionaries.

A very creative approach to evangelism is being done by believers who are taking to the popular National Israel Trail during the holidays and are setting up stations to provide food, water and a witness to the curious hiker.

I am sure that there are many different evangelistic efforts taking place throughout the country but time prevents me from mentioning more. No doubt there are efforts going on that I haven't yet heard about.

Current vision for the future

In sharing my vision with you for the future of evangelism in Israel let me first say that I do not want to take away from the current efforts I've described. They represent valid and effective methods of bringing the Gospel to Israel.

While evangelism has taken place and is taking place today there has not been a nationwide proclamation outreach in recent years. People have been confronted with the Gospel through street evangelism and

media in certain pockets in the Land but there has not been a nationwide proclamation evangelism which involves both street evangelism and media at the same time.

In my opinion it is time for such a nationwide cooperative outreach. Lord willing such an outreach will begin in the spring of 2008 with the launch of Behold Your God Israel. Jews for Jesus' plan of conducting intensive, nationwide evangelistic campaigns over the next six years. Maybe God will use this outreach to cause the majority of Israelis to know that Jesus' Hebrew name is Y'shua (salvation) and not Yeshu (a curse). By the grace of God this outreach might be able to reach 90% of the population of Israel with the issue of Jesus being the Jewish Messiah.

Maybe there can be a change in the thinking and perspective of many people in Israel. Maybe some of those who today are unreached with the Gospel can be changed to the category of the reached.

Our hope and prayer is that this outreach will add to the body in Israel and that it will also give us the opportunity to partner with congregations in the Land and ministries all over the world to bring the Gospel to the nation of Israel. You are all invited to come and help us share this burden of bringing the Gospel to the nation of Israel.

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The impact of Russian believers on the Messianic movement in Israel.

Michael Zinn, Chosen People Ministries Director for Israel

The purpose of this paper is to highlight specific ethnic impact of immigrants from former Soviet Union on the believer's movement in Israel. Since both definitions of "Russian believers" and "Messianic movement" are problematic I decided also to deal with them as well.

Historical socio-demographic survey

The influx of immigrants into the Land of Israel during the years 1882-1903 is known as "The First Aliyah." This was the first large wave of immigrants that were motivated by nationalism. During these years some 25,000 Jews emigrated from Russia and Rumania.

The Second Aliyah refers to the massive influx of immigrants during the years 1904-1914. Between these years approximately 35 thousand Jews arrived, mainly from Russia and Poland.

The Third Aliyah was in many ways a continuation of the Second Aliyah, which was halted by the outbreak of the First World War. During the Third Aliyah some 35,000 Jews arrived, the majority from Russia and Poland, with a smaller number from Lithuania and Rumania.

The fourth major influx of immigrants began in 1924. More than 67,000 immigrants arrived, mainly from Poland, Russia, Rumania, and Lithuania.

Next 1929-1939 Aliyah was caused primarily by Nazi regime and was dominated by immigrants from Europe.

The table below shows the number of immigrants coming from FSU during last sixty years. Those numbers are based on Jewish Agency statistics

Year	Number of immigrants
1948-1988	186,615
1989	12,392
1990	185,227
1991	147,839
1992	65,093

1993	66,145
1994	68,079
1995	64,848
1996	59,048
1997	54,621
1998	46,020
1999	66,848
2000	50,817
2001	33,601
2002	18,508
2003	12,383
2004	10,127
2005	9,378

Total 1989-2005	960,972
Total 1948-2005	1,147,587
Total from all countries 1948-2005	2,976,761
Immigration from FSU	35,55%

Professional make up according to the Ministry of absorption: about 25% (or about 50% of adults) are engineers, doctors, artists and scientists and teachers.

The number of Russians in the Israeli cities varies from 8% in Jerusalem to 45% in Upper Nazareth.

Short analysis of the data brought above shows that number of people speaking Russian and sharing to some extent what is called Russian culture constitutes for at least 33% of entire Jewish population of Israel.

From survey conducted personally and cannot be accurate and still giving the general picture, from 40 to 60% of families cannot be defined as halahicly Jewish. In addition to this fact about 7% of immigrants coming to Israel define them self as followers of Orthodox Christianity.

Number of Israelis believing in Yeshua and attending Messianic or Jewish Christian congregations can be defined conservatively from 15,000 (internal surveys and estimation) to 23,000 (Wikipedia brings this number as related to the middle

of 90-th of the last century). It is reasonable to estimate that total number of believers from Russian background in Israel as 60% that is from 12 to 15 thousands.

1. Russian Jews or Jewish Russians?

Such question may sound strange but I believe there is solid ground for it. First, the ethnic structure of the people coming from former Soviet Union indicates that good portion of them is not Jewish at all (by different estimations up to 30% of new immigrants do not have Jewish parent). But the second, and this is more important, accumulation of non-Jews creates high density and eventual opposition to the local culture and traditions. As a result we can see many Russian schools, University programs, invasion of Russian pop-music, literature, ethnic clubs etc. Additional challenge is the Hebrew language that under condition of high percentage of Russians becomes sometimes not of the first need and as a result creates enclaves alternative to indigenous culture that in rare cases express some hostility toward Israel sometimes taking sometimes even form of anti-Semitism.

But even those who are Jewish (at least one parent is Jewish) very often identify themselves as Russians by culture. "The prospect of a permanent class of inferior status half-Jewish or non-Jewish Israelis raises the ugly specter of an Israel increasingly divided by hierarchical definitions of Jewish authenticity, and it has bred a dangerous sense of alienation in certain precincts of Israel's Russian immigrant community. According to a recent study, 48% feel more "Russian" than "Israeli." (EVAN R. GOLDSTEIN Wall Street Journal, April 13, 2007)

One cannot expect different attitude having in mind that overwhelming majority of Russian immigrants do not have minor knowledge and understanding of Jewish history, tradition, religion and culture. This is probably the main factor that differs them from immigrants from USA, South America, Ethiopia and Europe. Very often

we can observe not just passive rejection of everything that is Jewish and Israeli but active proclamation of superiority of everything Russian over everything that is Israeli. Such tendencies have found certain reflection in the religious life of Russian speaking believers.

Most of Russian believers are organized in Russian speaking congregations. From the first glance it may appear as a result of simple limitation in language skills. But in fact the dominating factor is not language but conviction of supremacy of the Russian version of faith versus domestic one. From another hand the cultural factor is also of great importance.

There are two big groups of Russian believers: one of them consists of those who came to faith back in FSU and they constitute the most conservative and sometimes legalistic trend. The other group is people that came to faith in Israel. Here we can see some tendencies toward Israeli culture with still reservations toward Jewish tradition.

The Russian congregations usually keep very close relationship with their home churches back in metropolis and ethnic churches in US and Germany (usually very conservative and doctrinally demanding in return for financial support). To some extent it happened because those congregations do not see in Israel in general and in Israeli congregations in particular the worth alternative to their teaching and culture framing.

There is fundamental ignorance of Jewish roots both ethnical and scriptural. This is easily explained by Soviet authorities treatment of Jews and Jewish life. But effectively this generation of Jews is not bound (for bad and for good) by history, tradition and religion of their fathers. From negative side it weakens their testimony to Israeli society. From positive side it helps to share Good News with Russian immigrants making them open to the Gospel.

At this point I would like to elaborate more about:

2. The gap between Russian believers and Jewish tradition and culture.

The term “Russian believers” serves as umbrella for all the immigrants that came from FSU. But in real life they may be divided into two big groups “Ashkenazi” and “Sfaradi”.

First group consist out of Jews and their family members from European part of FSU where Russian culture and priority of secular education were two the most domineering factors in formation of identity and worldview. This part of immigrants are characterised predominantly by high level of mixed marriages and confusion in issues of identity and its expression. As a result they are very open to the Gospel in its Gentile expression and very cautious toward traditional Jewish heritage. It is among them the thesis of faithfulness toward everything that is Jewish considered very often as alternative to Christianity and thus finds ultimate expression in certain aggressive hostility to what they call “judaizing”.

From another hand the Sfaradi group that comes from the Jews immigrated from the Middle Asia countries (Uzbekistan and Caucasus region) is marked by traditional Eastern Jewish culture that is very opposite to the first group and keeps the faithfulness to tradition as of highest value in their life. Percentage of believers from this group is very low and those who came to faith try to keep this or other way traditional Jewish life and culture.

Antagonism in the treatment of the Gospel and person of Yeshua may be expressed in ironic statement that was done by the mother of the one of our workers from Bocharan background: “Yeshua was born Jewish but then he became Russian”. For the most of this group to see Yeshua’s and eventually Christianity’s departure from the Jewishness of any kind is just intolerable and constitutes different from indigenous Biblical Judaism religion.

In a short survey that was done by me among ten Russian-speaking congregations and was based on two simple questions: a) do you have some

classes on Jewish tradition and culture? and b) do you use in the Bible studies some Jewish sources? – nine out of ten answered negatively to both of them.

To be fair the situation in the Hebrew-speaking congregations for the most part is not very different but in the last time we see some tendencies toward changing this situation. Contrary to this in Russian speaking congregations we did not observe such movement.

Cultural factor also brought into existence the interesting phenomena of pushing out Israeli Hebrew speaking believers from what once was called Hebrew-speaking congregations (Hesed V’emet, Beit Asaf). And if the moderate number of “Russians” in Hebrew speaking congregations lead to further introducing of them to Israel and Jewishness, the opposite process is observed in the congregations where Russians became majority. In certain sense such tendencies present to wide the wide Israeli public a Messianic movement as Gentile and foreign body and thus does not attract many.

It brings us to the next question:

3. Messianic Jews or Jewish Christians?

I am not willing to write here on this very controversial issue. Many would say that there is no etymological difference between above two names. Many would insist that difference exist just in ecclesiology or missiology areas. Some would claim that there is fundamental need in two definitions because they express two different hermeneutical approaches etc. My goal here is nothing from above but simply to address two main divisions among Russian speaking believers in Israel. And if one group of them is almost unobservable and small another one is overwhelmingly big. For the sake of this paper (and just for that) I would offer to define the congregations that at least consider Jewish heritage of big value in their walking with God as Messianic. For the same purpose I would call all others as

Jewish Christians. As far as I know from more than 60 Russian speaking congregations just 3 will fall under Messianic Jews criteria. As Jew believing in Yeshua I cannot be but happy seeing many Russian-speaking immigrants became believers. But in the same time I cannot be but depressed seeing as they distant themselves from our rich heritage. This gap is widening and found its expression in creating Russian homogenic ghetto type protestant churches that just cannot suite as worship place for any other cultural ethnic bodies (Ethiopian Jewish congregations are another example). It resulted, for instance, in creating whole denomination in the north of the country, which consists from more then thousand believers. And though they sing Hebrew songs in their worship they remain essentially Russian in their culture, tradition, theology, relationship with outside world and treatment of the Gospel as alternative to the OT revelation. The issue of OT-NT discontinuity though finds its support also among Hebrew speaking believers never reached such almost unanimous backing as within Russian believing community.

4. Some congregational challenges

One of the problems Russian believing community face is financial one. The problem of integrating into new community became for many a challenge that is very difficult to deal with. As it was mentioned before Russian community is highly educated. But language and cultural problems pushed many of them to the sidewalks of the nation of Israel. Many engineers, teachers and others with university degrees never found the job and corresponding earnings. As a result a big portion of the members of Russian speaking congregation lives on welfare and feel very disappointed. On the good side it resulted in bigger trust on God but for the part (it is especially true for the elder generation - the percentage of such people is usually double in Russian congregations in comparison with Hebrew

speaking) of this group the congregation became a social club where they can share their problems and hopes rather than the place of worship and studies.

Additional distinctive of Russian speaking congregations is high per cent of broken families particularly the women and their children. Historically (and even now) women constitute a big portion in the congregation but in Russian speaking body this percentage is much higher.

Facing all these difficulties people need to work extra hours to support their families. This leaves them less time for the ministry. That is why very often Russian speaking congregation is centred around few people in the leadership who basically do almost all work in the congregation. Of course with time there is more and more people in the congregation that start to take some responsibilities. Still this process is slow enough and requires huge commitment from the pastor and elders. Worth to notice that historically and culturally Russian people are used to the very centralized system of leadership and are ready to give to the hands of pastors both ministerial responsibilities and sometime entrust in their hand authority that looks as dictatorial to the westerners.

One of the weak sides of the Russian congregation leadership is almost no formal education among elders. The teaching and counselling is done with great deal of enthusiasm and commitment but is short of professional expertise and vision. In their teaching they usually rely on almost never reconsidered doctrines and paradigms they brought from their home churches in Russia or learned from missionaries coming to teach to Russia under given cultural environment. Being used in Israel such tools may be contra-productive in the long range.

5. Commitment

One of the most positive thrusts brought by Russians into Messianic movement in Israel is commitment and readiness to bare consequences of their faith in Yeshua. Traditionally back in Soviet Union the

church was under heavy persecution. Many hundreds of ethnically Russian believers spent dozens of years in the prisons and labour camps and often died for their faith. The life of Russian speaking congregation in Israel is rich by the stories of their lives sometimes shared by eyewitnesses. But ironically Russian communist propaganda even played for good for believers. From the very childhood people were taught to the sacrificial life. So when many of those later came to faith they sincerely imitated the Paul's example in their personal walking with God.

But if such behaviour is relatively common among Russians it is rather rare occasion in Israeli congregation. The Russian inclination in Hebrew congregation brought some fruit in the area of sacrificial evangelism, holy leaving and commitment.

Another positive example is modern day Russian immigrants soldiers. It is not a secret that for rather last decades the moral of the Israeli Army went down. The number of the young people trying to skip military service is growing and many of those who eventually go to serve try to do it on the low profile and not to take part in the combat units. Same time the percentage of the Russian immigrants serving in such units is 2,5 times higher than among native Israelis.

In general such behaviour and social involvement makes their testimony very powerful and helps both to bring up the status of Russians among Israelis and testifies about faith in Yeshua.

6. Social area

One of the notable successes of new immigrant believers is their involvement in numerous humanitarian and social projects undertaking by congregations and Christian organizations. They are actively participating in both raising and distributing funds among needy believers, taking part in advisory boards and helping in the field.

One of the most significant areas of social help is establishment of

rehabilitation centres through all the country. To be fair the most of the patients are also of Russian background but activity of these places overgrow just the ministry to Russians. This trend is very encouraging because helps to the Russian believers to feel as the part of the larger body of the people of Israel and from another hand establishes their high profile testimony among Israeli citizens and local authorities.

Very essential is the work among divorced and abused women. And though again they deal mostly with their own community the native Israelis are also involved.

As it was shown above Russians brought the big number of talented musicians and artists. The worship in the congregations all around Israel became of much better quality. Russian believing musicians and singers do not limit their ministry just to believers but present to the wide Israeli public using their talents as powerful evangelistic tool.

7. Role of Russians in mixed congregations.

Good sign of integration is new immigrants ministry in the mixed congregations. With time going on and achieving good results in language some of the Russian believers started to serve in elder's positions in originally Hebrew speaking congregation. And though majority of those congregations consist of Russian believers, still worship and teaching is done there in Hebrew. In congregations like Ohalei Rahamim, Beit Asaf, Hesed V'emet and others we can see number of Russian believers that lead services and enjoy respect from the Hebrew speaking community. It became possible because of their willingness to change narrow sectoral views of serving just to particular group of people to the understanding of necessity of becoming part of Israeli community and due to the vision that some Israeli leaders have. As a result those mixed congregations show essential growth in both numbers and spirituality.

Worth also to notice that many Russians obtained leading positions in the international ministries working in Israel. Among others these are Campus Crusade for Christ, Chosen People Ministries etc.

On the positive side involvement of Russians in Israeli congregations raised interest in sharing Gospel overseas in Russia and eventually in other countries. Once being self-centred Israeli ministers and congregations started to look beyond the borders and became ready to fulfil the God's command to be the light to the nations. I believe it is very positive tendency that make Israeli believers an integral part of the universal body of Messiah. God used Russian believers to widen Israeli ministers horizon and to extend their helping hands to other countries. First it helped very much to creating of new believing communities among Jews back in Russia and promoting ideas of Aliyah as God's mitzvah but also set a paradigm for understanding that blessings in local congregations are dependent on the work among the Gentile churches around the world.

8. Second generation of Russian believers.

By second generation of Russian believers I mean children of those who came to Israel in 90-th from both believing and unbelieving families. Those young men and women possess some distinctive features that make them available to multi-ethnic ministry. This group of young believers is distinctive by certain qualities necessary to bring new souls to faith:

- high motivation
- cultural flexibility
- speaking two or more languages
- high educational level (according to some survey almost 70% of them study at universities and colleges)

- Zionist's ideals
- social involvement

I really believe that bringing up this generation is the biggest priority in transforming closed Russian believer's groups into integral part of believing community in Israel. Those new believers do not have the limitations of their fathers and may effectively serve among Hebrew speakers as equal among equals. With time they will be ready to take over the leadership in the local body and present the new kind of leadership distinct by bigger sensitivity and flexibility.

9. Summary

In the presented paper I tried to show the impact of Russian believers on the believing community in Israel. The impact is two-fold and based partially on cultural and historical distinctives from one hand and processes of integration from another one. The impact can be summarized in two directions. On the negative side it is:

- distancing from local community as result of cultural and historical difference
- sticking to the Gentile protestant church model rather than to Jewish Messianic congregation as a result of ignorance of Jewish roots
- certain centralization in leadership model

On the positive side it is:

- cultural flexibility
- value of education in general and Biblical in particular
- younger generation active involvement
- high level of commitment.

Looking thru all these pro's and contra's I believe that eventual impact of Russian believers in Israel will be very fruitful and the weaknesses of present day mainly related to the objective factors will be successfully dealt in the new future.

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Reconciliation - against the wall in Israel/Palestine 2007

Lisa Loden, member of the International Coordinating Committee, LCJE

In essence, reconciliation in its biblical sense is about living without walls. God's primary mission in our fallen, broken world is reconciliation. The Bible teaches that God's reconciliation intention is holistic, including relationships with God, self, others, and creation. This mission has not changed from the time of the fall. God's reconciling mission involves the very in-breaking of the Kingdom of God into this fallen world. God himself takes the initiative in reconciliation through Messiah and He transforms believers into God's new creation.¹ As God's children, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. We are all called to take an active role in that ministry.

Reconciliation is the very heart of the gospel. Holistic reconciliation is the overall context for evangelism and making disciples. Reconciliation with God is essential and believers must be agents of that restoration. To separate out and isolate "evangelism" as a subject is to distort the gospel by wrenching it from its biblical context of holistic reconciliation. To stress evangelism without also being agents of holistic reconciliation betrays the full truth of the gospel and the mission of God.²

To some, reconciliation may seem to be a peripheral subject in the context of a conference devoted to the subject of Jewish evangelism. By the above, you will have realized that my opinion is quite the opposite of that position. Reconciliation is integral to any authentic presentation of the gospel.

The title of this article is intentionally provocative. It is meant to elicit reaction and hopefully engender thoughtful concern. When mentioned in an Israeli/Palestinian context, the "wall" immediately brings to mind the picture of the rapidly advancing dividing wall crisscrossing the land. For most of the residents of Israel,

the existence of the wall, otherwise known as the "security fence," is viewed as an unavoidable necessity. Living in Israel today means that we live with this encroaching physical wall. Since the majority of the population does not personally encounter the wall, it is therefore not a part of their active consciousness. The painful reality though is that believers in Yeshua live on both sides of this wall. As the wall continues to be built, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the believers who live on opposite sides of the wall to meet one another. Whether we recognize it or like it, the situation in which we live affects our thinking and our attitudes.

The peoples divided by the wall view it through very different lenses. Roger Cohen, a columnist for the International Herald Tribune puts it this way,

To the Palestinians, it is a 'racist, separating wall.' It is a part of their 'ghettoization,' a term that deliberately or subliminally borrows from the Jewish holocaust experience. It is history through a glass darkly. To most Israelis, on the contrary, it is merely a barrier, a rational construct that facilitates rather than complicates a two state solution, represents their abandonment of any idealistic notion of brotherhood in favor of cool pragmatism, protects them from suicide bombers and enables them to look away. It is the next best thing to an escape from history.³

Walls have two sides, you live on one or the other. On whichever side you find yourself, you are barred from the reality of what exists on the other side. The function is clearly to separate and divide. Walls are barriers to both keep things in and out. They are generally erected by only one party in a conflict. Although this is self

evident, what is not always grasped is that in the effort to create security; fear and hostility are unavoidable byproducts.

Walls are of many different sorts and they are not always physical. They are inescapable and often necessary. We all live behind one sort or another of them. There is, however, one wall that has been forever eradicated – and that is the wall of separation and enmity between all those who are in Messiah.⁴ Unfortunately, too many followers of Yeshua continue to live as if that wall was still in place. This wall mentality obstructs and hinders the expression of the unity of Messiah's body.

The physical barrier wall in Israel/Palestine today is a constant reminder that our peoples are in conflict with no solution in sight. In the ministry of reconciliation between the people groups of this land it is the wall mentality, reinforced by the physical wall, that provides the context for our reconciliation initiatives.

Congregational initiatives

In Israel today, reconciliation initiatives are on the increase. These initiatives are not always given that title but there is growing awareness on the part of the Messianic community that healed relationships between believers in Yeshua are essential for our gospel to be authentic.

Local Messianic congregational leaders are meeting with Arab pastors and leaders of Arab speaking congregations in Israel on an increasingly frequent basis. The bi-annual Messianic leaders' prayer retreat, "Sitting at Yeshua's Feet" now includes a number of Arab Israeli pastors. Each year Caspari Center's leadership training program, "Hearts to Serve," has an increased number of Arab Christian participants. Arab and Jewish pastors will on occasion exchange pulpits. There is a developing consciousness that the Bible mandates an embodied expression of the "one new man" in Messiah, in whom ethnic, social, and gender differences are no longer grounds for division.⁵

Growing numbers of local Messianic congregations are making efforts to reach

over to "the other side of the wall." In Tel Aviv, Haifa, Netanya, Jerusalem, and Tiberias, to name a few, local congregations are involved with aid distribution that reaches the Arab community. For example, over the Christmas holiday season in 2006, collections of money and clothing were sent by Messianic congregations and individual believers to the needy Christians of the Bethlehem area.

Yad b'Yad

Yad b'Yad, or hand in hand, is a recent reconciliation initiative involving high school aged young people from the Israeli Messianic and Arab Christian congregations. Two thousand and seven will be the third year that during the summer holidays, groups of Jewish and Arab believing young people will be hosted in Germany, meet with young German believers their age, and go together to Auschwitz. These trips are powerful times of encountering history together. The healing and reconciling power of God is evident among the young people who participate in these journeys.

Musalaha reconciliation ministries

In the context of conflict and wide cultural diversity that is Israel/Palestine, Musalaha is the only faith based reconciliation ministry in Israel that intentionally involves Arab Palestinian Christians from the Palestinian territories and Gaza together with Arab Israeli Christians and Messianic Jews. The activities of Musalaha have increased dramatically during the past four years. Working from an unambiguous basis of common faith in Messiah, Musalaha brings together people from these different communities in order to deepen understanding and relationship. In the last year, 2005 – 2006, participants in Musalaha activities passed the 1,000 number mark.

Meeting together is increasingly difficult. For the past four years, Musalaha has been consistently denied permissions for participants living in the Palestinian

territories to come to events in Israel. By law, Israelis are not permitted to go into the Palestinian controlled areas. This has meant that the activities have had to occur outside of Israel. Women's conferences, youth activities, family camps have all had to be located outside of Israel. There has been one venue in which both sides could meet but when the wall is completed this will no longer be possible.

In the framework of Musalaha, the participants often find themselves facing new challenges that require them to move from their comfort zones. Doing this helps them to grow in faith understand that "we cannot reconcile if we do not grow together in our faith and let it unite us. The more one interacts with different communities in our country, the more one realizes just how necessary this faith is to our reconciliation."⁶

Conferences, seminars, outings, trips, prayer meetings and camps are available for many different population subgroups. There are specialized activities for children, women, leaders, families, and youth. Working with a core group, who are involved long term, new people are brought into each of the activities. Over time, as people become more comfortable with each other, there is an engagement with some of the hard issues that are a part of the context of our relationships. While it is fundamental that spiritual unity is the basis of our relationship there is a recognition that this unity does not either erase, or render our individual and corporate identities unimportant.

During this year, 2007, women's groups, youth gatherings, and leaders and families groups in the Musalaha framework engaged with themes of identity and our different historical narratives. When dealing with identity, it is evident that virtually all of the participants see their spiritual identity as primary. When asked to choose a second and third identity classification there is great diversity among the participants. Even within the sectors represented in Musalaha events, there is no homogeneity. Exercises of this sort lead

to in depth discussions and enable the participants to understand both themselves and each another on deeper levels.

Telling our historical narratives is a challenging task. Listening to our own narrative as told by the other side, or trying ourselves to relate the narrative of the other side is much more so. Although often difficult and sometimes painful, seeing our own situation from the perspective of another helps us get beneath the surface of relationships, understand ourselves and others and then to begin to relate to one another more profoundly. "Our historical narratives, both as Palestinians and Israelis, have been used to justify our positions in the conflict and to deny one another's truth."⁷ By listening to one another, hearing history from another point of view, it becomes possible to legitimize the differing perspectives, to accept and embrace one another's views.

The women's work of Musalaha has expanded over the last four years from one large conference a year to a network of five smaller groups of women, meeting on a regular basis. The large yearly conference served an important purpose in initially acquainting numbers of women with the vision of Musalaha but it did not meet the challenge of going deeper and developing sustainable relationships among the participants. For this reason, a change in strategy was implemented. This change has been exceptionally successful. A smaller framework is more conducive to openness and personal sharing. Women find small groups welcoming. They are non-threatening and it is easier to be vulnerable and take risks in relationship when the group is small.

The newest women's group initiative is the "third side." This group is made up of women who are themselves not Jewish or Arab but are married to Jewish or Arab men. These women often feel caught between the camps and have found the "third side" gatherings to be places of acceptance. In particular, a strong prayer fellowship has developed among these women.

Musalaha's youth work has also expanded over the past several years to include training of youth leaders and arranging groups of young people to go together on desert encounters. The youth leader training sessions generally take place over several days and involve participants from all the sectors Musalaha serves. The groups of young people spend three to five days hiking, camel riding and camping in the deserts of Israel or Jordan. The desert experience is uniquely suited to leveling differences between people as survival is joint task. Everything must be shared. The participants bond quickly and many ongoing friendships begin in the desert environment.

Every year Musalaha activities increase in number and in the number of participants. It is an encouragement to see that the issue of reconciliation and relationship between believers in Israel/Palestine is progressively more on the agenda of the congregations of believers in the region.

Conclusion

Reconciliation for the believer in Messiah should be a lifestyle, in the same way as evangelism should also be. In our witness, the two emphases are inseparable. The work of reconciliation is neither secondary nor is it optional. The body of Messiah is called to be a reconciled community, visibly living in unity. This visible unity is intended to bear witness to the truth that Messiah was indeed sent from God. Messiah's final prayer for his followers of every time was "I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-23). Our divided world desperately needs to see this truth.

The differences between us in Israel/Palestine are many. Language, culture, faith expression, life situation are only a part of the picture. Our differences, however, need not divide us. Diversity of

peoples and cultures is a gift of God, given to enrich rather than divide. Reconciliation does not eliminate our human diversity. It gives opportunity for enrichment and healing of brokenness.

The situation in Israel/Palestine today is one of separation, animosity, hostility and destructive conflict and imbalance of power. Walls will not aid the situation. The only help is from God who has demolished the wall of separation and hostility. He alone is able truly to bring reconciliation. As His followers, having been entrusted with His ministry of reconciliation, our proclamation of this truth is that reconciliation is ultimately a matter of God's power and victory. Just as our lives individually are transformed by the power of God, so our life as a community should reflect this transformation. "The pursuit of reconciliation is an ongoing struggle. This quest should not be expected to end conflict in this world, but rather to transform it."⁸

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Notes

1. Reconciliation As the Mission of God, Faithful Christian Witness in a World of Destructive Conflicts and Divisions, A 2005 paper from 47 Christian leaders from diverse conflicts across the world. p.4 www.reconciliationnetwork.com
2. op. cit., p. 7.
3. Roger Cohen, International Herald Tribune, May 12, 2007, p. 2.
4. Eph. 2:14.
5. Eph. 2:15, Gal. 3:28.
6. Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation Newsletter, May 2007.
7. Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation Newsletter, March 2007.
8. Reconciliation As the Mission of God, Faithful Christian Witness in a World of Destructive Conflicts and Divisions, A 2005 paper from 47 Christian leaders from diverse conflicts across the world. p. 8 www.reconciliationnetwork.com

Muslim and Jewish evangelism – comparing notes

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Introduction

The fact of this session, dedicated to a comparison between Jewish and Muslim evangelisms, is taking place is a hopeful sign. I have always prayed for Jewish believers in the Messiah not to be inward looking but to be aware of non-Jews in need of the Good News of salvation in Yeshua. I applaud this interest, and pray that it may lead to a wave of Jewish believers reaching out to the non-Jewish world as the early Jewish believers in the book of Acts did. Because of the many similarities between Judaism and Islam, Jewish believers should be especially good at understanding Muslims and the problems of evangelism among them.

Western studies into the sources of Islam were initiated by Abraham Geiger (1810–1874) in his 1833 book *Judaism and Islam*.¹ It is a fact of history that some of the best academic scholars of Islam have been Jews (especially of Orthodox background) such as Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) and Gustav Weil (1808-89), who because of their Jewish background and the similarities between Islamic *shari'a* and Jewish *halacha*, were better able to understand Islam than gentile scholars of their time. They developed a more objective and positive evaluation of Islamic civilization than that prevalent in Christian scholarship of their time. Their hope was that a Europe respectful of Islam would be more likely to show respect for Judaism and Jews. The current doyen of Western Islamic scholarship is the well-known Jewish scholar Bernard Lewis (1916-), one of the most prolific and widely-read scholars of Islam and the Middle East.²

In this comparison, we will take note of some similarities and differences in theology, history and culture between Islam and Judaism, as well as similarities and differences between Jewish and Muslim evangelism in approaches, attitudes, obstacles to the gospel, and methods of outreach and church planting.

Not all Muslims are the same – there is a great diversity within Islam. In this short session I will be dealing with mainline Sunni Islamic orthodoxy as it is followed by some 80% of all Muslims. Mainline Twelver Imami Shi'ism is similar to Sunni Islam in its attitudes to law and ritual. There are however other significant minorities such as the Ismailis, Alevis, Alawis and Druze whose attitudes are very different and who might need a specific evangelistic approach tailored to their beliefs.

Islam categorically denies Christ's deity, incarnation, crucifixion, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection. Islam thus denies the very heart of the Christian faith. It also accuses Christians and Jews of tampering with the original scriptures given to them, thus denying that the Bible is trustworthy. As Islam is held to have superseded Christianity, Muhammad is the final authority and the Qur'an the only scripture valid for today. From the Muslim point of view, non-Muslims who accept Muhammad's prophethood and the Qur'an as revelation have actually become Muslims.

Some categories within Sunni Islam

1. *Traditional Muslims*. Most Muslims still practice some form of traditional Islam which has been coloured by local, sometimes pagan customs as well as Sufism and Folk Islam. Traditionalists accept Islam as it developed over the centuries including the various schools of law and later commentators and jurists. Most oppose innovations, new interpretations or reformation in religion, and reject secularism and Western culture as sinful.

2. *Islamist fundamentalists*. Islamists want to revive Muslim glory and reform Islam by a literal return to the Muslim source texts and to the model of the first Muslim state under Muhammad. They want to re-establish an idealised original Islamic community that is politically organised as

an all-embracing Islamic state operating under Islamic religious law (*shari'a*). Islamists are political and social activists, militant in their pursuit of political power that they see as the key to implementing their utopian and millenarian vision. They are out to capture the state, using a staged programme based on Muhammad's migration (Hijra) model. The violent radicals among them prefer terrorism, revolution and coups as the right method for fighting perceived enemies of Islam, destabilising the state and taking over political power.

3. Progressive Muslims. A small minority, they endeavour to reinterpret Islam in a way compatible with modern concepts of secularity, individual human rights, religious freedom and gender equality. Most see themselves as good Muslims who accept a core of basic Islamic values, distilled from the Muslim source texts, which determine all contemporary interpretations. Some see a need to radically change traditional orthodox Islam in such a way as to integrate liberal humanistic values at its core.³ Others see themselves only as culturally Muslim, having rejected Islam as a religious system. These include Muslim humanists, agnostics, and atheists. All demand the implementation of pluralism and of democratic freedoms in Muslim societies.

Core elements of Islam

1. One God - Tawhid
2. One final prophet - Muhammad
3. One final revelation – Qur'an and Hadith
4. One law for all – Shari'a
5. One perfect model - Muhammad
6. One people of God – the Muslim community

Liberal Christian attitudes to Muslim evangelism

Liberal church attitudes are formed by those involved in interfaith dialogue. These claim that there is no need to evangelize Jews or Muslims. They have an inclusive attitude to the monotheistic world religions: all are children of Abraham, all have a

revelatory core, and there are no real differences between them as all are valid ways to God and to salvation. There is therefore no place for any exclusivist claims. As regards Islam, the Qur'an is a word of God and Muhammad is a prophet of God.

As an example of liberal Christian attitudes, the United Church of Canada, the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, released a draft report on Christian-Muslim relations in 2004 that accepts a pluralist view of Christianity and Islam. Islam is accepted as a redemptive religion, Muhammad as a valid prophet of God and the Qur'an as a revelation from God.⁴ This document reveals a definite shift in the official stand of this church from orthodox Christian doctrine to a pluralist stand that denies the exclusivity of Christ in God's plan of salvation and downplays orthodox Christian views on the Trinity, the person of Christ, and the authority of the Bible.

Especially disturbing are affirmations of Islam as part of God's ongoing redemptive revelation.

[This proposed statement] Affirms that God is creatively and redemptively at work in the religious life of Muslims.⁵ On Muhammad and the Qur'an the document states that:

We believe that it is possible for Christians to *affirm Muhammad as one of a number of unique voices who followed in the prophetic traditions of Abraham, Moses and Jesus*, or, in other words, *to affirm the "prophetic witness" of Muhammad*. It is important to acknowledge as well that the prophetic witness of Muhammad is linked inextricably to the Qur'an. Therefore it is necessary, in affirming this, to also invite the possibility within the Christian community of a *recognition of the Qur'an as an inspired word from God, as God's revelation directed to the people who would come to be known as followers of Islam – in other words, to acknowledge that the*

mercy, compassion and justice of God is expressed in the Qur'an, regarded by Muslims as the authoritative word of God.⁶ [emphasis added]

The main issue is that liberals deny the uniqueness of Christ as the only way to salvation. They downgrade the doctrines of his deity, incarnation, substitutionary death on the cross, resurrection and intercessory ministry. Finally, they reject the scriptural view of sinful man unable to save himself. They thus agree with orthodox Muslim views of Christianity.

Where are Muslims coming to Yeshua in significant numbers?

For many decades Muslim evangelism was a barren field, with only a few individuals here and there turning to Christ. Since the 1990s there has been a sea change in Muslim evangelism as thousands (tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands?) have been turning to Christ. This has been happening in various parts of the Muslim world, including especially Algeria, Iran, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Muslim immigrants in Western countries. This has several reasons but primarily it is a sovereign move of God and His Spirit. These new believers are called Muslim Background Believers (MBBs).

Some reasons given for the dramatic change:

1. Islamism and its backlash: the brutality of Islamist regimes and organizations has shaken many Muslims. In Iran there is a revulsion at the brutality, hypocrisy and corruption of the Islamist regime. Several thousand Muslims have become followers of Jesus and many Iranians abroad in exile have also come to faith. In Algeria there is a great revulsion at the brutality and massacres of the civil war. This has been instrumental in tens of thousands of Algerian Muslims turning to Jesus.
2. Muslim ethnic minorities such as Berbers and Kurds as are opening up to the gospel. In Algeria, most MBBs are from the Berber Kabyle minority.

3. Islamic sects such as the Alawi, Alevi and Druze and are also more open to gospel than before. Their 'heretical' Trinitarian views of God, concepts of a divine returning Messiah, stress on martyrdom and its atoning aspects, make them more receptive to Biblical truth than Sunnis. In Turkey most MBBs (1,000-2,000) are from Alevi background.
4. Mystical Sufis are also more open to concepts of God's love and of dying to self and being united with Christ in his death and resurrection.
5. Modern contextualized approaches are yielding better results in many areas of the Muslim world.
6. Ancient ME churches, especially the Coptic Church in Egypt, are being more involved in evangelism and are attracting more Muslims.
7. The impact of modern mass media and communication technologies. The gospel message is available more than ever before in printed form, on radio, satellite TV, CDs, DVDs and the Internet in Arabic and many other local languages. We could say that MBBs today are where Messianic Jews were in 1960s-1970s: facing unprecedented accelerated growth.

Similarities between Rabbinic Judaism and Islam

Similarities are based on the fact that Rabbinic Judaism strongly influenced the early development of Islam.⁷ This happened not just through borrowing, but also through the impact of scholarly Jews converted to early Islam. As Rosenthal notes:

What Jews would never have achieved through proselytism, apostates managed to do by the imposition on Islam of a number of important Jewish ideas and institutions.⁸

Later Islam as it developed influenced further developments within Judaism. This was especially true in Abbasid Iraq and in Muslim Spain. Saadia Gaon (892-942) drew on the early Islamic philosophers (the *mutakallimun*) in his works. He was

especially influence by the Mu'tazilites, and like them wanted to get rid of anthropomorphisms in scriptural exegesis. Other Jewish scholars impacted by Muslim philosophy, exegesis, grammar, Sufism and poetry include Dunash ibn Lubrat, Bachya ibn Pakuda, Ibn Daud, Judah Halevi and the Rambam (Maimonides), who all wrote in Judeo-Arabic in addition to Hebrew. After Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1126-1198) the philosophical era of Islam came to an end as the orthodox Muslim establishment unleashed an all-out attack on philosophy. Islamic philosophy then found a refuge among Jewish scholars who transmitted it by translation to the Christian world. Many Arabic philosophical works were translated into Hebrew with added commentary.⁹

Rabbinic Judaism and Islam agree that culture and society are subsumed within religion, that there is no distinction between the religious and the secular. Both stress a community that conforms to God's will as expressed in a wide-ranging sacred legal system (law) that controls all of life.¹⁰

Islam is similar to Judaism in its fundamental religious outlook, structure, jurisprudence and practice. The Qur'an has much Jewish material within it taken from the Bible, *Halacha*, *Agadah*, *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, *Targum* and *Midrash*. There are many traditions (*hadith*) in Islam originating from Jewish sources - either biblical or post biblical - known as the *Isra'iliyat*. Islamic interpretation of the Qur'an (*tafsir*), draws heavily on the *Isra'iliyat*.

The "Jewishness" of Islam is revealed in many religious and cultural aspects. The centrality of law and ritual, the importance of orthopraxy as against orthodoxy, a geographical holy centre, a founding prophet, a founding Exodus (*hijra*) paradigm, the claim of Abrahamic descent, the notion of the "chosen people", the Semitic cultural background, and the obsession with ritual purity and defilement (*Tohorah – Tahara*).

Judaism and Islam are both radically monotheistic (*tawhid – yihud*), advocating

a monolithic unity of God. There can be no variety in the Godhead. Anything else is heresy and paganism (*kufir, shirk - avoda zara, minut*). In Islam the greatest sin is that of associating partners with the one God (*shirk*).

*Jewish statements: the Shema',
Hear O Israel, the Lord our
God the Lord is One.*

also:

*Vehu echad v'ein sheni,
Ihamshil lo, lehahbira
He is One and there is no
other to compare or associate
with Him.*

*Muslim statements, the Creed
(Shahada),*

*There is no god but God, and
Muhammad is the Apostle of
God.*

also: `

*Kul: huwa allahu ahad, allahu
al-samad, lam yalida wa lam
yulad, walam yakun lahu kufwan
ahad*

*Say: He is Allah the One and
Only; Allah the Eternal Absolute;
He begetteth not nor is He
begotten; And there is none like
unto Him. (Qur'an, Sura 112:1-4)*

Some similarities

1. Strict Unitarian monotheism. An indivisible, monolithic unity of the godhead. God can have no partners.
2. Religion as Law. Both religions are composed of an elaborate legalistic system of law which minutely prescribes every area of life – ritual, purity, custom, family, communal, economic and political – and is seen as the very essence of the religion. Islam is *shari'a*, Judaism is *halacha*.
3. Strict ritual purity and defilement laws and dietary rules (*kashrut – halal*).
4. No separation between religion and politics. Religion as a total system that encompasses all areas of life, nothing is outside its remit. Religion is a communal, not just a private matter and must have a

dominant place in the public square. Both aim at the ideal a religious state under religious law.

5. One great Prophet who brought God's revelation and law: Moses (Torah) – Muhammad (Qur'an).

6. Religion is important for identity. Even for secular and liberal people, religion remains the main cultural and ethnic identity marker. Religion, ethnicity, culture and nationality are deeply intertwined.

7. Community is prioritized over the individual and his free choice. Loyalty to the community takes precedence over all other considerations. *'Am Yisrael, Klal Yisrael – the Muslim Umma.*

8. Attitudes to converts from Islam or Judaism. In both religions, those who leave the traditional faith for another are considered traitors, betrayers, renegades and apostates (*murtad - mumar*). They are worse than infidels and deserve the death penalty. They bring the greatest possible shame on their families, communities and societies. The apostate is counted as dead. Great efforts are made to cause them to return and repent. They face great anger, threats of violence and assassination and experience harassment, disgrace, rejection and isolation.

9. Both religions developed in a historic framework of hostility to Christianity. Rabbinic Judaism is extremely hostile to the person of Jesus, while Islam accepts Jesus as a prophet, but is hostile to Christianity as a religion.

10. Mystical movements such as Sufism in Islam and Kabbalah and Hasidism in Judaism. Doctrines of emanation from the Godhead, religious ecstasy aimed at unity with the divine and annihilation of self. Love and joy as central. Saints and their veneration (*Tsadikim – Awliya*).

11. Folk Islam and Folk Judaism: saints, mediators, intercessors. Occultism, magic, astrology, evil eye, etc.

12. Both religions scoff at the deity of Christ, the trinity and at Christ's substitutionary death on the cross. These are seen as evidence of idolatry in Christianity.

13. View of man and sin – man not born a

sinner, good but weak, two natures. Man can merit his own salvation. No need for divine intervention and redemption.

14. Perceptions of the Crusades as a terrible historic calamity still relevant today.

Some differences

- While for Jews both Yeshua and Christianity (the Church) are the enemy, Muslims greatly respect 'Isa (Jesus) as a prophet while viewing Christianity as their main enemy.

- Judaism sees itself as the first revealed monotheist covenant religion, original, authentic and valid for all times for the Jewish people.

- Islam sees itself as the last revealed monotheist religion, superseding all previous religions and the only valid universal religion for all people and all times.

- Muslim modern Antisemitism: In addition to traditional anti-Jewish attitudes embedded in Qur'an and Hadith, the incorporation of Western racial Antisemitism has produced a virulent form of modern Islamic Antisemitism..

- Muslims deny God's eternal covenant through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, substituting a covenant with Ishmael and his descendants in its place.

- Islam universalizes what is specific in Judaism: not one specific chosen people inheriting a small specific promised land, but a universal chosen people inheriting the whole world.

Similarities in culture

1. Victimhood attitude and culture of Jews and Muslims. All *goyim* hate us. All *kuffar* are one nation and against Islam. The whole world is against us. There is nothing wrong with Judaism or Islam, it is the *goyim* or the *kafirs* that are to blame for all our troubles. Conspiracy theories.

2. A person's religion is inherited and fixed – no individual freedom to leave it for another.

3. Centrality of religion to identity. Religion, culture, community and country all closely interlinked.

4. Preference of community over individualism.
5. Legacy of the Crusades seen as an unmitigated evil revealing the eternal enmity at the heart of Christianity for Jews and Muslims.
6. Wrong concepts of gospel inherent in Judaism and Islam. Wild beliefs about missionaries, their motives and methods are accepted as factual truth. Missionaries offer bribes and material benefits, kidnap children, are spies for Western governments, etc. Both religions see Christian missionary activity as an aggressive hostile activity, unethical, subversive, and aimed at the destruction of Judaism or Islam. Yet both actively promote their own mission. A one way street.
7. Objection to the cross as the symbol of Christian arrogance, persecution, and theological error. A spiritual dimension, as the cross is the centre of the gospel. The humiliation of a dying savior is unacceptable. Savior sent by God must be triumphant, victorious, successful. Conquer his enemies, set up God's kingdom on earth. Cross denies all this.
8. Importance of family, extended family and family bonds.
9. Honor and shame: stronger in Islam were it is the main cultural attribute. Present especially in Sephardic and Oriental Jewish communities. Sullied honor demands vengeance.
10. Hospitality and generosity are very important, going back to the Abrahamic example.
11. From the Christian side, the holocaust is used as excuse for not evangelizing Jews, while imperialism and colonialism are used as excuses for not evangelizing Muslims

Advice we gave our workers among Muslims

REALIZE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

- Different does not mean better. Sin appears in every culture but in different forms. Acknowledge and judge evil in your own culture. Respect their ways. Find the

good in their culture. Compliment them on the good you find. Dress modestly and treat the opposite sex with reserve and dignity. Don't eat pork, don't drink alcohol. When visiting give a gift.

KNOW MUSLIM STEREOTYPES OF CHRISTIANS

- Christians worship three gods, deify a mere man. Crusader mentality – they hate Muslims and Islam. Missions as an arm of Western Christian imperialism.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS & FRIENDSHIPS

Show an interest in them and their problems. Give them of your precious time. Clarify your position as a believer – not a secularist, atheist or immoral Westerner. Exhibit piety and fear of God. Be an honorable man. Mention God and prayer in your everyday conversation.

HOW TO WITNESS TO MUSLIM FRIENDS

- Know and respect their Muslim culture and customs
- Show respect to your Bible – never place it on the ground. Keep it in a prominent place it on your desk.
- Remember reciprocity in hospitality
- Be generous, be loyal, be a friend
- Define your identity as a true believer in one God, a follower of Jesus.
- Present yourself as a God-fearing, pious, praying and Bible-loving person
- Ask questions about their religion, then feel free to share about yours when asked
- Never denigrate Islam, the Qur'an or Muhammad. Elevate Jesus.

DON'T BE CONFRONTATIONAL

- Don't argue but firmly express your own faith and convictions. Don't joke about religion. Raise up Jesus as God's answer to man's problem.

ADDRESS THEIR FELT NEEDS

- Fear of unknown evil spiritual forces (jinn, fate, evil eye). Fear of an uncertain future. Need for assurance of salvation; for a

personal relationship with God, for a mediator and an intercessory; for protection, healing, deliverance, guidance, help and blessing (*baraka*).

USE BIBLICAL SYMBOLISM, PARABLES AND STORIES

- Sin and sacrifice; God as loving father; Jesus removes shame of sin and guilt; the good shepherd; the prodigal son, etc.

Difficulties Muslims face in turning to Jesus

(Gleaned from personal biographies)

1. Contempt for Christians endemic (*dhimmi*s, impure, infidels, eaters of pig, drinkers of wine, immoral).
2. Misconceptions and prejudice about Christians and Christianity abound. They worship three Gods, are idolaters who bow to images, icons, and the cross. Impure eaters of pork and drinkers of wine, ancient enemies of Islam. In some countries most Christians are from animist pagan backgrounds and retain pagan cultural practices and even rituals that are abhorrent to Muslims.
3. Islam gives stability and sense of belonging - difficult to leave.
4. Islamic religious rituals and regulations become an ingrained habit – difficult to shake them off. Difficulties in handling new freedoms in Jesus.
5. Duty of obedience to family: parents, father, older brother. Family pressure, guilt, shame, manipulation, family honor. Mother and father often threaten: 'If you become a Christian you are no longer our child, you are dead to us'. Guilt at bringing shame on their family.
6. Those who turn to Christ often lose their kinship group, extended family and friends. They are stripped of their social security system: house, property, business, job. They might lose their wife and children. They face charges of apostasy and the death penalty. They also face shame, alienation, ostracism, disinheritance, discrimination and expulsion from their family and clan, their social group,. They will most likely lose their employment and

face persecution, imprisonment on false charges and constant harassment instigated by family, religious authorities, religious organizations and possible the state.

7. Points that galvanize hostility and persecution: baptism, changing one's name, erecting a church-like building. Maligning the Qur'an or Muhammad.
8. Love your enemies – a big stumbling block.
9. Person of Muhammad, his veneration as a Christ-like figure. Must mention and bless Muhammad hundreds of times a day. Difficult to shake off.
10. The Old Testament, Israel and the promises to Israel. The Bible is full of Israel and Jews – difficult to accept them as God's chosen people. Need to overcome inbred hatred.
11. Problem of West's support for Israel. West as great enemy of Islam. Christianity as Western religion.
12. Western mission expectations that Muslim converts leave their Muslim culture and identify cross-culturally with Western Christian culture and ritual.
13. Problems of Christian terminology unsuited to Muslim culture.

Other problems faced

1. Many new believers from Islam fall back within the first two years.¹¹
2. The real challenge begins after conversion.

Factors that helped Muslims come to faith

- No assurance of salvation in Islam. Fear of hell fire. God arbitrary – no matter how good you try to be, he can cast you into hell if he so wills.
- Experience God as a hard taskmaster – search for a better way.
- Many links in the chain: foreign believers, local believers, Bible courses, Scriptures, leaflets, Christian radio, TV, videos, etc.
- Impact of friendly and loving believers – different lifestyles and characters.
- Attraction of impromptu informal prayers.
- Revulsion at excesses of Islamist

regimes and movements: civil war, terrorism, murder, brutality, torture, repression, etc.

- Dreams and visions

- Turning point in search: accept Jesus rather than Muhammad. Accept Bible rather than Qur'an and Hadith.

What MBBs need:

Acceptance, nurture, friendship, help, encouragement, emotional support. Integration into a new community to replace the loss of their extended family and religious group. Contextualized theology and ritual. New role models. Integrated discipleship programs, mentoring and counseling. Marriage arrangements.

New trends in Muslim evangelism: contextualization and C4-C6 models, controversy over Syncretism

1. "Muslims as Greeks" model

There are many similarities between the discourse on contextualization in Muslim evangelism and that in Jewish evangelism.

The problem of contextualization within Muslim culture is a contentious question, as it is for Jewish evangelism. Proponents see it as the key to greater success in Muslim evangelism while claiming it is biblical, especially following the Apostle Paul's teaching and methods. They stress his exhortation of not placing any obstacle before any one and that the only obstacle allowed is to be the cross.¹² Their favorite verse is:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became as a Jew to win the Jews. To those under the Law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to

win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1.Cor. 9:19-23)

Many argue that contextualization must reach deeper than just language and external forms of worship, and must touch deep emotional, psychological, cultural and theological levels.

Where is the line to be drawn between biblical contextualization and syncretism?

Most would agree that accepting the Qur'an as a word of God and Muhammad as a prophet of God crosses the line.

Basically there are three models:

1. Extraction and immersion into nominally Christian churches and culture.
2. Establishing fellowships for Muslim-background believers within their homelands, language and culture, while adopting Western-style Christian theology and mixed practice
3. Jesus mosques of culturally integrated Muslim "Messianic believers" or followers of 'Isa, following as much of Muslim religious and cultural practices and rituals as are deemed not contradictory to Biblical teaching.

An interesting case within the first category is that of Muslims converting to Christianity within the traditional eastern churches – especially the Coptic Church in Egypt, but also others (Syriac, Assyrian, etc.). This is the Christian church they know. The Coptic church is seen as the authentic ancient Egyptian, pre-Islamic state religion in Egypt.

Some institutional Protestant churches also reject the need for special contextualized "messianic Jewish" congregations or "Muslim followers of Jesus fellowships". Only full conversion and membership in mainstream Western churches is seen as acceptable. Other approaches are seen as deceitful. Of course this concurs with Jewish or Muslim perceptions of true believers who remain culturally faithful as deceivers.

Contextualizers argue that multiple levels of Muslim identity need multiple

levels of contextualization. They rely on Paul's approach to Judaizers in NT, equating the Judaizers with the mainline churches and agencies opposed to contextualization. Muslim believers are thus similar to first century Greek believers who were not forced to convert to Judaism in order to be saved and accepted. The idea is for missionaries to become as much of a Muslim as possible to win Muslims in the way Paul became a Greek to win the Greeks. The eternal unchanging gospel truth is to be presented in a way that communicates to Muslims within their religious and cultural context and that removes unnecessary obstacles and barriers imposed by misunderstandings, prejudice, stereotypes and history.¹³

Proponents argue that Muslims don't have to officially convert to Christianity (change their identity card religious affiliation to Christian) or be officially baptized into a recognized Christian Church to become true believers in Jesus. They also rely on Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10), and on James and the Council of Jerusalem's resolution for Gentile

believers (Acts 15). Conversion is to Christ rather than to institutional Christianity and there is no need for a cataclysmic shift into a foreign religious milieu.

Muslim Background Believers are encouraged to see themselves as members of Muslim society and remain culturally relevant within it. They are to meet their social obligations. They use Muslim religious vocabulary and worship forms.

Examples of the practical outworking of the theory: accept dietary rules (avoid pork and wine), Muslim dress, prostration in prayer and Muslim religious terminology. Worship in MBB Fellowships or 'Isa mosques, not in churches. Do not change Muslim names to "Christian" ones.

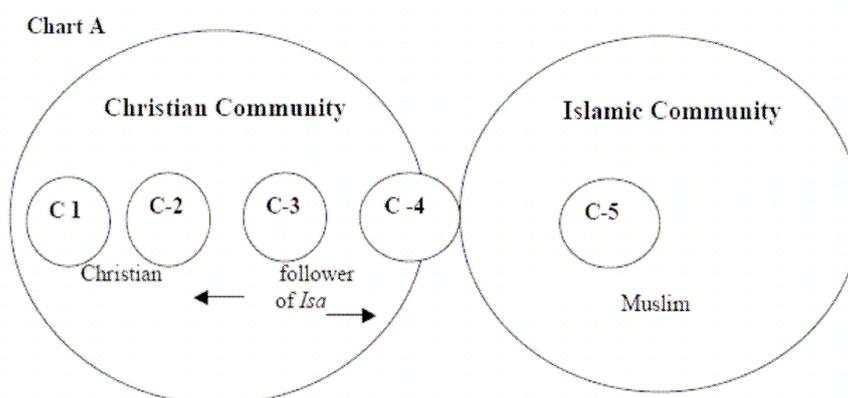
The full spectrum of contextualization in Muslim evangelism is seen in the following table (C stands for Christ centered communities)¹⁴ as developed by John Travis who also defined them as "Cross Cultural Church-Planting Spectrums".¹⁵ These six types are differentiated by three elements: language, cultural factors, and religious identity.¹⁶

Figure 1: The C1-C6 Spectrum

	C1	C2	C3
Christ-centered community description	A church foreign to the community in both culture and language	C1 in form but speaking the language used by Muslims, though their religious terminology is distinctively non-Muslim	C2 using non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g., dress, music, diet, arts)
Self-Identity	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Christian"
Muslim Perception	Christian	Christian	Christian

	C4	C5	C6
Christ-centered community description	C3 with some Biblically acceptable Islamic practices	C4 with a "Muslim follower of Jesus" self-identity	Secret believers, may or may not be an active members in the religious life of the Muslim community
Self-Identity	"Follower of Isa [Jesus]"	"Muslim follower of Jesus"	Privately: "Christian," or "Follower of Isa," or "Muslim follower of Jesus"
Muslim Perception	A kind of Christian	A strange kind of Muslim	Muslim

Placing C1 through C5 in relation to Christianity and Islam¹⁷



While the first three (low-spectrum) categories are not controversial as regarding traditional orthodox Christian doctrine and practice, the last three (high-spectrum) categories have aroused much debate and controversy. C5 especially has come under attack as promoting unbiblical contextualization, reactionary particularism and exclusive homogeneity.¹⁸

The avoidance of extraction evangelism is a main principle of C4 and C5 contextualization, because it builds barriers against the spread of the gospel in Muslim society. MBBs ought to remain in their society and religious community as salt and light.¹⁹ Muslim believers desperately need a sense of identity. They need to be reassured that they are not traitors, heretics or Western spies. They must be

able to have the firm conviction that they still belong to their people, culture, traditions and society and can keep all that is good in them that does not directly contradict the scriptures.²⁰

C4 and C5 users find redemptive forms in Islam that MBBs may use while giving them new meaning. Both use Muslim vocabulary, diets, clothing and culture. Both oppose the extraction of individual Muslims and transplanting them into culturally foreign churches.²¹ Their proponents argue that they aim at reducing offence as much as possible. They want to lower the bar; remove obstacles, lessen the potential for persecution and keep the new believer in his community.²²

Some practitioners of C5 have advocated the missionary convert to Islam

and participate in the mosque and win Muslims to Jesus within it. Often they recommend that new MBBs remain in the mosque long term and join fully in all forms of Muslim ritual and worship in order to be “salt and light” and win others to the Messiah. While Muhammad and the Qur’an are being lauded, they should pray silently to Jesus in their hearts and meditate on Bible verses. They are encouraged to use the mosque as a platform for reaching other Muslims. They perform the prayers (*salat*) alongside other Muslims thus having to proclaim the creed that Muhammad is the Prophet of God, even if in their hearts they might recite a different creed such as “I witness that there is no god but Allah, and that ‘Isa is his Messiah”.²³

These practitioners believe that there is no need to fight the battle of “changing religion” – salvation is by grace alone through faith in Jesus. Changing religion is no prerequisite for salvation. Jesus did not come to found a new religion, but to establish the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men. They stress that there is a difference between formal religious adherence and true spiritual allegiance. They argue that “insider movements” within Islam could grow fast as Muslims find an acceptable way of believing for their salvation in ‘Isa the Messiah and taking his gospel to the innermost parts of Muslim communities. They believe that God is causing the gospel to break out of institutional formal Christianity, as born-again Muslims remain as a sweet fragrance inside Islam. Eventually the numbers will be so great that they will result in a reform movement within Islam. They rejoice in the fact that:

In spite of the concerns that some may have on this issue, the fact remains that in a number of countries today, there are groups of Muslims who have genuinely come to faith in Jesus Christ, yet have remained legally and socio-religiously within the local Muslim community.²⁴

The hope is that C-5 MBBs will be viewed by the general Muslim community as Muslims. Odd Muslims, bad Muslims, but still Muslims. As such they will not be viewed as renegades or apostates who are to be rejected and pushed out of the community because they refuse to practice normative Muslim cultural norms. Proponents argue that Muslim society has a remarkable tolerance for those followers of ‘Isa who remain loyal to their community as cultural Muslims and do not publicly reject Islamic history, civilization and culture.²⁵

Arguments of opponents of C5

Opponents of C5 argue that MBBs are taught to separate themselves from the greater body of Christ in order to promote a Jesus movement within Islam. C5 evangelism establishes exclusive homogenous fellowships that deny the unity of the body of Christ. Further they argue that pragmatism has overruled doctrine and theology, creating a utilitarian concept of “if it works, do it”.²⁶

Phil Parshall accepts C4 as a legitimate model as long as it is being constantly examined and subordinated to biblical truth.²⁷ However, he sees C5 as open to charges of unethical behavior and deception. It has initiated a slide that might end up with a sub-Christian framework.²⁸

Parshall observes several possible points in which C5 practitioners would have crossed the Red Line into syncretism:²⁹

- Recitation of the *Shahada* (Muslim creed) that states that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.
- Lining up in the prayer line and performing *salat*.
- Calling oneself “Muslim” with no qualifier, such as “follower of Isa.”
- Encouraging MBBs to remain in the mosque permanently.
- Avoidance of affirming the deity of Jesus.
- Not adequately teaching that the Qur’an is not one of the books of Scripture given by God.
- Going on the *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca)

- Official conversion or re-conversion to Islam.

Woods accepts the C4 model as biblically correct but critiques the C5 model as tending to accommodation with Islam and to syncretism. The difference is one of identity. While C4 believers call themselves followers of 'Isa and set up their own fellowships and 'Isa mosques, C5 believers claim they are Muslims and continue going to the regular mosque. While C4 believers embrace the Muslim culture and forms but distinguish themselves from Islam as a religion by labeling themselves as followers of 'Isa, C5 believers embrace both Islam as religion (not just as culture) and the mosque, and try to carve out a niche within Islam. There is a vast difference between being culturally relevant and theologically accommodating. Woods recommends such people remember the biblical teaching on separation, on "going out from among them". There is also a danger of participating in folk Islamic animistic and occult practices which cannot be condoned. While Islam contains some truth, the bulk of its faith and practice is incompatible with scripture. In contrast to 1st century Judaism where God had revealed himself in scripture and Temple, mosque theology says Jesus was not crucified, is not part of the godhead, the Bible has been corrupted, Muhammad is the final prophet, and the Qur'an the final revelation. Such claims are incompatible with biblical faith.³⁰

Piper is afraid that C-5 methods minimize the centrality of the Bible in missions, and reflect a loss of confidence in the power of proclaiming God's Word to bring people of all nations and cultures to faith and to build the Church.³¹ Corwin doubts that it is right for a Muslim follower of Christ to retain certain Muslim religious practices such as reciting the creed and praying in a mosque facing towards Mecca. He argues that most highly experienced mission leaders would reject the idea that Muslim believers could

remain in their Islamic worship context and be true followers of Christ.³²

In response to such charges, Travis, a supporter of the C5 model, suggested the following guidelines for C5 believers to avoid syncretism:³³

1. Declare Jesus is Lord and Savior: there is no salvation outside of him.
2. New believers are baptized, meet regularly with other believers (this may need to be done with great discretion) and take communion.
3. New believers study the Injil (also Torah and Zabur if available in their language) regularly.
4. New believers renounce and are delivered from occultism and harmful folk Islamic practices (i.e. shamanism, prayers to saints, use of charms, curses, incantations, etc.).
5. Muslim practices and traditions (e.g. fasting, alms, circumcision, attending the mosque, wearing the head covering, refraining from pork and alcohol, etc.) are kept as expressions of love for God and respect for neighbors, rather than as acts necessary to receive forgiveness of sins.
6. The Qu'ran, Muhammad and traditional Muslim theology are examined, judged and reinterpreted in light of biblical truth. Biblically acceptable Muslim beliefs and practices are maintained, others are modified, some must be rejected.
7. New believers show evidence of the new birth and growth in grace (the fruit of the Spirit, increased love, etc.) and a desire to reach the lost (verbal witness and intercession).

2. "Muslims as 1st century Jews" model: emulating Messianic Judaism

Missionaries to Muslims, in their efforts to combat the extraction methodology and allow Muslim background believers (MBBs) to retain a Muslim cultural identity and remain within their society, are drawing parallels between first century Judaism and twenty-first century Islam.³⁴ They see Evangelical Christianity as paranoid about law and the possibility of keeping religious

laws as a way of life. As a missionary to Muslims explains:

Because most of us have been reared on sermons which tend to belittle the Law or confuse it with legalism, we clearly have much to learn about Torah-observance within the New Covenant from our Messianic Jewish brethren.³⁵

In their opposition to extraction, some equate those who use extraction evangelism with the Judaizers of the first century who told Gentile believers to be circumcised before they could become full members of the church.³⁶ Some workers among Muslims take the Messianic-Jewish synagogue model as applicable to Muslim contexts.

According to this view, Islam as a monotheist religion which borrowed heavily from Judaism and Christianity still retains much God-given truth and practice taken from these religions amidst the many unbiblical doctrines and practices added on to it by Muhammad and his followers. Many of these residual elements can be redeemed and used to forge an identity for MBBs that will enable them to survive within their families, society and religion without being immediately labeled as apostates and heretics.³⁷ MBBs could delight themselves in those aspects of God's law (as in Psalm 119) that are preserved within Islam. While Islamic law is not God-given, it includes many rules taken from Jewish Old Testament law – circumcision, dietary rules, slaughtering, no blood, congregational prayer, fasting, sacrifices and pilgrimage – which are redeemable in contextualized MBB fellowships. Liturgy, prayer towards a fixed position (instead of Mecca Jerusalem or the East in general), and many other rituals and practices can be safely incorporated into MBB worship.³⁸ Woodbury goes to some length to prove the biblical and early Jewish roots of the five pillars of Islam.³⁹

Proponents of the equivalence claim assert that Muslims bear in their flesh the sign of the early Abrahamic covenant

(circumcision). That early covenant (Genesis 17) included Ishmael and his blessing and is still valid for Ishmael's descendants today. In addition to being spiritual sons of Abraham by faith, Arabic MBBs are in addition sons of Abraham in the flesh.

For proponents of the parallels between Islam and Judaism, elements most frequently pointed out as compatible with Biblical teaching are the belief in one God (*tawhid*) who reveals his will to humanity in sacred scriptures and through the Old Testament Hebrew prophets and Jesus; the stress on God's law (*shari'a*) as the central aspect of religion; the public rituals of fasting (*sawm*), prayer (*salat*) and pilgrimage (*hajj*); charitable giving (*zakat*); the beliefs in angels, the day of judgment and the afterlife as well as the belief in a coming Messiah-deliverer.⁴⁰

It is argued that Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount mentions three of the five pillars of Islam: giving (Mat. 6:2-4), prayers (Mat. 6:5-7) and fasting (Mat. 6:16-18). Also that the first part of the Muslim creed, "There is no God but Allah" echoes the Jewish Shema (Deut. 6:4). Like first century Judaism, Islam has been taken over by legalists who place heavy burdens on Muslims and prevent them from accepting the real Jesus and from entering the Kingdom of God.⁴¹

Further, Jewish believers in Jesus in the first century created a new identity for themselves within the framework of Judaism, continuing to see themselves as true Jews, and perceived by other Jews to be a Jewish sect. Thus James could say in Acts 21:20 that ". . . many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law". It was the keeping of the law (orthopraxy) that defined who was Jewish, so the law-keeping followers of Jesus were seen as a sect within Judaism called "The Way".

Another point made by supporters of radical contextualization for Muslims is that early Christianity spread along pre-existing social networks especially within the Jewish Diaspora. Believers kept in touch

with these non-believing networks for many generations thus keeping open access for evangelism. From this model they draw the conclusion that in the Muslim world it is important to work through existing Islamic networks of clans, sects or ethnic groups.⁴²

Massey advocates that gentile missionaries wanting to serve among Muslims be circumcised. They are thus ritually pure and do not defile Muslim religious rites by their presence. He cites Timothy as being circumcised for the right reason of not being a stumbling block in reaching Jews, not to attain salvation.⁴³ Some missionaries among Muslims equate Paul's keeping Jewish law to reach Jews with Muslim believers keeping some of the Islamic law (*shari'a*) to reach Muslims and remain within their culture and society. It is difficult to discern which rules and customs are consistent with biblical principles and which are contrary, which to keep and which to reject. What about family law including marriage and burial officiated by Muslim clerics extolling Muhammad? Would a Muslim state recognize such rites led by MBB clerics? Of course NT synagogue practice was adhered to by Jesus, the disciples and Paul even though it was different to OT revealed law. It is assumed that certain Muslim forms of liturgy, prayer, prostration, fasting, charity, etc. could be valid – but the Qur'an and Muhammad must be removed and replaced by the Bible and Jesus.

However some go so far as to maintain that MBBs should be able to recite the *shahada* if that is the only means of retaining their Muslim identity. In many Muslim states one is allowed to be a nominal, cultural Muslim as long as one does not deny the *shahada*. It has become merely a form of words that connects an individual to the Muslim community, no matter what he personally believes.⁴⁴

Some argue that Muslim prostration in prayer may have been copied from Eastern Syriac Christian practice, while the standing prayer form for voluntary prayers was taken from Jewish practice. Massey

advocates a return to biblical, Jewish and early Christian postures of worship and liturgy as appropriate for MBB congregations. Muslim ritual washings of hands and feet, taken from the Old Testament and later Jewish practice, symbolize the internal cleansing of heart and mind before entering God's holy presence.⁴⁵

Proponents advocate the development of a form of public display of religion in accordance with Muslim expectations of what it means to be devout. While contrary to modern evangelical practice, such a ritualistic form does have scriptural basis and valid missiological aims. Such external forms remove barriers to the Gospel and contradict Muslim stereotypes of believers in Jesus. Muslims appreciate law and ritual. Muslim believers know the difference between law and legalism, and must be free to obey the law without becoming legalistic. They should be able to live like Jesus and the disciples in keeping the Jewish law expressed in Muslim terms.⁴⁶ Muslims expect devoutly religious people to pray regularly in public, fast openly, not eat unclean food, have no images, dress modestly, grow beards, etc. Those who practice such norms will not fit into wrong Muslim stereotypes of Christians as unclean eaters of pork, drinkers of wine, clean shaven, shameless, immodest, scantily-dressed and immoral. This is similar to early Christianity before the acute Hellenization of the church, Such practice is easily explained by Bible and biblical law, modeled by Jesus and Apostles.⁴⁷ Of course in addition to these outward expressions of faith, there must be the inward reality and motivation of love, justice and righteousness and the outward expression of these central Christian virtues.

Arguments against the Jewish model

There is of course much controversy over these ideas and their implementation. These include the question of defining the elements capable of redemption, the question of syncretism and of where to

draw the line. Questions are raised about the validity of MBBs calling themselves Muslims and continuing to attend mosques and practice other Muslim religious rites and rituals.

It is obvious that on the spectrum of world religions, Islam is much nearer to Christianity and Judaism than Hinduism, Buddhism, Animism or Chinese and Japanese religions. However, it is also clear that with its claims at superseding Judaism and Christianity, Islam developed consciously in an anti-Judaism and anti-Christianity mode. Some argue that as denial of the deity of Jesus, his crucifixion, substitutionary death, and uniqueness as the only way to salvation are basic elements of Muslim dogma, believers cannot permanently accept to operate under the umbrella of official Islam.

Traditional Christian (gentile) theology would stress the gradual revelation of God's universal mission to the whole world (Cornelius, Jerusalem Council, etc), which included the annulment of Jewish law and particularity even for Jewish believers. Jesus himself had accused the religious leaders of his time of placing their traditions above the revealed word of God (the Old Testament scriptures) and of nullifying the word of God for the sake of their traditions (Mat 15:6). Jews and gentiles were to worship and fellowship together in a multicultural congregation. Religious Jewish expressions were seen as sub-Christian. Supporters of this theology would question the validity of both the Jewish and Muslim contextualization process.⁴⁸

Some critique of the Messianic Jewish contextualized approach argues that the acceptance of Rabbinic Jewish terms and customs as obligatory on Jewish believers is wrong. The only valid Jewish way of life is the biblical one. Rabbinic Judaism has replaced the Bible with the oral tradition and its derivatives as well as developing in a conscious anti-Jesus mode. It must not be recognized as the arbiter of Jewishness. Indeed, many Jews in Israel and the Diaspora prefer to express their

Jewishness in cultural and national terms rather than in religious customs and rules.⁴⁹ Applying this critique to Muslim contextualization would imply that only those Islamic customs and practices consistent with the Bible are to be accepted, not those originating in Rabbinic Judaism or for that matter heretical Christianity. Even some proponents of Messianic Judaism realize the danger of letting Jewishness and Jewish customs replace Jesus as the focus of their worship and community.⁵⁰

Other opponents of radical Muslim contextualization argue that while Judaism was God-given, Islam was not, so there can be no parallels drawn between them. Judaism is the only acceptable cultural/religious framework for such contextualization, as Israel is God's chosen people to whom God gave the covenants, promises, law, temple and the Messiah. This is not true of any other religion, including Islam. Islam is hostile to Judeo-Christian beliefs. It is wrong to hold Islam and Judaism as equivalent. The term Messianic Jews is valid, as Jesus is the Jewish Messiah; but "Messianic Muslim" is wrong as Jesus is not the expected Muslim savior figure. Some add that Allah is not God, Yahwe, and that believers in Jesus should not use the title Allah for the Christian God. Believers of any background must separate themselves from false religions, gods and practices, following the call to "Come out from among them and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6:17). They must separate themselves from their former unbiblical practices, not synthesize them into a new composite system.⁵¹

The breathing-space argument

One argument of proponents of C4 and C5 models is that such cultural and religious Muslim practices give the emerging church a breathing space to grow numerically and spiritually. Utilizing fluid Islamic borders between sects and movements and the Islamic principle of *taqiyya* (dissimulation), will enable the church to grow and become

strong. Then it can discard more Islamic practices deemed contradictory to the Bible and be more open in witness, thus inviting hostile and violent reaction. This model would follow the biblical Naaman paradigm.⁵² Parshall advocates a breathing space in which new believers can mature while slowly disengaging themselves from mosque attendance. Too sudden a separation may spark off intense hostility, persecution and alienation for which they are not ready.⁵³ Dean S. Gillard also mentions the need for the passage of time. He argues that establishing MBBs in the faith is a process that takes some time and the Holy Spirit must be allowed to work, blessing the truth and removing his blessing from error. He believes that the Holy Spirit is at work even in poorly informed and misguided believers and that he will faithfully guide them into the truth.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The most interesting development in Muslim evangelism is the contextualized C5 model that seeks to emulate both early 1st century models of Jewish believers in Jesus and current Messianic Judaism and its theology and practices. The main controversy is on whether such an equivalence is possible and valid. In Jewish evangelism there is an ongoing debate over the extent of the acceptance of Rabbinical authority and of the oral law (given at Sinai according to the rabbis) as binding on Jewish believers. In Muslim evangelism the problem is more acute, as submitting to official Islam means the acceptance of Muhammad and the Qur'an as valid to some extent. Selecting Muslim rituals, customs and symbols commensurate with Biblical teaching is fraught with many dangers as well as benefits. There is always the risk of the slippery slope leading to compromise and syncretism. At the same time, there is no doubt that the practitioners of these methods have achieved some remarkable success in bringing Muslims to faith in Jesus within the framework of their family, society and culture, without initiating the

cataclysmic separation often experienced by Muslim background believers in the lower spectrum contextualization models.

It is obvious that practitioners and theoreticians of contextualized Muslim evangelism are grappling with problems well-known to those involved in Jewish evangelism in the last decades. While contextualization as method is accepted by most churches and missions, contextualization as theology becomes controversial. All involved need God's guidance, grace and wisdom in this new venture. Muslim believers must be centered on Jesus as Savior and Lord, must be Bible centered and cross centered if they are to remain part of the universal body of Christ. The same holds true for Jewish believers in the Messiah. There is the danger that Jewishness or "Muslimness" become alternate centers that might gradually replace these biblical foci.

On the other hand, radical contextualization offers the opportunity for many more Jewish and Muslim believers to be included in the original covenant with Israel through the Messiah as spiritual and biological heirs of Abraham, by faith and through grace, without having to give up their own authentic culture in favor of an imposed Western one. How much of their religion (rabbinic Judaism or Islam) can be included in this authentic culture without denying the basic doctrines of the biblical faith in Jesus the Messiah, is one of the main problems facing contemporary radical contextualization efforts in both groups.

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Evening Session

With Hans Walter Hirschberg and Arthur Goldschmidt in Theresienstadt Kai Kjær-Hansen, International Coordinator of LCJE

Jewish believers from the past

This evening we are going to a place about 40 miles north of Prague, to Theresienstadt in what was then Czechoslovakia, to the town that Hitler “had donated to the Jews” and which in Nazi propaganda was described as a “spa town” where elderly Jews could “retire”. From the end of 1941 to the beginning of 1945, more than 140,000 Jews were sent to this ghetto, which for many, about 88,000, became a transit camp to the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Approximately 33,000 died in this ghetto. When it was all over and the ghetto had been liberated on May 8 1945, there were about 19,000 survivors.

Theresienstadt was governed by a council of Jewish elders; but although there was a certain degree of self-management, it did not mean that they had freedom to do as they pleased; it meant that they were expected to make things work and to carry out the German orders with all the compromises that involved for the council itself.

Among those who died *in* Theresienstadt, or were deported from Theresienstadt *to* the death camp Auschwitz or survived the horrors *in* Theresienstadt, were individuals who were *Christians of Jewish descent*. It is tempting today to call them “Messianic Jews”, but this would not correspond with their self-perception. Like most other Jews in Germany they saw themselves as

Germans; unlike most other German Jews they were Jews who had embraced the Christian faith, some by conviction, others for pragmatic reasons. In plain words, and whether or not we like to hear it: the Jewish identity Isaac Lichtenstein or Lucky had fought for 50 years before was quite beyond the horizon of these *Christian* Jews. But in Theresienstadt they shared the fate of “Mosaic” Jews. In the eyes of the Nazis, their Christian faith did not obliterate their Jewishness.

Hans Werner Hirschberg

I will begin with Hans Werner Hirschberg, who had been a judge in Berlin. He arrived at Theresienstadt on February 10, 1944, and survived the horrors. We have at least two written accounts from him. After the liberation Hirschberg writes in the Romanian magazine *Prietenu*, which had been launched by Isaac Feinstein, “that the light of the gospel shone brightly in Theresienstadt. One tenth of the Jews who had been interned there belonged to a Christian confession. Some were Protestants, some Catholics. Among these Jews, there was a group of Evangelical Jewish Christians from Holland, four hundred in number that distinguished themselves. They even had a Jewish Christian pastor with them.” The person he refers to is Dominé Enker, who came to Theresienstadt in September 1944.

Hirschberg also writes: “The Catholic and Evangelical Jews lived together as brethren in harmony. In Theresienstadt the words of Jesus, that we may all be one, became reality . . . and we prayed publicly for Pastor [Martin] Niemöller and other

Christians who were in concentration camps. I think that we were the only people who really had freedom to do that. No one could commit us to a concentration camp, for we were already in a concentration camp.”

Hirschberg concludes his account with the following words: “Many of our ‘church members’ had, although they had been baptized, never really considered being followers of Jesus until they came to Theresienstadt. But here, under the influence of God’s word, many of them were truly converted. Jews who had been Christians in name only became true Christians.

Many Mosaic Jews and Jews who had no faith whatsoever found Jesus and were saved in Theresienstadt.

I am one of the few survivors from the concentration camp in Theresienstadt. Most of my brothers went home to be with the Lord. But my Saviour saved me out of this camp so that I might proclaim the wonderful things that He performed among those who were in ‘the valley of the shadow of death’”.

Some will probably be surprised at Hirschberg’s statement that one tenth of the people in Theresienstadt were Christian Jews. And it does seem to be an understatement if the whole period is considered. On April 20, 1945, more than 36 percent were “non-Mosaic” Jews. To this I just want to say that it cannot be deduced that there were 600,000 Jewish Christians among the 6 million Jews that were killed during the Holocaust. But there was a considerable number of Christians of Jewish descent – some mention a six-figure number. Their certificate of baptism could not save them from the gas ovens.

Arthur Goldschmidt – the founder of the evangelical congregation

Arthur Goldschmidt’s parents had converted to Christianity in 1858. After Goldschmidt, born in 1873, had to resign his post as a judge in Hamburg in 1933, he devoted himself to his hobby as a painter. His wife Kitty, who was a baptized Jew,

died in June 1942. The Protestant clergyman in the town refused to bury her in the churchyard as Mrs Goldschmidt was not an “Aryan”. One month later Goldschmidt was deported to Theresienstadt. Here he founded an evangelical congregation where he preached and administered pastoral care. He survived in the ghetto. Before his death on February 9, 1947, he wrote down an account of the evangelical congregation in Theresienstadt. Here are a few glimpses from the account that was published in 1948.

On the first Sunday in the ghetto, Goldschmidt and another man get together in an attic and read the New Testament which he has brought. The word gets about, and others join them the following Sundays. No more than twenty persons can assemble without permission. “What was I to do?” He realizes that the administration was not likely to appreciate the formation of a Christian congregation in a Jewish town, and without the consent of the Jewish council of elders he could not proceed.

Goldschmidt continues: “So I turned, nonetheless, to Mr Edelstein, who was then the leader of the Jewish council, and described the state of affairs to him. When he was informed of the fact that an evangelical congregation had already been founded, he was astonished but also full of understanding. The good God is ultimately the same, and to him, Edelstein, it is the same in which way he is honoured.” Both sides realize that the room where the Mosaic Jews worship cannot be used.

On October 18, 1942, they get the first and semi-official recognition of the congregation as a room with electrical light, used as a variety theatre and a lecture hall, is made available for them by the council of elders. And the congregation grows. Between 150 and 200 attend the services, at the festivals there are even more. It is an extremely mixed congregation; there are, for example, Lutherans, members of the Reformed Church, Anglicans, Hussites, Remonstrants, Brethren, and others. Non-

Christians were welcome but could not receive Communion.

In the summer of 1943 a split threatens the congregation but it was prevented, another matter that I cannot go into here.

Goldschmidt says about the relationship between Mosaic and Christian Jews that the attitude to those who had been baptized as infants was "neutral". It was a different matter with those who had been baptized as adults. They were regarded as "backsliders, renegades and traitors". The idea that someone should have embraced Christianity out of conviction and not for pragmatic reasons seemed to be absolutely unthinkable. But this also needs to be said: Communion, consisting of bread and tea with sugar, was also administered to sick Christian Jews in infirmaries and sickrooms. Goldschmidt writes: "Apart from a few improper remarks, which were soon discouraged with a word of admonition, the other patients of Jewish persuasion observed a pious quietness."

Goldschmidt does not hide that, from time to time, there were some difficulties with the council of elders. But the following words are nevertheless remarkable: "In retrospect it must be admitted that this administration of what was intended as a pure Jewish society, which naturally would see a Christian congregation as a foreign body, in general has been very obliging." Here is an example:

Christian German Jews cannot celebrate Christmas without a Christmas tree, which is difficult to come by. Again in Goldschmidt's words: "Finally the SS permitted us to have a small tree, which would be decorated by the women; not even candles, a much desired rarity donated from all sides, were missing." But then listen to how Goldschmidt continues:

"The last year the Christmas tree was cynically forbidden by the SS man who had to make the decision. But then, fortunately, the Jewish administration saw to it that an artificial tree with inserted branches and with multicoloured electrical lamps was made for the service!" I wonder if it was the

Hanukkah bush?

"And what is more," Goldschmidt continues, "the administration, or more correctly the leader of the Jewish council, Dr Murrelstein, even organized a gala performance for the Christian children with a children's choir singing Christmas carols, children performing a small fairytale play and a magician – a man in the camp that had been deprived of his profession – showed his tricks."

Death and "Ego sum resurrectio"

For the evangelical congregation the question of how to honour their dead in death became a pressing one. Mortality was high, not least during the first years. A crematorium, which could cope with 200 corpses a day, had been built. The coffins, 40-50 or more, were first placed in open air, later in a casemate hall. After a rabbi had performed the ceremony, the coffins were taken to the crematorium. I will let Goldschmidt tell about this:

"The Christians had doubts about this funeral after Jewish rites. They tried therefore to attain a dissociation from the Jewish funerals. To begin with it was argued again and again that there were technical difficulties, but from May 1943 the deceased Christians were laid out a half hour before the funeral ceremony; later a special hall was allowed for this. The attempts to fit out this hall to some extent with dignity were long futile. The request to have a large crucifix and the inscription 'Ego sum resurrectio' – 'I am the Resurrection' was finally made, but the commandant rejected it since a public exhibition of Christian symbols could not be permitted.

Not until the end was the hall put in a suitable condition and fitted out with a big crucifix, with that inscription, made by a sculptor. It also became possible to have the corpse carts and the coffins covered with a simple black cloth instead of a cloth with the David star."

So in death these Christians of Jewish descent chose not to have the David Star on their coffins. Who dare, under these

circumstances, throw the first stone? And perhaps it is throwing the first stone to ask the question: If Isaac Lichtenstein or Lucky had been there ... which hall would they have chosen for their burial ceremony? And which cloth to cover their coffin?

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"Mosaic" and "non-Mosaic" Jews in Theresienstadt

The number of "non-Jewish Jews" increased over the years, there is however no material till October 1943. At that time the share of Christians amounted to approx. 9%, the number of those without confession to 6 %. After this time there are more precise figures:

	Mosaic		Non-Mosaic	
Dec. 1943	30.480	87,9 %	3.925	12,1 %
May 1944	23.529	84,2 %	4.193	15,8 %
Dec. 1944	8.346	72,1 %	3.112	27,9 %
20.4.1945	11.104	63,4 %	3.619	36,6 %

The non-Mosaic groups were distributed in the following way :

	Cath.	Evang.	Sects	No confession	Not stated
Dec. 1943	1.321	830	207	1.567	250
May 1944	1.439	1.084	195	1.475	255
Dec. 1944	943	1.198	139	832	110
20.4.1945	2.014	1.808	368	2.004	117

Source: Theresienstadt Lexikon: Christen

<http://www.ghetto-theresienstadt.de/pages/c/christen.htm>

All I knew was that I had found the Lord

David Loden, Pastor, Beit Asaph Messianic Congregation, Netanya, Israel

The subject of reaching people for the Lord fascinates me, especially since I have for the last thirty years been a pastor in Israel and perhaps because of my background as a communicator (I have been an artist; composer, actor, singer, etc., for all my life.) Since receiving Yeshua as my Messiah in 1969, I have been involved in evangelism of some sort or another. When I came to faith I was living with my wife Lisa in the middle of a forest in a national park in the state of Washington. I had heard the Good News numerous times from street preachers in New York, from the media and from excited new believers. It was *only when I saw the Gospel consistently lived in the life of someone that I was confronted with the reality of the Faith and the need to make spiritual choices*. This began a period of questioning in which I was finally led by this exemplary person to choose the Messiah for myself.

My first reaction to having accepted the Lord in my life was to wade the Soleduc River to get to highway 101. From there I would hitchhike to Port Angeles, a distance of perhaps 70 kilometers. My purpose was to testify and preach the Gospel to whoever was in the car. When I arrived at my destination, I would simply thank the man and turn around and hitchhike back again, doing the same thing. The majority of vehicles on that highway were logging trucks, and quite a number of those drivers were hostage for an hour and a half to this strange hippie raving on about his new-found faith. I knew nothing about evangelism and strategizing. All I knew was that I had found the Lord. I was sure that people simply needed to hear about my experiences and they would then naturally accept the Gospel. Needless to say, most didn't, but the conversations with them were always stimulating. I had started to learn something. I had begun to be aware that *every preaching of the Word produces some fruit in that it confronted people with the need to choose*.

Several memories of those early years remain. One of the most vivid is how the Word of God was received by the hippie community, and also by the "straight" population. Our "community" (not really a commune, since we were all living miles apart in the woods) was sharply split down the middle by our testimony of Yeshua. Half were incensed that we would join the "Christian Establishment" (a strong pejorative expression in that world), and the other half were strongly drawn by the love of the Messiah and many came to faith. (Incidentally, although an inordinately large proportion of the hippie community was Jewish, the Gospel never seemed to be a problem to them in the same manner that it is a problem to most "normal" Jewish people.)

The normal citizens of the area thought us to be quite quaint. As they began to see a revival happening before their eyes they were bewildered at first. The little church which was our first place of fellowship was composed mostly of people in the logging industry, and our testimonies were deeply challenging to them. After a somewhat rocky start, we were received into their hearts and lives. It was only later we learned that for years, a group of women in the church had been praying for revival. When we walked in, as strange as we were, they knew that their prayers had been answered. *Prayer should precede, accompany, and sum up the work of evangelism*.

The prevailing attitude in those areas was that hippies were lazy and dropped-out people, not to be taken seriously. When the Spirit began to work among us, however, the miracles God did were amazing to the more "normal" population and it prompted a much wider witness to the community. *In time many people of the area, seeing that this Gospel had the power to change what seemed to them to be wasted lives into productive ones, were also drawn to the light of the Lord*.

From that time to this, in whatever

framework we have found ourselves preaching the Gospel, whether in our own families, old friends from our former lives, or groups into which we are invited (or perhaps not...) I have seen the same thing happen. The Word preached has the uncanny power to split the audience into two extremes; those who hate it and those who are drawn to it. *It is in that act of division, then, that one can differentiate the seekers from the non-seekers, and concentrate on feeding those who are truly touched.*

The lessons I had drawn by the first year of life in the Lord were:

1. Live the Gospel consistently. This will be the most powerful preaching we could ever do.

2. Speak the Word in all possible frameworks. It will always cause some to confront the truth and demand choices to be made.

3. Always pray for and during the proclamation of the Gospel, since it is the power of God unto salvation, and as such will be consistently attacked by the enemy of our souls.

4. Personal testimony is strong medicine. It will always draw people to check your words and engage you in conversation. Personal examples always speak more than the most well developed methodologies.

5. Once the truth has separated the detractors from the seekers, feed the seekers and, where necessary, reprove the detractors. We should not waste energy on those who only engage us in order to argue or abuse.

This fifth point may sound harsh to some, but it has been my experience that one of the most effective strategies of the enemy is to waste our time and energy by engaging us in “doubtful disputations”. Our job should be making sure that the seekers after truth correctly identify what that truth is, and where it can be found. A starving man needs to know three things; first, that the pain in his belly is hunger and not something else; second, that it is bread

that is needed and not something else; third, the address of the bakery and not somewhere else!

Yeshua, Peter, John and Paul all approached evangelism in this manner. They were aware that the Holy Spirit was already at work preparing hearts for the seed which would be sown. Knowing that, they spoke to the widest audience that the Holy Spirit provided them, allowing the Word to winnow out the grain from the chaff. They reproved the enemies of the Gospel, but spent the bulk of their time discipling those who were truly on “The Way”. They were sensitive to the times in which they lived, and also to the customs and lifestyles of their audience. They were aware of what would attract these open hearts and what would repel them.

All this, then, prepares me to evaluate what we have seen in evangelism in our congregation in Netanya. My experiences in evangelism were never “Jewish specific” until we immigrated to Israel in 1974. Most of my knowledge, then, is within the Israeli context. I have found that in reaching people in Israel, we need be aware of the following things.

1. We should realize that the Holy Spirit is already at work in the land and people. This may be hard to believe sometimes, when we see the corruption and evil all around us, but it is that very corruption which already produces a generation that seeks a better truth. We see in Israel a rapidly growing number of disaffected people, particularly youth, who have seen clearly the failures of the philosophies and dreams of the former generation.

2. Knowing that, we can speak the “better truth” of the Gospel in almost every situation of our daily lives. Paul never sought to force his way into the synagogues to speak, he was expected to be there, as a Jew. We use all available opportunities, but do not try to force-feed the bread of life to those who hate it. The most effective evangelism in today’s Israel is the simple sharing of who we are in our daily social encounters. The Word will do

its work, and curiosity will do the rest. Every week we have new seekers in the congregations.

3. Discipling the seekers includes not only teaching them the foundations of the Faith and the requirements of the Messiah, but also turning these disciples into disciplers. New believers are extremely effective communicators of their own testimonies. We can help them be more effective by giving them early direction in sensitivity and context and supporting them with prayer.

4. We need sensitivity to the situation and the times. What was at one point necessary to do in evangelistic methodology may now be superfluous, or even counter productive. For example, the struggle of market awareness (that such a creature as a Messianic Jew exists) has come a long way. Almost all Israelis know we exist and are growing, and a surprising number have met a Jewish believer. The battle for legitimization of the name of Yeshua (instead of “yeshu”) is not over, but it is well advanced in our favor. What was

never possible thirty years ago may well be the most effective approach today. Where it was almost unheard of to really engage an Israeli in a discussion about the Faith because of his initial revulsion, the younger generation now is really open to talk and even learn about the Messiah and the claims of the New Covenant.

In conclusion, the principles have not changed. A righteous life is still the best sermon; the Word still does its work, and prayer is still necessary. There are, however, changes in Israeli society which necessitate changes in our methods. Confrontational approaches are even less effective now than they were before, and the one-on-one sharing as Israeli to Israeli is bearing much fruit. We can help our friends and neighbors identify the hunger. We can show them the way to the bread of life and give them the tools not only to become disciples, but disciplers of others.

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Stories from Australia

Bob Mendelsohn, LCJE coordinator for Oceania

From street corner to special meeting

from Rahel Landrum

“Jesus was a nice Jewish boy,” Estelle told Rahel while Rahel was passing out gospel tracts in the main business district of Sydney (2006). Estelle was willing to continue to meet with Rahel to talk about Jesus who claimed to be the Messiah who could give her life and forgiveness of sins. While they met and discussed the Bible, Estelle suggested Rahel should come and talk to her group that meets at the humanist society. Rahel agreed. She had other unsaved Jewish people made similar suggestions regarding secular or other Jewish groups, but nothing had ever eventuated. To her surprise, Rahel got a call from the organizer, asking if she could come and speak to the group. So we got the chance to go and address a group of 14 self-defined atheists and skeptics.

Besides comments of disagreement, we didn't know what to expect. It turned out to be an interesting meeting. Even before Rahel started to speak, people came to look and buy the books we brought. The original organizer had an emergency in the family and had Fred, another leader of the group moderate the meeting instead. Rahel noticed Fred's accent and asked him where he was from. Fred told her he was born in Germany but his family fled to Shanghai before WWII started. Rahel asked, “You're not Jewish, are you?” Fred said he was. So Fred, an atheist Jew had to introduce and moderate a meeting where a Jew for Jesus was speaking. Rahel spoke about how we can't ignore the fact that Jesus is who He says He is, told her testimony of faith, and showed how one can be Jewish and believe in Jesus. We did get what we expected, comments of disagreement but also other, more pleasant ones. One person came after the meeting and said that this was one of the most interesting and liveliest discussions they've had. The

best response came from John, the most belligerent person who needed to be constantly asked to not interrupt Rahel's speech. He said, “if she believes in the Bible so passionately, maybe I should go back home and start reading it.”

HIT produces a new life

from Mark Landrum

It was a missionary's dream. An Israeli rang our office wanting to talk about Y'shua. (2006) Peter had been reading about Jewish people believing in Jesus during his recent travels in New Zealand. He had stayed with a few Christian people from both the Chibburim and the HIT (Hosting Israeli Travellers) programs who lovingly shared the Gospel with him, gave him Messianic books in English & Hebrew, and showed him “The Passion of the Christ” video. The movie impacted Peter so much that since then he'd rented the video and seen it five more times. After that he decided it was more economical to purchase the video.

The next stop in his travels was Sydney. By the time he got here and we met with him, he was very close to making a decision to accept Y'shua as his Messiah. It was important for him to meet other Jewish people and, particularly an Israeli like Rahel, who believed in Jesus. Several days later, Peter prayed to accept Jesus as his Messiah and became a new creation in Him.

His baptism two weeks later was eventful. One of Mark's former neighbours, who is Jewish and not so happy about our faith, was present at the public beach where we had the event. When he found out Peter was also Jewish, he tried to interfere, hoping to stop the baptism. As Peter got out of the water, Peter had the opportunity to give an account of his faith and public commitment to follow Jesus. As our neighbour, Jonathan approached him, Peter's words were: “Now that I believe in Jesus, I feel more Jewish than before.”

Since then Peter's growing in the faith tremendously and seems very committed to fellowship with other believers, studying the Bible and even volunteers with us. Please pray that God will protect and guide him in His purpose for him.

Now Peter (going by: Gal) is serving on the JFJ Summer campaign this July in New York City. How good is that!

London to Launceston to Lordship

from Bob Mendelsohn

(Another) Peter is 57 and came to Tasmania, Australia, from the suburbs of London about 30 years ago. He was very committed to his Jewish family and the religion of the rabbis. He travelled a fair bit and conducted business in Sydney and Melbourne and all over Tasmania. He found pleasure in many things and people, but longed to find a real connection with God. The synagogue was empty, his own life in his own words was "empty" as well. Peter had done some serious study on religion. He grew up in a very normal Jewish home with lots of questions and fewer answers.

He went to hear Billy Graham in London 30 years ago and even went forward at the invitation, but he lived as if

nothing occurred that night.

I was out on the streets of the centre of Launceston (2006) and Peter was surprised to meet me handing out Gospel tracts there. I gave him a tract I had written for a big football game that was on the next day. He stopped and read the whole thing. He asked me if I was the author, Bob Mendelsohn. "Yes," I answered.

Seems Peter had visited our website and even watched a segment on the religious affairs TV show, *Compass*. He was captivated, that he and I should be meeting in such an unlikely location. (I find it very likely). After 20 more minutes of religious "unpacking" and answering his questions, Peter and I sat down to pray together. "Jesus, I accept you as my Messiah and Saviour. You died for me and rose to give me new life," he prayed. How awesome is our God who does all things well.

We've spoken several times on the phone since and he's studying his Bible and meeting up with other believers in a continued walk with Y'shua. Thanks be to God!

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The prodigal son:

Rev. David Sedaca, LCJE Coordinator for Latin America

Jesus' teachings were understood by all of his audience because he was able to speak in terms that were easily understood by his listeners. He often used stories to illustrate the spiritual lessons he was trying to convey. These illustrations are generally referred to as parables, which are not necessarily true but have enough real elements in them to draw a conclusion easy to understand. Today is not uncommon to see in theological journals, religious lectures, or even sermons, the use of terminologies that sound academic, sophisticated or "churchie," as if the level of complexity is a measure of the intellectual caliber of the author or speaker. How good it would be if we were to go back to the simplicity and straightforwardness of Jesus' teachings.

In the Gospel of Luke there are three parables grouped together: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son. If Jesus were speaking today he might have spoken of "The Lost Financial Report," "The lost car-keys," and "The Son who is drinking and doing drugs." The last parable is the three found in Mark 15 often referred to as the Prodigal Son, although the term "prodigal" is not found in the text, and is one of the best known parables of Jesus.

The parable of the Prodigal Son (the word prodigal actually means *extravagant*) has a storyline suitable for a Hollywood movie or an afternoon TV "soap drama": there is jealousy; there is rebellion; there is partying; there is sex; there is misery; and overriding all else, there is love. But Jesus was trying to do more than to tell a story, his intention was to illustrate God's unconditional love. From a biblical and spiritual perspective, this parable speaks of unconditional love, rebellion, sin, repentance and forgiveness. In a nutshell, it contains all the elements of life's drama so each of the hearers can understand that God's love is unconditional.

This parable has three main protagonists: the father, an elder brother

and a younger son. It is this younger son that is the focus of the story. In Jesus' parable, the younger son requests the part of the inheritance that would eventually be his. Having received it from his father, he goes to a distant land and there he spends his fortune on parties and entertainment. When the money runs out, he finds himself as a stranger in a foreign land without friends or means to survive. The only job he can find is feeding pigs. While he is doing this he realizes that even his father's servants are better off than he is now. He then decides to return to his father, ask for forgiveness, and be accepted back into the household, perhaps not with the perks and privileges of a son, but at least as one of his father's workers.

If you allow me some literary freedom and allow me to put this parable in a modern context, it would sound something like this: There is a family business that is run by the father and where his two sons work there as well. The younger son, who has been hanging around with "the wrong crowd" wants to have the freedom to do as he pleases without having to say to his father why he is showing up late to work and denying that he is doing drugs or drinking too much. So one day he decides to ask his father for his share of the business and leaves. Let me now come back to Jesus' story.

The story tells that the father had always hoped for his foolish son to come to his senses and come back home. He goes out to the road frequently with the hope that one day he will see his son coming back. And one day, "... *while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*" The son is repentant as he is embraced by his father. "*The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'*" (v. 21) His father's

response is a moving picture of unconditional love: His father greets him with open arms. He calls for the "fatted calf" to be killed in celebration of his son's return. The older brother becomes angry, apparently jealous of the favored treatment toward his faithless brother and feeling slighted at the lack of reward for his own faithfulness. But the father responds: *"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'*

I have used this parable many times as the basis of evangelistic sermons, yet, the parable of the Prodigal Son also speaks of another lesson, that of God's unfailing love for Israel. If we consider this story as a picture of God's unconditional love for Israel, we see that the parable contains three protagonists: The loving father, representing a loving God; Israel, represented as the Prodigal Son, and the church, the jealous brother. As with any illustration, using this parable as a picture of God's love for Israel, it has its limitations. In this case, the jealous brother represents the church, which in biblical chronology would be the younger brother.

What then is the meaning of the parable as it applies to God, Israel and the church? Israel has had all the privileges as the rightful son of a rich, loving father. There were times when Israel took advantage of all that God provided, and regrettably, there was a time that Israel rebelled against the Father and has remained largely far from God. Israel's rejection of

the Messiah represents the son's rebellion against the father. Although, as a political entity Israel has been restored to the land, spiritually it remains in a spiritual "galut."

From this same perspective, I find the most interesting analogy is that of the other son representing the church. He is at the same time faithful to the father, but lacks understanding with regard to his wayward brother. The history of the New Testament church is sometimes hard to comprehend, for while at the same time it adheres to its love for the father, there were times when it could not accept the father's love for the Prodigal son, Israel. The church's relationship to Israel ought to be that of a brother that, like his father, is ready and waiting for the return of his estranged brother. Israel's spiritual and physical restoration should be a joyful and expected event for the church, not something to be reluctantly rationalized

In closing, the picture of God is the loving father. He is pictured as the God of faithfulness, as a father expecting his son's love, but not demanding it or imposing it. A father, whose love for his wayward son makes him always ready and waiting with open arms for his beloved son's return. We look towards the day when the history of Israel, God, and the church, will have the same happy ending as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. When at the feast the father says, *"this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."* May it be so with the relationship between God and his two sons: Israel and the Church.

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Morning Session – 24 August

Building bridges

**Johannes Kleppe, National Secretary for Children and Youth Work,
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Background

For years the situation in the Middle East has been tense. Bloody violence has dominated the lives of Israelis and Palestinians. Fear is prevalent amongst both people groups. The Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel (NCMI) has been working in this region since 1949. Although the main objective in our Mission is to proclaim the gospel to the Jews, the NCMI has for some years now been seeking to make an explicit contribution in order to promote peace in the Middle East, and to better the situation for people living in this strife torn region.

Progression

The idea behind the Bridgebuilders project has been developed and taken shape over a number of years. In September 2005 a Norwegian organizing committee for Bridgebuilders 06/07 was established. In cooperation with other partner organizations, both in Norway* and in the Middle East**, we developed a program for a peace and reconciliation conference for Israeli, Palestinian and Norwegian youth.

The bridgebuilders project has the following objectives:

- Building bridges between the participants
- Encouraging mutual involvement and increasing knowledge of the counterparts
- Educating agents for peace

The motivation behind the project is based on a wish for participating in establishing an environment for peace. This goal is reached through focus on respect, mutual acknowledgement, increased knowledge and reconciliation. Through team building and various modes of teaching, young people are educated

and experiences and tools are impart to them that can increase their possibilities and their own motivation of becoming agents for peace.

Assessment

We believe in focusing on youth. They represent the present as well as the future. The youth of today will in future take over leadership of their societies, and it is therefore of the outmost importance that they develop and internalize healthy attitudes.

The Christian doctrine teaches the inherent value of every single human being. All humans have equal value in spite of differences in ethnicity, nationality and religious beliefs. However, this project seeks to focus especially on one specific group – Christian believers in the Middle East. On both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, the Christian/Messianic believers constitute minorities in their societies and often face added challenges in an already challenging environment. The participants shared faith is a natural common platform for mutual acknowledgement, and function as a useful starting point for dialogue.

The current initiative

Bridgebuilders is a peace and reconciliation conference for Israeli, Palestinian and Norwegian youth. It is an encounter across cultural boundaries, where the setting and content stimulates reflection and conversation about identity, prejudices and conflict resolution. This concept is an exchange program consisting of two parts. The first part is taking place in Norway and the second part in the Middle East.

Bridgebuilders wishes to lay a

foundation for further involvement and bridge building among youths in their respective countries and home environments. It is our belief, and our intention that the insights and experiences gained through Bridgebuilders will have a ripple effect and serve the cause of peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.

Pilot project

Bridgebuilders 06/07 was a pilot project. The experiences gained in this first faze has been decisive in determining how this concept will develop in the future. Our plan is to organize a new conference, with new participants, summer of 2008/easter of 2009, and then a new conference every two years.

The gospel creates reconciliation and peace

The involvement in this specific reconciliation project has been a new experience for the NCMI. Our organisations core commitment is to proclaim the gospel for the Jews. Why then involve our selves in a reconciliation project?

The gospel speaks first and foremost of reconciliation between God and humankind, but it also speaks about reconciliation among men. For that reason we, as Christians, must support efforts to bring peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. To create peace is in accordance with God's will. (cf. Matt 5:9; Ps 122).

As Christians we have a particular responsibility to our fellow believers – among both Jews and Palestinians. We are pleased with the efforts towards reconciliation which take place among Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians,

and we regard this as a witness of the power of the gospel to create peace among men.

The unity in the body of Christ – a mission statement

When our Lord Jesus offered the great intercessory prayer (John 17) the unity of the Body of Christ was one of his major concerns. >From the earliest days of the church it has been necessary to take into consideration that the body of Christ comprises both Jews and non-Jews. The unity of the body has faced great challenges throughout history. With all its different denominations, the Church appears rather disunited today.

Working for the visible oneness of the body of Christ is a joint concern to all believers. It is Gods will, as well as it is a mission statement in itself. Jesus prayed: "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (...) may they become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:20-23 ESV)

* Partner organisations in Norway:

- FriBU – The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway's Children and Youth Department
- The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (ELFCN)

** Partner organisations in the Middle East:

- Musalaha
- The Palestinian Bible Society

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Outreach to the “forgotten Jews” of Far East Russia

Lawrence Hirsch, Executive Director, Celebrate Messiah Australia

A Soviet Zion?

I grew up in a Jewish home in South Africa. My forebears had all come to South Africa from Latvia, Lithuania and Russia towards the end of the 1800s and early 1900s during a period of pogroms against the Jewish people across Eastern Europe. I grew up hearing stories about the “Refuseniks” – those Soviet Jews who were denied permission to emigrate abroad by the authorities of the former Soviet Union especially during the period following the Six-Day War. However, in general I knew very little about Soviet Jewry.

I never knew, and I have since discovered that I am not alone in my ignorance amongst my Jewish and Gentile peers, that prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 that Stalin created his own communist version of “Zion.” His solution to the “Jewish problem” was to give the Jewish people a homeland – a barren stretch of mosquito-ridden swamp-land in the Far East of Russia, just north of the Chinese border, further east than Siberia and Mongolia. This region was designated the Jewish Autonomous Region and called Birobidzhan. It was established in April 1928, twenty years before the existence of the modern State of Israel.

Jews from Belarus and Ukraine were given “incentives” to immigrate to Birobidzhan and many moved there in the early 1930’s. Stalin’s communist experiment had mixed results. Like so many other schemes that are hatched in defiance to the Lord of Creation, it began with a measure of success, only to fade away. Stalin began to crack down on Jewish culture and pogroms broke out. By 1948, the Jewish population had peaked at 45,000 with Yiddish schools, theatres, publications and synagogues.

During the decades of the Stalin’s notorious purges, hundreds of thousands (some say millions) of Jews were sent to

the gulags in Siberia and other remote areas across the Far East region like Magadan, Kamchatka and the Sakhalin Islands. We were told but have yet been able to verify that 17 million people died in Stalin’s gulags – three million of them Jewish.

Since the fall of communism in the early 1990s many Jewish people began to leave Birobidzhan and make “aliyah” (return) to Israel. However, there is a story told of when the last Jew of Birobidzhan was about leave on a train bound ultimately for Israel that twenty-five of his relatives came to say goodbye.

The reality is that there is still a large number of Jewish people in living in Birobidzhan and smaller numbers of Jews scattered across the entire region of Far East Russia. In these times many Jewish people have decided to stay in the Far East of Russia because of the volatile situation in the Middle East. We estimate that the combined Jewish population of the cities of Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Birobidzhan total about 70,000 and there are smaller numbers of Jewish people scattered across the region in Magadan, Kamchatka and the Sakhalin Islands.

These are the people that God placed on our hearts to reach out to with the Gospel of Yeshua – Israel’s true Messiah.

The vision to reach these “Forgotten Jews” was first placed on the hearts of Chris and Nicole Malcolm, friends of Celebrate Messiah. Since then, my wife Louise and I, together with Rita Ivenskis (our Russian Jewish outreach worker) and our mission teams from Celebrate Messiah have made several trips to the Russian Far East. Today we support a messianic Jewish couple, Valeria and Andre, as they reach out to Jewish people in Birobidzhan and surrounding areas through an evangelistic ministry and humanitarian aid.

This is part of our ongoing story of outreach to the “Forgotten Jews” of Far East Russia...

The early beginnings

It all started in September 2004, when Celebrate Messiah took a missions team to Far East Russia. The mission began in Vladivostok, then on to Khabarovsk and finally to the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan. During that first visit the team identified key people for future Messianic ministry in the region and made significant contacts with prominent people in the Jewish and Christian community.

In Vladivostok we made a significant connection with a Pastor Alexey. Pastor Alexey is a young Russian pastor who has planted over sixty churches across the Primorye Region around Vladivostok. He has a great love and respect for the Jewish people and had already established a good relationship with the Jewish Community leader in his city. Alexey was to prove a key contact for future ministry.

In Birobidzhan we met a Messianic Jewish family, Andre and Valeria. Valeria had been a believer for some time and had worked with the ministry of Ebenezer helping Jews make Aliyah, however, this work was beginning to diminish as fewer Jews wanted to leave. Through the work she had done across the Far East Region, Valeria had met thousands of Jewish people that she now had a burden to reach with the Gospel. Her transition to Celebrate Messiah was fitting and timely.

Andre's story is quite typical in some respects. He was born into a Jewish family ravaged by alcoholism and strife and he landed up on the streets by the age of 11 having being beaten up regularly by his step-father. He developed a life of crime and was in prison by the age of 18. During his 23 years in a Soviet prison he came to faith in Messiah after reading a book by the orthodox priest Alexander Mean, who was actually a Jewish believer in Jesus. Andre had an amazing personal vision of Jesus in prison that changed his life. At the age of 41, he was released from prison, and then met and married Valeria. The two of them were very keen to work with Celebrate Messiah in reaching Jewish people in Birobidzhan and a very significant

relationship began.

One of the other significant people we met was a local Rabbi who shepherds a small congregation of what I would describe as a group of poverty stricken Jews. Rabbi Dov was open to contact with us and we enjoyed celebrating Shabbat with his congregation. He was very moved when we gave him a gift of a small Sefer Torah scroll. Their Sefer Torah had been stolen several years before and they've been without one ever since.

Ministry developments

After our first visit to Birobidzhan we began to support and resource Valeria and Andre with Bible teaching and evangelistic materials. Rita, our Russian Jewish outreach worker from Melbourne has followed up and continued to support and encourage the work in Birobidzhan with several visits to the region.

Valeria and Andre began by visiting Jewish friends and contacts, sharing with them the good news of Yeshua. Within weeks, several Jewish people came to faith and a messianic Shabbat service began in a Centre for the Disabled in Birobidzhan. In 2005 they baptised about 20 new believers and last year in 2006, 35 new believers were baptised. They have also been hosting special services for all the Jewish holidays and have started an outreach they call Club Simcha.

We also knew that we had to do something to try and help alleviate the suffering of impoverished Jewish people in the region. In addition to fellowship and encouragement, Celebrate Messiah has also gathered and given practical aid, such as the sum of \$10,000 to purchase a mini van used to distribute these food parcels to families in the district and to pick up people for services. In addition to this, each month we try and send extra funds for purchasing food hampers to be distributed to the poor together with a Bible as a gift. This has proven a vital part of the ministry in Birobidzhan.

Training and networking

Celebrate Messiah enjoys a fantastic ministry partnership with Chosen People Ministries and we are very thankful for the efforts that have been put into training and networking Russian speaking Messianic Jewish leaders. In September 2006 Chosen People Ministries hosted a historical conference in Berlin for over one hundred Russian speaking Messianic Jewish leaders from around the world, all sessions were taught in Russian by messianic pastors/rabbis or practitioners in Jewish missions. We were able to send our missionaries, Valeria and Andre from Birobidzhan, and Rita from Melbourne to participate. Pastor Alexey from Vladivostok also attended the conference as an observer. This was a tremendous success in vital training and networking and a great blessing for our workers who can feel very isolated and far from the rest of the messianic world.

Ministry highlights

For Louise and I, the most challenging and rewarding time of ministry occurred during our visit to Far East Russia in October 2006. Together with Rita and another Russian speaking worker called Victor we travelled to Vladivostok, Birobidzhan and Magadan. During this visit we saw 18 people come to faith in Yeshua, 14 of them being Jewish.

In Vladivostok, Pastor Alexey had organised a conference that was attended by over 200 people - 60 of them were pastors from around the Primorye Region. We were very moved by the willingness displayed by these humble pastors to reach out to Jewish people living in the small towns scattered throughout the region with the love of Messiah.

During our time there we visited a number of rehabilitation centres that had been set up by Pastor Alexey's network of churches. We were also exposed to their ministry of taking abandoned children off the streets and into Christian homes. We visited a family that had adopted 19 children and care for them with such love and

dedication in a two-bedroom apartment.

Salvation in Birobidzhan

We then travelled by overnight train to Birobidzhan – the Jewish Autonomous Region. The first thing that one sees is the word Birobidzhan emblazoned in Russian and in Hebrew on the façade of the Station building. As you walk through to the square you come face to face with a beautiful fountain decorated with a huge golden Menorah. Even though the Jewish population is a minority in the region, Jewish symbols and Hebrew lettering are all over the town.

At the first meeting that we attended we met several beautiful, elderly Jewish ladies who remembered coming to Birobidzhan in the 1930's under Stalin's rule. Klara, one of these ladies, says that she came to Birobidzhan as a child and she remembered Birobidzhan as a vibrant Jewish town full of Jewish life with singing and dancing in the streets. I can't tell you how wonderful it was to hear how these ladies had come to faith in Yeshua just a few months before, and it was also a joy to witness them singing praises to Yeshua for his salvation. At that meeting we also had the privilege of leading 10 more Jewish people to faith in Yeshua.

A personal highlight was an occasion to visit with Rabbi Dov in his small apartment. He gave me an opportunity to teach a small group from his synagogue a Bible study from the New Testament. I introduced them to a Rabbi in the Scriptures called Nicodemus and spoke of his encounters with Yeshua in the Gospel of John. What a privilege this was.

One of the most disturbing things that Rabbi Dov told us about was that many homeless Jewish people take up overnight residence under veranda of his synagogue in minus 35°C. During the night, thugs often walk around looking for homeless people to beat up. A couple of people had already been bashed to death.

Ministry to the disabled and fatherless

On one of our visits we were introduced to several children who had just been brought

into the orphanage. One of them was a Jewish girl whose mother had just been arrested for murder. She was awaiting an aunt from Israel to arrive and hopefully take her back with her to Israel.

One of Valeria's friends is Sonia, a Jewish lady who has a 27 year-old handicapped son who spends all day couped up in a barren room. Sonia also looks after her daughter's child who was born with a similar disability and yet, they did not have enough money for electricity for the next few months. Our hearts went out to Sonia and her plight as we too have a disabled child that we dearly love. We found that God used our testimony about our daughter Sarah to minister to people who have experienced similar circumstances yet with many more hardships because of the virtual non-existent social support from the Russian government.

Valeria and Andre continue to minister especially to the disabled and destitute. They have developed a wonderful network of friends and helpers even going as far as soliciting the help of the military to transport disabled people to meetings. This ministry has recently grown to the surrounding areas around Birobidzhan. Recently, in March 2007, they held an outreach in a small town called Smidovichy, visiting Jewish families and distributing food. They reported that seven people came to faith that day.

Ministry in Magadan

Our team travelled together with Valeria to Magadan. The region of Magadan is notorious for Stalin's gulags, work camps. Millions of people were worked to death in freezing cold conditions building roads, railways and digging in the many mines throughout this mineral rich region. Magadan is literally built on people's bones.

Valeria had spent several months travelling this region working for Ebenezer and she knew a number of Jewish people in the city and surrounding areas.

Our time in Magadan was also truly

remarkable. We were absolutely surprised to discover a vibrant church led by a messianic Jewish believer and his family - Pastor Nicolai. The worship services at this church were dynamic messianic praise in Russian and in Hebrew. The dance team was truly outstanding, mixing Russian and Jewish dance steps. This church too is very keen to work with us in reaching the Jewish people who are still scattered across their region.

Lost sheep found

But the highlight of our time in Magadan, and perhaps the entire trip was the time we spend at the Jewish community centre. God made a way for us to share a Shabbat dinner with about 30 members of the Magadan Jewish community. During the evening I shared about who we were and why we had come to Magadan and Rita shared her personal testimony of how she came to faith in Yeshua.

After the service, one of the Jewish ladies present was clearly very moved about what she had heard. Louise shared with her about the parable of the Lost Sheep and how we had come to Magadan to find the "forgotten Jews" of Far East Russia. She lifted up her index finger and said with tremendous conviction in her voice, "I am that lost sheep, I am Jewish and I want to receive Yeshua as my Messiah." With tears streaming down her face, she prayed with us, right in the Jewish community centre, to receive the Messiah. What a moment! If we had embarked on this journey just for this one lost sheep, it would have been worth it. That night however, another Jewish lady also prayed to receive the Lord. Hallelujah!

Extraordinary opportunities

Ministry to the "Forgotten Jews" of Far East Russia represents an extraordinary opportunity to reach Jewish people with the Gospel message of Yeshua.

We have been given the opportunity to meet with government officials, being interviewed on television and God has put

together a network of messianic Jewish believers and Christians who have a heart to reach Jewish people.

It is the vision of Celebrate Messiah to establish a Messianic Centre in Birobidzhan that would be a place of ministry to the disabled, disadvantaged and homeless Jewish people in the region as well as a worship centre for Jewish believers in Yeshua.

We ask you to please pray for the ongoing ministry in this region and especially for our workers Valeria and Andre in Birobidzhan. Please pray too for our upcoming trip in October back to Birobidzhan for further ministry to the Jewish people in Birobidzhan and also to the scattered Jewish people on the

peninsula of Kamchatka and on the Sakhalin Islands.

"Then Jesus told them this parable:

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:3-7, NIV)

Lawrence Hirsch

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Networking for Jewish evangelism - is there a future for LCJE?

David Brickner, Executive Director, Jews for Jesus, USA

Imagine the following: The topic of thousands of prayer meetings is being answered. There is a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit amongst the Jewish People in Israel. It is like the book of Acts all over the land. Jews eagerly seeking out their kin and their friends to explain to them that what before was considered impossible nonsense is actually true. Then, as they meet with those to whom they seek to tell the good news they are surprised to find out those friends and relatives already know, already believe, and are already witnessing to other themselves.

The sheer volume of Jews coming to Christ makes one dazed. A revival of great magnitude has fallen on Israel. Israelis are flocking to the missionaries they had spurned. Messianic Rabbis are hopping around like rabbits. The existing fellowships and congregations are too few. The resources and personnel in the messianic community are exhausted. There is just not enough of anything to meet the needs of those who have a voracious appetite for Bible knowledge.

For some strange reason the terrorists can't act. They too, find the events unbelievable.

Within a short time, an international summit is held as all the leaders of all the various Messianic ministries need to get together and figure out what to do.

What opportunities might enable this disparate group of leaders and their congregations and organizations to share their experience and resources? Could the LCJE help foster the kind of cooperation this imagined situation demands? What obstacles need to be overcome so that cooperation could be the modus operandi?

Sadly, if the situation arose tomorrow, it is doubtful that we could make a unified response. Further in the future? Maybe, but not if things remain the way they are now.

The LCJE is a network and by our own

definition the purposes of our network are:

- to gather and catalogue information useful in Jewish evangelism and to furnish such material in an occasional publication;
- to provide a platform on which Jewish missions can meet to coordinate strategies;
- to monitor and report trends in the Jewish community;
- to stimulate theological and missiological research related to Jewish evangelism;
- to arrange consultations that will be useful to those engaged in Jewish evangelism.

To some extent this is what we have been doing and are currently engaged in here in Hungary. But a network is only as effective as the people making use of it, and therein lies the big problem which threatens the future possibilities of the LCJE. None of us really deeply believe that we need the LCJE because none of us really, truly believes we need one another. None of us believe we can trust one another with the sometimes less than impressive facts in our little patch of Jewish mission work. We show up often behaving as though we are among a group of donors looking to impress one another with the effectiveness of our own organizations or programs.

There is an inherent dishonesty in all of this, not that we are lying to one another but that we remain unwilling to admit our failures to each other and be transparent enough to acknowledge, first to ourselves and then to each other that we need one another. The sad fact is that no one ministry here, including Jews for Jesus, is having significant success in making a substantial impact for the gospel among the Jewish community. If anyone gets saved, it's because they have responded to impressions usually made by an individual.

Jews for Jesus has succeeded at one small thing, and that is that we've made the Jewish community answer their own defensive allegation: "There are no Jews who believe in Jesus." But whether or not Jesus is the Messiah is a non-issue in our little patch— it doesn't cause conflict—it's not discussed. Our Jews for Jesus mission statement is a statement of aspiration rather than a description of what we have achieved. In short, no one, including Jews for Jesus has made Jesus an unavoidable issue to the Jewish community worldwide. But are any of us willing to admit our failures to one another? And if we can't admit our failures, then how can we strengthen each other, so that as a united testimony, we can move forward?

Mark Kinzer's book, *Post Missionary Messianic Judaism*, should by its very title have made us angry. That title declares without any proof whatsoever that our life's work, the purposes of the institutions that we've founded, the use of the funds and resources that we've collected and marshaled is all in vain—obsolete. Not only that, but there's a new sheriff in town who's going to really get the job done. However, there is no new sheriff and there is no magic bullet to shatter the wall of resistance our people have between their hearts and the gospel.

We are all threatened by criticism when we should be looking for ways to be more effective, more faithful to our calling and less committed to seeing ourselves as heroes. The fact remains that messianic congregations are just as vulnerable to critical scrutiny as the rest of the Messianic movement's institutions. The emperor has no clothes, and unfortunately we are all behaving like emperors, somewhat unsure of our finery deep down, but willing to brazen it out as long as others will say how good we look. But that is exactly why we need each other and why what we have to give one another is of such great value.

Most of what we have to offer one another is intangible. It means a lot when a colleague knows your ministry fairly well and you've been open with them in what

you're getting done and not getting done. Once he or she knows how small your achievements really are, but still finds it worthwhile to encourage you and stand with you—that's worth a fortune.

We can also lend a credibility endorsement to one another. Each person can shout from a mountaintop "I'm doctrinally correct." but it doesn't mean anything until some professor of theology says "They are doctrinally correct." In our self-anointed, self-appointed authority we can declare all kinds of things about ourselves but they're all too often statements of aspiration, not statements of achievement. Yet if a respected colleague can say of my ministry, "They are doctrinally correct," people are more apt to recognize the legitimacy of the claim.

What I'm saying is that we need each other to put a check on what we say and how we live up to our own desire to be the best we can be. When we say we have 500 missionaries but 150 of those are volunteers who don't have the professional training of a missionary and 300 of them are people who get partial support anywhere from \$50 a month to \$500 a month we aren't being straight about our situation. Maybe we hope no one will notice, but we should notice each other. We should be able to say to each other, hey let's all pray together for more missionaries but we shouldn't claim what we don't yet have. Are we willing to allow others to be honest with us and help us to be honest with others? Maybe not yet, but until we do that, we can at least affirm one another in the things that are right and good about each other.

Some of you know how I was chosen to be the Executive Director. Some of you know that Moishe Rosen had nothing to do with picking a successor. He and the Board of Directors wanted to know the mind of God. The process they set up required the entire senior staff to gather for prayer and discussion, with a minority of them who had been elected by their peers having the right to vote in the Council. Several of the candidates were part of that

voting body. And they had to vote unanimously. The Board of Directors knew that they were imposing a difficult situation, but if the minds and the hearts of the Council could agree on one person, they would accept that one person as being chosen of God.

Perhaps the most difficult thing in my career up to this point has been to realize that I hold this position, not because of the structure, not even because it's something that I would want—though I think it would have been wrong for me not to want the position. But here, 11 years later I want to say that one of the hardest things for me is to accept is that this is God's calling, and to trust Him to work out His purpose through me.

Do any of the rest of you have the same feelings, wondering about the call, wondering about the position? Are you troubled with the same feelings of inadequacy? Yes, we want to have a bright and beautiful staff who are so dedicated and so discerning but the only problem is that most of the staff are like me. We talk about high and noble ideals but do you think that you know how to act on those ideals? I'm still reaching.

It would be a whole lot better for me if I knew that I had people like you understanding that I don't know it all, that I don't have expert knowledge, that I am sometimes meandering on God's path. And if I believe the same thing about you, please understand that it's not because I think myself better than you. Or that I think less of you. It's just that I think that we're all having the same struggle. I desperately need to be upheld by you. I can get the people on my staff to agree with me. They really try. I can get the people on my staff to do follow and do what I want to do because they understand the biblical principle of authority.

But what about you, my dear colleagues? I have no authority over you. Will you help me lift the burden of my responsibilities and my own sense of inadequacy? Will you help me know that I'm truly called by God? I'd like to help you

in that way. I'd like to be able to be part of God's reassurance to you. If there comes a time when you think that everybody else is real, all of the people employed by other missions are effective and that you alone are failing, I'd invite you to call me because I can tell you that we're all together and we need to lift one another and to live together.

A network like the LCJE is effective when its members value the relationships and the opportunities the network affords, and when we recognize that networks can be most useful when they foster partnerships.

Partnership goes beyond networking. The primary focus of a network is to share information. The focus of a partnership is to take joint action to do something, and to do it better by working together. Partners need not give up their organizational identity to work together. In an effective partnership, workers know they are not alone. They know they can count on many others with more specialties, and in more locations, than their own agency serves. They know that they can be a source of strength in places where colleagues are frail and they can be strengthened by others in areas where they are frail. They know that together they can accomplish more than each can as a separate entity.

Partners can handle contacts that they pass on to one another. Would that we have enough qualified workers to do proper follow-up in a timely way after a special outreach. Partners can use each other's materials, and they can work together to improve them. When more people use the same resource, they can share the cost of a project and lower the expense for each agency.

While our agencies would be the first to benefit through partnerships, many others would gain from them as well.

New believers with whom partnering agencies work will have a larger circle of fellowship. In a culture resistant to our message where the workers often feel isolated, there is a tremendous advantage in the wider circle of friends that can come

through partnership.

Donors benefit because partnerships translate into stronger efforts and potentially more results for their missions giving. We all would like to see our resources have the greatest impact possible for the Kingdom. No one wants to see his or her donation diluted through inefficiency or duplication. Partnerships maximize the effectiveness of resources.

Yet despite these benefits, we resist partnerships. Concepts of unity without a scriptural basis in Christ have made some believers suspicious. Furthermore, organizational pride, egos, finances, and independent agendas or “conflicting interests” often keep us from healthy partnerships. But Scripture calls for believers to work together in unity. Consider the words of the apostle Paul, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”(Phil.1:27)

Or consider John 17:20-23, where twice in four verses Y’shua prays that His followers may be one, in order that the world may believe and know that God the Father sent Jesus. Except for the Great Commission itself, this is one of the strongest statements Jesus made on missions. He hinged the credibility of our mission message on our oneness in Him. So how’s our credibility?

Partnerships can be forged between people with a variety of cultural background, experience and theological perspective; yet each with a commitment to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus our Messiah. Partnerships work best when people attempt to celebrate their diversity, rather than trying to eliminate, minimize or de-legitimize the ways in which their partners do things differently.

Occasionally in the history of the LCJE we have seen several ministries cooperate for specialized projects. Back in 1980’s in London several agencies participated in

the Messiah Has Come Campaign. In Jews for Jesus, we were encouraged by the number of people and organizations who shared with us in our Behold Your God campaign around the world these past six years. Chosen People Ministries recently sponsored a gathering of congregations and ministries involved in work among Russian speaking Jews. But these efforts have been few and far between. They only hint at what more lasting partnerships might accomplish.

Think on this. What would happen if a wealthy group of donors approached the CEO’s of the major Jewish ministries and told us, “We want to give a substantial amount of money to see the gospel proclaimed to the Jewish people, say ten million dollars. We will give this money with only one condition attached, that you all agree how the money is to be spent and that you work together to assure that it is wisely spent.” I don’t know what would be more difficult for us, figuring out how to spend ten million dollars well or agreeing to work together in spending it. Hey, it would be a nice problem to have. I would also like to think we have more and better reasons to try and work together. Who can put a price on the pleasure God receives when we are unified in Him, or the power the Holy Spirit releases when we set aside our differences?

If the purpose of ministry to the Jews is to make a significant impression on Jewish consciousness, then all of us have failed. If it is possible at all to make this impression, we have to have a unified statement. The only way that can happen is if we can work together, partner together, not only as we speak to the Jewish community, but as we speak to the Body of Christ, urging them to put the issue of Jewish evangelism in its proper place. If the evangelical church around the world is saying something different than what we are saying, Jews won’t pay any attention. The church must raise the challenge on the Messiahship of Jesus for the Jewish people to allow it to be an issue. We must partner together and partner with the church to fulfill the task

God has entrusted to us. Are we up to the task or must it wait for another generation?

Rabbi Hillel could have been speaking to our situation when he said, "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"

The opening scenario I described in this address is not a pipe dream. For me it is a promise of God's word. There will come a day when a revival will break out in Israel and it will be beyond the ability of a divided Messianic movement to respond effectively. I can't say for certain, but I would like to believe it is a reality some of us will live to witness. Can we admit to one another that we are not at this time prepared or preparing for such a time? Can we agree with one another that we must begin to prepare? And if not now, when?

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Additional suggested reading

1. **PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL; The Strategic Role of Partnership in World Evangelization** edited by James H. Kraakevik and Dotsey Welliver, published by the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL 60187, USA. 203 pages, \$6.95.
2. **KINGDOM PARTNERSHIPS FOR SYNERGY IN MISSIONS** edited by William D. Taylor, published by the William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA 91114, USA. 264 pages, \$6.95.
3. **LOVING YOUR CITY INTO THE KINGDOM: City-Reaching Strategies for a 21st Century Revival**, by Ted Haggard and Jack Hayford, published by Regal Books, Ventura, CA, USA. 204 pages. \$17.99.
4. **WIKINOMICS: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything** by Don Tapscott (Author), Anthony D. Williams (Author) Portfolio New York, NY. USA. 324 pages. \$25.95

Brilliant reflections on key facets of Romans 10:1

Steve Cohen, The Apple of His Eye Mission Society, USA

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

The challenge of writing on a passage that is foundational to our faith and ministries is no small task. Volumes have been written, lives over the ages have been invested and now as we prepare to leave from Hungary to return to our stations of duty, we hear once again the words of the apostle. My prayer from this brief search for gems is that we each rehearse again our calling, consider the personal challenges and obstacles we face, and then with God's help intentionally choose to move forward for the sake of the lost.

Before we get there, – as my uncle Mel used to say, “So nu, how's business?”

I grew up in a family where customer service was not just a mantra but a way of life. My grandfather, Arthur Cohen – or *Bumpa* to those who knew him best, worked in the jewelry business. One of my earliest memories is sitting on his knee at the watch repair bench. He could tear apart, repair and replace worn parts of fine Swiss pocket watches with the best of them. Even now, over 50 years later, I still picture his triple-lensed glasses propped on his nose. His diligence and training brought inanimate objects to life ticking away the seconds towards eternity. Those heirloom pieces were worthy of maintenance, quite unlike the throw away jobs people have today.

My father, Robert Cohen, chose to not follow in Bumpa's footsteps. He charted his own course to become an ophthalmologist. While in college, one of his fraternity mates at Sigma Alpha Mu invited him for a quick get away trip to southern California. There on a blind date, he met Barbara Louise Hyman. It was love at first sight and not too long after they were married. A few months later, I was conceived and that ended Dad's college days. Bumpa took him into the family jewelry business where Dad

learned the art of sales and customer service from some of the best.

I was 13 in 1963 when Dad ventured out on his own and opened up Robert's Jewelers at 11 West Kennewick Avenue in Kennewick, Washington. This was a family affair and we all pitched in. I started in the stock room, swept the floors, worked on affixing addresses to the “mailers”, hand made the bows and learned to become an expert gift wrapper.

Two advertising campaigns still remain with me: 1) time spots on the radio. “Robert's Jewelers correct time is 12 noon. It's time for you to visit Roberts Jewelry for all your Jewelry needs” he had hundreds of those spots on air. 2) The “I Am Loved” campaign – which is still running today.

When I was finally allowed onto the sales floor, my side of the store offered the costume jewelry and *chatchkes*. Dad's side contained the watches and rings cases. *His most important domain was the coveted diamond table.*

The diamond table was positioned behind the diamond counter so that couples could sit without distraction and examine the various stones and settings. The diamond table held the ultra-sonic cleaner, a diamond microscope, the velvet pad and a pair of locking tweezers. It was always warmer there because of the bright lights directly overhead.

Should Dad be busy, I would entertain the potential customers until he was free and then oblige with the turn-over to “Mr. C.” As Dad got to know the customer, he would determine what style of stone they were looking for, the price range, and finally measure the ring size and present various ring settings.

Dad had a working relationship with Sam Kamsley, a diamond dealer from New York City. Tens of thousands of dollars of stones were sent through the mail to our store “on speculation”. They did not have to be paid for until a sale took place. The pricing and grading of the stones was a

mystery to me at my young age. The codes on the small envelopes containing packets of stones told pretty much the whole story – if you knew the code.

Dad patiently explained the 4 “C’s” of diamonds that affected the value of a stone:

Cut: the style of the diamond – round, marquise, pear shaped or rectangular

Color: not all diamonds are clear some of the “fancy” stones have amazing coloring

Clarity: stones are graded by an international standard from the highest of flawless, as seen through a 10X loupe, downward as imperfections become more and more visible

Carat: the physical weight of the stone. The term comes from “carabis” referring to carob seed which was used to measure weights of precious stones. One carat equals 200 milligrams.

Diamond FAQ’s

Diamonds are made from earth’s most common element – carbon. The chemical difference between a lump of coal and a diamond is negligible. But the real difference is that the stone has been exposed to immense heat and pressure in the bowels of the earth so that over very large periods of time it changes from fuel to one of the hardest substances found on earth.

The difference is caused by the types of bonding between adjacent atoms to form varying types of crystalline structure.

In diamond, each carbon atom is bonded to four other carbon atoms in a tetrahedral structure, like a pyramid. Each link or bond is the same length, and the tetrahedral formation is therefore completely regular. It is the strength and regularity of this bonding which makes diamond very hard, non-volatile and resistant to chemical attack.

Theoretically, a perfect diamond crystal could be composed of one giant molecule of carbon.

Today the mining process to locate diamonds is very labor intensive sifting through as much as 250 tons of sand, rock

and gravel to find just one useable stone.

Master diamond cutters today produce stones called *Hearts on Fire*, which are cut and polished so that no flaws are visible to 100x loupe, ten times that of normal stones. Hence the cost is significantly higher as time and materials are more.

One very special diamond

Jan and I met on a blind date in 1971.

From the moment we met, I knew she was the one for me. Five months after we met, she was off traveling throughout Europe as soloist with her university chorale. *That was the most miserable summer of my life.* I called my father, told him I wanted to ask her to marry me. I did not even have her ring size, so I purchased a single marquise cut diamond. I drove up to Vancouver, BC to meet her charter flight back. She said yes and we had the diamond mounted shortly thereafter. I told her that if she was going to travel and sing, I would follow her the rest of my life. Little did either of us know what God had in mind back in 1971 ... before I was a believer in Jesus! Jan thought she was marrying a soon-to-be lawyer. Today we like to say that I was freed from the law and saved by God’s grace. *These rough stones known as Steve & Jan Cohen were being cut and polished for use by the Master Himself.*

Sifting through two hundred fifty tons of dirt and debris for one diamond

I can’t imagine the huge effort of searching and sifting on that scale for such a small yield, but such is the diamond business. What does it take for humanity to be sifted so that a missionary comes to the surface? And at that a missionary to the Jewish people? Over six billion souls populate the earth, yet barely a handful of rough stones consecrated for God’s holy purpose. *The Lord says, “I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart. I will put My Spirit in you and will see to it that you follow My laws and keep all the commands I have given you.” Ezekiel 36:26-27*

An ardent persecutor of the early church like Paul hardly seemed a viable candidate for the diamond table. An initial inspection might result in being tossed aside with the other rubble strewn over the landscape. But not so fast...

Today, this very hour, as we consider the words of Paul to the Romans under the jewelers loupe, we clearly see that he poured his heart out on behalf of our people. He spoke to people of a different *cut* but the same substance: Romans, Jews, gentiles, men, women, bond and free. Some showed flaws through secular opposition towards our people. But they, too, were potentially high quality diamonds in the rough. *God cut away the occlusions in our heart and polished the facets which refracted the heart of fire from within.*

The obvious parallel for you and me today is to take out a 100x spiritual loupe and honestly search out the flaws that might diminish the *clarity* - refraction and reflection - of the light that comes from the Lord. We are blessed to live in the forgiveness of confessed sins! Each day we can approach the Lord in repentance seeking the removal of the grime and gunk which dulls the luster of our faith. Praise God this can be wiped away by the blood of the Messiah.

As for the *carat* weight – how is the missionary’s faith, prayer, and heart’s desire measured? Certainly not in ounces or milligrams. It is measured in the crucible of a life offered in service to the Lord. That life sometimes under great pressure over long periods of time with great sacrifice.

How about the *color*? Look around you – we come from various backgrounds, different races, different cultures, yet in Y’shua we are one in the Lord – of one substance, faith in God’s Son.

So what?

Most of us here are leaders in our various spheres of influence. Are we living up to the brightest Biblical facets of leadership – Discipline – Servanthood – Wisdom – Courage – Patience?

Leaders are first followers. If I can not

follow well, how can I lead well? Discipline begins at home – not the house, but the person. Many who leave missionary work do so not because they lack talents, but because there are large areas in their life not yielded to God through His Holy Spirit. These words of Amy Carmichael ring true to me...

God, harden me against myself
The coward with the pathetic voice
Who craves for ease and rest and joy.
Myself, arch-traitor to myself
My hollowest friend
My deadliest foe
My clog, whatever road I go.

Another facet of leadership is *service*. How strong is our serve? How do we evaluate our heart of putting others before myself? We are reminded to seek the Kingdom of God. The image I carry with me to this day is a poster I saw in a host’s home years ago. It is a kitten inside a large cup, paws and head peaking over the top with drops of milk clinging to its whiskers. The caption says, “I may not be able to do great things for God, but I can do small things in a great way!” Each morning a good start-up the day question might be – how is my serve coming along?

Wisdom & Courage – two side-by-side facets which complement each other. Courage, being afraid in a given situation yet moving ahead with God’s strength. I recall my very first year as a missionary at Queens College in NYC. Each week I would go to that commuter campus of over 30,000 students nearly half being Jewish. There was much opposition, mostly vocal, but opposition none-the-less. Each morning before I would go to the campus the butterflies were churning away in my stomach, and I know the enemy was whispering thoughts to cause doubt in even trying to go. But the moment my toe touched the campus ground, God took over, went to work in my life, gave peace in the midst of struggle, and in the long run, he brought the victory – and the lessons to pass on to others. Surely many of you here

share those same experiences, but how about today – do we substitute less important administrative activities for that which really makes a difference? How deep is this facet of our lives??

The jewelry business is not just about product knowledge; it is very much about customer service! This calls for *patience*. *The objective is not to make one sale but to build life-time customers*. Is it different for the missionary? While we certainly need to have specific training and knowledge of our craft, the application of that knowledge is what makes all the difference. Do we share a true heart's desire not for a brief flash in the pan or a campaign soon over and done with, but with the goal of making disciples? We are not called to "love-'em and leave 'em, but to love them and lead them!"

Perhaps we might each self-evaluate what I call the 5 "C's" of missionary service:

Character – having a good reputation takes years to build and seconds to destroy. May we be found faithful in building godly character in our service to God

Compassion -- identifying the spiritual void or lack in others and having the urgent desire to help

Creativity – the ability to use our imaginations to adapt the various media available to us to amplify and express the Gospel message in ways that people hear and are urged to respond

Consistency – the ability to maintain ministry standards and repeat the efforts over long periods of time while not being dissuaded or distracted from the ministry goals

Cooperation – being willing and able to work with others to achieve greater gains for the Kingdom of God.

Without Godly *character*, we are but clanging gongs making a racket in the night not affecting the lives of those near or not so near to us. Without *compassion* we become robotic in our activities, maybe even proficient, but with the wrong motivation – well let's just say that others

can see and we ourselves, if we are honest, certainly can tell. *Creativity* – has your ministry become stale, rote, routine, even boring? We need to polish up our skills and clear away the debris of dullness and receive a fresh move of God's spirit to reflect God's light to new generations.

Our mission efforts are not like a 40-yard dash, but much more like a tri-athlon – giving our all in three key areas: 1) to our God, 2) to our families, and 3) to our mission. We seek *consistency* as opposed to start/stop, or start/struggle/decide-it-is-too-much/quit. Missionary work is easier when we find *cooperative* partners to serve with us. Some of us would prefer to be lone rangers but then the work load gets too heavy and the cost to our efforts is too much. As we enlarge our circle of friends and partners, the load is shared and the joy of fellowship is a great blessing, indeed.

The brilliance of a diamond is not found in shining its own light; it has none of its own! Brilliance and luster are seen in reflecting and refracting the light from an outside source. Put a diamond in a dark room and there is nothing to see. Let it bask in a wonderful light source and it's true brilliance shines forward. So it is with the brilliance of our lives. When clean and polished, we can reflect brilliantly the glory of the Lord.

Therefore...

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved! what say you?

Paul's words cut deep and ring true. I pray that we wisely allow them to be etched afresh into our lives and ministries. O Lord, send your Spirit upon each of us, cleanse us of all impurities, create in us clean hearts and restore the joy of our salvation!

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses (*diamonds in the mission field*), let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with

perseverance the race marked out for us.
Hebrews 12:1

Appendix

Appendix – or “perhaps a few things you wanted to know about diamonds but did not want to read in the body a paper like this one...”

The first diamonds were found along rivers in India around 800 BC. There were called *vajraz* in Sanskrit meaning thunderbolt. The word diamond comes from the Greek *Adamas*, meaning unconquerable. Kings and royalty were some of the first to wear diamonds until it all changed in 1477 when Archduke Maximilian of Austria gave a diamond ring on the occasion of his engagement to Mary of Burgundy. The ring finger on the left hand is used because in ancient Egyptian mythology, the vein of love ran from the heart to the tip of the third digit on the left hand.

The first recorded reference to diamond cutting was in Antwerp in the 1550. A - “diamantaire” – the professional term for a diamond craftsman – begins as an apprentice who worked with an expert diamond cutter and polisher before being given responsibility for cutting diamonds on their own. The cutter stayed “at the bench” – meaning the cutting and polishing bench -- for many years honing his skills and craftsmanship.

During the hands-on training, a diamantaire learns how to assess rough diamonds. That means, looking at a rough piece to determine what kind of yield it will give, as well as making an educated estimate of the color and clarity of the finished diamond. A beautiful diamond is cut it so that there are the fewest inclusions (flaws inside the stone) and so that the faceting pattern captures and makes the best use of light to deliver maximum brilliance. During the cutting process a lot of carat weight is lost in diamond dust, which is why diamonds of high grading are so expensive. It takes a very well-trained eye to select good rough with an understanding of the value the

finished stone will command, and years of experience to bring the most out of the diamond.

The *table* is the top of the diamond; the *crown* the portion above the *girdle* which is the widest part of the stone, the *pavilion* is the portion below the girdle and the *culet* is the facet at the point which keeps the stone from fracturing.

Facet names - crown facets

Table: The largest and most important facet on a round brilliant cut diamond is the table. This is the topmost facet. It is, or should be, a symmetrical octagon.

Star facets: Immediately surrounding the table, and adjacent to it are the eight *star* facets. Their name comes from the simple fact that, looking directly downwards, they form an eight pointed star shape around and including the table. On a well-proportioned diamond, the lines formed by the star facet edges will be completely straight. On an old cut diamond, or one with a relatively small table, these lines will appear to “bend” inwards, and with a table which is too large, they will appear to “bend” outwards, although this is not a prime consideration when judging proportion.

Kite or bezel facets: The eight facets which reach from the table to the girdle, and which share facet edges with the star facets, are usually known as *kite* facets, because they are in the shape of a four sided kite, although some people call them bezel facets.

Upper girdle facets: These are the sixteen crown facets which run around the girdle, and which also share a facet edge with the kite facets.

Pavilion facets

Main pavilion facets: Also often simply called pavilion facets, these are the eight large four-sided facets which run from the bottom point or culet, to the girdle.

Lower girdle facets: These are the sixteen triangular shaped facets on the pavilion side of the diamond, which run around the girdle. They share a facet edge

with the main pavilion facets.

Culet: It is usual to regard and count the culet as a facet, even if it is actually a point. Some brillianteers regard it as preferable to polish a very small facet for the culet, in which case it should be octagonal.

A well proportioned stone offers the greatest brilliance which comes from the refraction of light on the facets. All materials refract light (alter its angle). The

amount by which light is refracted is an important feature of every gemstone. The measure of a material's refractivity is known as its *refractive index*. Without going too deeply into physics, light travels at different speeds through different media. When light passes from one medium to another, its path is altered (bent) and it is said to be diffracted.

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