



# B e g i n n i n g F r o m J e r u s a l e m

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Dedication:

This labor of love is dedicated to the love of my life, Janice Anne (Isbell) Cohen. She has labored at my side as a partner in ministry and labored in mothering our five children! As she and thousands of others battle Huntington's Disease, we pray for a cure and rely on the Lord for eternity.

May those who venture through these pages be stirred with a heart's desire to reach the Lost Sheep of Israel with the greatest news of all: The Messiah has come and His name is Y'shua!

Steve Cohen

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Section I: Beginning From Jerusalem...</b>	
Confronting Evangelistic Barriers	5
Hurdling Barriers that Prevent Christian Witness	12
Attitudes in Witnessing	14
Basic Jewish Beliefs	19
Common Objections to Jesus as Messiah	24
A Bible Chain to Present the Gospel in the Old Testament	47
Major Messianic Prophecies	51
<b>Section II: Historical information to assist understanding</b>	
Jewish Identity	64
Gentile Identity	70
Orthodox Judaism	71
Reform Judaism	74
Conservative Judaism	75
Reconstructionism	76
Jewish Writings	80
The Jewish Calendar	82
The Jewish Festivals	83
Modern Traditions and Customs	89
Jewish Concerns	91
Jewish Mission History	92
A Roman State Religion	101
From the 4th Century to the Reformation	102
Lutheran involvement in Jewish Missions	103
<b>Appendices</b>	
I - History of Jewish Missions in the LCMS	108
II - LCMS Task Force Strategic Planning Process	121
III- LCMS Task Force Strategic Plan - 1999 Update & Mission Core Values	127
IV- To the Jew First - A Biblical Analysis of the "Two Covenant" Theory	136
V - Calendar of Jewish Holidays	148
VI - World Jewish Population Statistics by Country	149
VII - Glossary	150



# BEGINNING FROM JERUSALEM

**Telling Jewish People  
of Their Messiah:**

**“To the Jew First . . .”**

Introduction to the 2003 written edition

An audio cassette series called *Beginning From Jerusalem* was designed to help concerned Christians bring the Gospel to Jewish people. It was originally produced by the Department of Evangelism Services of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, with the aid of a grant from the English District Lutheran Women’s Missionary League. *The Apple of His Eye Mission Society* is updating the information with this text edition.

Jesus commissioned Christians to bring the message of Messiah to all people, beginning from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and ultimately to the uttermost parts of the earth. As we reconsider what that means, it is my prayer that we will lovingly and intentionally include all people in the mission of our church, including my people: The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel.

*My deep thanks go out to Susan Spitz for her heroic yeoman’s duty by transcribing the text from the tapes and to Robin Mueller for her terrific work on editing! Thanks also go to Ivan Peterson, Glenda Smith and Joyce Rottmann for their eagle eyes in finding revision edits for the second edition; to Seth Cohen for editing help and to Alan Butterworth & Glenda Smith for developing the newly added glossary!*

*– Steve Cohen*



## **SECTION 1:**

### **BEGINNING FROM JERUSALEM...**

Confronting Evangelistic Barriers

Current Jewish Beliefs

13 Common Jewish Objections to Jesus as Messiah

An Old Testament Chain to Present the Gospel

Significant Messianic Prophecies

**Confronting 15 Evangelistic Barriers**



## That Prevent Christians From Witnessing

At age 15, I went with my parents to the drivers license examiner's office, and took a written test to qualify for a learner's permit. The first time I sat behind the wheel of my father's 1955 Oldsmobile 98, my father sitting in the passenger seat, I noticed first how nervous he was – and how nervous I was!

As I slowly pulled out of the lot and onto the street, trying to concentrate on hand signals, braking, and the gas pedal, the cars in front of me and behind me, I was a nervous wreck! My first time behind the wheel of a car was certainly a negative experience!

Today I think little of getting into a car, putting on the seatbelt, starting the engine, and just driving away. My reactions have become automatic. I can even think of other things while I'm driving down the highway, knowing subconsciously what to look for in order to avoid an accident.

Over the years, many people have asked me how to testify about their Lord and Savior to Jewish people. They've had much experience and training in evangelism, but say they feel nervous when speaking with Jewish people. They are not sure of themselves or what they should say.

If a Christian finds it difficult to witness to a non-Jewish person, I often wonder how difficult it must be for my Christian friends to freely witness or share their faith with Jewish people. Over the years, I believe that talking about Jesus can become just as natural as breathing or driving.

We should cultivate a sensitivity and understanding of our audience, confidence in the Lord, and a reliance upon the Holy Spirit to give us direction, wisdom and discernment. As we tell of our faith, we are not salespeople hawking God or Christianity. Some principles of communication apply, but the results are up to the Holy Spirit, not us.

Consider these "communication" principles:

- Know your own faith
- Know the attitudes of the people you speak to
- Demonstrate who God is and speak the Gospel
- Demonstrate the individual's need for God
- Invite the person to respond in faith to the finished work of Christ

A salesperson takes time to learn his product and how to present it. It may take years or just a few minutes to build a relationship which facilitates open communication or it could be just a short time.... There is no set formula. So, when presenting the Gos-



pel, the first order is patience. God has His own timing for an individual's salvation. We cannot hurry God along nor can we create anyone's willingness to listen.

**Prayer is the primary key to evangelism** – speaking your faith and waiting on God's timing. We don't wait in silence, but we expectantly wait for the opportunities to speak up about what God has done in our lives.

A number of years ago, I attended an evangelism convocation. One speaker, Rev. Terry Cripe, was then serving St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Harborton, N.J. His brief presentation was entitled: *Fifteen reasons why evangelism won't work*. I have kept his outline in my office file and have referred to it often.

*1. Evangelism will not work because stopping evangelism is the top priority of Satan's work.*

Many times I've set up appointments or visits with people, and minor emergencies have arisen. They include illnesses, automobiles that won't start, crossed lines of communications, and many small irritations that try to deter and dissuade me from actually carrying out the testimony I want to bring. Others have told me they experience these same roadblocks.

Paul says in Ephesians 6:10: *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."*

When we seek to move forward for the Gospel and become effective in bringing a testimony, Satan's opposition will surely mount and increase. In fact, I've noticed that the degree of opposition seems to increase with the effectiveness of the testimony and the clarity of communication in sharing the Gospel.

So, why would Satan interfere if we're not being effective? If we do nothing, he doesn't need to do anything. But of course he will discourage us when we're prepared to move ahead. We may lose a skirmish here or there. But be encouraged to go ahead, for we have victory over Satan in Jesus our Savior.

*2. Evangelism won't work within a congregation, because the pastor fails to see himself as coach and members of the congregation as the star players.*

Too often, a congregation's leader is saddled with every responsibility — teach-



ing, preaching, counseling, administration, visiting and evangelism. There aren't enough hours in the week to do all that's necessary for an effective evangelism program. Each member of the congregation must play an integral part within the framework of the congregation, so that they might work as a team, under the pastor's supervision, molded to effectively bring the Gospel to their community.

*3. Evangelism won't work because we tend to spiritualize things in our lives, rather than to work them out in a practical way.*

I have found that in many Bible study groups that gather within a congregational setting, the tendency is to "talk spiritual talk," but not to walk the spiritual life. We can talk about service, love and worship, but too often we don't do them.

Jesus didn't spend three years training His disciples so they could sit around and think spiritual thoughts or construct fine theological arguments. Jesus prepared his followers for active ministry. They didn't wait for people to come to their 11:00 a.m. worship service. Jesus gave them practical instruction on how to go out into the world and to bring the Good News to every living creature. That still applies. We need to go to the people and bring them the Lord.

*4. Evangelism will not work because we are afraid of commitment.*

I can't wholeheartedly agree with this statement without qualifying it, for it seems as though people in North America are over-committed! We commit to social clubs, sporting events, hobbies and many other projects.

But these commitments crowd our lives so that we make no room to commit to the work of evangelism. So, I agree with Pastor Cripe – we are afraid of commitment to a planned, purposeful and effective course of evangelism. Evangelism just doesn't have enough of a priority within our lives today.

In fact, congregational members seem to opt out further by saying, "Why do you think we give offerings or support missions?" "Isn't that the work of the visiting committee or the evangelism committee?" "Isn't that the work of the pastor? He's the one responsible for doing those kinds of spiritual things." Maybe they support evangelistic agencies or associations, or radio or television ministries.

We can give financial and prayer support to many worthwhile causes. But there is no more worthwhile cause than personal commitment and involvement as a believer in the life of a person who is not yet a believer. What greater commitment could we have than to commit to the value of an eternal soul?

*5. Evangelism won't work because there is insufficient follow-up.*



Perhaps you have many acquaintances, points of contact or friendships. But the conversation doesn't turn to spiritual things. We easily talk about sports, politics or world events and we leave it there.

Christians must take the initiative with the Holy Spirit as our guide. We can follow through, return a visit, send some literature, lend a Bible, or just stay in touch with an individual to let him or her know that we will be available for spiritual questions.

Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5: "*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*" Timothy was called to make evangelism his work. He traveled and did a great deal. But Paul exhorted him over and over again to be diligent, and watchful in all things.

As believers, we too are called to be diligent and mindful of the people the Lord has brought into our lives. People don't just cross our paths by chance. The Lord has a plan for each person, and we should seize the opportunity God has given us to tell them about Jesus.

#### *6. Evangelism won't work because we don't expect results.*

It's become a vicious, self-fulfilling circle. We say to ourselves, "People won't believe, so I'm not going to tell them." And when we don't tell them, therefore, people don't believe.

When it comes to a person's salvation, we are not responsible for the results – the Holy Spirit is. That doesn't mean we sit back and do nothing. As Christians, Scripture exhorts us to go, to preach the word and to share the Gospel of the resurrection of Jesus in a bold, yet sensitive, way.

Isaiah 55:10-11 promises: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

When we speak God's Word, it will not return empty, but God will accomplish His purposes through it. Let's reconsider our own attitude in not expecting results. God tells us that His Word will have results.

#### *7. Evangelism won't work because there is a lack of vision, and the objectives in evange-*





*lism are unclear.*

Do you know where your congregation stands in evangelism? What are your congregation's plans for the coming year? The next two years? The next five years?

Do you plan to reach every member of your community within a certain radius of the church? Will it be done house by house, door by door? Do you have a plan to meet with people within your own personal sphere of influence, starting at home, with your immediate family? What about your co-workers, acquaintances, friends, the people with whom you have classes? What about the strangers you meet?

You wouldn't leave on a trip without a map, and so you won't be successful in evangelism without a direction, purpose, vision or goal. One could almost say that the people perish where there is no vision in the parish for evangelism.

*8. Evangelism will not work when we do not prepare ourselves to endure the long haul.*

Many people think of evangelism as a 100-yard dash. We go to seminars or convocations, gear up, expend our energy for a short time, and then say, "That's it!" But evangelism is more like a marathon. We need to pace and build ourselves to commit to the long run, not just commit to a short burst of energy.

*9. Evangelism becomes a program, rather than a way of life.*

All too often, we easily commit ourselves to bringing in special speakers, and holding special events, rallies and festivals. We'll even do community outreach. But, beyond that, we live a fairly non-evangelistic lifestyle.

Being a Christian in this world, by definition, means that we should not conform to the ways of this world. We're called to be in this world, but not of it. An evangelistic lifestyle seeks opportunities to speak whenever we meet someone, and to share testimony of our Lord and Savior. Perhaps we can simply leave a tract or share scripture, but in some positive, affirmative way we need to make a statement and communicate with others the Good News we know.

*10. Evangelism won't work because we are uncomfortable or unwilling to lead other people to the Lord in their work or in school.*

So often, we think of evangelism as church work or work for church leaders, rather than of individuals speaking to other individuals. The more you tell others about Jesus, the easier it becomes. You learn what to expect and how to respond.

God hasn't allowed us to opt out and leave the responsibility of speaking to those



who are “above us” spiritually. All of us who believe in Jesus are called to become co-laborers in speaking of our Lord and Savior. By simply doing the work of evangelism in your daily life, you can overcome that unwillingness to lead others to the Lord.

*11. Evangelism will fail because we fail to involve our family and friends in praying for us and for others who are speaking the Gospel.*

It is crucial that we involve the community of believers around us in the work of praying. Through prayer and the Holy Spirit, we can know and look for success in our Gospel proclamation.

*12. Evangelism will not succeed because the leaders of the congregation are not trained to do the work of evangelism.*

In the recent past, *Dialogue Evangelism* clinics became a part of the seminary training experience within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Now they are not offered at all. I’ve spoken at many congregations where pastors have told me that they have no evangelism training or experience. So, how can they be expected to train up members of their congregations? It’s like the blind leading the blind.

Jesus did not spend three years with His disciples teaching them theological perspectives, foreign languages, or many other elements we find in seminaries today. But, in a very practical way, Jesus equipped His followers to do evangelism. Through His preaching and teaching, He demonstrated His power and showed His followers that they had this same power through His Holy Spirit. We are enabled and equipped to go forward.

Today, both leaders and laypeople can make it a priority to attend evangelism convocations and become equipped to participate, for training is the key to success.

*13. Evangelism will not work because we do not have the right attitude towards evangelism.*

A book published in the 1980s was entitled, *The Seven Last Words of the Church* – “We never did it that way before!”

When I was a new believer, I attended a Lutheran congregation in Washington state. During a Sunday school class, I asked: “Let’s say you have a friend over for coffee, and you’d like to turn the conversation to Jesus. You’d like to see that person become a believer and you want to initiate a testimony. What do you say? Where do you begin? How do you start a conversation that focuses on spiritual things?”

One lady, a member of that congregation for many years, stood up and said, “Oh,



I'm a Lutheran. I don't do that sort of thing."

Unfortunately, her attitude about evangelism prevails in far too many congregations across North America. But I'm encouraged as I see minds changing, people's spirits being challenged and hearts awakening to the Great Commission of going into the world and making disciples. We will always hear voices in congregations saying, "We never did it that way before," but I urge you instead to follow the voice of Jesus Who commissions us as His followers to "Go and Tell the Good News."

*14. Evangelism won't work because our own devotional life is either poor or non-existent.*

How can we possibly introduce somebody to Jesus as our Lord and Savior if we really don't know Him in a real, personal way? How can we know Him if we don't have daily fellowship with Him in prayer, study of His word, or through regular participation in a congregation?

A minister once told me how many members were faithful attenders at his congregation – at Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. He was trying to say that was OK, because the Jewish people, in the exile, were only summoned to Jerusalem for the three major festivals (Passover, Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur).

The scriptures exhort us to gather regularly with other believers to affirm, uphold and nurture the faith we have.

The last and probably most influential of the 15 reasons why evangelism won't work: Evangelism won't succeed: *simply because we are afraid!*

We are afraid of failure . . . a lack of knowledge about the Bible . . . not having graduated from a Bible school or seminary. . . a lack of experience . . . not knowing the answers . . . and, in Jewish evangelism, not knowing Jewish customs or traditions. You might worry that Jewish people know the Bible better than you do, or that they have different festivals, or that you might offend them if you tell them that Jesus is the only way to God. I'm sure many people can add to this list of fears.

Still, remember Paul's words in 2 Timothy 1:5-8 "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

In Romans 1:16, Paul makes a great statement of faith and boldness: "*I am not*



*ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”*

My father-in-law is a very special man, a man of great wisdom and practicality. Before I was even a Christian, he helped me to understand how all men are equal before God. Though we have different social positions, stations in life, or economic status, we all stand on the same level in the eyes of God – at the foot of the cross. We stand as sinners in need of salvation.

My father-in-law said, “ We are all the same, because we all put our pants on one leg at a time. Nobody is different when it comes to needing salvation. Whether we are Jewish or gentile, all stand in need before God as sinners, and are separated from Him. *Even though Jewish people are in a called, covenant relationship to God through Abraham, that relationship does not guarantee salvation.* We must be mindful of the need and the importance of telling Jewish people about Jesus.”

### **Hurdling Barriers that Prevent Christians from Witnessing to Jewish People**

**One key to effective personal evangelism is setting aside stereotypes.**

Stereotyping any people hinders, rather than helps, our Gospel proclamation to them. When non-Jewish people meet Jewish people personally, they will think about and speak to the stereotypes rather than truly getting to know the person.

Jewish people are involved in all levels of society. Yet, people stereotype them by appearance, cultural or religious differences. Some say that Jewish people are moneyed or that they control financial institutions or the entertainment industry. Others say that Jewish people are close-knit and exclusive of non-Jewish people.

Simply because a person has a Jewish-sounding name or wears some Jewish symbols – such as the Star of David, or a Chai, two of the Jewish letters which stand for life – you cannot presume that he or she is religious, follows the dietary laws or even knows what’s in the Bible, much less has any factual information about the Messiah or Jesus.

I encourage you to set aside any stereotypic attitudes you may have about Jewish people (or any group for that matter), and instead think of each person as one created by God. Here is an individual, like all other human beings, who has one very basic, vital need – the need to have a living relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**Language plays an important role.**



When addressing a Jewish person or talking about Jewish people, don't use the shortened word "Jew." That word unfortunately holds too many negative connotations in the eyes of many people. Speak instead of "the Jewish people" or a "Jewish man" or "Jewish woman." This will help to demonstrate a positive manner of propriety and respect when relating to your Jewish friend.

Prayerfully consider your words and terms and think about how you can translate your Christian jargon or "Christian-ese" into a lay language that shares your message more inclusively. For example, instead of "church," consider using the word "congregation." Instead of "Christ," use "Messiah." Instead of "Christian," use the term "believer."

When you refer to the Old and the New Testament together, it's appropriate to use the term "the whole Bible" to indicate both the unity and the completeness of the scriptures. If you refer to either Testament separately, use the term "the Hebrew portion" or "the New Testament portion." Jewish people today do not refer to the Hebrew scriptures as the Old Testament.

***Some people today think that God is finished with the Jewish people, and that He's only dealing with those in the church, the gentiles, the Christians.*** But nowhere in the scripture does God say that, even because of their unbelief, He was finished with the Jewish people. In fact, Jeremiah 31:34-35 says that heaven and earth, the sun, stars, moon, tides and all natural laws would have to be done away with before God would be finished with the Jewish people.

Another reason people hesitate to tell Jewish people about Jesus: "*Blindness has come upon Israel. How can we do any good in telling them? They're just not able to see.*" The Biblical response is clear: Jesus healed the blind. Yes, there is a spiritual blindness on **part** of Israel. But that doesn't mean that each Jewish person is blinded for life.

In Romans 11:25-26, we see that Israel's blindness is only temporary. More than one million Jewish people were followers of Jesus at the end of the first century, including many Pharisees, Sadducees, and religious leaders of those days. Today, rabbis note that 2,000 to 3,000 people annually turn to Jesus as the Messiah. *In a recent survey, it was determined that nearly 85% of the Jewish people who came to believe in Jesus did so primarily through the testimony of somebody who was not Jewish, through a gentile Christian.*

### **Positive Attitudes In Preparation for Witnessing**



Perhaps you have a Jewish neighbor, acquaintance or friend. You may have felt, “I really can’t tell my Jewish friend about Jesus, because they’re Jewish! I don’t want to offend my friend by telling him about Jesus.” However, to begin to share your faith with Jewish people (or anyone for that matter!), here are some helpful attitudes:

### **1. Develop an attitude of willingness to tell others about Jesus.**

This is key. Today many people by tradition have moved away from willingly, actively talking about their personal faith. It’s easier to talk about the weather, sports, politics or the economy. But when it comes to matters of personal faith, we tend to withdraw or to become uncomfortable. Perhaps we lack self-confidence. Maybe we lack a knowledge of Scripture or feel inferior when dealing with spiritual things. But the Lord has called us to be witnesses and He will equip us to be His witnesses. Our actions and our words are important.

### **2. Pray that God will change hearts.**

Prayer is the key that unlocks the door to closed hearts. Hearts are not changed because of words or deeds, but because the Holy Spirit moves and touches the individual, initiating and maturing faith.

The person who helped me come to faith in Messiah told me he prayed for me daily for nearly two years. His faithful prayer availed much. It should encourage you to know that praying for your Jewish friends who are not yet believers is a powerful action God will bless.

I’ve heard stories and testimonies of loved ones who have prayed for spouses for 30 or 40 years before they finally came to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. Consistent prayer will bring consistent results in God’s time. But we can never rush God in these matters of great spiritual importance. And, as you pray for your Jewish friend, also pray that God will give you wisdom, discernment and understanding as you take courage in speaking the things of God.

### **3. Develop sincere, trusting friendships with people.**

Often we speak only to our friends about spiritual things. You don’t need to know someone for years before you can speak of spiritual things, but you do need to build a friendship. Build a bridge of trust over which your information can travel, and you will have gone a long way towards initiating personal evangelistic dialogue.

Seek opportunities to involve yourself in the lives of people for whom you are praying and witnessing. Drop a card or note to your Jewish friend during a special



festival. If there is a wedding or birth within their family, send a card or note to express your joy for them. If they are experiencing a sickness or death in the family, mourn and sorrow with them.

These opportunities demonstrate the true kinds of love that Jesus demonstrated to us. We can laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep, showing people we care and letting them know we respect and love them as human beings.

#### **4. Listen, listen some more, keep on listening... then speak.**

Rather than telling someone about our spiritual beliefs, ask about theirs. Ask what your Jewish friend believes and does. Does your friend attend a synagogue in the neighborhood? Has he or she celebrated a holiday recently – or will that person do so in the near future? If so, ask what that holiday means to your Jewish friend. Ask the person which of the various groupings of Jewish people he or she identifies with or belongs to, and what he or she feels those distinctions are.

Become interested and acquainted with their concerns. You might consider asking how they feel about Israel, or intermarriage, or if they feel unity is possible between Jewish people and Christians. If so, how could unity be accomplished? You might mention that many Jewish people today are believing in Jesus as Messiah. Ask them what they think of such a movement, or what they think about the Bible or Jesus.

As I've had the opportunity to speak with Jewish people on a regular basis, I first want to know where a person is spiritually, before I share anything with them about my spiritual life. I want to know whether or not this person is religious, and if so, to what degree. I want to know what he thinks about the Bible, and what his attitudes are towards God, sin, atonement and redemption.

I want to know what he believes about Messiah, if the Messiah is to be a person, an age, or perhaps if he's lost hope in a personal Messiah. I want to know what his attitude is toward Jesus. Does he believe Jesus lived at all? Was Jesus a person in history? A prophet?

By knowing and understanding where a person's faith life is, we can then tailor our conversation to urge them to investigate further the things of God.

#### **5. Simply and personally share your own faith.**

One of the most important things you can do in relating with anybody, including Jewish people, is to tell of what God has done for you. Your own personal testimony is very important. People may try to argue around interpretations of the Bible or theologi-



cal perspectives, but they cannot argue about another individual's personal experience.

Perhaps you think your testimony is not exciting. But list the many things God has done for you, and I'm sure you will find several that you can share that give glory to God and communicate to others. Simply demonstrate that God is personal, caring, loving and has made Himself real to you.

Consider Peter's simple, yet powerful, confession in Matthew 16:13-17: "*When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.'*"

**We, as believers on earth, are not shouldered with the responsibility of convincing people of Jesus' claims.** Rather, we are given the privilege of proclaiming His name to all. When we do, we know that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob convinces people's hearts. We can rest on that promise and press ahead, gently sharing the hope that is in us and feeling free to express the Good News of our Savior.

#### **6. Seek many different opportunities to speak of Jesus.**

Jewish people today are open to talking about spiritual things, especially when they don't fear that someone is out to change them from being Jewish to being something else. Develop an open relationship and an attitude of honest exchange and your personal, evangelistic dialogue will bring forth good opportunities and good fruit.

When presenting the Gospel, don't give spiritual indigestion to the person. Don't overfeed someone with too many scriptures and spiritual food for thought. Give a little over several visits, rather than a lot in a couple of longer visits. This way, you will not wear out your welcome and you will leave the person with one or two concrete thoughts to think about rather than a host of things to ponder.

You might invite your Jewish friend to a home Bible discussion group, or to a service at your congregation. Sometimes churches in local communities have special speakers who talk about things of interest to Jewish people, or Jewish evangelism. When you see or hear of these events, invite your friend to the service with you, so that he or she can hear and consider for themselves what is said.

#### **7. Use your Bible as the basis of a personal evangelistic dialogue.**





The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It's alive and active, and its words can change hearts. We cannot force anyone through coercion or pressure tactics to believe that Jesus is Messiah. The Holy Spirit and the living Word of God alone can do that. Get to know your Bible. Practice using it as a workman uses a tool, so that you can develop the skill of a craftsman.

When witnessing to a Jewish person, it's important to share with them Old Testament passages that point toward the Messiah. (See the Old Testament chain presenting the Gospel below.)

Before you open your Bible, be sure that you ask permission of your friend to show them something there. Has that person agreed, in some way, to allow you to explain or to become your student? As you open the Bible, make sure you don't rise onto some invisible pulpit, and don't speak with a sermonic, preachy tone.

It may be appropriate, if you are in the home of your Jewish friend, to ask to use their Bible. The order of books within the Jewish Bible is different from the Bible you normally use, but the words are the same. Many Jewish homes today have a copy of the Hebrew scriptures translated into the English language from the Masoretic text. Ask the listener to read from the Bible aloud, giving him the opportunity not only to handle God's Word, but to see, speak and read God's Word for himself in his own voice.

### **8. Remember that perfect love casts out fear.**

Many have been dissuaded from personal opportunities to tell others of their faith because of fear — fear of not knowing enough, or offending, or doing something to turn somebody off to the message of Messiah.

Recently I was listening to a tape of a woman who was discussing this type of fear. She described how she was challenged to overcome it. She was asked to go into a room at night, and follow directions to turn the light switch on and off a number of times. Then, when the light was out, she was asked to turn the light off. She responded, "How can you turn off something that's already turned off?" Obviously, you can't. But what's turned off can be turned on.

Practically speaking, a person spiritually turned off to the things of God can go nowhere but to be turned on to the things of God, through the hearing of your testimony or the Word of God. If you communicate in an honest, sensitive way, those who are spiritually open will welcome with great interest your words and prayers as you have opportunity to share.

In fact, our love for the Jewish people should cast out our fear. Christians should feel great love for the Jewish people. Think of the considerable debt we owe to the Jew-



ish people, through God's plan. Jesus our Savior was born into a Jewish family, a part of one of the Jewish tribes, in a Jewish town. He lived the life of a Jewish person, followed the Jewish religious practices and affirmed Biblical Judaism throughout His life.

The scriptures tell us that salvation is of the Jewish people. God promised that through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob down to us today that all nations of the earth will be blessed. This blessing is the blessing of salvation through Jesus.

From the Jewish people came the scriptures, the Old Testament and the New Testament (with the possible exception of Luke). The church liturgy, setting, and other elements have their origins in Judaic roots.

However, don't choose to love someone simply to try to win that soul into the kingdom of God. That isn't love, that's merely bait, trying to hook a line and reel them into the kingdom.

True love is giving. We give to and respect the person, even if that person never comes to follow Jesus. But don't misconstrue respect. We can't feel, "I respect you so much that I'm not going to tell you of my faith. I don't want to offend you by infringing upon your rights. That's the respect I feel for you."

If we don't offer Jewish people eternal life by sharing the Gospel, isn't that, in effect, the worst form of anti-Semitism? For if you withhold the Good News from Jewish people, they will not hear. And how can they believe unless they hear? And, without Jesus, how will they be given eternal life?

## **9. Persevere and remain faithful.**

If I could leave you with one word of exhortation, it would be the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:58: *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*

I urge you and encourage you to enter into the Lord's work of sharing His Gospel. This may not mean full-time mission work or traveling off to Africa, India or Asia. But enter the Lord's mission field where you live, work, go to school and are given opportunities to influence other's lives. God can work in their hearts to bring them to eternal salvation through Jesus. Remain steadfast, immovable, and always abound in the work of the Lord, for we know that His work is not in vain.



## Basic Jewish Beliefs Today

In order to witness effectively and lovingly, it's important for non-Jewish people to understand the foundation of what Jewish people believe today. There is no single answer. The term dogma, which is much better applied to Christianity, has little place within Judaism. In Judaism, the need for a profession of belief did not arise, and rabbis saw no necessity for drawing up concise formulas stressing Jewish beliefs and faith.

Theologically speaking, it is understood that Jewish people are born into God's covenant with the people of Israel in Genesis 12:1-3 *"The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'"*

Membership in the community of Israel does not depend upon creedal affirmations of a formal nature, so Jewish beliefs are voiced in the form of prayer.

The most important is the twice daily recited prayer known as the *Sh'mah*. In English it says this: "Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." These words enfold Judaism's greatest contribution to religious thought. They constitute the confession of faith and the religion of the synagogue declaring that the Holy God worshiped and proclaimed by Israel is One, and that He alone is God, Who was, Who is, and Who is to come.

In addition to declaring the unity of God, we find voiced 13 principles of faith by Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam), the foremost of the rabbis. His 13 principles of faith appear as a part of the Siddur, the prayer book. They are:

1. I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the author and guide of everything that has been created, and that He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, blessed be His name, is a unity. And there is no unity in any manner like unto His, and that He alone is our God who was, is and will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, blessed be His name, is not a body, and that He is free from all properties of matter, and that He has not any form whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the first and the last.
5. I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, blessed be His name, and to Him



- alone, is the right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being, besides Him.
6. I believe with perfect faith, that all the words of the prophets are true.
  7. I believe with perfect faith, that the prophesy of Moses our teacher, peace be unto him, was true, and that he was our chief of prophets, both of those that preceded and those that followed.
  8. I believe with perfect faith, that the whole Torah, now in our possession, is the same that was given to Moses, our teacher, peace be unto him.
  9. I believe with perfect faith, that this Torah will not be changed and there will not be any other law from the Creator, blessed be His name.
  10. I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, blessed be His name, knows every deed of the children of man, and all their thoughts, as it is said. It is He that fashioneth the hearts of them all that giveth heed to all their works.
  11. I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, blessed be His name, rewards those that keep His commandments, and punishes those that transgress them.
  12. I believe with perfect faith, in the coming of the Messiah, and, though He tarry, I wait daily for His coming.
  13. I believe with perfect faith, that there will be a revival of the dead at the end of time, when it shall please the Creator, blessed be His name, and exalted be His name forever and ever, for thy salvation I hope, Oh Lord.

Though the uttering of these 13 Principles of Faith took place when modern divisions among Jews did not yet exist, statements were given in order to help men clarify, set down, and understand the basic principles of the scriptures. Today, as we understand the Orthodox and Conservative movements, the scriptures are given great emphasis and are regarded as being from God. However, within the Reform movement, the scriptures are not viewed as verbally inspired, in a Biblical sense. Rather they are seen as setting forth moral principles, in figurative language, to help us gain understanding in how to lead our lives.

Both Orthodox and Conservative leaders believe the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) are inspired, but to differing degrees. Those things that were given face-to-face to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the 10 commandments, have the highest degree of inspiration. Next come the things that were revealed to Moses, then those revealed to other prophets, and finally the writings.

Reform Judaism indicates that the Torah has some errors, but does stress that there is an ethic from which our moral code is derived. The oral law, the Talmud, as regarded from an Orthodox and Conservative viewpoint, has a high, authoritative position within the community of belief. Yet Jewish people within the Reform movement do not regard the Talmud as authoritative.



Deuteronomy 6:4-6, the *Sh'mah*, is the clearest statement of Jewish beliefs about the nature of God today. He is but One God (not three). He is a personal God, who is interested in the lives of men today, and has indicated His interest by His communications to the prophets and the writings we have. A Christian, Trinitarian viewpoint of the nature of God is expressly denied within Judaism today in all its major branches except Messianic Judaism.

### **Basic Jewish Teaching: Man's Nature and Sin**

Basic Christian teaching today concerning man understands that man is totally depraved. He is in a state of sinfulness and therefore separated from God because of this condition. The Jewish emphasis on sin is different. Man is recognized as sinful, as evidenced by the Holy Days, such as Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

But man also was born into this world with two inclinations – one evil, one good. It is a person's task in this life to struggle to overcome evil by doing good, through following moral and religious principles. So, man's potential is greatly emphasized within Judaism today. Orthodox and Conservative teaching recognize that death is a result of sin. However, the concept of *original sin* is not acknowledged or emphasized.

Orthodox and Conservative Judaism greatly emphasize understanding sin. The scriptures are full of pictures to alert us to the nature of sin within man. Sin is pictured as an evil bent, or a crookedness, as a perversion of righteousness, even a twisted morality. The Hebrew language has many terms that define the wide range of sins with a fine-tuned sensitivity. Many Jewish laws and commandments spell out the correct ethical procedures for our lives. If these laws are broken, then sin has been committed.

The major emphasis of the law stresses interpersonal relationships between man and his fellow-man. But it also stresses the relationship between man and his Creator. The collective teachings of the scripture say that when sin takes place a separation exists between man and his Creator. Judaism seeks to emphasize reconciliation and restoration between man and God, as well as between man and man.

### **Basic Jewish Teaching: Reconciliation**

The concept of salvation in the Christian sense is not emphasized in a traditional Jewish setting. Three elements are necessary for reconciliation to take place between man and his Creator. First, there is repentance, or *teshuva*, which literally means to change a course of action, to turn around. In effect, if man is walking in his own way, he is asked to turn 180 degrees to walk in God's way.



The second is prayer, or *tefillah*. And the third is *tzedakkah*, or the doing of good deeds, such as giving to charity, meeting the needs of others, etc.

These three — repentance, prayer and good deeds — have today become traditional substitutes for the sacrificial system instituted by God through Moses and Aaron. The sacrificial system had a central place within the Jewish community until the destruction of the temple in the year 70 A.D. Atonement was an important part of restoring the severed relationship between man and God. Key to the emphasis was that sacrificial system. The principle applied is stated in Ezekiel 18:4, “*For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.*”

Yet how can a merciful and a loving God, who desires that man not die, provide a means of reconciliation? When the sacrificial system was put into place, animals were offered up as a substitute atonement, so man might understand the consequences and nature of his sin. Man saw the consequences of his sin through the animals’ sacrifice and death.

The scripture speaks more of a temporal separation from God, but it also speaks about eternal separation due to sin. Since no sacrifices are offered today, rabbinic traditions have substituted these three — repentance, prayer and good deeds — as the means of being restored. Thus Judaism as it is practiced today is very much a works-righteousness centered religion. Man is attempting to work his way toward God as he seeks to correct his errors, earn forgiveness from God, and do good deeds to make up for his committed misdeeds.

However, apart from Jesus and faith in Him, all human efforts fall short. The scriptures teach that there is only one way to this living relationship with God in John 14:6 “*Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’*” It is a matter of spiritual life and death that the Gospel be brought to our Jewish brothers and sisters today!

### **Basic Jewish Teaching: Life After Death**

Jewish people also hold a diversity of opinion concerning life after death. Both Orthodox and Conservative Jewish people believe life exists after this life. Some would say that those who are wicked will suffer punishment. That punishment may be short, long, or lead to utter eternal destruction. The righteous will find themselves in paradise: *gan eden*, the Garden of Eden.



However, Reform Judaism today emphasizes this life. Some Reform leaders would go so far as to say that eternal life is not life after this life, but is rather based on the good deeds we do during this life. The memory of those deeds, passed down from generation to generation, ensure us eternal life through the memories of those deeds.

### **Basic Jewish Teaching: Messiah**

Several opinions predominate about the Jewish understanding of the Messiah, or “the Anointed One.” Orthodox Jews may say they are still looking for a personal Messiah, a human being, maybe even with super-human qualities, but not divine. They look for that person to come, and bring with him an age of peace where the Messiah will dispense world justice and peace from King David’s throne in Jerusalem. Yet, before that can happen, Jewish people must first be able to meet the laws of God and follow his commandments, in order to bring Messiah to this age.

Reform Jewish people are not looking for Messiah to come as a person, but for a Messianic Age. The Messianic Age, similar to the “Age of Aquarius,” will bring peace throughout the world. Man will have lifted himself up by his bootstraps to create a better world, with better conditions. Reform, Orthodox and Conservative Judaism agrees that Messiah has yet to come and that Jesus is not the Jewish Messiah.

### **Attitudes Towards Jesus**

Jewish attitudes towards Jesus today fall into four basic categories:

- 1) Jesus never existed
- 2) Jesus was despised, hated and rejected
- 3) Jesus was the greatest Jewish person who ever lived
- 4) Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah

Only a tiny minority believe that Jesus never existed. They claim He was not even a historical figure, living nearly 2,000 years ago. They say the New Testament and teachings about Him are a hoax and a myth.

The majority of Jewish people today, however, acknowledge that Jesus lived during the time the Bible claims He lived. Jewish people hold various degrees of attitudes toward Jesus. A second category are those Jewish people who say that Jesus was despised, hated and rejected, while, at the other end of the spectrum, a third group says that Jesus was the greatest Jewish person who ever lived. They positively maintain He was a prophet of prophets, a teacher of teachers, and one whose teachings should be highly regarded. But, sadly, neither group believes that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah.



Attitudes toward Jesus have changed considerably in the past generation. At one time, Jewish people could not even speak His name without having to spit on the ground, or request that His name be blotted out of their memory. This attitude came about not so much because of people's understandings of Jesus' teachings, but because of the misdeeds some people have done to Jewish people in the name of Jesus, culminating in the Holocaust.

A fourth attitude in a growing minority of Jewish people today is to believe in Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel. Most Jewish people today, however, are ignorant of His teachings or what the New Testament claims about Him. One significant thing you can do for your Jewish friend is lend a copy of the New Testament, and encourage the reading of the Book of Matthew. Lending a copy is less threatening to a Jewish person. By lending your Jewish friend the book, he will be mindful that you will request it back, and so perhaps will look at it a little sooner.

When you see him again, ask whether or not he has read certain portions of the scripture, and what he's learned so far. It's best to keep in mind that Jewish people hold a wide range of attitudes concerning Jesus and the New Testament. It's best for you to find out what your Jewish friend thinks about Jesus before you speak at any great length about your personal faith in Him. In this way, you can know where to begin your testimony.

### **Jesus the Messiah:**

#### **Answering 13 Common Objections Of Jewish People**

In my personal experience as a missionary to Jewish people, I want to share with you some common objections I've heard throughout the years. I call it "A Baker's Dozen" or, "Thirteen objections – with holes in them – that can be filled with the Gospel."

When it comes to telling Jewish people about Jesus, we find that many objections raised are not necessarily new objections. A whole history of apologetics is today being reviewed and republished, all speaking against the claims of Jesus' Messiahship.

One noted work is a book entitled *Hezzek Emunah*. In English it means, "Faith Strengthened," written by Isaac Troke, a Karrite. The Karrites were Jewish people who did not acknowledge that the Talmud had the same authority as the Bible. He lived in the early 16th century. He wrote his polemic to refute, in an organized way, the Messianic claims of Jesus. Today his work has been republished by a couple of Jewish publication societies. His lines of disputation have been republished in popular forms by a number of Jewish organizations who see themselves as *anti-missionaries*. Rabbis and scholars





who seek to refute the Messiahship of Jesus and the validity of the New Testament are quoting him, even in the media.

Interestingly enough, Rev. Arthur Lukyn Williams, in the early 20th century in England, published a series of articles that eventually were compiled into a book entitled *A Manual of Christian Evidences for Jewish People*. It refuted, point by point, the arguments in “Faith Strengthened.” In browsing through the library at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, I was fortunate to find both volumes one and two of William’s works.

Most Jewish people today are not familiar with many of the arguments set forth in “Faith Strengthened.” But they do have a mindset, instilled by tradition, not to consider Jesus as Messiah.

Along with this mindset are common objections that people use as smokescreens to try to ward off a positive testimony. I’ve experienced them personally. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it does cover many questions Jewish people raise, both personally and theologically.

In any situation, if you can anticipate someone’s objection and have answers prepared to meet it, you will be well on your way towards helping Jewish people overcome their fears in considering Jesus as the Messiah. This doesn’t mean they will readily accept or acknowledge that your answers are true, but they will see that there is a logical answer for their questions. So, let’s begin!

1). The first objection reflects an attitude of fear. ***“I cannot believe in Jesus, because if I believe in Jesus, I will become a Christian, meaning that I will stop being Jewish.”***

As a reaction to the modern-day Messianic movement, and the modern “Jews for Jesus” movement, Jewish leaders are more frequently saying that if you believe in Jesus, you are no longer Jewish. Some families have carried this to extremes, even giving funerals for their children who have come to faith and been baptized. Other families have disinherited their children, and still others think that the souls of their children have been snatched away. They seek to have their children kidnapped by de-programmers to forcefully bring their children back to Judaism.

One such example of this extreme reaction can be found in a book entitled *Kidnapped For My Faith*, written by Ken Levitt and Ceil Rosen, and published by Moody Press. It’s the story of a Jewish person I know who came to believe in Jesus. As he was preparing to be married, his parents had him kidnaped for de-programming. He was

taken from his home in the Boston area to the Adirondack mountains in upper New York



State. After three weeks of attempted de-programming, he escaped.

I picked him up the day he escaped. It's a moving testimony to hear his story of how people sought to desecrate the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus. These actions are simply a response to fears that people have when it comes to Jewishness and Jesus.

But again, these are but a handful of extremist attitudes made visible today. The majority of Jewish people just don't have much to do with Jesus. Their attitude is, "Well, it's OK for the gentiles, it's OK for the Christians, but for those of us who are in the synagogue, Jesus and I, well, we just don't go together."

So let's take a closer look. Being Jewish is not a matter of religiosity. Being Jewish is a matter of being born into a covenant relationship that God established with Abraham, passed down to Isaac, Jacob, and eventually to their descendants. God inaugurated a covenant with the Jewish people who were chosen for a mission: *proclaim to the world that there is just one God.*

People become Jewish by birth. They are born to Jewish parents into this covenant. For males, this covenant is sealed with the sign of circumcision on the eighth day after birth. Frequently I've heard it said, "I was born Jewish and I will die Jewish, so nothing's going to cause me to change my ways." Some Jewish people mistakenly equate belief in Jesus with becoming a gentile.

The accoutrements of the church today seem very un-Jewish. The culture, music and fellowship are totally different from what Jewish people would find in the synagogue or their home. Therefore, they conclude, Christianity must not be Jewish!

Physical birth plays an important role in maintaining the Jewish lineage within the community. Many Jewish people can still maintain a misconception that Jewish parents produce Jewish babies, therefore Christian parents produce Christian babies.

An old saying might clarify this point: "Being born in a Christian home doesn't make you a Christian any more than being born in a bakery makes you a bagel." This old and slightly humorous statement conveys a real Biblical truth: no one, neither Jewish nor gentile, becomes a Christian by physical birth. Christian parents do not produce Christian babies at birth. The Holy Spirit works in the lives of individuals and through Baptism.

There are two kinds of physical births in this world, those that are Jewish, and those that are gentile (coming from the Hebrew term Goy, meaning of the nations as opposed to being from the 12 tribes of Israel). But both Jewish AND gentiles become be-



lievers, and become New Testament chosen people in the same way — by grace, through faith, in Jesus the Messiah. This is the gift of God. It is not something we are born into or something we can earn. This is very important to communicate with your Jewish friends.

From the beginning you need to have a frame of reference that demonstrates to your unsaved friends that you are not trying to change them from being Jewish into a gentile. And you are not trying to get them to stop being Jewish, either. Rather, have your Jewish friend consider the fact that the Messiah of Israel has come to free us from the penalty of sin. And that belief in the Messiah is the only way to eternal life. Though it may not be traditionally taught within the community, it is very clearly taught throughout the scriptures.

Some terms used today to describe Jewish people who are believers in Jesus are: Jewish Christians, Christian Jews, Hebrew Christians, Messianic Jews, Jewish Believers, Jews for Jesus and Followers of Y'Shua. Each title conveys the same truth — people who are Jewish who also believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Some Jewish believers are found worshiping in Messianic congregations, while others are sprinkled throughout mainline denominations of the body of Christ today. But all Jewish believers have one thing in common – salvation through Jesus by faith. They also hold this in common with their gentile brothers and sisters.

Whereas Paul says in Galatians 3:28 *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* Paul did not mean that there were no longer men and women or Jews and gentiles on this earth. Paul meant that believers enjoy unity, a unity given to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. This unity can help us to build bridges and to raise an effective testimony for our Lord and Savior and what He has done for us.

So if someone says to you, “I can’t believe in Jesus, because if I do I will stop being Jewish,” review this section to understand what the Bible says about being Jewish. Believing in the Messiah today does not mean that you stop being Jewish, but in fact the Old Testament promises have found their fulfillment and completion in Jesus in the New Testament. Belief in Jesus is an affirmation, not a denial, of being Jewish.

2) Frequently, when speaking with Jewish people, we find that the kinds of spiritual questions we’re posing are ones they have no experience in dealing with. A traditional response is to shift the question away from the hearer to the Rabbi’s shoulders. So, a second kind of objection is: ***“If Jesus is the Messiah, then why don’t our Rabbis believe, or understand, or teach us about Him?”***

The Rabbi is the chief figure within the religious community, and is in a position



of authority. He has studied, dreamt and hoped for Messiah to come. Obviously, Jewish people reason, if Messiah had come, their Rabbi would let them know! When you respond to this question, you must understand the basis of rabbinic study today.

Rabbinic study derives from a *Talmudic* point of view. (The Talmud is the compilation of rabbinic commentaries on the first five books of the Bible comprising of two main sections: The Mishna and Gemorrah. Mishna is direct commentary on scripture, while Gemorrah is commentary on Mishna.) The emphasis and focus of the Talmud is that Messiah is yet to come. It is not an open question for Rabbis today whether or not Messiah has come, but everything leads to and focuses on the hope of the future coming of our Messiah.

Besides pointing this out, it is important to relate that many Rabbis throughout history have followed Jesus as Messiah. Their testimonies are written up in pamphlets and journals from many Jewish mission organizations. One of the most prominent was an Orthodox Rabbi by the name of Isaac Lichtenstein of Hungary. In his early rabbinic career, he was introduced to the New Testament. Tradition tells us that he was so upset that somebody brought him a copy that he threw the New Testament across the room, and it fell behind some older books on his shelf.

Some 40 years later, as he was cleaning his shelves, he came across the copy of the New Testament. This time, instead of anger, he sat down in interest and read about Jesus for the first time. As he read, he became convinced of the truth that Jesus was indeed the Messiah of Israel. And, in his congregation in Hungary, he publicly proclaimed the Messiahship of Jesus.

Many have followed his example and testimony. In the early 1900s, a German Rabbi, Max Wortheimer, came to the United States and graduated from Hebrew Union College. He wrote of his experience in a book entitled, *How a Rabbi Found Peace*. Rabbi Paul Levinhof, had a congregation of some 700 Jewish believers in the London area. Rabbi Joseph Rabinowitz of Kichenev in Russia had a following of several thousand Messianic Jewish believers.

Rabbi Leopold Cohn was the founder of the Williamsburg Mission in the early 1880s, which eventually came to be known as the American Board of Missions to the Jews. That mission is still growing and going strong across North America. And don't forget Rabbi Saul of Tarsus!

Many Jewish believers are not Rabbis, but men of distinction. They have become known throughout the world. Benjamin Disraeli, the Prime Minister of England, was a great writer. Samuel Isaac Joseph Sherashefsky was a renowned Hebrew Christian



called by God to go to China and bring the testimony of the Gospel to people there. He was called to translate the scriptures into Mandarin. The testimony of his afflictions, and yet his persistence and perseverance in the Gospel is a great encouragement to many who enter into the mission field today.

According to the Jewish historian Neander nearly one million Jewish people were believers in the Messiah at the end of the first century!

Today some Rabbis estimate that nearly 2,000 - 3,000 Jewish people come to believe in Jesus as Messiah each year. There are no accurate numbers, however, because a census of Jewish believers has yet to be taken. Estimates vary as to how many Jewish believers are in the world today, and it is difficult to determine because many are secret believers. They have come to faith in Messiah, but for personal reasons — family, social or business reasons— have been unwilling or unable to go public in terms of their faith.

Jewish believers today are by no means the majority within the Jewish community, your friend might argue. You may answer by pointing out that truth has never been determined by a majority vote. Throughout Jewish history, we find times when Jewish people were called to follow the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but many fell away. Early in Moses' life, he was rejected by his brothers and sisters and the people of Israel. The prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah did not find universal acceptance of their message. Instead, they were rejected, scorned and mocked.

So if Moses and the prophets were rejected, would it be any different for the Messiah of Israel? The scriptures indicate clearly that the Messiah would be rejected. In Isaiah 53:1-4, we find: *“Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.”*

Messianic expectations of the religious and political leaders of the Jewish people in Jesus' day were not focused on the suffering servant pictured in Isaiah 53. Rather, they hoped for a conquering king who would remove the Roman yoke, a rule that strangled them and placed burdens upon their shoulders.

The first advent of Jesus was really to make atonement for all sin, and to reconcile man to God. The external political situation of that time did not change, and so the hopes of many for peace in the world were dashed at the foot of the cross.

But this fact is not something unexpected. Isaiah 6 provides a preview of what



would happen. Isaiah the prophet had a vision of the Lord. He was cleansed by hot coals from the altar as they touched his lips, and he was sent out into the world with a message. In Isaiah 6:9-10, the Lord says, *“Go, and say to this people, hear and hear, but do not understand. See and see, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”*

Not only is this true of what happened during Isaiah’s ministry, but it’s a future statement of what happened during Messiah’s ministry. For many heard the message of Messiah at that time, but they did not hear with their ears or understand with their hearts, and turn at that point to be healed.

People might ask, “Why would God, for a period of time, blind the hearts and the minds of some Jewish people?” This mystery is revealed as Paul explains in Romans 11:1-11 - *“I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don’t you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel: ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me?’ And what was God’s answer to him? ‘I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, as it is written: ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day.’ And David says: ‘May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.’ Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.”*

So what can we draw from these verses in Romans 11? In the 21st century, perhaps we can look back to see that it was part of God’s plan that not all of the Jewish people would acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah when He came the first time. Some would, but many would have their hearts hardened. With the hardening of the hearts of some Jewish people, we find the spreading of the Gospel of the Word of God to the gentiles who are grafted into the olive tree. God established a covenant with Israel and a plan for worldwide salvation through the Messiah – thus gentiles who believed in Jesus were called in turn to provoke many Jewish people to jealousy on account of their faith in the Jewish Messiah.

Perhaps we can speculate and ask, “What would happen if Jesus had been universally accepted by the Jewish people when he came? Would Jewish people have gone out into the world proclaiming the fact that Messiah had come to the non-Jewish people?”



Again, it's mere speculation, but some people would say, "No, that would not have happened." Yet salvation was not to be confined to the Jewish people alone, but salvation was to be brought to the entire world. So perhaps we can see why this is part of God's plan, that for a time, some of the Jewish people will not believe. However, this is not an eternal state of unbelief, but a temporary state of hardness of heart and spiritual blindness for some.

3) A corollary to the argument concerning why Rabbis don't believe is a third common objection: ***If Jesus is the Messiah, then why is there no peace in the world? Why do we still have wars and famines and other troubles facing us?***

The emphasis has become one-sided as we look at the Messianic speculation of Jewish people today. Instead of looking for a suffering servant described in Isaiah or Zechariah, the hope for Jewish people today is that Messiah will be a king, a ruler who will come down to this earth, rule from Jerusalem and bring peace to the world. Jewish people long for a time when the lion will lay down with the lamb (Isaiah 11:6) and swords be beaten into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4).

As we watch any TV broadcast or read any newspaper or magazine, we find just the opposite condition in the world. So many Jewish people simply conclude, "It's obvious! Messiah has not yet come."

Additionally, most Jewish people have been molded by a tradition that says there is one coming of Messiah, not two. "We are looking for king Messiah. We are waiting for Him to come and establish His rule on this earth" is a common response from Jewish leaders and individuals today.

But this is not the historic Messianic understanding. For up until around 700 years ago, our rabbis and leaders have taught not just one coming of Messiah – but two. The mosaic that is painted of Messianic prophecy within the scriptures portrays two different pictures. One picture is that of a king, who will come and bring peace. The other is that of a servant, who suffers, is rejected, and dies.

Our rabbis have identified these two types of figures with labels: *Messiah Ben David* and *Messiah Ben Joseph*. Messiah Ben David is the Messianic figure who would sit on the throne of David, bringing peace and rule. Messiah Ben Joseph is the Messianic figure who, like Joseph, would be rejected by his own family and left for dead. He went to Egypt and found favor and eventually grew into a high position within that non-Jewish community. Eventually he was able to restore life to his brothers and family as they faced death through a famine throughout the land. Messiah Ben Joseph is a figure rejected at first, but received later by family and friends.



Throughout Jewish history, much Messianic literature has evolved that comments upon the Hebrew scriptures. Various forms have been set forth in traditional form, codified, and brought down to us today. This literature speaks of scripture in a homiletic sense and seeks to explain the scripture through the telling of stories, known as midrash.

One example of this literature is called *Pesikta Rabbati*, a compilation of at least two rabbinic figures who wrote on the Jewish festivals. The *Pesikta Rabbati* is thought to have surfaced around the middle of the ninth century C.E. An interesting portion in section 162a. comments upon Messiah, known as “the suffering Messiah.” The English translation of this portion is found in a book entitled *The Messiah Texts* by Raphael Patai.

In a reading from a section on the suffering servant of Messiah, found on page eleven, he writes: “A certain rabbi said, ‘In the future Jerusalem will be a lantern for the nations of the world. And they will walk in her light.’ ‘In thy light do we see light,’ says the psalmist, chapter 36. v.10. This is the light of Messiah, as it is written, ‘and God saw the light and it was good.’ This teaches us that the holy one, blessed be He, saw the generation of Messiah and its deeds prior to the creation of the world, and He hid the light from the Messiah and His generation under His throne of glory.

“Satan said before the Holy One, blessed be He, ‘Master of the world, the light which is hidden underneath Your throne of glory, for whom is it destined?’ The Lord said to him, ‘for him who will turn you back and disgrace you and shame your face.’ And he said to Him, ‘Master of the world, show Him to me.’ The Lord said to Satan, ‘come and see Him.’ When Satan saw the Messiah, he trembled and fell upon his face and said, ‘surely this is the Messiah who, in the future, will cast me and all the princes of the nation into the world, into Gehenna.’

“In that hour the nations became awestruck and said to Him, ‘Master of the world, who is He in whose hands we shall fall? What is His name and what is His nature?’ The Holy one, blessed be He, said to them, ‘His name is Ephriam, the true Messiah. He will raise His stature and the stature of His generation, and will light up the eyes. He will save His people, that no nation or language shall be able to stand up against Him. All His enemies and adversaries will be frightened and will flee from Him. Even the rivers will cease to flow into the sea.’

“The Holy One, blessed be He, began to tell Messiah the conditions of His future mission, and He said unto Him, ‘Those who are hidden with you, that is, your generation, their sins will in the future force you into an iron yoke, and they will render you like unto this calf, whose eyes have grown dim. And they will choke your spirit with the yoke and because of their sins, your tongue will cleave to the roof of your mouth. Do you accept





this?’ The Messiah said before The Holy One, blessed be He, ‘Master of the world, will that suffering last many years?’ The Holy One, blessed be He, said unto Him, ‘By your life and the life of my head, it is a centenary of what it is that I have decreed upon you. But if your soul is troubled, I shall banish them as from this very moment.’

“He said unto Him, ‘Master of the world, with gladness in my soul and with joy in my heart, I accept it, so that not a single one of Israel should perish. And not only those who are alive should be saved in my days, but even the dead, who have died from the days of Adam the first man until now. And not only they, but even the stillborn shall be saved in my days. And not only the stillborn, but even those whose creation you gave thought, but who were not created. This is what I want, and this is what I accept.’ ”

Scholars have repeatedly speculated about the origin of Messiah Ben Joseph, and wondered at the fact that the Messiah figure was split into two. At an early stage, the death of Messiah was pictured and developed as a consequence of the suffering servant text. Perhaps it results from a prophecy in Daniel 9:24-26.

The question remains, to what end do we find a suffering Messiah, one who dies as opposed to one who would be a king? When God established the covenant relationship between Abraham and Himself, between Moses and Himself, and the people of Israel, He declared a principle – the people were to follow the commandments of the Lord, to seek His heart and to do His will.

Isaiah 59:1-2 says, “*Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.* ”

In Jeremiah 3:11 ff, we read, “*The LORD said to me, ‘Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah. Go, proclaim this message toward the north: “Return, faithless Israel,” declares the LORD, “I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,” declares the LORD, “I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt — you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,” declares the LORD. “Return, faithless people,” declares the LORD, “for I am your husband. I will choose you — one from a town and two from a clan — and bring you to Zion. Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding. In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the LORD, “men will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts.’ ” ’ ”*



Man was given the freedom to follow or not follow God's commandments. The consequence of men not following His commandments is evident. The relationship between man and his creator is severed. Israel had to first acknowledge their iniquity, their sin, and then God would grant them the blessings of the covenant He established.

Before there can be peace in the world, man must have peace with God — a proper, unique and harmonious relationship with God — and peace with himself. That peace cannot be found until man deals with his sin, which destroys any peace between man and God. Before Messianic benefits can be had, an intimate relationship between God and His people must be restored.

In Ezekiel 36:22-28, we see these principles: *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.’ ”*

In verse 25, we read that there must be a cleansing for the forgiveness of sin. This cleansing and forgiveness results in the spirit of God dwelling within man and bringing about a new nature, inclinations and attitudes. Redemption and Messianic blessings without man's repentance and regeneration is untenable and morally impossible. Man, in an unregenerated condition, would only spoil the Messianic blessings God can give. To argue against this denies the testimony of the scriptures and ignores God's holiness and justice.

So how do we find forgiveness for sins? The prophet Daniel 9:24-26 sheds light: *“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will*



*be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. ”*

The purpose of the coming of Messiah, we find in verse 24, is to end sin, to make reconciliation to atone for sin, and to bring an opportunity for everlasting righteousness. Through Messiah’s death, this will be accomplished. He will be cut off from the land of the living, Isaiah the prophet said in a very moving way.

Isaiah 52: 13 to 53:12 are key Messianic passages: *“See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness— so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

*“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*

*“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.*

*“Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”*



This clearly indicates that Messiah will be “the sin-bearer.” He will take our sins upon Him, and affect atonement for our sin. As a result of His atonement, man will be restored to the proper relationship with God. Man must first be made right with God before peace in the world is possible.

You can gain clear insight into the full meaning of atonement by reading Leviticus 16. Here we find God’s proscribed means for restoring sinful man to a right relationship with himself. This is the centerpiece of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, with its highlight being Leviticus 17:10-11. God indicates clearly that there must be the shedding of blood before atonement and forgiveness of sins can be found.

So, if Jewish people say, **“If Jesus is the Messiah, then why is there no peace in the world? The lion is supposed to lay down with the lamb and swords are to be beaten into plowshares!”** You can give this answer, “Indeed, we have peace. A peace, as the New Testament says, which passes all understanding. A peace of heart, a peace of mind. A peace with God, that comes first through the death of Messiah, our faith in Him, and subsequently, eternal peace through His return.”

A corollary to the question above is, **“Where does it say in the Jewish Bible that there would be two comings of the Messiah?”** This question will be answered in the chapter that deals with Messianic prophecy.

4) A fourth objection: **We Jewish people can go directly to God when we pray. We do not need an intermediary.** Traditional Judaism as practiced today does not have a mediator for the people. Rabbis serve as the leaders of congregations, but not as go-betweens between the individual and the almighty. Yet, traditional Judaism today is much different from revealed Biblical Judaism.

Moses, Aaron and the priesthood served as intermediaries between the people and the Lord. Leviticus 16 explains how it was the function of the high priest to mediate once a year between the people of Israel and the Lord, to make atonement on Yom Kippur. An individual could not make his own sacrifice, nor could he take his own sacrifice into the Holy of Holies. Instead, the high priest alone was allowed, this one time a year, to make atonement for all the people’s sins.

So we see the picture of a mediator, who stood for the people before the Lord. Hebrews 9:11-15, **“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having**



*obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”*

Today, traditional Judaism does not seek a mediator. But Biblical Judaism focuses on the priest, who serves all Israel as mediator. The ultimate mediator for all mankind is our Messiah. Sinful men cannot approach God’s holy presence. We first must be cleansed. Jesus has accomplished this work, who, though sinless, made it possible for us to be cleansed. Acknowledging that Messiah is the One who atones for our sins acknowledges that Messiah is not a mere human, but God incarnate. Only God is without sin, and only the Messiah can make atonement for all our sin and redeem mankind. This is none other than Jesus.

5) The fifth objection: ***Christians believe in three Gods. But Jewish people believe in only One God.*** Because Jewish people hear Christians talk about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it appears to some that Christians worship more than one God. We know that Christianity does not teach tri-theism, but rather one God revealed in three persons, the Trinity.

Jewish people react strongly against the thought of the Trinity because of the Sh’mah in Deuteronomy 6:4: Sh’mah Israe Adonai Elohenu, Adonai Echad. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One.” Many Jewish people say it is impossible for there to be a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because there is just one God, as it says in the Sh’mah.

The Hebrew word for One is *echad*. A literal translation of this word is not “one” in the numerical sense, but one in the sense of a complex unity. The Hebrew word *echad* is found many places in the scriptures. One of the first is Genesis 2:23-24. God brings Eve to Adam, who says, “*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.*” Verse 24 says, “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*”

Two people are perceived as one. The picture is one of complex unity – two distinct individuals, yet viewed with a single eye by God. Another example of the complexity of this unity of *echad* is found in Numbers 13:23. “*When they reached the Valley of Eshcol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it*



on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs.” The phrase, the cluster of grapes, the single cluster of grapes, is referred to as *echad*, a grouping of individual grapes but bound together on one cluster. Many grapes but one cluster.

*Echad* can be contrasted with the word that means “absolute oneness”—*Yachid*. *Yachid* is found in many instances of scripture, but here are just two. In Genesis 22:2, Abraham is instructed to take Isaac, his only son – *Yachid* – to offer him up. This *Yachid* refers to the one son of Abraham and Sarah. Again, a similar phrase, “your only son,” is found in Jeremiah 6:26. Though the Hebrew word *echad* does not automatically imply a trinity, it does leave evidence that the nature of God is more than *Yachid*, a single, absolute oneness, but rather, a complex unity.

There is an excellent pamphlet that has been reprinted from the publication called, *Issues*, volume 1, no. 8, written by Arnold Fruchtenbaum. The pamphlet is entitled “Jewishness and the Trinity” and is available from the offices of Jews for Jesus. You can obtain one by writing them at 60 Haight Street, San Francisco CA, 94102.

This pamphlet clearly lays out the bulk of this lengthy argument concerning Jewishness and the Trinity. Some areas discussed in this pamphlet deal with: the name of God as a plural; plural pronouns used to refer to God; plural descriptions of God; the Sh’mah; and how many persons of God there are (the three personalities found in the same passage, such as Isaiah 48:12-16). It also deals with New Testament scripture.

6) The sixth objection is found in an underlying attitude. ***Many Jewish people today think that you cannot be Jewish and believe in the Trinity at the same time.*** Now, rather than wrestling with the theological issue of explaining the Trinity, or trying to convince someone of the three persons of God, it’s more important to deal with the nature of God and the attitude that causes this.

At best, what you can do is say that in your own life you have come to understand that God is one who reveals Himself. There are many things about God one cannot fully understand, because He is infinite and our minds are finite. But you do believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of the Messiah of Israel. A Jewish person cannot theologially argue against your personal experience if you have encountered the Triune God. Certainly, one would not stop being Jewish if he believed in this Messiah.

7) ***A seventh objection is that Jewish people don’t believe in original sin.*** How can we, as human beings, be responsible for the sin that Adam committed in the Garden of Eden?, they ask. Many Jewish people question the scriptures’ veracity or truthfulness. Some teach that Adam and Eve and the stories of creation are not real, but merely fables or settings that try to explain creation and the nature of Man today.

Jewish tradition holds that Man is made up of two inclinations. One, the Yetzer



Ha Tov , the good inclination, and the other, the Yetzer Ha Rah, the evil inclination. These two sparks of good and evil are instilled in man at birth. Man lives out his life in a struggle for the good to overcome the evil on this plane. Original sin is not seen as something needing attention. Jewish people concentrate on the struggle with our day-to-day evil inclinations, to overcome them with the good ones.

From a Biblical standpoint, original sin means that mankind suffers from the consequences of Adam's transgressions. The effect of his disobedience is passed down from generation to generation, to our own lives today. This means that sin is part of Man's nature, rather than an outward action or attitude. The nature of sin within us causes us to commit sinful acts.

Jewish people today tend to think of sin in terms of deeds, not as a characteristic. Robbery, murder or idolatry are actions viewed as sins committed by Man. This does not take into consideration the Biblical understanding of Human Nature. The Bible says that we are disease-ridden by our sin. Much of modern Jewish thought today says it is possible for Man to live a moral and exemplary life, and to make decent, good moral choices.

We can agree that it is possible to lead a good life, and to practice ethics, perhaps even to raise the level of society. But this does not deal with man's relationship to God. What can one say when he comes face to face with God in a disease-ridden condition of sin? What good have we in our lives? What do the scriptures say about the nature of this relationship?

Let's review briefly what scriptures say. In Jeremiah 17:9, we read the following: *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* In Ecclesiastes 7:20, we find, *"There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins."* In Psalm 14:2-3, *"The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

Isaiah 53:6 describes the condition of man's relationship with God: *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

Because God is both loving and just, He cannot simply wink at or overlook our sin. He must judge and reject it. We must be judged in light of our sin, and be found either innocent or guilty. Without Jesus, we are found guilty. In Ezekiel 18:4, we read

how all souls belong to the Lord, the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son. The soul that sins is to die – both a physical and spiritual death. **Separation from God is a direct consequence of our sin.**



Other verses dealing with this subject are Jeremiah 31:29, and Song of Solomon 5:5-7. A barrier of sin exists between man and God.

Isaiah 59 :1-2 reads, *“Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

Frequently people think that making themselves right before God is simple – do a bunch of good deeds, here and now. This attitude is pervasive today, but it does not match the teaching of scripture. In Isaiah 64:5-6, we find, *“ You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”*

Because of our sinful nature, God considers even our righteous deeds and good acts to be considered polluted. Why? Because they are stained with the sinfulness of our hearts, which must be atoned for by the shedding of blood. Our own efforts are insufficient, in every way, to make us right before God. The Psalmist says in 49:7- 8: *“No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him — the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough.”*

And yet, God does not leave us in a hopeless state. Psalm 49:17 says, *“For he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him.”* We trust and hope in God’s provision of the Messiah. His death is sufficient for our sin — our original sin and all the sins we have committed throughout our lives.

The provision that God made prior to the coming of Messiah was the sacrificial system and its offerings. That system allowed Jewish people to satisfy God’s requirements through the shedding of blood, a repentant heart, and an attitude desirous of returning to this right relationship with God.

These same principles apply today. This time, though, it is through the blood of the Messiah. The Lord has dealt with our sin, has judged us and has made provision. When Jesus came and offered up His life, His sacrifice once and for all, He made it possible for both Jews and gentiles to enter into this living relationship with God, through repentance and faith. Though someone today may say that he does not believe in original sin, encourage him to consider the testimony of the scriptures and to take them seriously to heart. God doesn’t turn His eyes from our sin, but rather makes provision for us in Jesus Christ’s shed blood, if we will only receive it.





8) **The eighth common objection raised is that it is difficult to understand a religion that believes in a virgin birth.** Many Jewish people today are at least familiar with the story of Jesus' birth. They probably have not read about the nativity through the scriptures, but they have seen Christmas pageants, plays, stories and movies. They acknowledge that teaching, but they do not accept it.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah 7:14 refers to the virgin birth. Arguments have raged for centuries over the meaning of the word "virgin." In Hebrew, virgin is "Almah," a word found only seven times in the Old Testament — Genesis 24:43, Exodus 2:8, Psalm 68:25, Proverbs 30:19, Song of Solomon 1:3, and 6:8, and of course, Isaiah 7:14.

In each of these, apart from Isaiah 7:14, we find that the Hebrew word *Almah* is translated to "virgin." Logic and hermeneutics would dictate that a word taken for a certain meaning in six other instances should mean the same in the seventh instance. Yet, many today contend that the word *Almah* does not mean virgin, and that Jesus therefore was not born of a virgin.

To give you an overview of the apologetic against the teaching that Messiah is born of a virgin, see the book *The Jew and the Christian Missionary: A Christian Response to Missionary Christianity*, by Gerald Segal, published in 1981 by CDEV Publishing Company. In chapter eight, Mr. Segal devotes nine pages to "the virgin birth myth," as he calls it. He looks for many ways to try to tear down this clear scriptural teaching that Messiah would be born of a virgin.

I learned a few years ago, that when the Septuagint was translated, some 150 years prior to Jesus' birth, the Hebrew word *Almah* was translated into the Greek word *Parthenos*. One day, as I was speaking to a group in New York City, a young student from Greece heard me mention this word, *Parthenos*. She said, "Why, that word only means 'virgin.'" "

The translators of the Septuagint took great pains and care to translate the Hebrew meaning into Greek. While it was not a problem 200 years before the birth of the Messiah whether Isaiah 7:14 referred to a virgin or not, it became a great problem subsequent to the New Testament accounts of the birth of the Messiah Jesus.

Practically speaking, we can recognize that God is supreme over all His creation. God can do anything He wants to carry out His purposes. He can part a Red Sea, cause Abraham to have a child at 100 years old and Sarah at 90, and provide manna in the desert. He can work miracle upon miracle, and bring about the birth of His Son, Jesus, through a virgin.

9) A ninth common question also references Isaiah 7:14. "Emmanuel" literally means "God with us." Many Jewish people today say, ***How can Jesus, being a man,***



### *make Himself to be God?*

Exodus 20:4-6, one of the 10 commandments, says, “*You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.*”

From this, Jewish people extrapolate that God can in no way take on human form. Therefore Jesus was merely a man, only saying He was God. The question shouldn’t be, “Didn’t Man make himself to be God?” but rather “Did God make Himself to be Man, in order to express His love toward us?”

Throughout scripture we find several incidences of God appearing in the form of Man, called “theophanies.” In Genesis 18, the Lord appears in the presence of two other angels before Abraham. The Lord sits down, eats and is served with Abraham and the others.

It was not out of the realm of possibility for God to take on human form. But it is unique that the person of Jesus became incarnate as a baby, grew as a boy, and experienced the anguish and pains, suffering and joys that we human beings experience. Only in God becoming Man could He experience firsthand what we struggle with in our daily lives. Now, as the risen Messiah, He can truly intercede for us, knowing our sufferings and temptations.

The eighth chapter of Josh McDowell’s book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, entitled, “The Great Proposition,” includes an excellent 30-page description focusing on the purpose and nature of God becoming a man. I encourage you to include this textbook in your library.

10) The tenth objection I commonly hear is, **How can Jesus rightfully claim to be heir to David’s throne, if he was born of a virgin?** Since Joseph wasn’t his real father, He has no right to be Messiah and King. That right is transmitted only through the father.

In order to properly evaluate this objection, we must first ascertain whether women can receive and transmit inheritance rights, according to scripture. In Numbers 27:3, we read that Zeloaphad died, and had no sons. His daughters came to Moses, and asked if they could be given their father’s inheritance. Moses agreed that their reasoning was correct, and he gave them their inheritance. In the eighth verse, he was commanded



by God to tell Israel, that if a man dies without a son, his inheritance passes to his daughter. So, according to the scripture, women had property, as well as inheritance, rights.

Judges 4 and 5 shows us that women had administrative rights as well. Deborah, the Prophetess, exercised leadership and delivered Israel from the Canaanites. Under her administration, God gave Israel peace from their enemies for some 40 years. In 2 King 11:1, we find Queen Athaliah ruled Judah for a six-year period. Later, she was overthrown, not because she was a woman, but because she had seized power through murder and intrigue. Queen Salome Alexandra ruled Israel, and is remembered as a wise and a good ruler from the year 76 to 67 B.C.E. She even helped to heal many political divisions, and kept Israel free from invasion.

Numbers 36:1 ff states: *“The family heads of the clan of Gilead son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, who were from the clans of the descendants of Joseph, came and spoke before Moses and the leaders, the heads of the Israelite families. They said, “When the LORD commanded my lord to give the land as an inheritance to the Israelites by lot, he ordered you to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. Now suppose they marry men from other Israelite tribes; then their inheritance will be taken from our ancestral inheritance and added to that of the tribe they marry into. And so part of the inheritance allotted to us will be taken away. When the Year of Jubilee for the Israelites comes, their inheritance will be added to that of the tribe into which they marry, and their property will be taken from the tribal inheritance of our forefathers.”* In verse 9, we read, *“No inheritance may pass from tribe to tribe, for each Israelite tribe is to keep the land it inherits.”*

We find by command of the Lord that inheritance rights can be transferred through a woman, but must stay within the tribe. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a descendent of King David through Nathan. Joseph, Mary’s husband, also was a descendent of King David through Solomon. Mary married into the same tribe, and maintained her inheritance right. Yet there is no record of Mary having any brothers, so the inheritance of Heli, Mary’s father, was passed down to her.

2 Samuel 7:12-16 says, *“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”*

God promised David that his throne would be established forever. Jeremiah



22:30 speaks about Jekoniah, one of Solomon's descendants. Because of Jekoniah's idolatry, and his great sins against the Lord, none of Jekoniah's descendants would ever rule in the kingdom of Judah. The promise of the eternal throne was given unconditionally to King David, but not to Solomon. Therefore, we should discern that David's inheritance and rights must be transmitted through some other line than that of Solomon and Jekoniah.

It's interesting to find in 1 Chronicles 3:5: "*and these were the children born to him there: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon. These four were by Bathsheba daughter of Ammiel.*" Now, we know from 2 Samuel 12:24 that Solomon was born before Nathan. But perhaps this is a foreglimpse of the importance of Nathan over Solomon in the Messianic lineage. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a direct descendent of Nathan, and therefore of David. Mary and Joseph were of David's lineage, since the two were married. The inheritance rights were maintained and were capable of being passed down through the mother to Jesus.

But consider something equally important. Had Joseph been Jesus' physical father, he would have been barred from passing down the inherited throne to Jesus, because of the prophecy Jeremiah gave concerning Jekoniah. In this light, the virgin birth is the Lord's answer to a problem established through Jekoniah's idolatry. God provided for throne rights to be passed down through Mary, as Jesus was not the physical seed of Joseph.

Jesus was not barred from inheriting from Joseph, however. Jesus was the adopted step-child of Joseph. Through this adoption, he was able to receive all rights as a direct child.

11) The eleventh objection speaks of eternity. ***Many Jewish people today wrestle with the concept of the Biblical teaching concerning heaven and hell.*** It's more modern and upbeat to say that heaven and hell are here on earth, rather than an eternal place of abode. We make them ourselves and so eliminate the consequences of sin.

Jewish people who come from a more liberal background say that there is life after this life. But it is not our personal existence, rather the memories of the good deeds we have done that are passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, the most important thing for us to do on earth today is not worry about our eternal future, but to concentrate on doing the best we can here and now.

Many verses of scripture speak to this, but let's examine just two. Psalm 9:15-17 says, "*The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug; their feet are caught in the net they have hidden. The LORD is known by his justice; the wicked are ensnared by the*



work of their hands. Higgaiion. Selah 17 The wicked return to the grave, all the nations that forget God. ” In Daniel 12:2 (verse 1 in the Hebrew text), we find: “*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.* ”

Scripture clearly indicates life continues beyond the grave – a place of everlasting life with God or everlasting life in a place apart from God. Whether this conjures up a picture of heaven with angels floating around in clouds, or a hell with devils and pitchforks and flames shooting out, the reality is this – people who believe in Jesus and have their sins redeemed will live in the presence of God and those who do not believe in Jesus and have no provision for their sin will find themselves apart from God. The determining factor that determines our eternal life is how we deal with our sin.

12) This Biblical reality has unfortunately led to an emotional response, and the twelfth objection: ***If this is the case, that only those people who believe in Jesus go to heaven, what about my friends or relatives who died in the holocaust?*** Are you telling me that the six million people who died in Germany are going to spend eternity in hell simply because they didn’t accept Jesus? The corollary to that of course, is, ***“Where was God when the six million people died?”***

The emotions of many Jewish memories are tied and bound to those who died in the concentration camps of Dachau and Auschwitz. Six million Jewish people were killed during that tragic time. But an additional 24 million non-Jewish people also lost their lives during World War II. It is unfair to drag their memories into the balance scale of human judgement that each person faces.

We should respond with compassion, understanding and love for the person who raises these objections – but dying in a concentration camp is not sufficient to atone for anyone’s sins. Historically speaking, six million Jewish people in Eastern Europe in the 1940s are just one part of an ongoing attempt to eliminate Jewish people from the face of this earth. Pharaoh, Haman, Czars, and Hitler all have sought to destroy the Jewish people. None have yet succeeded, nor will they succeed.

If it were possible to eliminate Jews from this earth, then it would be possible to thwart God’s eternal plan, which includes the Jewish people coming to faith. Jeremiah 31:35-38 promises that heaven and earth would have to pass away before the Jewish people could be removed from the face of this earth.

So, how do you answer, “Where was God during the carnage, as Jewish people lost their lives?” At best, we can say God was mourning over the dead and persecuted, and mourning over those minds who were confused by a lust for power.



God created us with a free will. He allows us to make free, independent, moral choices. We are independent of each other, and we can act independently of God, if we choose. Unfortunately, some have allowed that independent action to lead to mass destruction of many people, including Jewish people. Instead of choosing the ability to love and rejoice, to choose peace, some have chosen hatred, war, and even a holocaust.

Mankind has responded to the privilege God gave us of making good moral choices with a history of irresponsibly making many immoral choices. In the end, we know that God will judge each man and woman for his or her decisions. Six million people's deaths cannot atone for even one person's sin. Affirm the fact that God has a plan for salvation and life eternal – only through the blood sacrifice of the perfect Son of God, Messiah.

13) Beyond the holocaust and the six million, what about all of the Christians who, throughout the centuries, have so hated and mistreated the Jewish people? Throughout history, we have seen that Jewish bloodshed has come at the hands of those who claimed to follow Jesus. Jewish people have suffered crusades and pogroms, the Holocaust and forced expulsions of entire communities by those who claimed to follow Jesus.

We must demonstrate the clear difference between what Jesus taught us to do, and what people have wrongfully done in His name. Jesus did not teach us to kill, but rather to lay down our lives for our brother. Yet these past acts remain strong emotional barriers in Jewish people's minds.

Unfortunately, even some of Martin Luther's writings have become a barrier to Jewish people hearing the Gospel today. (For a more detailed examination of the history of Jewish missions, see the second part of this book.)

We have one recourse — to demonstrate to our Jewish brethren that Jesus taught us to love one another. Anti-Jewish thought, anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish sentiments are absolutely inconsistent with the clear teachings of the scriptures!

Paul went a step further to say that this Good News should even be brought to the Jewish people first. Not first, because Jewish people are better, or of higher value to God, but first because the prophets, the scriptures and the Messiah Himself came through Jewish people. The opportunity for them to respond first was granted as a result of this. *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”* – Romans 1:16

Jewish people have other objections, but these give you a starting point. First,



pray before you speak to your Jewish friends. Most important, listen to them with an open heart. Learn to listen beneath the surface of the question so that you can hear the real objection they raise. When you hear their true fears, you will have an opportunity to open up communication and dialogue about the Gospel.

Not all of your Jewish friends will accept, right from the start, your words, deeds or testimony. But you can plant seeds for the Gospel. Water them with prayers and fertilize them with love, and the Holy Spirit can work in their lives.

### **A Biblical Chain to Witness to Jewish People from the Old Testament**

In witnessing to someone who is not Jewish you can easily present the Gospel from the New Testament, laying out the claims of Jesus as Messiah, showing how man is sinful and separated from God, and discussing reconciliation and redemption. But you should not do this when talking to Jewish people about Jesus. The New Testament is not acknowledged or recognized as authoritative in their life today. So the Gospel is best presented from the Old Testament.

Listed below is a chain of Old Testament passages, which, when linked together, help to clearly present the Gospel. You may wish to write these down in your Bible. Write the first verse in this Bible chain in the front of your Bible. When you've turned to the first verse, write down the second Bible verse at the bottom of that page. When you turn to the second Bible reference, write the third Biblical reference at the bottom of that page, etc. Your Bible will contain intact an entire chain of thought, without needing to memorize all the verses.

This can be applied not only to Jewish evangelism or witnessing, but to any spiritual principle or theme found throughout the scriptures. There are other parallel verses beyond the ones I list here, and you may wish to add to these.

(As I cautioned earlier, however, your presentation may be more meaningful to a Jewish person if he or she sees these words in their own copy of the scriptures. So you may wish to memorize the following references. Or, use your Bible and encourage your Jewish friend to use a copy of his or her scriptures. Point out that your books are the same, but in a different order.)

Once I have asked questions and listened carefully to what a particular Jewish person believes, I ask that person's permission to look with them at the scriptures. I ex-



plain I want to look together at what God says about man, sin and reconciliation.

First, I turn to Isaiah 59:1-2: *“Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

In this important portion of scripture we demonstrate the nature of God and man, and the consequences of sin between God and man. Some Jewish people consider sin as actions or misdeeds done against man or the Lord, rather than man’s chronic spiritual condition.

One Hebrew word used to denote sin is a word that translates to mean, “we fall short,” or “we miss the mark.” Use the example of an archer at an archery range, who aims an arrow at a target and most often misses the bulls-eye or is slightly off course. That’s how our sinful nature infects our lives. We may strive to do good, but it is impossible for us, and we fall short of doing it.

Next, follow your Biblical references to Leviticus 19:2: *“Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’”* Here we see what God’s real expectation and demand is for our life. His standard is perfection – measured against his revealed Law. We might try to live without sinning, but of course we find that no one is capable of living up to that standard. We all fall short.

Recognizing that we fall short of God’s standard on this earth, we also must help our Jewish brothers and sisters understand that there are consequences of this shortfall. Our sins cause us to be separated from God, so that He hides His face from us and does not hear. Man and his Creator are separated when we sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). But there is a much greater consequence.

Next, turn to Ezekiel 18:1-4: *“The word of the LORD came to me: ‘What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?’ As surely as I live’, declares the Sovereign LORD, ‘you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.’”*

When God established His covenant with Moses and the people of Israel on Mt. Sinai, they cried with one voice and heart, “We hear and we will obey the laws of our God.” But the Lord knew that their hearts and minds would eventually rebel against Him. He announced to them that some individual’s sins would cause consequences to fall not only on the individual who committed the sin, but would fall onto the second, third and perhaps fourth generation of that individual’s descendants.





In this verse, the Lord announces, through the prophet Ezekiel, that each individual will be held accountable for his own sin. All souls belong to God — the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son. And each individual is held accountable: the one who sins will die.

The scriptures talk about two different kinds of death: 1) Physical death, cessation of life as we know it, where the spirit or soul is separated from the body and 2) spiritual death, or, eternal separation from God. The Lord is speaking about both physical and spiritual death as a consequence of sin. Physical death is the result of the separation of mankind and God through sin. That separation is NOT healed at death. That separation is only healed through redemption in Messiah.

Even though physical death is everywhere around us, many Jewish people do not consider life after this life such an important issue. But, the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and can speak to those who doubt the truthfulness of scripture and the afterlife.

The next portion of scripture to turn to is Daniel 12:2 (v.1 in the Hebrew text): *“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”* Reform Judaism today focuses very little on life after this life. Conservative and Orthodox Judaism do speak of life after this life, but Rabbis have disagreements as to whether there is a degree of punishment – short-term, long-term or eternal – for those who’ve committed sins against God.

The scriptures testify that there is life after this life. Some find eternal life with God, while others experience suffering, shame and eternal contempt. I was challenged by this portion of scripture when I considered Jesus’ claims for the first time. Ask this question of your unsaved friend: “What’s going to make the difference between those who spend eternity with God and those who don’t? Where is the dividing line?” Then simply listen to his or her response.

Many Jewish people today will respond in a traditional way, saying “the things that we do on earth determine what our future is going to be. So we must seek to offset our evil by doing good.” How is man capable of achieving his own right relationship with God? That may be a traditional thought, but it is not Biblical.

Isaiah 64:6 says: *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”*

I shared this verse in a class I was teaching in Ft. Lauderdale a number of years



ago. One of the Christians present had invited her unsaved Orthodox Jewish friend to come and listen to the discussion. When I indicated to the class that the verse implies that our sins are like filthy rags she came up to me afterwards and proceeded to bore in on my comments. “How dare you imply that my good deeds done with a loving heart would be seen by God in such a disgusting manner?” My response was that those were not MY words, but God’s. She then told me she was going to speak with her son who was a rabbi in Israel. I told her that would be a good idea and I took her phone number. Two weeks later I called and asked what her son the rabbi said. She told me that he confirmed what I had said and that the scriptures clearly indicate our good deeds are like filthy rags. That brought her to a point of a dramatic shift in her world view. She had lived many years thinking that her place in eternity was secured through her deeds, but discovered that it is not. While I have yet to hear that she has responded in faith to Y’shua – I pray that she and many others will realize God’s gift of love for us in the Messiah.

Because we are sinful by nature, even the good deeds we do can not, in God’s eyes, avail enough to overcome our sinful nature. In fact, nothing we do of ourselves will avail anything for our relationship with God.

But our Lord does not leave us in a condition of hopelessness, condemned to eternal separation from Himself. From the beginning, the Lord desired a close personal relationship with His creation. In His covenant with Moses and the rest of the Hebrew people, He established a means of restoring the severed relationship because of sin. That means was a sacrificial system in which atonement, or covering, could be made for the sins of the people.

Leviticus 16 covers in great depth and detail the extent to which the Lord sought to make atonement for the Hebrew people’s sins. Rather than review this entire chapter, I urge you to personally outline that chapter, so that, in a few minutes, you can present its basic principles.

The High Priest is permitted, once a year, to enter into the Holy of Holies, and to sprinkle blood of a sacrificed animal upon the mercy seat. He does it twice, once for himself and once for the people of Israel. The picture here demonstrates substitutionary atonement. The Hebrew word for atonement, Kippur, literally means to “cover over.” The blood of the animal sacrificed in our place covers over the sin which keeps us from God. God sees the blood of the sacrificed animal, atonement is effected, and a relationship with Him is restored.

Next comes Leviticus 17:10-11. Verse 11 tells us that without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sin. As I see it, the central problem to traditional Judaism as it’s practiced today is this: The Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in the



year 70 of this era. Since the destruction of the Temple in Israel and its altar inside, there have been no animal sacrifices, no shedding of blood and no Yom Kippur sacrifices. So, in light of what the scriptures command, no atonement can be made.

Yet, *Yom Kippur* remains central during the High Holy Days as a time of prayer, giving to charity and repentance. But these three were never sufficient to fulfill the Biblical injunction to shed blood for the forgiveness of sin. ***A key question you might ask your Jewish friend: “How do you find atonement, or forgiveness for your sin today, since no sacrifices are made?”***

Having established the problem, God answers the need in the promise of a New Covenant found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Here the Lord announces the new covenant He’s going to make between the house of Israel and Judah and Himself. This New Covenant would be different from the law He established with Moses on Mt. Sinai, which was written upon tablets of stone. Instead, this New Covenant would be written upon men’s minds and hearts, that they might know and be able to do the law of God. How would this New Covenant come about?

Now, turn to Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. You can focus on all or a portion of these scriptures, but look mainly to verses 4-6, where we see that One was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and as it says in verse 6, “the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all..”

Many times I’ve had the opportunity to read the entire 53rd chapter of Isaiah to a Jewish individual. As I’ve read, I’ve asked them where they feel that portion of scripture comes from. Frequently they respond, “Why, you’re reading right out of the Christian New Testament, because it’s talking about Jesus.” Most do not realize or recognize that Isaiah’s prophecy was written some 700 years before the birth of Jesus. These words speak very clearly to the life, death and rejection of Messiah who would make final atonement for our sins once and for all.

Now, the question of the hour is: ***“How can we identify and recognize the true Messiah of Israel?”*** There are many specific Messianic prophecies that focus on the coming of Messiah, His death, His resurrection and His return.

### **Major Messianic Prophecies**

Often I’ve asked Jewish people this question, “When the Jewish Messiah comes, how will you know? How will you be able to identify the true Jewish Messiah from many over the centuries who have claimed to be Messiah, but weren’t?”



Most Jewish people today don't know how they will identify the Messiah of Israel. They typically respond, "Well, when He comes, we will just know it." Others say, "Our Rabbi will be sure to tell us when the Jewish Messiah is here, but we know He hasn't come yet."

Reverend Moon, the leader of the Unification Church, claims to be the Messiah. About 100 years ago, the founder of the Bh'ai faith also claimed to be the returning Messiah. Though both have many ardent followers, we know both are false Messiahs.

But how can anyone know for sure if a person is or isn't the Messiah of Israel? It's not a matter of personal opinion, or religious zeal, or majority vote. There is only one way to identify Messiah. We must look at the scriptural prophecies that point toward His coming.

Several hundred portions of scripture contain, to a greater or lesser degree, Messianic implications. Before you begin talking with people about Messianic prophecy, it's good to set the stage for them.

Say something like this. "Within the scriptures we find many pieces of a puzzle, that when fit together, give us the picture of Messiah. Within that picture are two very different and contrasting views of His work. Having one piece of the puzzle does not mean that you have the entire puzzle, or just getting pieces to fit around the edge does not mean that you have a complete picture."

The standard for fulfilling Messianic prophecy is not 20% or 50% or even 97%, but all prophecies must be fulfilled with 100% accuracy. Not all Messianic prophecies have been fulfilled to this day. Many point forward to the return of Messiah, and these are yet unfulfilled.

When discussing a prophetic passage, try to help the listener become acquainted with the date in which the prophecy was given, so that he can see it being fulfilled hundreds of years later. When citing a text, try to explain the portion in its context. It's important to explain elements of scripture that the listener may not understand, such as author, the audience he was writing to and the setting.

In this discussion, we will not go into lengthy detail of various Messianic portions, but we will strive to give you an overview of some of the major Messianic prophecies as well as their New Testament fulfillment. If you wish to study more, we recommend a book entitled, *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible*, published by Zondervan Publishing Company, and compiled by Herbert Lockyer.



On page 21 of this book is a statement by a Dr. A. T. Pearson, who reminds us that prophecy must be evaluated by three tests:

1. A prophecy must be such an unveiling of the future that no mere human foresight or wisdom could have guessed it.
2. The prediction must deal in sufficient detail as to exclude true guesswork.
3. There must be such a lapse of time between the prophecy and fulfillment, so as to preclude that agency of the prophet himself in effecting, or affecting, the result.

The first Messianic prophecy in the Bible is found in Genesis 3, a specific prophecy uttered by God and directed toward the serpent who beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Reading from Genesis 3: 14 ff, we find, *“So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.’ To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’ ”*

The serpent himself was the first to learn that a Deliverer would come and destroy his devilish work. The serpent was given the initial promise, and the prophecy of redemption from the sin that he brought into God’s universe. This redemption would be brought about through One who would spring forth from humanity.

But at this early stage in the Messianic puzzle, scripture is ambiguous about whether a single person is intended here. The Hebrew word for seed in this portion is “zarah,” and it may be taken to mean either a collective seed, such as a group, or singular, such as an individual.

The context of this portion of scripture seems to imply that the serpent has a representative leader, through the phrase, “thy head.” It also seems to imply that the seed of the woman would be an individual, but this is not spelled out in this portion of scripture. Yet it is the potential of an individualistic reference that we see in the refinement of this offspring, who would be channeled down through a line of people to come from the line of Abraham.



In Genesis 12:3, we find this portion of the promise that is part of the Abraham covenant. It says, *“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

We find two portions of scripture in Galatians that help us to see a New Testament understanding of these two prophecies. First, Galatians 3:16. *“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.”*

In Galatians 4:4-5 : *“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*

Genesis 49:9-10 contains a Messianic prophecy: *“You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.”*

The word “Shiloh” here does not refer to the city Shiloh, for that town was destroyed before Judah ever rose to power. But within the context of the clause there is indication that Shiloh is a person. The root word for Shiloh means to be “at peace.”

So the concept behind the person known as Shiloh is one who brings peace, or gives rest. This is indeed part of Messiah’s work. Through this portion of scripture we understand the further channeling of Messianic lineage – that it would be through the tribe of Judah that we look for the one known as Messiah.

In a brief overview of the genealogies found in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, we see that the Messiah came through Abraham, Isaac, Judah and David. Each of these has a specific Old Testament Messianic prophecy fulfilled in the one known as Y’shua. That this one would be the seed of David is found in Isaiah 11:10 and in Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15.

In Deuteronomy 18:15-22, we find a lot of important information concerning the nature of prophecy and prophets in general, as well as Messianic prophecies in particular: *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, ‘Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.’ The LORD said to me: ‘What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers;*



*I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?” If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.’ ”*

The Jewish people regard Moses as the greatest of all prophets. Here the Lord, speaking through Moses, tells them that one will come after him whose words they should heed. Many prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, came forward to speak the Word of God to the Hebrew people. But Jesus, as Messiah, was one like Moses, speaking the Word of God with power, might and authority.

In Acts 3:23-24, Peter says in his second sermon that Moses spoke of one who would come, a prophet like unto himself, and that Jesus fulfilled this prophetic portion as He was here on this earth and spoke many prophecies. One function of Messiah is that He would be the Son of God.

The second Psalm is the first of the “Messianic Psalms” in scripture. We read in Psalm 2:2-12. *“The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ‘Let us break their chains,’ they say, ‘and throw off their fetters.’ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ‘I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.’ I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.’ Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. ”*

In Proverbs 30:4 we read, *“Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know! ”* God will have a son... this is promised and foretold!

In Luke 1:32 we are helped to understand how this was fulfilled in the Messiah: *“He will be great, and He will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David.”*

A very interesting Messianic Psalm is the 22nd Psalm. Perhaps you might be encouraged to read the entire Psalm, as it portrays a vivid picture of the crucifixion



experience. From verse 13ff: *“Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.”*

Crucifixion was never a Jewish form of execution. As a matter of fact, when this Psalm was written, nearly 1,000 years before the time of Jesus, crucifixion was not even invented! The traditional, acceptable form of execution for Jewish people was stoning. The cause of death in a crucifixion is not the piercing through of the hands and feet, but asphyxiation. The individual is not able to breathe because his weight is pressed down upon his diaphragm.

As we look at Jesus’ crucifixion in Matthew 27, we see the important role that Roman soldiers played during this time. Soldiers came in the evening to break the legs of those who were crucified, so that the person could not draw himself up and support himself with his legs, asphyxiation would result, and death would come quickly. The Gospel account tells us that the legs of those on either side of Jesus were broken, but the legs of Jesus were not. It was standard practice for a Roman guard to break someone’s legs if they were still alive. This clearly indicates that Jesus was already dead.

Because Jesus died on the cross, he could not have caused the fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 22:18: *“They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”* Matthew 27 tells us that the guards cast lots for Jesus’ clothing. Between this prophecy and its fulfillment lie 1,000 years. The pieces of the Messianic puzzle just keep falling into place.

Psalm 16 is a magnificent Psalm of hope, telling us that Messiah would not remain dead but be raised from the dead. In verses 9 and 10 we read, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”*

A parallel portion is found in Isaiah 53:8-11, which reads, *“By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and*





*cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ”*

Each of the four New Testament Gospel accounts bears record to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. In Psalm 110:4, we read that the Lord has sworn, and will not change His mind, that *“The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”* Uniquely, the office of Messiah combines three offices within the people of Israel: prophet, priest and king. They are to be bound together in one person, the Messiah of Israel.

Hebrews 5:1-10 focuses on the priestly functions of Messiah: *“Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. ”*

A few years ago, I heard a song by Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary fame on his album entitled “Reel to Real.” He prefaced the song with a story of how he moved out of the city and into the country, and purchased a four-story henhouse, which he made his home. The house should have been overlooked, but it became the centerpiece of his life. The song he wrote reflects this Biblical truth — the building block rejected by others has now become the cornerstone of the Holy world.

In Psalm 118:20 ff, *“This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”*

Many New Testament portions focus on this, and one is Romans 9:32-33: *“Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over*



*the 'stumbling stone.' As it is written: 'See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'"*

Obviously the Messiah Jesus is a stumbling block to many today. But those who have faith see Him as the foundation, cornerstone and head. Messianic prophecy tells us that some will, for a time, reject him, but others will come to faith and place Him at the cornerstone of their life.

A very controversial portion of scripture is Isaiah 7. To put it in context, you must read the entire chapter. In verses 10-14, the Lord spoke through Isaiah to King Ahaz: *"Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, 'I will not ask, I will not put the LORD to the test.' Then Isaiah said, 'Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.'"*

This is one of the more difficult Messianic prophecies. A standard interpretation proposed by liberal critics is that Isaiah the prophet here refers to a son of a contemporary young woman, not a virgin, whose child will be called Emmanuel, meaning that God would providentially be with him. So, he would serve as a sign of the defeat of Judah's northern enemies, referred to in Isaiah 7:8.

This non-Messianic interpretation, however, has serious deficiencies. The Hebrew word for virgin is *Almah*. In the Revised Standard Version of the scripture, the word *Almah* is rendered as "young woman," and not a virgin. Throughout the Old Testament, in Proverbs and other portions, the editors never used this word to mean a married woman, but used it for the word virgin or at least a maiden. On the other hand, the coming of Emmanuel is presented in the context as a threat to Ahaz and not an encouragement. The primary non-Messianic argument is that for Isaiah's words to be relevant to Ahaz, they must have had an immediate fulfillment.

Three factors speak against immediate fulfillment. First, the kingship was deceased in both the northern and southern Israel before Emmanuel was to come (verse 16). The former, the northern kingdom did fall 12 years later in 722 BCE. Ephraim would be taken away 65 years later, which is hardly immediate.

The second factor against immediate fulfillment is that Emmanuel was to be a sign (verse 14). A sign connotes being miraculous in nature, such as the birth of a child from a virgin. Those who advocate that this was fulfilled in Ahaz's time must show there was a virgin birth then. But there is no record of another virgin birth on this earth, in the scriptures or in history.



In verse 13, the prophet's threat was not addressed simply to Ahaz, but to the entire house of David. The Messiah would replace once and for all the merely human kings found in Ahaz's house and territory. That the Messianic king would be born of a virgin and be God incarnate are key Messianic prophecies in scripture. But all too often rabbinic dialogue and argument has sought to cast a cloud over this portion of scripture. Rather than delving into a lengthy theological discussion and heated debate, it might be best to review the portions of scriptures that demonstrate the fulfillment in the New Testament: "This fulfillment is found in Matthew 1:18 - 25." and move on.

If you're interested in a fuller treatment of the subject, read the book, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, by J. Gresham Machen, published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. This excellent 400-page book focuses on the Jewish understanding, the Gospel narrative, and some pagan derivations that some people have used as theories for explaining the virgin birth of Jesus.

Another portion of scripture that helps us to look back at the birth of Messiah is found in Isaiah 9:6: *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Here is one of the clearest pictures of the coming One. A child born and yet Eternal Father. A child born and yet Mighty God. This scripture helps us to point forward to the Messiah's very character and nature. More than a mere human being, He would be God Himself, incarnate, born of human flesh on this earth.

Where will His birthplace be? Micah 5:2 says, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."*

Did you know there were two Bethlehems? The city of Bethlehem Ephrathah lies about six miles southwest of Jerusalem, known as The City of David. Another Bethlehem, a town in Zebulun, is seven miles northwest of Nazareth. The scripture reference to this town is found in Joshua 19:15. It's interesting to note that Micah's prophecy goes so far as to point out which of the two Bethlehems the Messiah was to be born in.

The time of the Messiah's coming is foretold in Daniel 9:24-26. Many scholars have interpreted this challenging portion of scripture in different ways. *"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the*



*decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed."*

In looking at one of the simplest elements found in this complex prophecy, verse 24 says a period of time will pass when final atonement will be made for iniquity, and everlasting righteousness then will be brought in. After the death of the anointed one, the temple in Jerusalem will again be destroyed.

The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 C.E. Daniel's prophecy indicates that the Messiah's coming and death must be prior to its destruction. The only alternative to this interpretation would be that the temple must be built again and destroyed, with Messiah being born of a virgin in Bethlehem and then dying to make atonement for sin.

Look at the Messiah's character in Isaiah 42:1-3, "*Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.*" The character of Messiah is one of meekness and mildness, and yet firmness of authority and teaching, which is fulfilled in Matthew 12:18-20.

One of the most moving pieces of scripture concerning the nature and character of the work of Messiah is found in Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. Read it in your own Bible, and see the picture of the servant of God. But let me quote a few verses: "*Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness — so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open*



*his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”*

The weight and import of this scripture has changed many lives. Read this entire portion of scripture with your Jewish friend – or have him or her read it – not in an attempt to tell him what it talks about, but to allow him to come to his own conclusions.

In a book entitled *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters*, (edited by Harry Olinsky and published by KTAV Publishing Company, New York City), are more than 50 rabbinic interpretations and understandings of these few verses of scripture, attempting to focus on many historical people. Jewish people today often say this piece of scripture refers not to the Messiah, but to Israel as a nation. They have suffered greatly, been rejected by many, have died and lost their lives.

Yet, to interpret Isaiah 53 as being Israel as a nation goes against the plain, simple grammatical sense of it. For a person who claims that this scripture speaks about Israel, do a simple exercise to help illuminate the error of this interpretation. Each time the pronoun “he” is used, substitute “the nation of Israel,” or “the people of Israel.” After five or six sentences, he will see that substituting this phrase does not make grammatical sense.

However, just because this portion of scripture exists, it does not automatically conclude that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. This is only one strand of the warp and woof of the fabric of Messianic prophecy. But piece it together with other strands, and we find not only a garment of beauty, but also of strength and eternal value.

Another prophecy about the Messiah is found in Zechariah 9:9: *“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* In Matthew 21, verses 1 and 10, we find a direct fulfillment of this prophecy as Jesus enters Jerusalem and goes toward His crucifixion.

In Zechariah 13:7 ff: *“‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land,’ declares the LORD, ‘two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, “They are my people,” and they will say, “The LORD is our God.” ’ ”*

In Matthew 36:31-56, we read how Jesus is forsaken by his disciples, one by one,



before his crucifixion. Yet, after the crucifixion, the Lord regathered them, and tested and tried them, that they might become good and true servants of our Lord.

*Zechariah 12:10 says: “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”*

The time is not yet come. Jewish people are coming one at a time, not as a nation, to the Messiah. We pray that as you review material such as this with your Jewish friends, the Holy Spirit might touch their hearts. May they respond to the call of Jesus, and look upon Him, whom they have pierced, and mourn that for many years of their lives, they have not followed their Messiah, but have been mired in sin. But now, they can rejoice and turn to Him, finding grace, truth, peace, hope and love.

We have barely scratched the surface of Messianic prophecies. Let me encourage you to dig deeper and study harder, so that you might present yourself as a worker, handling the scriptures of the Lord in an effective, loving way, so that others might come to know the truth that we have found in Jesus, our Lord and Savior, and the Messiah.



notes:

## **SECTION II:**

### **IMPORTANT HISTORICAL INFORMATION FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING**

The Identity of Jewish People

The Diversity and History of Jewish Movements

Important Writings for Religious Jewish People

Jewish Customs and Festivals

History of Jewish Missions and Evangelism



## The Identity of Jewish People

Frequently, as I've had the opportunity to minister in various congregations, I've asked people, 'What do you think it means to be Jewish?' People tell me that being Jewish is being part of the chosen people. Or it's a person who has the Jewish religion. Or it's a person who doesn't believe in Jesus. People also respond in other ways. Even Jewish people have difficulty defining 'What does it mean to be Jewish?'

In the field of Jewish evangelism, definitions and terminologies seem to facilitate an understanding of how we might effectively communicate the message of Messiah. Jewish people are referred to as: Jews, Jewish people, Hebrews, Israelites, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Chosen people. Some Christians even seek to boast that THEY have become the true Jews because of their circumcision of the heart through faith in Jesus.

Yet it would be the height of insensitivity for a Gentile Christian to approach an orthodox Jewish person and say to him or her, 'I'm a true Jew, because I believe in Jesus, and really you're not so Jewish.' That would not open communication or build bridges for a clear hearing of the Gospel.

So the question we must focus on is, "Who is a Jew?" For centuries, rabbis and Jewish scholars have wrestled with this question. Debates have raged and court cases have occurred. If you were to ask three different Jewish leaders, "Who is a Jew?", you'd likely end up with three answers.

## The Origin of the Term "Jew"

What's the origin of the term "Jew"? The original Hebrew word is *Yehudi*. It survived through the Greek and Latin and found its way into early English about 1000 CE.

The term *Yehudi* originally applied to members of the tribe of Judah, who was the fourth son of the patriarch Jacob. As time passed, that definition expanded to include the people who lived within the kingdom of Judah. These peoples came to be known as "Judeans." Later, as the southern kingdom was formed, both the tribes of Benjamin and Judah came to be recognized together as *Yehudi* or Judah.

Eventually the term *Yehudi* was applied to all residents of the southern kingdom irrespective of their tribe. After the destruction of the northern kingdom, with only people in the southern kingdom remaining, the term took on a different focus for the people who were outside the land or in exile. They were referred to as *Yehudi* even though they came from different tribes. An example is found in the book of Esther,





where we find Mordecai, from the tribe of Benjamin, referred to as *Yehudi* or “Jew” even though he is not physically present in the southern kingdom of Judah.

### **The Historic Definitions**

During that time period and up to modern times, the term “Jew” came to encompass not merely tribal identity, but took on nationalistic, political, religious, and even ethnic or cultural points of identity. However this identifying word seems to only apply to those who were in exile. The Jewish people residing within the land of Israel chose to identify themselves by the title “Israelite” and called themselves “Israelites.” Much of the literature until the time of the destruction of Israel seems to verify this. Paul demonstrates this in Romans 10:1: “*Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.*”

In the New Testament are about 55 references to the people as “Israel.” Within the synoptic gospels, the term “Jews” is used 17 times. Eleven of those 17 refer to Jesus as “The King of the Jews.” The word “Jews” within the Gospel of John speaks in a different light. It does not refer to all the people from a national, political, religious or ethnic orientation, or from the land of Israel outside, but rather to the political and religious leaders who sought to mount opposition against Jesus. It is essential to understand, when reading John, that not all the “Jews” sought to rebel against Jesus.

The term *Jewess* for a female Jewish person is found only twice in the Bible – Acts 16:1 and Acts 16:24.

The historic term “Jew” brings some negative connotations to modern times. Some suggest the roots of this negativity go back to the person of Judas Iscariot. There were some early Christians who took the term “Judas” (which was the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *Yehudi*) and equated that with the Gospel account of Judas Iscariot.

The term “Jew” was used so negatively that some early dictionaries define it as someone who deals in monetary means through usury, for high gain for the individual. Used as a verb, “jew” unfavorably referred to business practices of trying to drive down a price through negotiation.

Unfortunately, today we find people continuing to believe these negative connotations through stereotyping and ignorance. This directly contradicts the original intent and purpose of the word “Jew” which means “to be a praise” or “to worship.”

### **The Halachic Definition**

So, “Who is Jewish?” Halachah is the rabbinic legal system that considers 1) the writings of the sacred scriptures, 2) the Talmud, or the oral law, 3) at times the mystical



revelations known as Kabbalah, and 4) the writings of the scribes, through which Jewish customs have evolved. The Halachic definition of a Jewish person is a child born of Jewish parents, or a convert to Judaism, who possesses both the sanctity of the Jewish people and the obligation to observe the commandments given by God.

This definition seems a bit circular, because it presumes an understanding of what it means to have Jewish parents. Today, rabbis contend that being Jewish is a matter of having a mother who is Jewish; or a mother and a father who are Jewish. Others claim it means practicing the Jewish religion, Judaism. Jewish people who are more orthodox in their religious practice would say that those who are less orthodox, i.e. those who might be Conservative or Reform, or even atheistic or agnostic, are Jewish, but not as good a Jewish person as one who is more orthodox in religious practice.

As an example of the confusion, a public opinion poll was taken of 1,500 Jewish families. The results were recorded in *The Jerusalem Post* in 1968. When asked “Who is Jewish?”

12% declared that a Jewish person is one whose father or mother is Jewish, or who had a Jewish spouse.

23% said a Jewish person is one who considers himself to be Jewish.

19% held that a man born of a Jewish mother, or a convert to Judaism, is Jewish.

13% said that a Jewish person is one who lives in Israel, or who identifies with the Jewish state.

13% said that a Jewish person is one who observes Jewish religious practices, and

11% said that a Jewish person is one who is raised and educated as a Jew.

9% said they just couldn’t define it!

So, the Halachic (is it Halachic or Halakhic?) definition, public opinion, and rabbinic opinion identify Jewish people as based on their birth or lineage through the mother.

### **A Nationalistic Definition**

A unique case was brought before the Supreme Court of the state of Israel in the late 1960s. Benjamin Shalit, a military leader in the Israeli navy, had a wife who was not Jewish. Both atheists, they lived in the land of Israel, where each was required to carry an identity card identifying them as Jewish or not.

Commander Shalit was a citizen of Israel and his children were reared in Israel. They knew the Hebrew language and identified with the culture. He felt that by nationality, not religion or personal belief in God, his children, though they had a gentile mother, should be registered as Jewish. The Israeli Minister of the Interior refused.



Eventually the matter went to the Supreme Court of Israel. Nine of the 10 justices presided over this hearing to answer, “Who is a Jew?” Commander Shalit’s argument was that the Israel minister had used a religious standard in judging whether or not a person was Jewish. Since he was not religious, he felt that this standard was inappropriate, and that identity or nationality should be the determining factor. He maintained that as a non-believer, he should not be forced to accept a decision based on religious law.

In November 1968, *Time Magazine* reported Commander Shalit’s statements: “It’s not faith that unites us as a nation. Too many people do not practice religion for that. It’s the cultural and the sociological factors that are the ones that determine who is a Jew. It is not the memory of a primitive religion, but children who were born in Israel, speak Hebrew, live in a Hebrew culture and go to Hebrew schools. They know nothing else. How can the Interior Minister say that they are not Jews?”

Commander Shalit sought to persuade the court that anyone who declares himself to be Jewish by nationality is Jewish. With one important exception of course — a Jewish person who identifies or affiliates with another religious group.

With a five to four decision, the Supreme Court ruled in Commander Shalit’s favor. Yet national religious parties of Israel applied pressure to the government and announced that they would remove themselves from the government coalition should the Supreme Court’s rule stand. The day after the Shalit decision, the pressure was so intense that the government overturned the Supreme Court’s ruling and reverted to a more vague definition of who was Jewish. Government leaders did not do this out of conviction, but political expediency.

Jewish people from all countries are welcome to come to the land of Israel and are granted under the Law of Return, the right of free return and automatic Israeli citizenship. Both Jewish people of religious and non-religious backgrounds can return. The Supreme Court decision made one exception, however – Jewish people who believe that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and have been baptized are denied free return.

This decision doesn’t answer whether a Jewish Christian is still Jewish. It speaks only to the issue of the right of return to the land of Israel. So we see no uniformity in defining what it means to be a Jew. A nationalistic, religious, political or Halakhic definition all point to greater or lesser degrees of subjectivity. Confusion, rather than consensus, reigns.



### The Biblical Definition

Let's see what the Word of God says about being Jewish, beginning with the Abrahamic covenant found in Genesis. *"The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'*" (Gen. 12:1-3).

*"The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.'*" (Gen. 13:14-17).

*"After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.' But Abram said, 'O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.' Then the word of the LORD came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.' He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Gen. 15:1-6).*

The Bible tells us that Abraham himself tried to bring forth the heir the Lord had promised. Because Sarah, his wife, was childless, Abraham conceived Ishmael through Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar. But God had chosen to fulfill his covenant through the descendant of Abraham and Sarah. When Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, Isaac, whose name means "laughter," the son of promise, was born. The Lord kept His promise.

God's covenant was confirmed to Isaac in Genesis 26:1-5:  
*"Now there was a famine in the land — besides the earlier famine of Abraham's time — and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar. The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws."*



Eventually, the covenant given to Isaac was passed down to Jacob in Gen. 28:10-15: “*Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: ‘I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’*”

***The promise and the covenant initially given to our father Abraham and passed down to Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants is still in effect today.*** Probably the best and broadest definition we can find from a Biblical standpoint is that the Jewish people are—just that! A people.

Jewish people are found on nearly every continent, in various cultural settings, with different racial features and cultural traditions. Those people may be religious or non-religious, they may be in the land of Israel today, or in the exile. But they are inextricably bound together by a covenant that God established thousands of years ago.

That relationship was established when God made His covenant with Abraham, passed it on to Isaac and Jacob, and then down to the people today. The covenant that God established with these people was not a covenant that granted salvation. The Abrahamic covenant merely granted the chartering of a people on earth for the purpose of glorifying God’s name. To help the Jewish people understand the nature of their relationship with God, 613 commandments, or *mitzvot*, were given to the Jewish people through Moses.

Most people know Moses received 10 Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai. Yet Scriptures reveal that God gave another 613 Commandments to help the Israelites understand the nature of their relationship to Him. Through the law, Israel was to work out moral, religious and personal relationships. All were dependent upon keeping the Law.

*The Laws were never given to make men righteous!* They were given to help men see their sinfulness. The animal sacrificial system established in the book of Leviticus was carried on for many centuries until the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.



Through the drama of slain animals, Israel understood the consequences for falling short of the Law that God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai

When Jesus, the Messiah, came, He did not change the Law of Moses. The scriptures teach very clearly that He fulfilled the Law of Moses so that all – both Jew and Gentile – might enter into a living, personal relationship with God, one that He desires. *It's incumbent upon us as Christians to bring the message of this vital relationship to all people, including those who are Jewish.*

The Jewish people have given us the prophets, Scripture, Law, and the lineage of the Messiah. The first followers of Jesus were Jewish. The early congregation was a congregation of Jewish people who came together to follow the Jewish Messiah, and their message was Good News . . . the long-awaited promised Messiah had come! He died for the sins of all, even those who weren't Jewish.

A Jewish person is one born into this covenant, who cannot do anything to change that covenant relationship. Jewish people may deny or reject their covenant relationship established by God. But the covenant stands.

The argument that only those born of a Jewish mother are Jewish seems to fall short. King David, the greatest of Jewish leaders, is definitely recognized as Jewish. And yet, his lineage had two females who were not Jewish. His great-grandmother was Ruth and his great-great grandmother was Rahab, both of whom were gentiles who followed the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Who would say today that David is not Jewish?

*The Biblical norm was that the lineage was determined through the father. The genealogical records we have throughout the Scriptures list all of the begets from father to father, not from mother to mother. So it might appear that the Biblical test of Jewishness is who the father is, not the mother. But God's covenant passes through either the mother or father!*

### **Who is Gentile?**

The term *Goyim* in Hebrew literally means “nations,” and refers to people not part of the Jewish people and not part of the covenant that God established with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In this world are two categories of people — those who are born Jewish and those who are born *gentile-ish*, not part of that covenant directly.

Neither, though, are born Christian. I like to say it this way when I speak in a church... “My parents are Jewish, my grandparents were Jewish, I was BORN Jewish.

(pause) How many of you were BORN Christian?” You would be surprised at the large



number of people who raise their hand, including many pastors.

Then I let them know it is a trick question. While we are born Jewish or gentile, no one is born Christian. Why? Because we all must be born again: “*In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’*” (John 3:3).

### **A Diversity of Belief Systems**

One cannot understand Jewish people today by studying only the Old Testament. Jewish people identify with different religious groups, writings, teaching and theology from a multitude of sources. The Jewish religious calendar and festivals, attitudes toward Jesus, traditions, concepts of family, and varying concerns comprise a multi-faceted Jewish milieu.

What Jewish people believe can cover an encyclopedia’s worth of information. We will present a basic overview of the highlights to help Christians better understand Jewish beliefs.

The divisions, or denominations, that Jewish people tend to be found in today are:

Orthodox

Reform

Conservative

Reconstructionist.

Some minor offshoots are the Hassidic movement (the ultra-orthodox) and the Zionist movement (a political movement). Some Jewish people are atheistic or agnostic. And of course there are the Jewish Christians, also known as “Messianic Jews.”

## **ORTHODOX JUDAISM**

Jewish people who claim to be Orthodox can trace their roots to 1,400 years before Jesus’ birth. Orthodox Judaism claims to have Ezra the scribe as its forefather. He sought to organize the scriptures into a form that could be easily communicated to the person on the street. He transliterated the scriptures from the Hebrew script and the Hebrew pronunciation to the Aramaic script, with a Hebrew pronunciation.

He also helped bring together a group of teachers called scribes, or *sofrim*. They sought to help transmit the intent and thought of the scriptures down to the people, and

were charged with the responsibility of watching over every jot and tittle of the scriptures.



Orthodox Judaism today seeks to maintain, as much as possible, the ancient religious traditions and observances. The liturgical worship setting is maintained mostly in Hebrew. An Orthodox Jew would seek to follow as many of the 613 Mosaic laws (the *Mitzvot*) as possible, except for those laws pertaining to the sacrificial system, halted in 70 C.E., following the Temple's destruction by the Romans. An Orthodox Jew also practices a traditional lifestyle, emphasizing the maintenance of religious duties to fulfill one's life.

Reformed Judaism is a much more modern movement. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Moses Mendelssohn, considered its father, sought to help Jewish people to relate to modern, western European culture. He hoped to bring Jewish people out of the ghettos and second-class citizenry status to a point of equality with other European people and cultures. He attempted to encourage his fellow Jewish people to be rational in their faith, orthodox in their practice, and German in their culture.

Following the approach of Enlightenment philosophy, Mendelssohn maintained that if the true doctrines of religion are based on reason, divine revelation is no longer needed as a source of truth. Enlightenment philosophy held that revelation cannot disclose any ideas that can't be discovered by man's reason.

In taking this position, Mendelssohn divorces himself sharply from the views of earlier Jewish philosophers, especially Maimonides. Maimonides believed that man's knowledge of truth is derived from both reason and revelation. However, Maimonides also believed that truth is essentially rational and cannot contradict reason. Nevertheless, it requires the support of revelation in order to reach the common people who do not know philosophy and are unable to discover truth by their own efforts.

Mendelssohn rejects the notion that truth can be derived from two sources. If man can arrive at a truth by his own capacity to reason, revelation is superfluous and therefore illogical. Revelation cannot convince any man of something his reason cannot understand. Mendelssohn is aware that his rejection of revelation on philosophical grounds clashes with the classic self-image of Judaism that sees itself as foundationally based on the Sinaitic covenant between God and Israel. If Judaism is revealed, it cannot be a religion for Mendelssohn, or if it is a religion it cannot have been revealed.

He resolves this dilemma by defining Judaism not as a "revealed religion" but as "revealed law." The central religious tenets of Judaism—the existence and unity of God, divine providence, and the immortality of the soul—are not specific Jewish notions but doctrines of the general religion of reason, which require no proof or act of revelation to





be intelligible. What distinguishes the Jew from the non-Jew is not his religion, which is the common property of all men of reason, but the unique laws, statutes and commandments disclosed at Sinai.

That God spoke at Sinai is for Mendelssohn an established historical fact, because the entire people of Israel clearly witnessed it. All people are destined to attain goodness, but Jews can attain it only by observing the Sinaitic laws.

For him the God of reason and the God of Sinai are one and the same: the benevolent Creator and Sustainer of the world whom reason can affirm, and the King and Guardian of Israel who spoke at Sinai and ordained the laws that govern Jewish life. This “revealed legislation” has an additional function in that it prescribes rules of life that “guide the seeking mind to divine truths—partly eternal, partly historical—on which the religion of this [the Jewish] people was based.”

In emphasizing that the observance of the *mitzvot* makes the Jewish people unique and is indispensable to Jewish existence, he adapts a theory previously formulated by the Christian theologian Faustus Socinus (1539–1604). Socinus asserted that God can reveal law to man, but not metaphysical truths. Socinus, therefore, defines religion objectively as the giving of law and subjectively as its observance. For Mendelssohn, several conclusions follow from his definition of religion and revelation:

- (1) No miracle can validate the truth of any faith or doctrine that cannot be established by reason. Miracles can at most support or confirm rational truths, but they cannot establish them.
- (2) For the same reason Judaism does not possess dogmas. It addresses itself to man’s will but does not attempt to control his thoughts. “Faith accepts no commands; it accepts only what comes to it by way of reasoned conviction.” Judaism requires conformity in act, but grants freedom in matters of doctrine.
- (3) If, as Mendelssohn firmly believed, a knowledge of truth is indispensable to man achieving happiness, truth must be accessible to all people without distinction of race or creed. No religion, not even his own Judaism, can be the sole instrument through which God discloses his truth.
- (4) Freedom of thought and doctrine requires equal respect for all religious ideas. “Let every man who does not disturb the public welfare, who obeys the law, acts righteously toward you and his fellow men be allowed to speak as he thinks, to pray to God after his own fashion or after that of his fathers, and to seek eternal salvation where he thinks he may find it.”

Nevertheless Mendelssohn discusses the difference between the Jewish religion, which brings man closer to eternal truths through his daily conduct regulated by the To-



rah, and other ancient religions, which conceal the truth through idolatry.

In ancient Judaism, in contrast to idolatry, religion and state were joined. Thus, a violation of the honor of God was a political crime and chastised accordingly. This situation was brought to an end when the Temple was destroyed. Those punishments have become invalid for “political crimes,” because they can only be applied as long as God was sovereign of the Jewish State. It was thus “Jerusalem”—that is, classic Judaism—which for Mendelssohn embodied the true religious might (*religioese Macht*),

united all contrasts, led to eternal truths, and elevated the Jew toward happiness in this world and in the world to come. (*The Encyclopedia Judaica*)

### AMERICAN REFORM MOVEMENT

Unfortunately, the Reformed movement today, emphasizing higher criticism and a movement toward liberal treatment of the Word of God, created an ethical and moral community of Jewish people who have de-emphasized traditional liturgical settings in order to be modern and acceptable to Western culture.

In America, Isaac M. Wise championed a moderate Reform movement and David Einhorn led radical reform movements. By 1885 the radical position had become dominant in American Reform Judaism, which was expressed in the “Pittsburgh Platform”:

“We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization....

“We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state....

“Their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation....

“We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor

a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state....



“We reassert the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, founding this belief on the divine nature of the human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden... as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

## THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

Conservative Judaism is a modern movement, having its roots in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first two decades of this century. Eastern European immigrants who came from a very Orthodox background found themselves in a western setting where Jewish people were given economic and social opportunities and training quite unlike the persecution they had suffered in Eastern Europe. The first generation of Jewish people who came to North America sought to maintain strict adherence to Orthodox principles and teachings. But the second generation moved away from them, yet maintained some of their teachings and principles.

Conservative Judaism, a mixture of the orthodox and modern society, emerged as a result of Reformed Judaism moving too far away from the traditional Jewish beliefs. This new movement holds to as much of the doctrine, beliefs and traditional practices of Judaism as possible, while in practice adapting as much as possible to an American lifestyle. The mixture has modernized many traditions while upholding many beliefs.

Jacob H. Schiff and Louis Marshall, who were Reform, were instrumental in reorganizing the central institution of Conservative Judaism, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. They wanted to provide an English-speaking, Westernized clergy for these immigrants to replace their foreign immigrant rabbis.

Cyrus Adler was the chief actor in this reorganization, though his primary concern was to continue traditional Judaism in America. Adler had grown up in the circle which had resisted Reform in the previous generation.

The reorganized Seminary opened in 1902 with a small but distinguished young faculty which had been assembled by Schechter, including such figures as Louis Ginzberg in *Talmud*.

Despite the attitude of the chief financial backers of the Seminary, who were anti-Zionists, Schechter and his younger faculty colleagues all identified with the Zionist



movement from a sense of religious and cultural unity. From its beginning, the Zionist movement impacted Jewish life both in America and Palestine.

An alumni association of the Seminary existed by 1901, even before the reorganization of the institution. This body had been renamed The Rabbinical Assembly of America before 1920, the name under which it was incorporated in 1929. Rabbis who graduated from other institutions but joined the Conservative group were admitted to this body along with graduates of the Seminary.

In 1962 this organization was renamed the Rabbinical Assembly, the International Association of Conservative Rabbis. By then, rabbis on all continents shared this Conservative outlook. By 1970, more than 40 served Israel in various capacities, several at

the head of congregations of their own. Solomon Schechter invested a decade of effort into organizing an association of synagogues sympathetic to the religious stance of his Seminary.

Cyrus Adler and others internally opposed this move, expressing fear that such an organization would permanently close the door to a unity of all the traditionalist forces, but Schechter prevailed. At the founding assembly of the United Synagogue of America in 1913, members adopted a constitution that announced as the organization's religious purpose as "the maintenance of Jewish tradition in its historical continuity" and summarized the main outlines of traditional Jewish practice. The last sentence read, "while not endorsing the innovations introduced by any of its constituent bodies" would "embrace all elements essentially loyal to traditional Judaism." (*The Encyclopedia Judaica*)

## **THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST MOVEMENT**

The Reconstructionist movement, a modern movement, also is a branch of conservatism. Advocates of Reconstructionism hold that Judaism is a culture and way of life, and provides some religious background. Reconstructionism requires constant adaptation to the contemporary conditions that Jews face in this world. Adaptation is necessary so that Jewish people can more readily identify and meaningfully participate within the larger community. Essentially, this means that the center role of the Supreme Being, or Creator, has been mostly replaced by moral and ethical teachings, and a cultural identity defined as Jewish.

Both the idea and the movement owe their inspiration to Mordecai Menahem Kaplan. Kaplan argues that with the breakdown of certain traditional beliefs, Jewish identity had become watered down. Jews remain loyal to their faith despite hardship and



suffering because they believe that adherence to Judaism assures them of salvation in the next world.

But in Kaplan's view, this is no longer credible. Consequently, Judaism must transform itself from a civilization oriented toward the life hereafter into one that can help Jews to attain salvation in this world. Belief in the possibility of this salvation is crucial to Kaplan's thought.

Reconstructionism strives for the progressive improvement of the human personality and the establishment of a free, just, and cooperative social order. Kaplan maintains that there are adequate resources in the world and capacities in man to achieve such salvation. He defines God as the "power that makes for salvation." This notion of God conforms to man's experience, since man senses a power that orients him to this life and elicits from him the best of what he is able.

Some Reconstructionists, Milton Steinberg probably being the best example, refused to accept Kaplan's theology. A more popular notion of Kaplan's was his definition of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization whose standards of conduct are established by the Jewish people and whose common denominator is neither beliefs, tenets, nor practices, but rather the continuous life of the Jewish people.

The Jewish religion, said Kaplan, exists for the Jewish people, not the Jewish people for the Jewish religion. Judaism, like any other civilization, comprises a history, language, religion, social organization, standards of conduct, and spiritual and social ideals. Under the influence of the early French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, Kaplan stated that whatever is an object of collective concern takes on all the traits of a religion, which in its turn functions in order to hold up to the individual the value of the group and the importance of his complete identification with it. Religion, therefore, lies at the very heart of every civilization.

Many Jewish intellectuals were attracted to Kaplan's program for a Jewish life. Since Judaism is, in his view, a civilization, its parts can only function in interrelationship with one another. He argued for what he called an "organic community" in which the basic unit of Jewish life would be the entire aggregate of synagogue, educational institutions, Zionist organizations, and defense and fraternal bodies, linked into a single community with a democratically elected leadership. Kaplan was also among the first to maintain that the synagogue must function as a Jewish center where an individual might find expression for virtually all Jewish and related activities.

The founding of the Reconstructionist movement may be dated from the establishment of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ) in January 1922. The



society served both as a synagogue center and as a forum for Kaplan's ideas. In 1935 he launched the magazine *Reconstructionist* in collaboration with his closest associates, of whom Milton Steinberg, Eugene Kohn, and Kaplan's son-in-law, Ira Eisenstein, formed the nucleus.

In 1941 the *New Haggadah* and the *Guide to Jewish Ritual* were published. In the *Guide*, ritual was viewed not as law but a means to group survival and the individual Jew's spiritual growth. The individual was to choose which rituals or folkways should be practiced, though when choosing, he should strike a balance between his own needs and those of the group.

In 1945 the *Reconstructionist Sabbath Prayer Book* appeared, against which a ban (*herem*) was proclaimed by the Aguddat ha-Rabbanim and an adverse "statement of opinion" (*gillui da'at*) was issued by Louis Ginzberg and Alexander Marx (*Hadoar*, 24 (1945), 904f.). In accordance with Kaplan's ideology, it excised references to the Jews as a chosen people, and to such concepts as God's revelation of the Torah to Moses and a personal Messiah. Some passages of the traditional prayer book were retained, despite Kaplan's rejection of the concepts that lay behind them. In such cases the editors suggested to the reader how the passages should be understood. So, prayers for the restoration of Israel were retained, but readers were told this should not be construed as the return of all Jews to Palestine. Kaplan was a Zionist of the American school, ardent in his support for the colonization of Palestine, but opposed to concepts implying the "negation of the Diaspora" and to emphasis on the necessity of *aliyah*.

Kaplan's greatest success was in his impact on Jewish educators, social workers, and rabbis, especially students of the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he taught from 1909 to 1963. He left an indelible mark upon many of the Jewish community leaders. The movement, however, was less successful in recruiting a mass following.

In 1970, there were just 10 congregations affiliated to the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Fellowships and about nine *havurot* (small groups who meet once every week or two for study and/or to observe the holidays together). The Federation affiliates have a combined membership of about 2,300 families. However, not all members think of themselves as Reconstructionists any more than all members of Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform synagogues think of themselves as Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform Jews.

A more unreservedly Reconstructionist organization, the Reconstructionist Foundation, whose membership is open to any Jew (including Federation members), has about 1,000 members. Reconstructionist influence, however, is far greater than these numbers



suggest.

An enhancement and turning point in the movement's history came in 1968 when the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College was established in Philadelphia. Students are expected to complete a doctoral program in religious or cognate studies at neighboring institutions in Philadelphia (primarily Temple University) while preparing for rabbinical ordination at the college.

After Kaplan, the leader of Reconstructionism has been Ira Eisenstein, who has served as president of the Reconstructionist Foundation and of the college, editor of the magazine *Reconstructionist*, and de facto editor of the Reconstructionist press. For further insights into the history and origins of these divisions and movements, see *Our Jewish Friends*, written by Dr. Louis Goldberg and published by Moody Press. It has an excellent section on the history of the divisions of Judaism today.

### **Current North American Jewish Demographics**

Surveys taken to determine how Jewish people identify themselves have yielded different results. More than six million Jewish people live in North America today. Nearly a third identify themselves as members of the Reform movement, about one quarter identify themselves with the Conservative movement, and less than a fifth describe themselves as Orthodox.

Orthodoxy today seems to be on the upswing, as many modern Jewish people are searching for meaning and purpose in their lives through Judaism. Many Jewish people do not have religious affiliations, other than to attend services such as the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur. Some even claim to be atheistic in their background, others agnostic, while still others claim to be Zionist.

Zionism is sometimes mistaken to be a religious movement. But basically, Zionism is a political movement. It concerns itself with the return and restoration of the land of Israel to the Jews, rather than the maintenance of a religious theology.

Jewish people identify with different branches of Judaism, because there is no unifying theology of Judaism today. Different rabbis hold differing opinions; in fact, Judaism could probably best be typified as "unity with diversity." Jewish people feel a unity of purpose, but they hold a diversity of opinions as to how they should be leading their lives.

### **Important Writings for Religious Jewish People**



For Orthodox and Conservative Jews today the centerpiece of Judaism is of course the Torah. The word Torah actually combines three different concepts or meanings. One understanding of the Torah is “the Jewish way of life.” All that we do and all that encompasses our life is found in what we call a “Torah way of life.”

Another understanding of Torah is that it encompasses the first five books of the Bible, or the Pentateuch.

A third understanding of Torah is that it refers to the entirety of the Hebrew scriptures, the Old Testament. Sometimes, however, you may hear Jewish people refer to the Old Testament as *Tanakh* an acronym, made up from the initials of the three sets of writings found in the Old Testament. One, the Torah, is the first five books, second, *Naviim*, the prophets, and the third, *Katuvim*, the writings such as Psalms, Proverbs and Lamentations.

Next in order of importance to religious Jewish people comes the writings compiled in the Talmud. The Talmud is a series of rabbinic commentaries upon the first five books of the Bible, the Torah. Frequently, I hear stories of a minister who has gone to visit a Jewish man, and has said, “I will read your Talmud if you will agree to read my Christian New Testament.” The minister did not get the good end of the bargain, because the Talmud in English contains nearly 18 volumes with an average of 500 pages per volume!

The Talmud is broken down into two major groupings. The first is the *Mishnah*, which means a repetition, or a statement, of the law. The compilation of the *Mishnah* is the work of Rabbi Judah Ha Nassi. The form in which it has come down to us contains many additions and modifications recorded by other scholars, and was completed by the end of the second century CE?. It contains many rabbinic interpretations and understandings of what the scriptures seek to tell us.

The second portion of the Talmud is known as *Gemorrah*, meaning the completion or conclusion. The *Gemorrah* was completed by the end of the fifth century CE. The *Mishnah* and the *Gemorrah* together form the Talmud. Religious Jewish people today study not only Torah, but also Talmud.

In effect, the *Mishnah* is rabbinic commentary on the scriptures, and *Gemorrah* is rabbinic commentary upon the *Mishnah*. So many Jewish people who study today are not studying the Word of God directly, but rabbinic opinion and rabbinic opinion upon rabbinic opinion.

One tractate of the Talmud is known as *Pirke Avot*. Literally, it means the ethics (sayings) of the fathers. Within *Pirke Avot*, as maintained by Orthodox Jewish leaders,





the oral law, or the *Talmud*, was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, at the same time as the written law, that is, the Torah.

“From the humblest of mountains, Mount Sinai, Hashem chose to give us His Torah. He chose Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses our teacher) who was the most humble man who ever lived. Only through such a man, could the chain of Torah be passed down to the Jewish people. The Ten Commandments are the beginning of the chain, followed by The Five Books of the Torah. Each word of the Torah was received by Moshe Rabbeinu and in exactly the same way was given over to Yehoshua (Joshua), the next leader and prophet of Israel. Yehoshua faithfully gave it over word for word to the Elders and the Elders to the Prophets, until it reached the Men of the Great Assembly. Not only were the laws of the Torah handed down so carefully, but even *Pirkei Avos* - The Lessons of Good Behavior - were given over through this chain.” (Taken from *Pirkei Avos* translated by Pirchei Shoshanim located at web site: <http://www.pirchei.com/pictoral/avos/perek1/m01x.htm>)

By tracing (in its first two chapters) the uninterrupted transmission of tradition from the Sinaitic revelation through the leading *tannaim* of the generation after the destruction of the Second Temple, the treatise provides the credentials, so to speak, of these teachers and their subsequent students. In effect, it declares that in these teachers and their loyal disciples is found the unbroken, authoritative instruction that began at Sinai. Thus *Avot* serves as the underpinning of the authority of the *Mishnah* as a whole.

Today they claim the same level of authority and inspiration for the *Talmud* as is given to the *Torah*, even though the *Talmud* was not actually written down until many hundreds of years later.

It's customary for religious Jewish people to study one of the six chapters of *Pirke Avot* during the afternoons of the Sabbath, beginning with the Sabbath after Pass-over and concluding with the Sabbath before *Rosh Hashannah* (Jewish New Year).

One famous commentator upon the Bible and the Talmud was Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, who lived in the eleventh century CE. He is commonly referred to as “Rashi.” His name and works became synonymous with Jewish learning. In fact, tradition holds that Rashi's contributions to Jewish scholarship was considered so significant that when the printing press was invented, his commentary was printed even before the Bible!

Another important collection, known as the *Shulhan Arukh*, is the code, or table, of Jewish laws, organized and presented in a simple form so that common man could understand and use them. The *Shulhan Arukh*, compiled by Joseph Caro in the early 16th



century, deals with the rituals and legal questions helping Jewish people to understand their duties and responsibilities in daily life.

Within the Lutheran church, the hymnal gives us our liturgical order for worship. It contains our hymns and the order of the service. Within the synagogue, the *Siddur*, or prayer book, is the centerpiece for Jewish worship life. Here lies the order for morning prayers, afternoon and evening services, and prayers for the Sabbath and special holidays and festivals. Some of the more modern *Siddurim* contain the *Pirke Avot*. Many today are printed in both Hebrew and English on opposite pages.

During certain special holidays, other books are used. For example, during Passover, the book called the *Haggadah*, which literally means “the telling,” is used to help recount the Exodus event. The *Haggadah* contains a collection of folklore and stories, songs and prayers, gathered over the centuries and compiled within one festival book. Jewish people are frequently known as a *People of the Book* – not only of the scriptures, but of many other writings.

Books, learning and knowledge are an important part of Jewish life. Many of your Jewish friends would be happy to acquaint you with some of these works. A good source of information for Jewish life is found in a set of books known as *The Encyclopedia Judaica*, an 18-volume set available in most public libraries and synagogues. It is also available on CD ROM for computer users for about \$250.00. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, please get in touch with us at our St. Louis office.

### **Basic Jewish Teaching: The Calendar**

The Jewish calendar is really two calendars in one. The civil year and New Year begin in September, the month of *Tishre*. The religious year begins with the month of *Nissan*, March or April. The first month of the civil calendar falls on the seventh month of the religious calendar.

The present Jewish calendar is lunisolar, the months being reckoned according to the moon and the years according to the sun. A month is the period of time between one conjunction of the moon with the sun and the next. The number of days in a year in this Jewish lunar calendar is shorter than the number of days in the solar calendar. The lunar year consists of twelve months, or 354 days, approximately 10 days, 21 hours shorter than the solar calendar.

To equalize the difference between the two systems, every two to three years the Jewish calendar adds another month, making a “leap year” consisting of 13 months. This



thirteenth month is called *adar sh'inee*, meaning the second *Adar*, which is one of the names of another month. The adding of this leap year occurs seven times in each 19-year cycle. This keeps the Biblical festivals aligned with the appropriate seasons.

### The Jewish Festivals

The cycle of Jewish festivals that govern religious life today are outlined in Leviticus 23. The first festival, held weekly, is given the highest place within Jewish life. It is known as *Shabbat*, the Sabbath. Leviticus 23:3 reads, “*Six days shall work be done. But the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings.*”

The Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and runs through sundown of the following day, a time when the family comes together. The Sabbath is a time of joy, change, rest and reflection. It is also a time of worship, studying the scriptures, and reflecting upon God, our Creator. A festive occasion, the Sabbath is welcomed as a bride, or as the “Queen Sabbath.”

The women of the house initiate the Sabbath by lighting candles. Various traditions include eating special bread, known as *Challah*, in a fine festive meal. If there is a synagogue in the community, people are most welcome to join the worshipers for a Friday night service or a Saturday morning service. Many rabbis are willing to help explain their order of service.

If a group from your congregation wants to attend a Sabbath worship service, it would be best to call the rabbi in advance, announcing your intentions, so that he can make your participation most meaningful.

The first of the major festivals in the religious calendar falls in the springtime, around Easter, and is known as *Pesach*, or Passover. Passover, an eight-day festival, is really three festivals combined into one eight-day period: The Feast of The Passover Lamb, The Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Firstfruits.

The Festival of the Passover Lamb commemorates the Exodus event. A first-born lamb was sacrificed and its blood put upon the door frames of Jewish homes. That delivered Jewish people from the grip of the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, the slaying of the firstborn in Egypt, and brought about freedom from bondage and slavery under Pharaoh.

Besides commemorating the Passover Lamb, Passover is also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For eight days, Jewish people rid their homes of all forms of



leaven, such as cookies, cakes and breads, and only the unleavened bread, usually *matzoh*, are eaten.

The third festival during this eight-day period is known as the Feast of First Fruits. Leviticus 23:9-11 reads, “*The LORD said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.’*”

Passover is celebrated primarily within the home, rather than the synagogue. A festive time, the family gathers to commemorate the Exodus through the feast of the Passover Seder and the singing of traditional songs. As believers in Jesus, we can gain insight into the sacrament of Communion as we understand the Last Supper, which was the Passover meal, and how Jesus celebrated it.

Through the Missouri Synod’s Board for Evangelism Services, the Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People has put together a Jewish Christian Haggadah (order of service), as well as a leader’s manual, to help Christians understand how they might celebrate Passover within their own worship setting. Many congregations in North America today, on Maundy Thursday, remember not only redemption from Egypt, but also redemption that has been bought for us through Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

Next in the order of festivals comes *Shavout*, or Pentecost, 50 days after Passover. Its name is derived from the Hebrew word which means weeks, because we mark seven cycles of weeks from the seventh day of Passover before we celebrate *Shavout*.

This holiday is doubly significant. First, it celebrates the harvest by the offering of the first fruits, commemorating the agricultural phase of the festival. Synagogues are decorated with flowers. Secondly, it commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments to Israel on Mt. Sinai.

Within the *Galut*, or Exile (Jewish people not living in Israel), the agricultural phase of *Shavuot* is diminished. Within American synagogues, this festival is used as a time of confirmation. The children who are confirmed, or initiated, into the Jewish fold are regarded as “first fruits,” offered on the altar of God in honor of Israel’s covenant on Mt. Sinai. It is commemorated by the consecration of Jewish youth to Torah.

Next in the religious calendar comes *Rosh HaShanna*, also known as the Feast of Trumpets, usually falling in mid-September. We find in Leviticus 23:23-25: “*And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘The LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: ‘On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the LORD by*



fire.” ’’ According to Jewish tradition, the world was created on the first day of *Tishre*. Therefore, this day is most appropriately designated as a day of judgment for Israel and all mankind.

*Tishre* is the first day of *Rosh HaShanna*, a time dedicated to prayer and contemplation, the day when spiritual rebirth is considered. The *shofar*, the ram’s horn, is sounded within the synagogue to summon worshipers to an awareness of their spiritual need.

The *shofar* has a special position within Jewish traditional life today. It is said that on *Rosh HaShanna*, when the shofar is sounded, God opens up three great books in heaven — The Book of Life, The Book of Death and an intermediate book. Those who have lived a most righteous life in the past year automatically have their names inscribed in the Book of Life. Those who have lived a most wicked life in the past year automatically have their names inscribed in the Book of Death. The rest have their names placed in the intermediate book.

We have ten days to restore our relationships with our fellowman. We are to seek forgiveness where we have offended, make restitution of outstanding damages, and fulfill or seek release from vows made. Then we turn to God to seek His forgiveness on *Yom Kippur*. After the last service ends, the *shofar* is once again sounded and fates are sealed into one of those books for the coming year. During this time, these greetings are exchanged: *L’Shannah tovah tekateivu* – may your name be inscribed for a good year.

Leviticus 16 and 17 help us to understand what *Yom Kippur* was about. On this day, all Israel gathered together in Jerusalem, and the high priest was to make atonement. He was to sacrifice for the people of Israel, so the relationship between the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the people might be restored. On this day only was the high priest allowed to enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of sacrificed animals.

First, a bull was sacrificed. Then the blood was brought inside the veil, and applied to the mercy seat, in order that the high priest of Israel and his family might first have atonement for their sins. Then, the high priest went out from the Holy of Holies and again, another animal was sacrificed. The blood of that animal was brought back inside in order to atone for the people of Israel. This atonement must be made year after year after year.

The temple in Jerusalem and the altar where the sacrifices were made was destroyed in the year 70. Since then and up to this time, no Jewish sacrifices have been offered even at *Yom Kippur*. Yet, *Yom Kippur* plays a central role in the life of Jewish people.



The *shofar* also serves as a reminder of the faithfulness of our forefather Abraham. He was willing to trust God and the promises God made concerning the nation of Israel, when God asked Abraham to offer up his son Isaac. Just as the knife was about to come down into Isaac, the angel of the Lord stopped the sacrifice, and provided a substitute sacrifice instead, a ram caught by its horns in a thicket nearby.

The sounding of the *shofar* also is a reminder of the giving of the law and testimony on Mt. Sinai. And it's a reminder of the eventual coming of Messiah.

Many Jews today say that prayer, repentance and good deeds are sufficient to accomplish atonement for our lives. But when many Jewish people are asked if they know for certain that their sins have been atoned for, few would respond with an overwhelming, "Yes."

For those of us who believe in the Messiah Jesus, we know for a fact that our sins have been forgiven. Jesus alone shed His blood for us. He has cleansed us of all sin, and made it possible for us to have that eternal assurance.

The next festival is *Sukkot*, a holiday occurring on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of *Tishre*, five days after *Yom Kippur*, and continuing for an eight-day period. *Sukkot* literally means booths, or tabernacles. It's a holiday of Thanksgiving, and the final of the three ingatherings of the harvest for the ancient people of Israel. The sacrifices offered in the temple during this holiday were considered by the sages as the most important ones, and

are bound to be resumed, even if the temple is never rebuilt in Israel, and even if all the other sacrifices were abolished.

It's incumbent upon religious Jewish people today to build three-sided booths, or *Sukka*, as a reminder of the wanderings of our ancestors in the wilderness. Jewish people are to take meals within these booths during this eight-day festival as a reminder of the temporary tents that were dwellings for the people.

During this festive time of thanksgiving, common foods of the earth are bound together, in order to be waved before the Lord as an offering of praise and thanksgiving. The elements bound together are the best fruit of the land, and are brought into the synagogue as evidence of the providential blessings conferred upon Israel.

The people use four different plants to observe *Succot* and different rabbinic interpretations describe the symbolism of each. The *Esrog*, citron, stands for the kind of



heart Jewish people should have, caring for others. The *Lulav*, palm branch, represents the spinal cord, symbolizing courage and steadfastness. The *Haddas*, or myrtle, some rabbis say, represents the human eye, to see the good in man and to shun the sin of envy. The last is the *Arabah*, or willow branch. The *Arabah* represents the mouth, or the power of expression, used to teach man right and straight thinking.

These four plants — citron, palm branch, myrtle and willow — are bound together to represent the ideal Jewish person, combining courage, freedom from envy, and cleanliness of speech. On the seventh day of this eight-day festival of *Succot*, a time of celebrating is known as *hoshana rabbah*. Within this synagogue celebration, Jewish people march around the *beema*, or the lectern, accompanied by the chanting of verses of *hoshana*, literally meaning “Save us, we pray!” The waving of the *Esrog*, the *Lulov*, the *Haddas*, and the *Arbah* symbolize man’s desire to lead a clean life and follow God.

The eighth day of *Sukkot* is known as *Shmeni Etzerat*, an extra day spent in the presence of the Lord. No time elapses between *Sukkot* and *Shmeni Etzerat*, as was the case between Passover and the Feast of Weeks. The rainy season in Israel began soon after *Sukkot*, and it would have been difficult for large numbers of Jewish people from outlying areas to again revisit the temple at a later time.

Today, rabbis interpret the eighth day of assembly as a plea of God to His people to gather in Jerusalem on a festival of thanksgiving. “Your parting from me and my house makes me unhappy. Please tarry an extra day, that I might enjoy your presence,” rabbis would say. “Being in the presence of the Lord” on *Shmeni Etzerat* typifies the understanding by Jewish people today of this festival.

The day following *Shmeni Etzerat* is known as *Simcha Torah*, literally meaning, rejoicing in the law. *Simcha Torah* is celebrated as a holiday in honor of the conclusion of the public reading of the Pentateuch. The reading cycle throughout the religious calendar year calls for the reading from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy. On *Simcha Torah* the last portions of the Pentateuch are read, and the first portions of Genesis are read. This once again completes the cycle and expresses the continuity of the heritage of devotion to Torah enjoyed by Jewish people in all the lands.

During *Simcha Torah*, processions with the Torah are made around the pulpit, accompanied by chants and marked by a festive setting. It’s customary to serve refreshments at synagogue as well as home. *Simcha Torah* is a day of the Jewish person’s greatest rejoicing that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has given His words to us, and we rejoice in them.

*Hannukkah*, *Chanukkah*, *Hanukah*, *Chanukah* (choose your spelling, as experts disagree) is the Festival of Dedication, or the Festival of Lights. This day begins on the



25th day of the Jewish month, *Kislev*, usually around mid-December, and lasts for eight days.

*Hannukkah* celebrates the rededication of the temple by the Maccabeans, who, in the year 167 BCE, were victorious over their enemies, the Syrian Greeks. Under the leadership of Antiochus, and aided by Hellenized Jewish people, attempts were made to destroy Judaism and Israel.

Today people light candles during this holiday to honor the traditional myth that, at the Temple rededication, a small jug of fine oil lasted for eight days, though it contained only enough oil for one day's light. However, this myth appears nowhere in the books of Maccabees in the Apocrypha.

Jewish observers use a nine-candled menorah, or *Hanukkiah*, during the eight days. Two traditions dominate the lighting of candles at *Hannukah*. One tradition holds that we must add to the light of the festival by increasing the number of candles lit on each day. The first night, one candle, the second night, two, the third night three, etc., until all eight are lit. Another tradition holds that we diminish the light, starting with all eight, and then going down to seven, six, etc., until only one candle is lit. The person who lights the candles at *Hannukah* lights a ninth candle, known as the *shamesh*, or the helper. Then the *shamesh* is used to light the festival lights.

*Hannukah* did not originate as a time of giving gifts. This is a modern addition, borrowed from the custom of exchanging gifts by Christian families at Christmas. At *Hannukah*, families give modest gifts to each other during the eight days of the festival.

The events leading up to this Festival of Dedication occurred in the time between the writing of the Old and New Testaments as recorded in the apocryphal book of I & II Maccabees. The only reference in the Bible to *Hannukah* is found in John 10:22: "Jesus is at the temple in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication."

The last festival in the religious calendar is known as The Feast of *Purim*, or the Casting of Lots. The book of Esther records how the plot of wicked Haman to destroy all the Jewish people throughout the kingdom of Xerxes was foiled by God through Mordecai and Queen Esther. The congregation and especially the children are given noisemakers, called *groggers*, on this very festive occasion. As the book of Esther is read, each time wicked Haman's name is mentioned, the congregation boos, hisses and makes noise, trying to blot out from all memory the name of Haman.

In its background, though, *Purim* has a serious note – the hope that someday in this world, all Jewish people can live in peace and harmony with others, without fear of





bigotry and the hatred of Pharaohs, Hamans, and Hitlers. Many religious Jewish people believe this will not happen until Messiah comes.

### Modern Traditions and Customs

Synagogue, community, home and family have brought about many traditions and customs, which play important roles in Jewish people's lives today. Everything in the synagogue, the center of worship, focuses on the place of the Torah and of the scriptures, which are front and center in worship, literally and figuratively. The scrolls that contain the words of the Torah are kept in an ark, a closet, behind closed doors and are surrounded by symbols that cause man to reflect on the place of the scriptures in the life of men.

Usually two stone tablets near the place where the scriptures are maintained contain the first two words of each of the Ten Commandments. Above the tablets are sometimes found a crown, and on each side, two lions, helping to focus on the fact that the Word of God is to be central in the life of people today. The *Ner tamid*, or the eternal light, is a lamp with a candle in it, continually shining to help man see that the light of God and the life of men is not only to be focused on this world, but upon the world to come.

In Orthodox and Conservative worship settings, men and women traditionally cover their heads; men, with a yarmulke, or in Hebrew, a *kippa*, and women, with hats. Most often, women sit separately from men. Sometimes the balcony is reserved for women. In a Reform temple, men do not normally cover their heads during worship and both men and women sit together.

During services, Orthodox and Conservative Jewish men wear a prayer shawl, called a *Tallit*, and during the morning services Jewish men would put on *Tiffilin*, or phylacteries. The phylacteries are small, cubical boxes that contain portions of scripture, based on Deuteronomy 6. The boxes are bound to the left arm and the forehead with leather straps.

In Orthodox and Conservative Jewish homes, you would see a *Mezzuzah*, a long, narrow case of wood or metal fastened to the right doorpost and containing a parchment, on which are inscribed the words of Deut. 6:4-9 and Deut. 11:13-20. Devout Jewish people will touch their fingers to the *Mezzuzah* and then to their lips, as though kissing it, an act of endearment for the scriptures it contains. For many Jewish people it is a sign

that God's love is present and accepted within the home, and reminds them of the need to live a holy life.



Leviticus 11 sets forth the dietary laws known as *kashrut*, or kosher, based on permissions and prohibitions regarding foods. Yet the scriptures today have been amplified by traditions that far exceed the Biblical injunctions. The Hebrew word *kosher* literally means to be “clean” or “fit.” Maintaining a “kosher home” has been an important factor in helping Jewish people to keep their identity as a people in the dispersion, showing that their lives are set apart from the lives of others in the community.

In larger Jewish communities it is much easier to maintain a kosher home and to purchase kosher food. But, in smaller ones, it is difficult at best. For some Jewish people, keeping kosher has come to mean abstinence from pork or pork products, while others follow all the Biblical and rabbinic injunctions. A good set of reference source books for Jewish life and worship are books known as *The Jewish Catalogs*. The three volumes are edited by Strassfield, and provide good insight into Jewish life and worship.

The Covenant of Circumcision, or the *Brit Millah*, or *Bris*, is traditionally performed in the home when a male infant is eight days old. This ritual is so important that it can even be performed on the Sabbath, a time in which no work can be done. Circumcision is seen as a time when a Jewish child is brought into the covenant that God has established with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Because each covenant required a shedding of blood, some blood must be shed by the child during this ritual.

Usually, a trained person, known as a *mohel*, is called upon to perform the circumcision, and the family and friends gather together to make this a festive occasion in the home.

From the time of the eighth day of the *Bris*, until the male child reaches the age of 13, the parents’ responsibilities to train up the child in Jewish ways, traditions and customs. At age 13, the Jewish male is brought before the congregation and brought into full membership and standing within the community through a ceremony known as the *Bar Mitzvah* or *Bat Mitzvah* for a daughter. Literally, it means “son (daughter) of the commandment.” Afterwards, the Jewish child can participate in all Jewish functions, religious duties and responsibilities, including the males donning the *tefillin* (*the phylacteries on the forehead and arm worn during prayer*) and attending worship.

A Jewish wedding service is a joyous and festive occasion, marked by the order of service being celebrated under the *chuppah*, or a canopy. Friends and family, chosen and so honored by the wedding couple, hold the four poles that support the canopy. The leader of the congregation leads the service and the cantor chants the blessings and some



of the prayers.

The service is marked by the drinking of wine, signing of the marriage contract called the *Ketubbah*, and culminates with the groom taking the empty glass and breaking it under his heel. This symbolizes the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, so that rejoicing on this day is tempered by a sad remembrance. Other traditions say that the broken glass reminds us of the transitoriness of life.

Jewish wedding services are marked by festive meals and dancing lasting long into the night. The family and the community rejoices in God who created the world, who created man and gave man woman, so that the two could be made one, be fruitful and multiply.

### **Current Concerns of Jewish People**

If you speak with two or three of your Jewish friends, you will find that they hold many similar concerns:

The survival of their people in light of the growing roots of anti-Semitism.

Issues surrounding the state of Israel in the heat of political turmoil and battles that rage in the Middle East

Declining numbers of Jewish people, in light of intermarriage and children moving away from religious lifestyles.

Social concerns, including disease and oppression throughout the world.

Once you learn your Jewish friends' concerns, you can speak about those in order to build and maintain the relationships that are so vital in clearly communicating the message of Messiah. But mere understanding of a person's concerns is not enough. Find innovative ways in which you can help to work towards diminishing their concerns, perhaps standing up against anti-Semitism, or standing in support of the people of Israel.

Many non-Jewish people today feel that Zionism, or the desire to see the state of Israel in existence, needs to be lessened in importance or eliminated altogether. Yet Jewish people have a strong fervor and desire to see the state of Israel exist in a state of peace and harmony. They feel very strongly that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob deeded this territory to Israel as part and parcel of the covenant God established with His people. These covenant rights to that piece of geography are still in existence today.

Support for the state of Israel does not necessarily mean whole-hearted support for a political government in leadership at any given time. Yet with many disagreements Jewish people have over the various issues, they stand together with a unifying cry, *Am Y'srael Chai!* (Israel must live!).



Regardless of what we might think about politics, policies, governments and rulers within Israel, you should understand that the existence of the land of Israel lies at the heart of Jewish people. God has maintained the Jewish people as a unique people on the face of this earth, over many centuries, when by all odds, when dispersed, they should have been assimilated into various cultures.

As Christians, we can and should choose to stand by the Jewish people, to stand by Israel and help to affirm that the Jewish people indeed have a place in God's plan. Some congregations have even held Israel commemoration days, where offerings have been given for reforestation projects in Israel, or to support people on various Kibbutzim. You are only limited by your imagination and willingness when it comes to affirming the continuity of the Jewish people. You can help to build relationships with them, so that in an honest, sincere relationship, a personal evangelistic dialogue can take place between you and your Jewish friend.

We hope and pray that you will seek to understand the Jewish people's concerns and needs even more, so that you might be able to tell them of Messiah in a loving, sincere, direct and sensitive way, to speak tenderly to them of their Savior.

Isaiah 40:1-5 says, "*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'*"

## **A History of Jewish Missions**

Jewish evangelism, the work of bringing the good news that Jesus is the Messiah to Jewish people, is not just a 20<sup>th</sup> Century phenomenon. In fact, it goes back through recorded human history. Galatians 3:6 reads, "*Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'*"

People of faith are sons of Abraham. The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are men of faith are blessed through Abraham, who had faith.



According to the scriptures, Paul indicates that the Lord Himself was the first evangelist to the Jewish people, bringing the good news that salvation had come by faith, and faith alone, to Abraham. Abraham passed his faith down to Isaac, Isaac to Jacob, Jacob down through David, who found the culmination of their faith in the Messiah.

The word evangelist can be found three times in the New Testament, referring a person, a work and a calling:

1) Phillip is typical and identified as “the evangelist” in Acts 21:8: “*Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven.*”

In Acts 8:4-40, we read an overview of Phillip’s work as he brought the good news, or evangelized, people he came into contact with. Acts 8:4-6 reads, “*Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.*”

Acts 8:9-13: “*Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is the divine power known as the Great Power.” 11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.*”

We recall the story of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:29-40: “*The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked. ‘How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: ‘He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.’ The eunuch asked Philip, ‘Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?’ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?’ -- And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When*



*they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.”*

Phillip was one of the first deacons elected by the church to serve the widows and elders. He was neither an apostle or an ordained minister, but an evangelist. He preached the Good News about the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ.

2) 2 Timothy 4:1-5 Paul, speaking to Timothy, says: *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. ”*

The primary work of an evangelist is to proclaim good tidings in new areas. Evangelism is the vanguard, or the leading edge, of Christianity, announcing the good news of the kingdom and of Christ where it has not been heard before. Paul, like Phillip, did this kind of work, as did Timothy and other traveling Christians. They planted Christianity, helping congregations to gather. Then they moved on.

An evangelist’s work is different from the work of a pastor, the shepherd of a flock. The pastor and teacher were to watch over and teach the flock, while the evangelist was charged with the responsibility of going place to place, seeking new believers. We find in later times that the authors of the four gospels were called evangelists, because they were the first to proclaim the good news through writing.

In Ephesians 4:1, we find Paul speaking to the church at Ephesus: *“I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called. A life with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love. Eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us, according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”*

3) In Ephesians 4:11-16 he says, *“And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for*



*the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be like children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of men, and by their craftiness and deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, for whom the whole body, joined and knit together in every joint, with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and it upbuilds itself in love.”*

In short, the body of believers today, the church, is one living organism, called to grow and to mature. Within that organism, individuals are given gifts by God to carry forth certain vocations, or callings, to help build up the body. One gift is being an evangelist, a bearer of the Good News.

Special talents or gifts are needed for the pioneering and proclaiming of the Gospel, central to the work of evangelism. The need for founding new mission centers and building up new congregations is evident today where but 20% of the world’s population is Christian. The evangelist is given appropriate spiritual gifts to unlock the doors of the hearts of pagans, heathens and sinners, so that Christ might enter into their lives.

### **The First Jewish Evangelist: Jesus**

The first Jewish evangelist was Jesus. He sent out 12 disciples to do the work of evangelism. We read in Matthew 10: *“He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: “The kingdom of heaven is near.” ’”* Jesus sent his disciples only to the Jewish people at this time. They were not to go to the Samaritans, or the gentiles, or anybody else other than “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Matthew 15:21-28 recounts *“Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”*

Here we find affirmation of Jesus’ calling and mystery during His short, three-



year ministry on this earth. It was the heart and desire of God that the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that is, the Jewish people, would turn back from sin to God.

Since 1976, I have worked as an evangelist. During that time, many people have said to me, “I didn’t know that there were Jewish people who believed in Jesus. I thought all Jewish people rejected Jesus and His teachings when He came.”

We need to ask these questions: Who rejected Jesus and His teachings? Did all of Israel as a nation reject Jesus? Did a handful? What happened? How did Jewish people in the first century really see Jesus? Investigating the writing of that time will provide answers. The best evidence, of course, is found in the New Testament. But other rabbinic sources are available, as well as writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus.

Luke 4:42-44, says: *“At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.’ And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.”*

Luke 5 adds, *“One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.”*

Again, in Luke 12:1, we read: *“Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”* The multitudes who gathered to hear Jesus were Jewish!

Jesus taught in a Jewish teaching style, not unlike that of rabbis or other leaders. The difference was His authority. Jesus’ teachings astounded many because he did not have a traditional basis of authority derived from Jewish “case law.” Matthew 7:28-29, says: *“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”*

So it seems that the people of the street, who were known as *Am Ha Eretz*, earth people, had opportunity to hear Jesus. They were far from being turned off by His message – they were amazed and challenged by it.

The Gospel impacted not only ordinary people, but also many religious groups





and leaders. The Pharisees, contrary to most opinions, was a sect of Judaism that was quite varied. One group of Pharisees followed the house of Shammai (a contemporary of Jesus), a rabbi who had great leanings toward a more strict interpretation of the Torah. Others, of the house of Hillel, were more lenient in their understanding of Torah. Others held mystical leanings.

The New Testament accounts deal mainly with the house of Shammai in talking about the Pharisees. But certainly the New Testament reflects the many varieties of Pharisees. One outstanding Pharisee mentioned in the New Testament is shown in a positive relationship with Jesus. Nicodemus was described as a man of the Pharisees, a member of the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin, and Israel's teacher.

The story of his initial visit with Jesus is recorded in John 3. Nicodemus recognized Jesus as one who was sent from God. As he was challenged by the comments Jesus made concerning being born again, he searched his heart and came to the point where he willingly, openly took up the cause of Jesus before his colleagues. We seem to find proof that Nicodemus took the claims of Jesus to heart, for he and Joseph of Aramithea were present at the preparation of Jesus' body for burial.

Gamaliel is the name and title of six sages, descendants of Hillel, who filled the office of *nasi* in Erez Israel. Rabban Gamaliel Ha-Zaken ("the elder"), a grandson of Hillel, lived in the first half of the first century. As president of the Sanhedrin he maintained close contact not only with the Jews of Erez Israel, but also with those in the Diaspora, the dispersion.

In Acts 5:38-39 is his recorded warning to the Sanhedrin that the work of the Apostles perhaps could be the work of God. Interfering with the work of God could be construed as going against the work of God. *"Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."* History points out that the Sanhedrin accepted Gamaliel's counsel.

The Jewish people who came in from the diaspora were gathered in Jerusalem for the Jewish festival Shavuot. In Acts 2:41, we read how 3,000 Jewish people were added to the number of believers in one day!! These 3,000 represented Jews who spoke different tongues and dialects, and yet each one heard the Good News in his own tongue from the evangelists. They responded with hearts of joy. Shortly after that, an additional 2,000 people responded to the Messiahship of Jesus.

Acts 6:7 tells us, *"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."* These priests belonged to the Sadducees, a sect of the latter half of the Second Temple



period, formed about 200 B.C.E?. Active in political and economic life, the Sadducean party was composed largely of the wealthier elements of the population—priests, merchants and aristocrats. They dominated the Temple worship and its rites and many were members of the Sanhedrin.

The Jewish Christian historian, Neander, who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, indicated that, at the time of the destruction of the temple in the year 70, more than one million Jewish people in the land of Israel were following Messiah. So the message was not totally rejected by all people.

On the other hand, the Gospel did not find total acceptance, either. Jesus Himself set forth the strategy for Jewish evangelism. He commissioned His followers to GO and bring the Good News.

In Luke 24:44-47, it reads: “ *He said to them, “ ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ ”* (emphasis mine)

Acts 1:1-8 says, “*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So when they met together, they asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ ”*

### **The Early Evangelists**

The early evangelists were to follow Jesus’ commission to first bring the message of Messiah to Jewish people. Why? Because they had as the warp and woof of their life and culture Moses, the Law, the Prophets, the Land of Israel, the priests, the sacrifices, the festivals and the hope that Messiah would come — the Jewish Messiah! In that day the gentiles were pagan heathens for the most part who were far from the God of Abra-



ham, Isaac and Jacob.

Consistently we read how Paul went into new communities and first visited the synagogues, where he would stay and preach the Gospel until the message was no longer received.

Romans 10 expresses Paul's heart for the salvation of the Jewish people, too: *"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."*

Now after posing Christ as the answer, he asks the question, in Romans 10:14-21: *"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.' Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, 'I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.' And Isaiah boldly says, 'I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.' But concerning Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people. And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings and good news." ' So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ. But I say, 'Surely, they have never heard, have they?' For indeed they have. Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and the words to the ends of the world. But I say, 'Surely Israel did not know, did they?' At the first, Moses says, 'I will make you jealous, by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you. Isaiah is very bold when he says, 'I was found by those who sought me not. I became manifest to those who did not ask for me.' But as for Israel, he says, 'All the day long, I have stretched out my hand, to a disobedient and an obstinate people.' "*

Paul continues in Romans 11: *"I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel: 'Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they*



are trying to kill me?’ And what was God’s answer to him? ‘I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, as it is written: ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day.’ And David says: ‘May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.’ Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.’ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.’”

God’s plan to bring salvation to the world meant the temporary rejection by a part of Israel, the Jewish people. Their hearts would be hardened and their eyes blinded for a time. But the rejection by some Jewish people has led to the spreading of the Gospel around the world. God obviously is concerned with all people, not just Israel! ***In turn, and this is important, it is God’s plan that the gentiles who come to faith would provoke Jewish people to reconsider the claims of Jesus. In that way, some would be won back.***

Today, Jewish people often react in this way toward any of their friends or family



turning toward Jesus: “Whoever heard of such a thing? Jewish people believing in Jesus! It’s crazy.” It sounds crazy because the majority of people who believe in Jesus today are gentiles, not Jewish. But that was not always the case. In fact, the early history of

evangelism was almost solely Jewish people telling other Jewish people about the Messiah. The early church said something just the opposite: “Whoever heard of such a thing? Gentiles believing in Jesus!”

In Acts 10:9-16: *“About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ ‘Surely not, Lord!’ Peter replied. ‘I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’ The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.”*

At verse 34 we read, *“Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.’ ”*

Verse 44 continues, *“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.”*

Evangelism was not to be limited to Jewish people, but to all nations of the world. The setting of the early worship services in the Jewish congregations was quite Jewish in flavor, custom, traditions, liturgy and music. But as more and more Gentiles followed Jesus, we increasingly find that the influence upon the leadership, customs, traditions and liturgy within the early church began to lean away from its roots and heritage.

### **A Roman State Religion**

By the year 321, when Constantine was Emperor of Rome, Christianity was proclaimed **a Roman state religion**. This was a far cry from the book of Acts recounting that the people’s hearts were stirred and challenged by the Holy Spirit to follow the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Instead, ritual, custom and an edict of leadership prevailed. Unfortunately, what was infused into the institutionalized organization in Rome



were attitudes of fear and even hostility towards Jewish people, especially Jewish believers – who were ultimately marginalized.

Hugh Schonfield, a 20<sup>th</sup> century British writer, owed his reputation to a long series of works, often controversial, in which he dealt with primitive Christianity's Jewish roots. He wrote *Besorat Mattai: An Old Hebrew Text of St. Matthew's Gospel*

(1927) and *According to the Hebrews - A New Translation of the Toledoth Jeshu . . .* (1937). In his *History of Jewish Christianity from the First to the Twentieth Century* (1936) Schonfield endeavored to revive the cause of the first-century Ebionite or "Nazarene" Church of Jerusalem, long silenced by the triumphant Gentile Church, and proclaimed the establishment of a "Jewish Christian independent religious communion" of Jews who believed in the messiahship of Jesus but remained separate from any Church denomination.

To varying extents, the same approach characterizes *Jesus: A Biography* (1939), *The Jew of Tarsus - An Unorthodox Portrait of Paul* (1946), *Saints Against Caesar: The Rise and Reactions of the First Christian Community* (1948), and *Those Incredible Christians - A New Look at the Early Church* (1968).

A noted lecturer and broadcaster, Schonfield continued his research in *The Authentic New Testament* (1955), an original translation from the Greek together with introduction and notes relating the text to rabbinic sources, which became a best seller. In this, as in other of his later works—such as *Judaism and World Order* (1943); *The Song of Songs* (1960), translated from the Hebrew with notes and introduction; and *A Popular Dictionary of Judaism* (1962), Schonfield stressed his Jewish identity and apparently retreated from his earlier wholehearted advocacy of Judeo-Christianity.

He also wrote *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1956); *A History of Biblical Literature* (1962); and *The Passover Plot* (1965), a reappraisal of the Messianic initiative of Jesus, and *The Politics of God* (1970). *The Pentecost Revolution* (1974), an account of the "Jesus Party" up to the outbreak of the Jewish War against the Romans in 66 C.E. is a sequel to *The Passover Plot*. (The Encyclopedia Judaica)

### **From the Fourth Century to the Reformation**

Hugh Schonfeld's *A History of Jewish Christianity* records that in the fourth century such fear of the Jews existed that the church thought it necessary to outline the boundaries of inter-relationships between Jewish people and church members. The sixty-fourth Canon stated, "If any clergyman entered a synagogue of the Jewish people, or the heritage (the Nazarenes) to pray, let the clergyman be deposed. If a layman, let him be excommunicated. If any bishop, Presbytery, or Deacon, or any of the list of the clergy, keeps the fast or festivals with Jewish people, or receives from them any of the gifts of their feasts (unleavened bread, etc.), let him be deposed, or if a layperson, excom-



municated. And if any person, whether clerical or faithful, shall take food with a Jewish person, he is to abstain from our communion, that he may learn to amend his ways.”

Further, we find that a Jewish person who came to faith and wanted to be baptized had to not only profess faith in following Jesus, but in renouncing everything Jewish. He had to renounce fasts, festivals, feasts, new moons, holy days, circumcision, etc. Only

after renouncing anything Jewish could he make a profession of faith. And, should this Jewish person revert to any of his folly, “may his soul be cast into hell as an anathema.” Quite a dramatic change of attitude in just a few centuries!

Initial methods of proclaiming the Good News were simple and effective: the preaching of the word, meeting with people one-on-one, sharing and breaking of bread house to house. In this way, others who wished to come to find out about this Good News had an opportunity to sit down and to openly and honestly consider the claims of the scriptures and the claims of Messiah in light of their Jewish heritage and traditions.

Unfortunately, during the dark ages from the fourth century to the age of the Reformation, there are no bright spots in the work of Jewish evangelism. Rather, we find nothing but a continuous, cancerous and negative view by the church against Jewish people.

Christians attempted to convert Jewish people, but at times the methods used were anything but Christ-like — threatening death, expulsion from the community or country, or taking away of all one’s possessions. Some Jewish people were made second-class citizens within their adopted country. These were not Biblical means of evangelism! But they occurred often and left a trail of Jewish bloodshed mourned even today. We must condemn unBiblical, unethical methodologies and simultaneously expand Biblical, ethical Gospel proclamation so that others will hear the Gospel before it is too late.

James Parks has written an excellent book, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, available through Hermon Press. This book details the nature of the relationship between Jewish believers and Gentile believers from the time of the early church until modern times. It begins when Christianity was still considered a Jewish sect to the time it became firmly established. It depicts an unpleasant history, but one important for believers to know why Jewish people face so many barriers and fears when hearing the Gospel.

### **Luther’s Attitudes Toward Jewish People**

“We want to act in a Christian way towards them and offer them first of all the Christian faith, that they might accept the Messiah, who, after all, is their kinsman and



born of their flesh and blood and is the real seed of Abraham of which they boast... We still want to treat them with Christian love and to pray for them, so that they might become converted and would receive the Lord.” So said Dr. Martin Luther in the last sermon of his life delivered in Eisleben on February 15, 1546, just three days before his death.

In his early life, Luther wrote a treatise entitled, “That Jesus Christ was born a Jew.” In it, he chastised the popes, bishops and early church leaders for so badly mistreating Jewish people. He told the bishops and popes that he would rather have been a pig than a Jew under their rule. If we loved the Jewish people, as flesh and blood of our Lord and Savior, we should extend a hand of love, that we might win some for the Gospel, he wrote.

Martin Luther held out his hand of love and hoped in his heart of hearts that Jewish people would turn from their sin, and turn back to Messiah. But, because of Jewish people’s precautions and fears, built up over centuries, few Jews sought Jesus during Martin Luther’s time.

Luther became embittered, and later in his ministry and not long before his death, he wrote another treatise entitled, “On the Jews and Their Lies.” Within this treatise, Dr. Luther proposes a seven-point program for dealing with Jewish people:

*Their Talmud, that is, their religious writings, should be burned.*

*Their synagogues should be burned and destroyed.*

*Their Rabbis should be forced to stop teaching for fear of losing their lives.*

*Young Jewish people should be forced into hard labor.*

*Their passes to travel about the countryside should be revoked.*

*Their business activities should be constricted.*

*Jewish people should be prohibited from involving themselves in certain forms of trade.*

This was the bond of love that would bring the Jewish people to their Messiah? [It should be noted here that the LCMS went on record by passing a synodical resolution in 1983 disavowing Dr. Luther’s anti-Semitic statements.]

Jewish leaders remember Martin Luther’s words today, as they remind their constituencies of what Christian leaders have said and continue to say about Jewish people. Occasionally, Luther’s statements still appear in writings within Jewish publications. They reinforce to Jewish people that they have no true friends among Christians.

In 1975, the Board for Evangelism for the LCMS compiled a book entitled, “Witnessing to Jewish People.” Written by Rev. Bruce Lieske, an original member of the Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish people, he wrote an essay entitled, “A Lost Heri-





tage.” He has written a brief synopsis of Lutheran missions to Jewish people.

I quote from the first portion of his essay, “*We want to act in a Christian way towards them, and offer them, first of all, the Christian faith, that they might accept Messiah who, after all, is their kinsman, born of their flesh and blood, and is of the real seed of Abraham, to which they boast. We still want to treat them with Christian love and pray for them, so that they might be converted and would receive the Lord.*” Thus spoke Martin Luther in the last sermon of his life, preached to the people of Eislaben on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1546, just three days prior to his death. His final remarks are subtitled, “*Eine Fromanhun Vider uns Juden*” (A Warning Against the Jews). And they comprised the conclusion of his sermon, based on Matthew chapter 11, v. 25-30.

*“Luther’s feelings toward the Jews were complex and ambivalent. Sometimes filled with compassion and love, but at other times, vulgar and abrasive. But one thing persists; his hope for their salvation. All throughout his active ministry, Luther was troubled by the general Jewish rejection of Jesus, the Messiah. Paradoxically, in an era in which church historians do not view as evangelistic, Luther showed a profound interest in Jewish evangelism, and wrote five books on the subject.*

*“Living and working in an atmosphere charged with theological polemics, and accustomed to the coarse vernacular of his society, Luther’s mission methods probably would not bear fruit in the twentieth century. Regardless of his choice of expression, even in his worst statements, Luther’s objective was always to bring Jewish people to Christ. He closes his book on “The Jews With The Lies” with this hope: ‘May Christ our dear Lord convert them mercifully, and preserve us steadfastly and immovably in the knowledge of Him, which is eternal life.’”*

### **Jewish Missions After the Reformation**

For a full two centuries after the Reformation, a voice on behalf of the salvation of Jewish people was scarcely heard. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Lutheran interests in evangelizing Jewish people reappeared through the Pietists. Philip Spenner was perhaps the one who replanted the seed of Lutheran interest in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He was a great pioneer in moving the methodology of Jewish evangelism away from the crudeness of Medieval times, to a more enlightened, Christ-like approach. Spenner is considered to be the first to work out a detailed missionary plan of the Christian approach to Jewish people. Its main significance was to renounce all forms of coercion.

Spenner became friends with a young instructor at Dresden, whose name was August Frank. He became Spenner’s successor in the Pietistic movement. Frank laid the groundwork for the “*Institutum Judaicum*,” which was founded at Halla in Germany in 1728. The first organized mission to the Jews from the continent of Europe was in Berlin, the Israel mission, founded in 1822.



German Lutheran evangelism to Jews bore rich fruit and Jews became Lutheran theologians. These include Carl Caspari (1814-1892), Old Testament scholar; the church historian Neander (1789-1850), and Frederick Philippi (1809-1882), New Testament exegete and defender of the Lutheran Confessions, and of course, Franz Deilitsch - a gentile very supportive of Jewish missions and famous Hebrew scholar and commentator on the Old Testament.

Several other Protestant missions arose during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1800s, the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews was formed, and is considered the oldest, most extensive Jewish mission or organization in the world.

The 1916 edition of Jewish Encyclopedia, the fourth volume, says that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nearly 250,000 Jewish people came to believe in Jesus in the British Isles and Germany. This source listed 14 mission societies, which claim nearly 12,400 conversions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This information indicates that most Jewish evangelism work was not done by societies themselves, but by local congregations and individuals within them.

One excellent source of Jewish missions history is a book entitled, *A Century Of Jewish Missions*, written by A. E. Thompson in 1902, and published by Fleming Ravel. Though out of print now, many libraries have copies of this little book. Its eighth chapter has a section on methodologies and agencies in Jewish evangelism. The primary method of Jewish evangelism, was itineration, i.e., mission workers traveling from place to place with the Gospel. This was Christ's own plan, and the one by which He sent forth the 12 and the 70.

Every pioneer missionary has followed it, and without it, little of the extensive, permanent work now existing could have been established. Itineration requires an unceasing goal, a willingness to get up and go from community to community, pioneering and proclaiming the message of Messiah.

The logical outcome of the itineration method is the establishment of mission stations and congregations. Once interest is awakened and souls are saved, a local mission is established, a place where people come together for discipleship, growth and encouragement to go out and make disciples. When the mission is firmly established, it becomes another center of operation where literature and itinerant journeys can spring forth and around which outposts can be planted.

The work of a mission station was spent in house to house visitation, literature distribution, Bible distribution, providing teachers for schools, physicians, pharmacists and nurses. The workers could proclaim the Gospel through chapels and mission halls, through street preaching, classes and mother's meetings and sometimes in language



schools, to help immigrants settle into a new language in the country.

Recently, excellent New Testament translations have been published, both in Hebrew and Yiddish, so that Jewish people might be able to read, in a familiar language,

the message of Messiah. *The Yiddish New Testament*, one of the best around, was translated by Dr. Henry Einspruch. His copy of the New Testament in Yiddish is available by contacting the Lederer Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century Outreach**

In the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bible shop window missions placed the Bible and other literature in windows to attract the attention of passers-by. Many people came to faith as they stopped, read the Word of God and came inside to ask questions. Some people were not reached through preaching, or on street corners, or in distribution of literature. So, some organizations chose to use the post office to communicate the Gospel. Tracts and Bibles were sent to the homes of Jewish people, and many have come to faith through reading the Word of God.

In North America, mission agencies were formed. Some are small, comprised of one or two persons. But a few are large mission agencies, supported by believers' free will gifts and have many traveling workers.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first organized concern for Jewish evangelism from Christians in America came from a Norwegian Lutheran Piety background. In 1878, at a church conference in Wisconsin, the Zion Society for Israel, an inter-Lutheran agency, was organized. Its goal was to encourage the promotion and conduct of a missionary program among Jewish people in the world. Then, however, American Lutherans were primarily concerned with reaching those of their own ethnic backgrounds. So, various Lutheran church bodies did not respond to the challenge of Jewish missions.

In 1964, the Zion Society merged with the American Lutheran Church and the work came under the auspices of the Commission on Evangelism. In 1974, the American Lutheran Church restructured itself and the Department of Messianic Ministries was phased out of existence.

Wishing to fill a need for an effective testimony to Jewish people, Rev. Clarence Hanson and Rev. S. Olsen were instrumental in establishing a new inter-Lutheran Jewish mission society called "Good News for Israel." They used a parish-centered approach to help congregations bring the message of Messiah to Jewish people. They recognized that special skills and attitudes were needed to help members. This organization is still seeking to encourage people in the Minneapolis area to speak for Messiah.

Success throughout the history of Jewish evangelism is not determined by large numbers of Jewish people coming to believe in Jesus. We know that this cannot happen



until the very end of days. But success can be determined by the faithfulness of God's people to lovingly, consistently tell the lost sheep of the house of Israel that salvation has come through Jesus, our Lord and Savior, and our Messiah. May God grant us such success.

## **Appendix I**

### **A History of Jewish Missions Through The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (2001 edition)**

Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890), although he was not Jewish, had a huge influence in Jewish understanding and C.F.W. Walther, the first president of the Synod, considered him to teach at Concordia Seminary.

In 1863, Daniel Landesmann became a Jewish Christian while residing in Jerusalem. He served for 18 years as a missionary among the Jewish people in Constantinople under the Scottish Society for Jewish Missions. Samuel Keyl, a Missouri Synod emigrant missionary, invited Landesmann to come to the United States to work in Jewish missions. When he arrived, he expected to find an assignment waiting for him. He soon learned that “outsiders did not break into the synodical ranks of membership without first passing formidable doctrinal tests.”

The LCMS Central Illinois District sponsored Landesmann to attend Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois for training in Lutheran doctrine. However, Landesmann, already in his 40s and with 20 years of missionary service experience, preferred to do mission work. In May 1883, the New York City pastoral conference took the initiative. Three congregations supported his missionary work until his death in 1896.

Never ordained by the LCMS, Landesmann was given “evangelist” status, the highest designation a layperson can receive, even in the church today. During his 13-year ministry, 37 Jewish people were baptized in Lutheran churches. One was Rabbi Nathaniel Friedman who came to New York City from Russia, and became a LCMS missionary until 1941. The Missouri Synod also conducted outreaches in Chicago from 1930-1939 under Isadore Schwartz, and in St. Louis from 1930- 1934 under Kenneth Frankenstein.

The first organized efforts to reach Jewish people in North America came from the Norwegian-Lutheran pietistic movement. In 1878, a conference was held in Stoughton, Wis., which led to the organizing of the “Zion Society for Israel.” The goals were to encourage, promote and conduct a missionary program among the Jewish people of the world.

Because Lutherans in the United States were mainly concerned with reaching



those of their own ethnic background, the various Lutheran church bodies developed

little enthusiasm for reaching Jewish people. So much of the work took place in Russia and Romania where interest could be stirred. The Zion Society eventually turned over their overseas work to European missions. A close liaison with the Norwegian Israel Mission continued with centers at various times in Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, the Twin Cities, and Omaha.

*In 1881, the Central Illinois District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) sent a petition to “consider the responsibility for establishing a Synodical means for enlisting and coordinating the interest and obligation of every Christian to bear witness to his Jewish fellowmen.” The Synod delegated the responsibility of organizing Jewish mission work to its districts. The net result was that only a handful of workers served from 1881 to 1981. In 1884, the Synod established a “Komission fuer Judenmission” (Commission for Jewish Missions) which functioned until 1932.*

### **Mission Activity Since 1973**

*In response to a resolution to a 1973 Synodical Convention, a Task Force for Jewish Evangelism (TF) began under the leadership of Dr. Erwin Kolb, Secretary for the Board for Evangelism Services (BFES) within the LCMS. Funding allowed a committee to meet two to three times a year in various locations. The TF’s main goal was to study and develop materials to assist nearly 6,000 LCMS congregations in understanding and involving themselves in Jewish evangelism.*

*The TF produced a “Manual on Witnessing to Jewish People,” which caught the attention of Rabbi James Rudin of the Jewish Community Relations Council’s Task Force on Cults and Missionary Activity in the 1970’s. He called for a “private meeting” to discuss the LCMS initiatives in Jewish evangelism. The meeting turned out to be an ambush. Rudin said he would only meet secretly without media exposure, but he called for a press conference immediately after that meeting!*

*The media fallout sent some LCMS church leaders and local pastors reeling, while others tried to understand why Jewish leaders were so upset. What had gone wrong? A hard lesson was learned. Good relationships can be maintained with Jewish*

*leaders who seek dialogue only so long as Jesus - the Way, the Truth and the Life - is excluded from the dialogue.*

*I first met Dr. Kolb in 1979. He came to San Francisco to spend a week with Jews for Jesus during Avodah, a time of staff re-training. Dr. Kolb invited me to visit one of the TF meetings in St. Louis. As a result of that visit, I became a member of the TF in*



1980.

*We held conferences in different locations throughout the United States, gave workshops, hosted Oneg Shabbat evenings (overview of traditional Sabbath), and set up displays at various synodical conventions, including the Lutheran Women's Missionary League conventions and other events. The TF members gave workshops at the early Great Commission Convocations — tri-annual LCMS national gatherings focusing on evangelism. We did what we could to raise consciousness and bring influence to bear for the cause of Jewish missions.*

*One way we tried to keep the eyes of the church at large on Jewish missions was to encourage congregations to bring memorials to the Synodical conventions. They would then be included in the convention workbooks and brought up for floor votes.*

*The most critical of the numerous resolutions passed to date was Resolution 3-09 at the 1983 Synodical convention in St. Louis. This resolution disavowed Martin Luther's anti-Semitic statements:*

*Whereas it is widely, but falsely, assumed that Luther's personal writings and opinions have some official status among us (thus, sometimes implying the responsibility of contemporary Lutheranism for those statements, if not complicity with them); but also*

Whereas, it is plain from Scripture that the Gospel must be proclaimed to all people, that is the Jew also, no more and no less than others (Matt. 28:18-20) and

Whereas this scriptural mandate is sometimes confused with anti-Semitism; therefore be it

Resolved .... that we affirm that the basis of our doctrine and practice are the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and not Luther as such; and be it further

Resolved that while, on the one hand, we are deeply indebted to Luther for his rediscovery and enunciation of the Gospel, on the other hand we deplore and disassociate ourselves from Luther's negative statements about the Jewish people, and, by the same token, we deplore the use today of such sentiments by Luther to incite anti-Christian and/or anti-Lutheran sentiment...

The LCMS was the first Lutheran body in North America to pass such a resolution. [In the 1990s, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America passed a similar statement. In 1999, I toured the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. While on the top level, I viewed a brief film on Hitler's rise to power. That film implied a direct link between Luther's 1543 statements in "On the Jews and Their Lies" (Vol. 47 of Luther's Works) and the Holocaust. At the end of the film the Evangelical Lutheran Church



of America was commended for their position against anti-Semitism. The LCMS

was not mentioned in this film for obvious reasons: The ELCA subscribes to the “dual covenant theory,” calling efforts to evangelize Jewish people offensive and wrong! I am proud to say that the LCMS firmly holds to the Biblical position of John 14:6 — No one comes to the Father but through Jesus.]

### **Two Tracks to Advance One Cause**

Since task forces are by nature temporary committees and their future always unclear, the TF members wanted to ensure that the initiatives in Jewish evangelism went forward! So a new organization was formed outside the Synodical structure called Lutheran Institute in Jewish Evangelism (LIJE) from 1982-1995 and Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism from 1995 to present. Rev. Bruce Lieske and two other former TF members headed this up after leaving the TF in 1982.

Yet, the TF’s work continued and so two tracks existed: one inside the LCMS structure and one alongside it. It took some time to define roles and tasks that the groups would share. Eventually LIJE found their niche in developing school curricula and other materials that emphasized the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and in working with local congregations to promote Jewish evangelism.

Dr. Kolb retired in 1989 and I became the chairman of the Task Force. There was a change in the focus of the TF when it was moved from the Board for Evangelism Services to the Board for Mission Services (BFMS). The emphasis shifted from developing literature and resolutions to planting mission stations and new Messianic congregations.

We are thankful for the temporary links in 1990-1992 to a couple of individuals in the BFMS including Dr. Leonard Harms, currently the Missions Executive for Lutheran Church Canada, and Dr. Rodney Rynearson who spearheaded deaf and blind ministries for the LCMS.

We participated in the new direction of the church following the path of Church Extension through Leadership Development (CELD). We attended seminars to help sharpen skills in these areas. Much of the material fit well in traditional church settings, but seemed lacking when put to work in a cross-cultural setting.

### **Reaching Out**

In 1989, I met with Rev. Dave Born, pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Rego Park, N.Y., and a member of the TF. I outlined what it would take to conduct our first ever short-term mission training event in New York City. The Synod provided the funding for these events.



Dave took notes on paper napkins and later transcribed them. (Oh how I wish we had those notes now!) When we discussed what name we should give, it came quickly to us that since New York City is known as The Big Apple, we would call this The Apple of His Eye taken from Deuteronomy 32:10: *“In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye.”*

The title was the name of our first produced filmstrip and seemed most appropriate for our mission effort then. Today it reflects the LCMS emphasis of including Jewish people in the overall mission of the church. While Jewish missions may never be on the front burner of the LCMS, we seek to have it on the stove top until Y’shua returns!

In 1989, Dr. Harms led us through a series of sessions to develop a 10-year strategy statement. We shifted from creating materials to developing leaders, opening new mission stations and planting new Lutheran Messianic congregations. We envisioned developing 10 sites by the year 2000. This was quite a leap of faith for this Lutheran body which, in the preceding 100 years, had but a handful of individual workers among Jewish people.

Mr. Milt Kohut, the first to step forward, spoke primarily to congregations in greater Los Angeles, California. He encouraged congregations of that district and brought renewed emphasis to reach out to Jewish people so that they could hear of Y’shua.

In 1990, I received a call to open a new mission station in the Atlantic District in New York City. I declined the call since the start-up funding available could not support a family with five children.

Mr. Marc Danzis accepted the call and opened The Apple of His Eye – New York City. Marc began a congregation in Rego Park, Beth El, that continues and is now a congregation of the Atlantic District. Marc opted out from The Apple of His Eye umbrella once the congregation was established. His focus on congregational pastoral work left little time for the evangelistic thrust of Apple of His Eye. This is something that would be remedied through team ministry. (Since the signing of the Glen Eyrie Accord

in June 2000 uniting LCMS mission workers under a set of core values rather than an organization, Marc has since rejoined The Apple of His Eye umbrella group.)

Darla Schmidt was brought on board and started ministry in the Chicago area in September 1992. Invited to a TF meeting in New York City, Darla was briefly interviewed and her heart for Jewish missions was apparent to us all. That day, we asked her





how soon she could move to Chicago to get started. Darla, because she was trained in the church and commissioned as a deaconess, could gain a hearing in Chicago area congregations.

As funds became available, Rev. Steve Baldauf came alongside to serve in Chicago. He was highly enthusiastic and spoke Russian, a valuable tool for ministry in the Chicagoland area. However, Steve's effectiveness was hampered by some personal problems. Had Apple of His Eye had standardized screening and training functions in place, we might have foreseen these problems. This was a difficult, but vital, lesson to learn. Rev. Baldauf did little to raise personal support and once his startup funds were depleted, his contract with the Northern Illinois District was not renewed.

The Apple of His Eye now has a process in place to thoroughly qualify candidates via short-term mission events, an extensive application and referral process, and an in-depth interview. New workers must attend a pre-field deployment training session in St. Louis. These sessions are tailored to individual needs, and consider prior training, experience and life service.

In 1992, Rev. Dave Tengbom was identified to serve in Los Angeles. Dave, ordained in the ELCA, was required by LCMS leaders to take an additional 36 hours of classroom training in the colloquy program. The pressure of starting a new ministry, taking classes and caring for his family ultimately caused David to leave the mission, which was placed on hold for several years.

In December 1993, Rev. Bruce Lieske was called by the Florida/Georgia District to serve as a missionary. He received \$150,000 in start-up funds disbursed over a four-year period while he developed his personal missionary support. His current emphasis is developing Messianic friendship groups in congregations, and he continues to lead LIJE.

In 1992, the LCMS made a historic shift. In the past, missions only took place outside the United States. Now the world was coming to us and the USA was redefined as a mission field. Dr. Robert Scudieri was named North American Secretary and a system of Counselors and Field Counselors was expanded.

The counselors were specialists who served a given field of ministry full time – i.e. Hispanic, deaf, and blind ministries. The field counselors were volunteers with expertise in a given field: Korean, Chinese, Hmong, Muslim, American Indian and Jewish for example. The focus of these workers was to work with District mission executives so that they in turn would take the initiative to facilitate ministries in their district. [I served as field counselor for Jewish Missions from 1992 - January 2000.]



However, we still face a historic problem – a lack of enthusiasm for this ministry among many district mission leaders. This problem, in my opinion, does not stem from a lack of interest or zeal; rather, with one person serving as the channel for new ministries, and many projects competing for his time and attention, how much more can go on his plate?

The TF and field counselor spent many hours seeking to win the hearts of those in leadership positions to begin Jewish mission efforts in Districts. We still seek to demonstrate to leaders today the Kingdom values through our mission efforts. “To the Jew first” was not just a slogan for the past, but is a mission strategy today.

### **Current Examples of Mission Need**

In a 1980’s survey of the Synod’s member churches, respondees said that more than 50% had Jewish people living in their immediate neighborhood. Yet, only 2% indicated that Jewish people were worshipping with them. The buildings were built, the pastors were sent, but the Jewish people certainly did not come!

The TF tried to win the hearts of the Canada East District to start a new mission effort among Jewish people in Toronto or Montreal. After Dave Born and I made an hour-long presentation to their Mission Board, the mission exec responded, “What current ministry do we stop in order to start something new? We just don’t have the extra dollars for new ministries.”

The traditional method for new mission starts was to secure funding, buy property, build the first worshiping unit and send in the pastor. “If you build it, they will come” was the generic modus operandi. We presented a new model – incrementally decreasing District support leading to missionary self-support, with the partnership of a Mission Society.

### **Reviving an Old Mission Model**

TF members began calling for a new model, which is actually an old model revived – establishing a Mission Society to partner with Districts and giving the support, encouragement and focus essential for a new ministry. In this era, little attention had been given to the model we presented – that the District and local congregations assist in supporting the mission effort during the startup period.

During the start-up period, the missionary was to personally develop his/her support base. So ministries like these could become self-supporting even if a congregation of 200 worshipping members did not exist to support a mission leader.



The other shift from traditional Lutheran new mission starts was “missionary mode.” The worker is to raise up and train other leaders. He will serve a specific geographical area (field), and when the time was right, move on to make another start in a different location. This contrasts greatly with the historic LCMS model of doing ministry: one parish — one pastor.

### **Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism**

In 1995, the Task Force and Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism sought to merge and to form a Mission Society. LIJE became known as Lutherans IN Jewish Evangelism, but operated briefly under the moniker of Apple of His Eye Missions. Differences in core values and operating procedures caused considerable strain on the partnership, and ultimately the two returned to operating as separate entities.

The separation was amicable and each group pledged to complement the other. LIJE would concentrate on working with churches and fostering its mission in Florida while the TF would work with a new Mission Society, The Apple of His Eye Mission Society, to plant new missions, open new Messianic congregations and train missionaries for service within the LCMS.

### **The Apple of His Eye Mission Society Begins**

In 1996, after 20 years with Jews for Jesus, Moishe Rosen negotiated for my release to serve with the LCMS. The focus of the Apple of His Eye Mission Society (AOHEMS) is to recruit, train and deploy missionaries, assist in planting new Lutheran Messianic congregations and equip the LCMS for effective outreach to the Jewish people.

AOHEMS quickly took on national aspects because it is:

- developing a missionary training center
- giving centralized administrative assistance to various mission stations
- developing and maintaining a database of support
- securing funding for new mission starts and establishing a web site.

We have hosted short-term mission events, called “*10 Days in July*,” to train Christians for witness and to establish a base for potential future workers. In the July 2000 event, over a ten day period, 18 participants came to St. Louis, distributed 56,000 Gospel tracts and received the names of 1,300+ people for follow-up. Four of those contacts confessed Christ right out on the streets of St. Louis. Participants went door-to-



door in the Jewish community and phoned Jewish homes offering free Messianic literature. This is become an annual event and we have also expanded our partnerships with Jews For Jesus by joining with them in their Behold Your God campaigns in Minneapolis in 2001, St. Louis, Boston and Los Angeles in 2002. Through these partnership events we have been able to lift high the cross!

### **More Workers Called**

Also in 1996, another worker, a recent graduate of one of the LCMS colleges, was recruited to work with LIJE. She was to receive missionary training in St. Louis for a year. Sadly, 13 months after she began her training, she went through a faith crisis when her brother was killed and family members applied heavy pressure against her faith. She decided to step down after taking a leave of absence.

After the English District sold the building out of which Darla Schmidt was operating in Chicago, I invited her to come to St. Louis for two years to help build the ministry. She took a part-time job at Concordia Publishing House while working part-time in our office. A year later, funds became available for her to work full-time in St. Louis.

Darla was involved in an auto accident, and though not seriously injured, it took some time for her to return to work. News of the accident led to her gaining her heart's desire. Joe Lucero, a past acquaintance in Chicago, contacted her out of concern for her well-being. A resulting relationship led to their marriage in August 1999. In order to prepare for that relationship, Darla moved back to Chicago two years after she began working with AOHE.

Rev. Kevin Parviz, a Jewish believer from Denver, Colorado, was a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis when I was introduced to him over beer and pizza. Kevin came from a parochial teaching background before pursuing parish ministry as a second career. Because the LCMS Board for Mission Services was testing a new program with the seminary, funding was available for two people to take part in a new "missionary track." Rather than going on the third of four years, the last two years would be switched. The third year emphasized mission studies and the fourth year was to be involved in a mission effort, that would be convertible to a full-time call.

Kevin did his vicarage/internship with the Apple of His Eye in St. Louis and on April 18, 1998, a month prior to his graduation, led the first service of congregation Chai V'Shalom. The Missouri District called Kevin to lead that ministry and follow through with the mission and ministry plan developed at the 1998 summer Church Planters

Institute held in Irvine, California. Since Kevin began his ministry, he has received calls



to other congregations, but feels God's call to continue serving in St. Louis.

Early in the 1990's, the TF held a meeting in Dallas to seek to win the hearts of the Texas District to begin work in Jewish missions. It took some time for that meeting to come to fruition. In 1997, Rev. Don Peymann, then pastor of Pilgrim Lutheran Church, a chair of the Texas District Task Force on Jewish Missions, came to St. Louis to participate in the "10 Days in July" outreach.

When the hoped-for worker chose not to accept the call to Texas, Don prayerfully decided to step down from 29 years of congregational ministry. He took the call to begin The Apple of His Eye — Houston in January 1998. Don, a gentile, had conducted parish ministry within one mile of the Jewish Community Center and developed a heart to reach Jewish people. He now has an office in a mall, oversees a core of volunteers, and is developing small groups for outreach. Graciously funded by the Texas District, Don is doing deputation for program support development. Don retired in 2002 following several good years of laying the foundation. Rev. Jay Klein, a Jewish believer, was installed to carry forth the work on February 23rd, 2003.

In 1998, Gary Timm and Ted Martin took part in our "10 Days in July" outreach. As a result, Ted, a Jewish believer, had a reawakened desire to be involved in Jewish missions and re-opened The Apple of His Eye — Los Angeles in 1999. In February 2000, Gary opened The Apple of His Eye - New York. Gary had nearly a year of training and eastern United States deputation prior to his deployment.

In March 2000, after considerable training and with immigration papers in hand, Mr. Yuri Butsak went to work in the Atlantic District among Russians. Because a substantial Russian Jewish community resides in Queens, Yuri also will be working with Gary Timm and Marc Danzis. We pray that Congregation Beth El will soon have a Russian component. Yuri, Gary and Ted also participated in the Summer 1999 Mission Planters Institute in Irvine, California. Dave Born, now a Mission Executive for the Atlantic District, became their mentor. This week-long intensive training event yielded a detailed working plan for their ministries.

The Apple of His Eye Mission Society and The Caspari Center for Biblical and Judaic Studies in Jerusalem formed a partnership to enhance mutual ministries and expand the base of opportunities for the future in September 2000.

Mr. Alan Butterworth was approved as a missionary candidate in September 2000. He began full-time missionary service on January 1st, 2003.

We covet your prayers for the followup to historic International Lutheran Con-



ference on Jewish Evangelism held in Yad ha Shmoneh, just outside Jerusalem in 2001. The objective was to raise the banner for the return to the Biblical principles of including Jewish people in the mission of the church – to denounce the “two covenant theory” touted by liberal Lutherans, network among workers and theologians, and seek mission partnerships for future ministries worldwide. This conference was the by-product of a small gathering of Lutherans at the 1999 International LCJE meeting at Hofstra University.

*We are faced with not only with ingrained polity and policy of the church, but a tension that North American church bodies must consider. We must weigh the cultural mandate of our society towards individual rights and tolerance of different beliefs versus the Biblical mandate to bring the Gospel to all, including the Lost Sheep of Israel. The LCMS still struggles to cultivate the reality of the priesthood of all believers who would bring the Gospel to the lost in their locale. Perhaps specialized Jewish mission agencies and emphases would be unnecessary if local evangelism initiatives intentionally included Jewish people.*

*In the LCMS organizational structure, much initiative is needed to get the attention of those who can allocate resources for specific mission starts. The individual congregation stands at the top of the LCMS organizational chart. Who would be willing to champion as difficult a task in the light of all the other church work to be done? Where is the missiological priority of Romans 1:16?*

*As one theologian told me recently, it ultimately boils down to a spiritual issue— Is the Bible authoritative in our lives and are we willing to be obedient to God’s call – His Great Commission – and reach out to all with His love?*

### **Conclusion**

*Our long-term vision for the LCMS calls for planting teams of people to serve in a specific region. Those teams would be composed of people with different gifts. In particular, we hope to see a pastor and evangelist type teaming together. Both gifts need to be fully expressed in building an effective ministry. Today most LCMS churches have excellently trained pastors, but few evangelists.*

**We are grateful to the following who have**



**assisted us along the way:**

Dr. Erv Kolb — retired Secretary for the Board for Evangelism Services  
Dr. Leonard Harms — liaison to the Board for Mission Services (BFMS) upon Dr. Kolb's retirement  
Dr. Rodney Rynearson — liaison to the BFMS after Dr. Harms took a call  
Dr. Robert Scudieri — Area Secretary for North American Missions  
Dr. Glen O'Shoney — Executive Director, BFMS  
Mrs. Debbie Williams — Manager for North American Missions and Administrative Services Support

Special thanks to Aid Association for Lutherans, Lutheran Brotherhood, The BFMS, the Missouri District LCMS, The Atlantic District LCMS, The Florida-Georgia District LCMS, the Texas District LCMS and the Pacific Southwest District LCMS and to the thousands of individuals and hundreds of congregations for their financial assistance over the years. We treasure your partnership in ministry!

**The members of the Task Force for Jewish Missions:**

Rev. R. John Perling  
Rev. David Born  
Mr. Dave Garrett  
Mr. Paul Krentz  
Ms. Jennifer Krupp  
Mrs. Jean Kiefer (emeritus)  
Dr. Erv Kolb (emeritus)  
Rev. Bruce Lieske (ex officio)  
Rev. Ed Einem (emeritus)  
Mr. Steve Cohen (ex officio)  
Rev. Robert Lindemann (emeritus)

**Apple of His Eye missionaries**

Marc Danzis (Ellen)  
Steve Cohen (Jan)  
Rev. Don Peymann (Geneva) (retired)  
Rev. Kevin Parviz (Colleen)  
Ted Martin (Carolyn)  
Gary Timm (Dawn)  
Alan Butterworth (Pam)  
Rev. Jay Klein (Sharon)

**Apple of His Eye Administrative staff in St. Louis:**



notes:

*Rev. Ivan Peterson (Janet)*

*Mrs. Darla Schmidt Lucero (retired to full-time mommyhood)*

**The members of the Board of Directors of The Apple of His Eye Mission Society:**

*Rev. Greg Smith*

*Mr. John Kindschi*

*Mrs. Darla Schmidt Lucero*

*Rev. Paul Teske*

*Dr. Andrew Bartelt*

*Rev. David Born*

*Rev. Ed Lang*

*Rev. Robert Roegner*

*Rev. Ellis Rottmam*

*Mr. Alan Butterworth*

*Mr. George Oehlert (emeritus)*

**Members of the Board of Directors of LIJE**

Rev. Ed Einem

Rev. Erv Kolb

Mrs. Dorothy Holtz

Mr. Gene Dworkin

Mrs. Suzanne Hall

Mr. Bob Loukas (emeritus)

Mr. Marty Perlman

Rev. Tim Fangmeier (emeritus)

Rev. Tom Zehnder (emeritus)

Mrs. Jean Keifer (emeritus)

Mr. Larry Ross (emeritus)

Mr. Steve Cohen (emeritus)

Rev. Bob Lindemann (emeritus)

Mr. Ed Smith (emeritus)

**APPENDIX II**





**LC-MS Task Force for Jewish Missions**  
**Strategic Planning Process: Jewish Missions**

- I. Environmental Analysis
  - A. External Environment
    1. Audience
      - a. General Audience: Church and Society
      - b. Targeted Audience
        - i. Unsaved Jewish People
        - ii. Church
      - c. Targeted Audience Attributes
        - i. Unsaved Jewish People: Spiritual hunger among many.
        - ii. Church can be an effective agent in Jewish evangelism if properly motivated and informed. The efforts of Apple of His Eye are well received in the LCMS.
      - d. Critical Service Factors:
        - i. Unsaved Jewish people do not feel they need anything from us; however their spiritual needs which are not met by rabbinic Judaism will cause them to consider Jesus as Messiah if we gain their interest and present the Gospel in a compassionate and rational way which is culturally sensitive.
        - ii. The Church needs us to raise its awareness of the importance of Jewish evangelism, and to offer quality programs and materials to assist the Church in carrying out such a ministry.
    2. Opportunities
      - a. Unsaved Jewish People: We are free to present the Gospel in North America; We may form relationships with Jewish people in which the Gospel can be shared
      - b. Church: We have an entrée into the church since 1974 when LCMS officially espoused the need for Jewish missions. Since that time we have developed a track record for serving the church by helping congregations and individuals give witness to their Jewish neighbors, as well as planting missions.
    3. Threats



- a. The Jewish community is negatively disposed to the Christian Gospel.
- b. The Church can be apathetic or indifferent. Ignorance of cultural sensitivity can be harmful. Some latent anti-Semitism exists in some parts of the church. Popular adherence to the “dual-covenant theory” and to “replacement theology” can be detrimental to our theology of mission.

## B. Internal Environment

### 1. Strengths

- a. The pool for missionary candidates is large because we do not need individuals with professional pre-field training before they come to us. Anyone in the church body with a heart for Jewish evangelism is a potential candidate.
- b. A strategy for identification, training and deploying missionaries is in place.
- c. A detailed mission plan and core values commonly held by all workers in the Glen Eyrie accord give a sense of direction and common purpose to the missions
- d. A history of working with districts for deployment and ongoing supervision of field developers enhances future work.
- e. A large data base of supporters (prayer, volunteer, donor) is growing both for the mission society and for the local field developers.
- f. A carefully defined curriculum, training center, MPI prepares professional missionaries for the work
- g. An international network of Jewish workers and evangelistic institutions, Lutheran and otherwise, as appropriate, is a rich resource for ideas, materials and cooperative ministries.
- h. Yearly retreats and other conferences build community among workers and their families.
- i. Apple of His Eye association of complimentary ministries: Mission Society, LIJE, Applecorps support groups, local fields
- j. Development of teams allow for formation of congregations without losing evangelism momentum.

### 2. Weaknesses:



- a. Missionary's families may have difficulty adjusting to the rigors of this missionary activity.
- b. Workers may burn out because it is often hard and lonely work with meager tangible results.
- c. Personal inadequacies of individual missionaries lead to inefficiency and ineffectiveness: e.g. Lone Ranger mentality; time management problems; flagging entrepreneurial spirit, personal discipline.
- d. Shallow pool of Jewish Believers able and equipped to serve on Synodical and Mission Society boards.
- e. Present levels of funding are inadequate to open more fields.
- f. Professional training cuts into ministry time.
- g. Team members in a single area may wind up competing for the same dollars.

#### C. Primary Environmental Issues

1. Militant rejection of missionary activities by some sectors of the Jewish community.
2. Comparative indifference of churches to supporting/being involved in Jewish work.
3. The slowness of the work because of environmental obstacles can be discouraging to missionaries and can make the work look ineffective from the outside.

## II. Future Direction

### A. Direction Statements; guiding documents

1. Purpose statement: "Courageously declaring Y'shua as Messiah to the Jewish people; urgently equipping believers to do the same."
2. Values Statement. The Glen Eyrie Accord (attached), containing the most significant core values for our ministry, was adopted by all LCMS workers in Jewish missions and their families in June, 2000.
3. Task Definition. A strategic plan (attached) was developed by the Task Force over a range of meetings in 1998-9. This was an updated version of a guiding document composed in 1989.
4. Vision Statement.
  - a. We see mission fields opened by LCMS in every world area where there are substantial populations of Jewish people.
  - b. We see Messianic congregations being formed from

leadership development and small group methodology



in many of these areas.

- c. We see mission leaders identified, equipped and deployed to effectively minister in each mission field; and teams of missionaries in fields containing Messianic congregations.
- d. We see small groups formed in churches located within areas of significant Jewish population being equipped to reach out to their Jewish neighbors.
- e. We see support groups formed in many areas where there is no significant Jewish population which will pray, volunteer and otherwise support the work of Apple of His Eye.
- f. Most significantly, we see many Jewish people coming to faith in Y'shua as their Messiah and taking positions of leadership in local congregations, Messianic or otherwise, and in the denomination.

## B. Objectives

### 1. Key Result Areas

#### a. Key Vision Components

- i. Increased recruitment results
- ii. Development of a training curriculum
- iii. Opening of new fields
- iv. Development of evangelism groups in local congregations.
- v. Dynamic numeric growth in those being saved

#### b. Alignment of Key Vision Components and Primary Environmental Issues:

- i. Openness of the church body to our work will lead to significant partnerships with individuals and congregations.
- ii. The willingness of Lutheran workers in Jewish missions to network worldwide will provide an excellent interchange of ideas, materials, and cooperation in the work.
- iii. The unprecedented openness of relatively large numbers of Jewish people over the past three decades will assure us that our work, while slow and difficult, will not be without result.
- iv. The need for stable, effective, theologically responsible Messianic congregations throughout

the world assures us of what the secular world



would call a “market niche”.

c. Measurement

- i. Numbers of response cards indicate the effectiveness of our presentations in congregations
- ii. Numbers of tracts distributed, prospects contacted and individuals who have professed Y’shua as Messiah indicate the effectiveness of our outreach.
- iii. Number of applications and number of workers identified, trained and deployed indicate our effectiveness as a mission institution.
- iv. Number of names on our databases indicate our effectiveness in getting our message out to the church.
- v. Numbers of dollars raised apart from grants will determine the effectiveness of our workers in raising their own support.

2. Measurable Commitments: We have set ongoing annual goals of

- a. preparing 2 new full-time workers,
- b. opening one new field,
- c. identifying at least 20 new serious prospects to each missionary’s case load
- d. initiating 3 new congregational groups in each existing field
- e. increasing residual giving by \$50K,
- f. adding 5000 names to the database.

III. Planning [Note: A detailed vision and strategy plan developed in 1999 is attached. What follows are some of the most important highlights of our strategy plan.]

A. Strategy Development

1. Phase Identification

- a. Increased recruitment results: Recruit through congregational contact, training events, synodical schools
- b. Development of a training curriculum: Gather a committee of selected workers, some recently trained to set a curriculum, drawing on resources of what others have done and what is available.
- c. Opening of new fields: Work with targeted districts
- d. Development of evangelism groups in local congregations. Equip missionaries to identify and approach lo-



- cal congregations.
    - e. Dynamic numeric growth in those being saved: increased direct evangelism, increased prayer support.
  - 2. Action Selection
    - a. Increased recruitment results: Annual training outreach event identifies candidates by seeing interested individuals in action. Local short-term events do the same. All workers making presentations should make it a point to address recruitment needs and report back any possible candidates identified.
    - b. Development of a training curriculum: A committee of missionaries, some with experience in training, others recently trained, is gathering during 2000-2001 to review various resources and set a curriculum for the training center.
    - c. Opening of new fields: Task Force members should approach Mission Executives in districts where there is significant Jewish population where we have no present work. Local task forces should be formed within interested districts to design a strategic plan appropriate for the local field. National and Local Task Force meet together to identify a missionary candidate and identify resources.
    - d. Development of evangelism groups in local congregations. Demographic research should be made available to local workers, congregations should be identified and approached.
    - e. Dynamic numeric growth in those being saved. All workers should place a priority on direct evangelism over every other aspect of their mission. Groups and individuals praying for the openness of Jewish people to our message should be encouraged at all times. Every process of our work should be undertaken prayerfully.
  - B. Program Development: All goals are ongoing and reviewed at least annually.



**LC-MS Task Force for Jewish Missions  
Strategic Plan – September 16, 1999 (update)**

**Mission Statement**

Our Mission: “Courageously declaring Y’shua as Messiah; urgently equipping believers in Jesus to do the same.”

**Vision Statement:** to develop new mission fields and to support existing LCMS missions among Jewish people, enabling and equipping districts, congregations and individuals of the Synod to bring the Gospel to the Jewish people.

**Critical Targets , Goals, Target Visions, and Action Plans**

**Target 1:** Unsaved Jewish People

*Goal 1:* Jewish people are presented with the Gospel in many locations so that some are coming to faith in Y’shua as Messiah.

Target Vision: We see...

- Lutheran believers becoming passionate about and trained to share their faith with Jewish friends, colleagues, neighbors, and family members.
- Mission developers beginning new ministries emphasizing leadership development in strategic locations for winning Jewish people.
- Jewish people confronted with the Messiahship of Jesus.

**ACTION PLAN:** (Encircled with prayer)

1. Curriculum suitable for training Lutherans to sensitively share Y’shua with Jewish people identified or developed for availability.
2. Materials and curriculum developed or identified to assist new Jewish believers in personal discipleship.
3. Ongoing, hands-on “Outreach” style events held in at least 2 locations annually.
4. Study, prayer, and conversation with people in strategic concentrations of Jewish population are ongoing in order to see where God might next be leading in the planting of Apple of His Eye ministries.
5. Students in DCE, DCO, Seminary programs doing summer internships in Jewish missions.
6. Make available several levels of training at the Missionary Training Center.
7. Missionaries are bringing the Gospel to unsaved Jewish people as their highest priority
8. Missionaries are developing leaders as their second priority.

**Target 2:** Districts and congregations of Synod



*Goal 2:* Districts and congregations are partners with the Task Force in opening new mission fields among Jewish people.

Target vision: We see...

- Mission fields open in every district where there are significant populations of Jewish People; at least 10 by 2005.
- Local task forces established throughout the Synod for the support of the mission in prayer, volunteer time, outreach and financial stewardship.
- Each mission field developer being responsible to their district and receiving encouragement and continuing education from (the) mission society

**ACTION PLAN:** (Encircled with prayer)

1. Network with district executives, presenting the possibilities of a Jewish field to be developed in the local district.
2. Work with interested districts to gather interested persons into their local task force which will develop the vision of a local Jewish mission.
3. Develop a specific plan for interaction between the district and the Synodical Task Force.
4. Help identify resources and candidates for the new ministry.
5. Work with the mission society to assure the ongoing health of the new mission.
6. The Mission Society will develop the New Mission Start Endowment fund with opening target of \$3,000,000 to offer resources to assist in new mission starts.
7. An effective web site will be in place to increase visibility for mission opportunities.
8. Through networking, we will influence the LWML and Lutheran Hour Ministries towards being missions sending agencies!
9. A recruiting video will be produced for dissemination to leaders and congregations.
10. Expand and continue the spadework in producing graded children's curriculum materials.

**Target 3:** Recruitment of Missionaries

*Goal 3:* An intentional and ongoing process of recruiting volunteer, part-time, and full-time ordained, commissioned, and lay missionaries is developed and active.

Target Vision: We see...

- Lutherans gaining an appreciation of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith
- Men and women identified for missionary service among Jewish people.
- Workers moving into and among Jewish population sectors sharing the Gospel.
- Seminary and university personnel of Synod actively joining us to steer interested and gifted students into this area of ministry.
- District and Synodical personnel alert and searching for men and women able to be





directed into Jewish mission work.

**ACTION PLAN: (Encircled with Prayer)**

1. Appoint faculty representatives on each campus who actively excite students for Jewish work.
2. Alert district presidents and their boards of directors to this unique ministry.
3. Publish media messages in district newsletters and receipt letters inviting lay men and women to consider missionary service.
4. Visit individuals singled out by their pastors who indicate an interest in Jewish outreach.
5. Author resolutions on district and synod levels for convention consideration alerting delegates to needs and personal necessities in Jewish work.
6. Write cards and letters on a regular basis to all who express mild interest to peak their possible involvement.
7. Make our LOGO a familiar sight in campus periodicals and district media.
8. Sponsor workshops and exhibit booths throughout the year at LWML-ILLI-Circuit forums, etc. to train volunteer workers and recruit workers in this task area.
9. Cull the list of commissioned and lay missionaries listed in the "The Lutheran Annual" for Jewish surnames and invite them to participate.
11. A recruitment brochure is developed for putting missionary work before people.
12. Network with synodical placement personnel for recruiting professional and volunteer workers.
13. Recruiting missionaries by placing ads or articles in all LCMS publications.

**Target 4:** Pre-field training of Missionaries

*Goal 4:* All workers for the field have undergone pre-field training experience at the Jewish Missionary Training Center in St. Louis.

Target Vision: We see..

- Each applicant prayerfully considered and screened.
- Every missionary receiving training appropriate to their individual needs
- Every missionary receiving training to be properly prepared for deployment.

**ACTION PLAN: (Encircled with prayer)**

1. Each applicant will be reviewed and interviewed by the Task Force.
2. Each applicant will take a personality profile survey.
3. The Task Force invite new applicants to have an interview with the synod's psychologist .
4. A training plan taking into account the applicant's prior training, background and experience will be put in place by the Missionary Training Center.



5. The Missionary Training Center will administer the individualized program prior to deployment.
6. Establish and maintain a library of Missionary training materials pertinent to Jewish missions at the Missionary Training Center.

**Target 5:** Missionary support and in-service training

*Goal 5:* All deployed workers are receiving cutting-edge training and ongoing support.

Target Vision: We see...

- Our staff as our most valuable resource.
- Each person's abilities and gifting utilized to their fullest.
- Training of our missionaries as an ongoing process.
- Spiritual encouragement and support of our staff as essential.
- Each missionary being a part of an annual missionary conference for mutual support and encouragement and continuing education.

**ACTION PLAN:** (Encircled with prayer)

1. Establish a system where all staff are regularly reviewed by their supervisor or by a board.
2. Reward those who perform well and invest time into those who are falling short until it reaches a point of diminishing return.
3. Determine a person's strengths and weaknesses early to provide them with the best opportunity to succeed.
4. Missionary conferences will be planned by the Task Force.
5. Determine what level of education each missionary should have and enable them attain it.
6. Network with those involved in Jewish missions.

**Target 6:** Funding

*Goal 6:* Funding for all missions and projects is adequately provided.

Target Vision: We see...

- Multiple sources for start-up funds for new missions identified.
- District and local funding availability determined
- Missionaries responsible for raising their own financial support.
- Ongoing efforts being made to secure third source funding.
- A \$3,000,000 mission start endowment fund developed.



notes:

**ACTION PLAN:** (encircled with prayer)

1. Missionaries are trained in the raising of self-support
2. Missionaries develop personalized mission support
3. Missionaries maintain regular contact with their donors
4. Start-up funding will decrease over time as self-support increases
5. Lists of grants and application deadlines will be maintained.
6. Synodical Task Force will serve as clearing house for the application process of grants. This excludes local grants.
7. Knowledge of specific structure and limitation of grants is shared with the Task Force.
8. Local boards and/or support groups will assist the fundraising effort.
9. Contact with district/regional gift planners is established
10. Identify a committee to establish an endowment fund.

**Target 7:** Jewish Believers in Y'shua

*Goal 7:* A system of support including Messianic Jewish Congregations provides linkage for Jewish believers.

Target Vision We see...

- A regular publication addressing issues of concern for Jewish Believers
- Hosting bi-annual retreats for Jewish believers
- Developing life cycle tools for Jewish believers.
- Setting up a special web site for Jewish believers and building an international list of Jewish Believers.
- Developing a graded children's program for congregations with Jewish believers
- Relationships established with other ministries in Jewish missions
- A resource library established for Jewish believers and Messianic ministries
- The addressing of life cycle issues and resources specific to the needs of Jewish believers

**ACTION PLAN:** (Encircled with prayer)

1. Establish a new publication containing articles on life cycle issues of concern for believing Jewish and believing in Y'shua.
2. Host small retreats on a regular basis giving opportunity for Jewish believers to grow in their faith.
3. Materials will be made available through the internet.

**Target 8:** International Gospel outreach to Jewish people



*Goal 8:* To promote and establish Jewish mission work world wide.

Target Vision: We see...

- Identification and establishment of new work in world areas.
- Representatives of the LCMS networking with partner churches and other Lutherans world wide.
- Networking with individuals and organizations involved in Jewish evangelism world wide.
- Lutherans visiting Israel not only to see the traditional pilgrimage sites, but to visit Messianic congregations in order to encourage them and learn from them.
- An Apple of His Eye Mission effort beginning in conjunction with an existing Lutheran Ministry in Israel.

**ACTION PLAN:** (encircled with prayer)

1. Intentional cultivation of contacts with the mission coordinators of partner churches abroad.
2. Exploring placement of at least one LCMS worker (possibly in partnership with the Caspari Center) who will assist Lutheran tour groups to link up with Messianic congregations.
3. Recruitment and training of missionary candidates from the foreign fields to be prepared for service in the home field at the Missionary Training Center.
4. Increased involvement of LCMS Jewish mission groups in LCJE

**Target 9:** Develop materials pertinent to Jewish Missions

*Goal 9:* Mission materials are developed and available

Target Vision: We see...

- Witnessing materials developed for dissemination
- Missionary training materials produced
- Discipleship materials made available to the church

**ACTION PLAN:** (Encircled with prayer)

1. Maintain a list of all materials currently available in Jewish evangelism
2. Maintain an inventory of our materials
3. Prioritize the production of future materials
4. Networking among missionary for the production and sharing of broadside



notes:

# Apple “Core” Values

## Mission Statement:

**Courageously declaring Y’shua as Messiah; urgently equipping believers in Jesus to do the same.**

Aleph

### **Direct Jewish Evangelism**

It is vital that we focus energy on a clear presentation of the Good News of life and salvation in Y’shua to unsaved Jewish people world-wide. (Romans 1:16)

Bet

### **Lutheran Biblical Doctrine**

We value sound Biblical grace-oriented teaching as we equip people to be witnesses to the life we find in the Messiah, Y’shua.

Gimmel

### **Planting Messianic Congregations**

The planting of worshipping congregations with a Messianic Jewish heritage is an important outcome of our ministry.

Daleth

### **Nurturing Mishpochah (Family)**

We value a caring and committed community which will rejoice with one another in victory and mourn with those who mourn. We recognize that for some, faith in Y’shua may lead to loss of family and Jewish community support, and we willingly stand in the gap to provide support and community for those Jewish believers.

He



**Awareness and Training for the Church in Jewish Evangelism**

We value raising the awareness level of Lutheran congregations for their Jewish community neighbors and we work to lift their zeal and skills in sharing their faith with them.

*Vav*

**Leadership Development**

We prize the discovery and usage of the spiritual gifts and talents of Jewish and gentile believers, and we invest time and energy in training and deploying them to carry out God’s mission in the community and the world.

*Zayin*

**We Value God’s Promises Concerning the Jewish People**

We believe that God is the same yesterday, today and forever. The promises that He has made concerning the Jewish people will be consummated in His time (Jer. 31:35-37; Romans 11:24-26). We stand against anti-Semitism in all of its forms, and view withholding the Gospel from the Jewish people to be the worst form of anti-Semitism.

Signatures affixed to the original document June 22, 2000

Paul Krentz  
 Marc Danzis  
 Ellen Danzis  
 Dave Born  
 Anita Born  
 Kevin Parviz  
 Dave Garrett  
 Carolyn Reed  
 Robert W. Reed  
 Geneva Peymann  
 Don Peymann  
 Gary Timm  
 Ann Lieske  
 Bruce I. Lieske  
 Carolyn Martin  
 Ted Martin  
 Ivan Peterson



Janet Peterson  
Jan Cohen  
R. John Perling  
Karen Perling  
Steve Cohen  
Colleen Parviz

1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.

*Should you have questions about reaching out to your Jewish friends, please contact us directly -*

*The Apple of His Eye*  
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#### APPENDIX IV

### **To The Jew First: A Biblical Analysis of the "Two Covenant" Theory of the Atonement**

by Joseph P. Gudel

In Paul's letter to the Romans we find a graphic visual picture painted for us by the



apostle. Imagine for a moment, seeing millions and millions of people, standing in a long line. They are of different ages, male and female, some very young and others being very old.

As you look at them you see that they are all carrying Bibles under their arms or in their hands. Many of these Bibles evidently are well-read, being marked and worn from usage. Innumerable numbers of these people have large portions of their Bibles memorized, some ~~entire sections or books.~~

Imagine also that these people are very faithful in attending church, worshiping regularly, tithing generously, being active in both their churches and in their communities. Many, if not most of these individuals live exemplary lives. And then, imagine seeing these people - in a line that goes on and on as far as the eye can see - all walking towards eternal judgment, going to hell with Bibles in their hands!

This reflects, in a concise but graphic picture, what Paul undoubtedly was experiencing as he wrote to the Christians and the church in Rome. In an extremely personal and moving section he speaks of his fellow Israelites, the Jewish people, in these words. "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved (Rom. 9:2-3; 10:1).

### **Questions Relating to Paul's Message**

Numerous questions exist today in the field of comparative religions and missiology. This is especially true when it comes to discussions concerning Christianity and Judaism.

Many Christian theologians today, as well as many different and disparate Christian denominations, question the need to share the gospel with Jewish people. In fact, many consider attempts to do this as being insensitive and judgmental. Indicative of this is a quote from Eric Gritsch in a publication of the Lutheran Council in the USA, distributed by the ELCA. In it Gritsch states:

There really is no need for any Christian mission to the Jews. They are and remain the people of God, even if they do not accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Why this is so only God knows. Christians should concentrate their missionary activities on those who do not yet belong to the people of God, and they should court them with a holistic witness in word and deed rather than with polemical argument and cultural legislation. The long history of Christian anti-Semitism calls for repentance, not triumphalist claims of spiritual superiority.<sup>1</sup>

The claim that the Jewish people do not need to know and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior, as their Messiah, is an extraordinary one. However, before summarily dismissing





these groups we should at least be conversant with what they are saying and know why they are saying it. Thus before we examine the Biblical evidence for sharing the gospel with the Jewish people we will first begin with an overview of what this “two covenant” theology is, its historical roots, and the reasons why so many Jewish and Christian groups accept this today.

### **Franz Rosenzweig and the Origins of Two Covenant Theology**

In virtually every historical work examining the factors which have influenced modern Jewish-Christian relations, the person of Franz Rosenzweig is discussed. Rosenzweig’s tenets were like the proverbial boulder that began an avalanche. The boulder was an idea, a hypothesis, that has created an avalanche in the history of ideas, particularly in the history of religion. And just as avalanches begin slowly, picking up speed, energy, and mass - so too with Rosenzweig’s “two covenant” theory of atonement.

The two covenant theory, as it is commonly referred to today, was first put forth by Franz Rosenzweig just after the First World War in a work entitled “The Star of Redemption.” His theology of the two covenants came about through a long series of discussions with a friend of his, a Hebrew Christian philosopher of religion, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.

At one point Rosenzweig was on the verge of becoming a convert to Christianity. Being raised in a largely assimilated Jewish household, Rosenzweig decided to attend a Yom Kippur service first, determining that “he would enter Christianity through Judaism. Like the earliest Christians, he would only enter as a Jew and not as a pagan.”<sup>2</sup>

However, instead of becoming a Christian he became fascinated with his religious roots. Concerning this Nahum Glatzer writes: “What the day conveyed to him was that essential as a mediator may be in the Christian experience, the Jew stands in no need of mediation. God is near to man and desires his undeviated devotion.”<sup>3</sup>

The two covenant theory of salvation which Rosenzweig would subsequently develop basically states that God has established two different, but equally valid covenants, one with His people Israel and the other with the Gentiles. The Covenant in Moses and the Covenant in Jesus are complementary to each other. Glatzer quotes Rosenzweig on this as follows:

Christianity acknowledges the God of the Jews, not as God but as “the Father of Jesus Christ.” Christianity itself cleaves to the “Lord” because it knows that the Father can be reached only through him. . . . We are all wholly agreed as to what Christ and his church mean to the world: no one can reach the Father save through him. No one can reach the Father! But the situation is quite different for one who does not have to reach the Father because he is already with him. And this is true of the people of Israel (though



not of individual Jews).<sup>4</sup>

And so there are two ways of salvation, one for the Jewish people and another separate one for the Gentiles. Glatzer continues, explaining Rosenzweig's thought with the following quotation from him: The synagogue, which is immortal but stands with broken staff and bound eyes, must renounce all work in this world, and muster all her strength to preserve her life and keep herself untainted by life. And so she leaves the work in the world to the church and recognizes the church as the salvation for all heathens in all time.<sup>5</sup>

Concerning this Rabbi Jakob J. Petuchowski stated: "Rosenzweig conceded more than any Jew, while remaining a Jew, had conceded before him. He admitted the truth of John 14:6." This is immediately qualified, though, by the assertion that "the Jew does not have to come to the Father. He has been with the Father ever since Sinai."<sup>6</sup>

### **Jewish Writers on the Two Covenant Theory**

Neither time nor space will allow for an adequate survey of Jewish writers on this. It must be sufficient to say that this belief in two separate covenants is held very widely by many Jewish people today. Arthur Gilbert states that Judaism allows for religious pluralism and does not consider it scandalous. . . . We do not believe that God's plan for salvation requires your conversion to Judaism nor mine to Christianity. But it does require our cooperation, our concern for, our joint effort to repair the world.<sup>7</sup>

Leon Klenicki, formerly the associate director of the Department of Interfaith Affairs of the Anti-Defamation League, expands on this in an essay discussing Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The dialogue involves a process of meeting and recognition between two faith communities, two experiences of God: Christianity and Judaism. It is an encounter of subjects, not faith, not objects of contempt, two equal testimonies to God. For each partner it means the recognition of the other as a constituent in God's design, the acceptance of a different approach to the Eternal, a different though not conflicting spirituality.<sup>8</sup>

Renowned orthodox rabbi Pinchas Lapide summarizes this new view of co-equal and complementary faiths, living side-by-side together: "We Jews and Christians are joined in brotherhood at the deepest level . . . We are brothers in a manifold 'elective affinity.'"<sup>9</sup>

### **Christians and the Two Covenant Theory**

Just as with the Jewish people above, there are numerous Christians who believe in a theology of two covenants. These views are usually seen as coming from certain mainline denominations, none of which have retained belief in the full inerrancy and authority of the Bible. For example, Carl Braaten writes:



Christianity is the Judaizing of the pagans. The task of Christianity is to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. . . . The task of Judaism meanwhile is to remind Christianity of its original Biblical roots.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, many Catholic theologians have taken the pronouncements of Vatican II and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* (1991) to their logical conclusion, viz., that religious dialogue with members of other religions is to replace actual missionary efforts.

Former Christian considerations of Judaism (as well as of other religions) encouraged proselytism. That is, Christians believed it not only legitimate but praiseworthy to exert economic, psychological, or spiritual pressure on non-Christians in order to gain new members for the Church. The diological position, however, is one in which the parties accept one another as mutually equal partners.<sup>11</sup>

This position, however, also is increasingly being found among Christians who accept and believe in the Bible as the Word of God. For example, George Sheridan, who at the time was the East Coast Regional Director for the Southern Baptist department of Interfaith Witness, asserted that God's bond with the Jewish people was never superseded with the coming of Jesus: "The Jews of today, as ever, receive salvation through their having been chosen by God in covenant with Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. . . . My position is that the Jews do not require evangelization."<sup>12</sup>

### **A Biblical Examination**

At this point it is essential to return to Scripture and see if there is any Biblical foundation for a theology of two separate (but equal?) covenants. I believe that even a cursory examination will show us that there is not. In doing this we will look at Jesus' example, the practice of the apostles, and the practice of Paul.

However, before looking at these, perhaps the best place to begin our examination of two covenant theology is with Paul's opening declaration in Romans 1:16: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*"

Many wonder why Paul would begin his message with an assertion that he was not "ashamed of the gospel." Different answers have been shared on this, the most cogent - in my opinion - being Franzmann's. Why should Paul speak, even negatively, of being ashamed of the Gospel, which gives his life its content, purpose, and direction? He is probably recalling Jesus' words of warning, "*If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*" (Luke 9:26).<sup>13</sup>

Concerning this, in his letter to young Timothy the Apostle Paul writes: "*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do*



*not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner” (2 Tim. 1:7-8).*

But what did Paul mean when he stated that the gospel was the power of God “for the salvation of everyone who believes?” Perhaps an illustration will help us understand this more fully.

A number of years ago an evangelical attempt at piquing people’s curiosity, and thus enabling Christians to share the Gospel message with non-Christians, was developed by putting bumper stickers on cars which simply said: “I Found It!” When people saw this they were supposed to ask what it was that the driver “found.” In response to this some Jewish groups countered with their own bumper sticker which stated: “We Never Lost It!”

This is of course, the crux of the problem. Who is Jesus, and how is one “saved”? I believe that for many, if not most, Christians today the entire concept of our salvation has dulled. That is, it is almost as if we take this for granted. The urgency of our salvation and the unspeakable eternal consequences of being cut off from God are not spoken of very often, or are not understood very well.

This was not so with Paul’s readers. Franzmann picks this up and summarizes it in these words. The word “salvation” is for us a worn coin; for Paul and his readers, fresh from their Old Testament, it still had a sharp image and a clear superscription. It meant radical deliverance out of a desperate situation. What Israel had experienced at the Red Sea, when all help was cut off before and behind and only a vertical miracle from on high could save, that was salvation.<sup>14</sup>

The apostle continues in Romans 1:16, telling us that this salvation message was “first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” There have been two main understandings or interpretations of what Paul meant here by the term proton

The first understanding or interpretation of this is that Paul was merely referring to “first” in a chronological sense. Concerning the usage of “first” and whether this meant that the Jews have a “special preference in salvation” Nygren writes:

Does this after all mean that the Jew has special preference in salvation? That cannot be what Paul means. The word may refer to Israel’s special history. In that case their priority is now abolished with the coming of Christ. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek. . . All are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28)* Thus the priority of the Jew is abolished.<sup>15</sup>

Hodge echoes this, saying that Paul’s usage of “first” in this verse “must have reference to time, ‘To the Jew in the first instance, and then to the Greek.’”<sup>16</sup>



The second understanding or interpretation of what Paul means here is that “first” has reference not only chronologically, but also in the sense of a “priority.” In Cranfield’s commentary on Romans he explains this as a tension between the equality all Christians have in common, and yet a special calling or place for the Jew in God’s church.

The word ... is suggestive of the fundamental equality of Jew and Gentile in the face of the gospel (the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for believing Jew and believing Gentile alike), while the word *proton* indicates that within the framework of this basic equality there is a certain undeniable priority of the Jew. In view of chapters nine to eleven it is hardly admissible to explain as referring merely to the historical fact that the gospel was preached to the Jews before it was preached to the Gentiles.<sup>17</sup>

Of great import here, Cranfield asserts, is Romans 11:29: “*For God’s gifts and His call are irrevocable.*” Along with this verse, the theologians who believe that *proton* refers to a priority will usually cite two other passages, Romans 2:9 and Acts 13:46. In Romans 2:9 Paul is referring to the coming judgment, stating: “*There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*” I do not know of any commentators who exegete “first” here in a temporal sense.

This exegesis is supported further when one looks at a number of passages, especially at Acts 13:5-46. In this account Paul and Barnabas enter the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, where Paul eloquently shares the Gospel with the people gathered there (13:13f.). When the Jewish people eventually reject the Gospel, Paul and Barnabas respond very forthrightly: “*We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles*” (13:46, emphasis mine).

### **Christianity’s Core**

As we have just seen, Christianity is - at its very core - a missionary faith. Our command from the very beginning was to go and “*make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*” (Matt.28:19-20).

Indeed, these are Jesus’ last words to us, as He departed into heaven: “*and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” (Acts 1:8).

This command was taken literally, as the early church - after Pentecost - turned Jerusalem upside-down. Concerning this David Bosch writes: Mass conversions of the Jews are again and again reported, particularly of Jews in Jerusalem . . . but also of those in the diaspora. There is, moreover, a clear progression in these reports: in Acts 2:41, three



thousand Jews are converted; in 4:4 there are five thousand; in 5:14 “multitudes both of men and women” are added; in 6:7 the number of disciples in Jerusalem has “multiplied greatly”; in 21:20 Paul is informed about “many thousands” . . . of believing Jews.<sup>18</sup>

We shall now turn and briefly observe this call to bring the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles - as seen in Jesus’ example, the practice of the apostles, and the practice of Paul.

### **Jesus and the Jewish People**

In Jesus’ ministry we see numerous examples of how He came “to the Jew first.” At the very beginning of John’s gospel account we are told that Jesus “*came to that which was His own, but his own did not receive Him*” (Jn. 1:11). He ministered to and among the Jewish people (e.g., Matt. 4:23-25; 9:35; et al.).

It was only in unusual circumstances that Jesus ministered to non-Jewish people (e.g., the Syro-phenician woman in Mark 7 and the Roman centurion’s servant in Matthew 8). The primary principle was to go first to the people of Israel. Thus when Jesus sent out the twelve apostles He told them: “*Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel*” (Matt. 10:5-6).

This command to go to the Jewish people is seen likewise in our Lord’s commands after His resurrection. As before, the apostles are to go out among the Jewish people with the message of salvation in Jesus the Messiah. However, a new note is added. That is, they also are to take this message beyond the confines of the Jewish people and take it to the Gentiles as well. Their command was, “beginning at Jerusalem,” to take the message out to all people and to all nations, both to the Jew and to the Greek (i.e., the Gentiles; cf., Luke 24:46-47; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

### **The Apostles and the Jewish People**

I believe that we see in the practice of the apostles a paradigm of missions for the entire church. In the very first preaching of the gospel after Jesus’ departure we find the Apostle Peter boldly proclaiming the good news of salvation, in the midst of a Jewish audience. Acts 2:5 tells us that there were “Jews from every nation” present when Peter shared the gospel message. And he addressed his message specifically to the Jewish people: “*Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem . . .*,” and “*Men of Israel listen to this . . .*” (2:14, 22f.). Furthermore he concluded his message with the bold and challenging words: “*Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (2:36). [Apparently, according to our modern sensitivities, Peter was unaware that he was being offensive to some of the Jewish people by telling them that they needed to receive Jesus as their Lord and Messiah!]

This same pattern of preaching to the Jewish people is followed consistently throughout



the Book of Acts (e.g., the apostles with Jewish people in the Temple in Acts 3:12-26; the apostles before the “rulers, elders, and teachers of the Law” in Acts 4:8ff., with a special emphasis on verses 10-12 [cf., Jn.14:6]; the apostles before the “full Sanhedrin” in Acts 5:27ff.; Stephen before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7; etc.).

It is not until Acts chapter ten that we find any attempt to begin taking the gospel to anyone other than Jewish people, and this took several miraculous interventions from God before it occurred. And it was immediately following Peter’s bringing the gospel to Cornelius and his household that he was criticized for sharing the message of salvation with Gentiles!

The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him. (Acts 11:1-2)

It was only very slowly, and reluctantly, that the early church began fulfilling Jesus’ command to bring the gospel to people other than Jews. Finally, after the great council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas were sent out with instructions for the Gentile believers (Acts 15:19f.).

### **Paul and the Jewish People**

Ironically, perhaps the supreme New Testament example of an apostle bringing the news of Jesus Christ to Jewish people is from the “apostle to the Gentiles,” Paul (Rom. 11:13). We saw above the account of Paul and Barnabas entering into the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch and sharing the Gospel with the Jewish people there (Acts 13:5, 14-46). At their rejection of Jesus, Paul responded: “*We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles*” (13:46).

Nonetheless, even as they took the gospel to the Gentiles their normal methodology still was to bring the gospel to the Jewish people first, before continuing on with the Gentiles. Thus we find in Acts 14:1 the statement: “*At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue.*” Moreover, we are told that they “spent considerable time there” (14:3).

Indeed, even before Paul’s ministry began, when he was still blinded and fasting before the Lord, God told Ananias to go to him, saying: “*Go! This man is My chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel*” (Acts 9:15, emphasis mine). And from the very beginning Paul did take the gospel to the Jewish people first (e.g., Acts 9:20-22, 26-29; et al.).

This continued and is seen throughout his lifetime of ministry. This is especially evident



in his writings. First, he emphasizes that apart from knowing their Messiah, the Jewish people were cut off from God and from their covenant with Him. For example, in his second letter to the Corinthians Paul writes: We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2 Cor. 3:13-16)

And second, Paul continually asks that prayers be offered up for the Jewish people, that they may repent and be brought back into a relationship with God. That is, that they might receive Jesus as their Lord and God, as their long-awaited Messiah.

This is seen especially in chapters nine through eleven of Romans. In Romans 9:1-5 Paul eloquently writes of how the Jewish people were elected by God in the past, and yet the adoption, the covenants, the Law, the temple worship, and the promises were all to no avail - for they rejected their own Messiah.

Paul again urges that prayers be made for them (apparently unaware of any “two covenant” theory). *“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.”* (Rom. 10:1-2).

He concludes that although the Jewish people are cut off for now, that God still has plans for them. That is, that God has not totally rejected them and that they would yet receive Jesus (Romans 11).

Much more could be said concerning all of this, but that is not within the purview of this paper. It is sufficient for our purposes to see that throughout the entire New Testament we find the Jewish people are always referred to as people who need to know and receive Jesus Christ, in this manner no different than any of the Gentiles.

### **A Concluding Biblical Rejoinder**

As much as one might like to agree with those promulgating a theology of two covenants, it simply is not a Biblical doctrine. Quite the contrary, it goes against everything that we find in the New Testament relating to missions. In fact this is the quintessential form of anti-Semitism, for in promoting this false doctrine the only way of salvation is closed to the Jewish person (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Nothing could be more dangerous, racist, or pernicious than this.

The Apostle Paul boldly affirmed: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the*





*Gentile.* ” (Rom.1:16).

We are not to be ashamed of sharing the good news of the gospel with anyone. And in that this good news came through the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in that “salvation is of the Jews” (Jn.4:22), this message was “for the Jew first.”

It seems that this is completely forgotten today. This gospel of Jesus Christ was first and foremost to go to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Christians owe a great debt to the Jews, for our entire spiritual heritage is derived from them. Indeed, we have been grafted into the olive tree of Israel, not the reverse (Rom. 11:11f.).

### **Two Unanswered Questions: A Hypothesis**

I close with two unanswered questions concerning the “two covenant theory,” at least unanswered for those who believe in the authority of God’s Word to lead us and guide us in all we believe and teach. I place these in the form of a hypothesis.

- 1) If the apostles and early church were called by God to bring the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to the people of Israel, to share the person and work of the Jewish Messiah with the Jews; then,
- 2) when was this call abrogated? And,
- 3) how do we know that it was abrogated, that is, by what authority was this call to preach and evangelize terminated?

As far as I know these questions remain unanswered by proponents of this theology, or at least unanswered from a Biblical perspective. Stephen Neill eloquently sums up the task we face in attempting to reach out to Jewish people with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Franz Rosenzweig suggested that the church has need of the synagogue, if it is to be true to its vocation. The Christian must ask for liberty to suggest to the Jew that the synagogue has need of the church, if it is to find its own true fulfillment. The suggestion must be made with the utmost humility, with a full sense both of the wrongs for which the church has been responsible in the past, and of the admiration due to the amazing faithfulness with which the Jew has clung to the God who has chosen him. All that he dare ask is that the Jew will look again at Jesus Christ, without hate and without prejudice, and consider whether there may not be things in the picture that he has so far missed. 19

*notes:*





Sanford Mills, a Hebrew believer, eloquently summarizes the other half of the problem we are facing today in attempting to reach Jewish people with the gospel. “The sad part of it is this, that many sincere Christians who do not believe that the Gospel is to the Jew first, do not believe that the Gospel is for the Jew at all!”<sup>20</sup>

### END NOTES

- 1 Eric W. Gritsch, “Luther and the Jews: Toward a Judgment of History,” in *Luther and the Jews* (n.p.: Lutheran Council in the USA, 1995), 9.
- 2 Arnold Betz, “Franz Rosenzweig: Essay and Exhibit” (AOL:www.library.vanderbilt.edu/divinity/rosenzw/rosenbib.html: 1997), 3.
- 3 Nahum N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 16
4. Franz Rosenzweig, in Glatzer, 341.
5. Ibid., 342.
- 6 Jakob J. Petuchowski, “The Christian-Jewish Dialog: A Jewish View,” in *Lutheran World*, October, 1963, vol. 10, no. 4, 383.
- 7 Arthur Gilbert, “The Mission of the Jewish People in History and in the Modern World,” in *Lutheran World*, July, 1964, vol. 11, no. 3, 308.
- 8 Leon Klenicki, “Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in Leon Klenicki and Geoffrey Wigoder, *A Dictionary of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (New York:Paulist Press, 1984), 101-102.
- 9 Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House,1983), 2.
- 10 Carl E. Braaten, “The Resurrection in Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in Lapide, 19.
- 11 Celia Deutsch, “Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in Leon Klenicki and Geoffrey Wigoder,103.



12 George Sheridan, in Mitch Glaser, “Critique of the Two Covenant Theory,” *Mishkan: A Theological Forum on Jewish Evangelism*, 1989, vol. 11, no. 2, 45. Shortly after making this comment Sheridan was removed from his position by Rev. Larry Lewis, the President of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Lewis explained this by saying: “We must believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Lord and Savior. Someone who doesn’t hold that position shouldn’t be in an evangelistic position for the Home Mission Board.” (Glaser, 68)

13 Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Commentary: Romans* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 32.

14 *Ibid.*, 33.

15 Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), 73.

16 Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882), 43.

17 C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. I. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 91.

18 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 96.

19 Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith & Other Faiths* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1984), 55.

20 Sanford Mills, *A Hebrew Christian Looks at Romans* (New York: ABMJ Press, 1971), 37.

## Appendix V

# THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS

(Note: Jewish holidays begin in the evening, so the actual start time is the evening before the day listed)

<b>Traditional year</b>	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
<b>Jewish year</b>	5764	5765	5766	5767	5768

**SHABBAT:** Every Friday evening to Saturday evening

<b>ROSH HASHANAH</b>	Sep 27-28	Sep 16-17	Oct 4-5	Sep. 22-23	Sep. 12-13
<b>YOM KIPPUR</b>	Oct. 6	Sep. 25	Oct. 13	Oct. 1	Sep. 21
<b>SUKKOT</b>	Oct 11-12	Sep. 30-Oct. 1	Oct 18-19	Oct. 6-7	Sep. 26-27
<b>SHEMINI ATZERET</b>	Oct 18-19	Oct. 7-8	Oct 25-26	Oct. 14	Oct. 4
<b>HANUKKAH</b>	Dec 20-27	Dec 9-15	Dec. 26 -Jan 2	Dec. 15-23	Dec 4-12
<b>PURIM</b>	Mar. 7	Mar. 25	Mar. 14	Mar. 4	Mar. 21
<b>PESACH</b>	Apr. 6-7	Apr. 24-25	Apr. 13-14	Apr. 2-3	Apr. 20-21
<b>YOM HASHOAH</b>	Apr. 18	May 6	Apr. 25	Apr. 15	May 2
<b>SHAVUOT</b>	May 26-27	June 13-14	June 2-3	May 23-24	June 9-10



## Appendix VI

# The Jewish Population of the World

The estimated strength of world Jewry today is little more than 13 million. We say “estimated” not just because of the traditional Jewish reluctance to count its people, but also because of the impossible task of reaching out to so many unaffiliated Jews.

United States	5,800,000		
Israel	4,847,000		
France	600,000		
Russia	550,000		
Ukraine	400,000		
Canada	360,000		
United Kingdom	300,000		
Argentina	250,000		
Brazil	130,000		
South Africa	106,000		
Australia	100,000		
Hungary	80,000		
Belarus	60,000		
Germany	60,000		
Mexico	40,700		
Belgium	40,000		
Italy	35,000		
Uzbekistan	35,000		
Venezuela	35,000		
Uruguay	32,500		
Azerbaijan		30,000	
Moldova	30,000		
Netherlands	30,000		
Iran	25,000		
Turkey	25,000		
Sweden	18,000		
Switzerland	18,000		
Georgia	17,000		
Chile	15,000		
Kazakhstan	15,000		
Latvia	15,000		
Romania	14,000		
Spain	14,000		
Austria	10,000		
Denmark	8,000		
Poland	8,000		
Morocco	7,500		
Hawaii, USA	7,000		
Panama	7,000		
Czech Republic	6,000		
India	6,000		
Lithuania	6,000		
Slovakia	6,000		
Colombia	5,650		
Greece	5,000		
New Zealand	5,000		
Kyrgyzstan	4,500		
Bulgaria	3,000		
Estonia	3,000		
Peru	3,000		
Puerto Rico	3,000		
Costa Rica		2,500	
Hong Kong	2,500		
Yugoslavia			2,500
Croatia	2,000		
Japan	2,000		
Tunisia	2,000		
Tajikistan	1,800		
Norway	1,500		
Guatemala			1,200
Finland	1,200		
Paraguay	1,200		
Turkmenistan	1,200		
Cuba	1,000		
Ecuador	1,000		
Ireland	1,000		
Monaco	1,000		
Zimbabwe			925
Portugal	900		
Yemen	800		
Bosnia-Herzegovina	600		
Gibraltar	600		
Luxembourg	600		
Ethiopia	500		
Kenya	400		
Netherlands Antilles	400		
US Virgin Islands	400		
Bolivia	380		
Zaire	320		
Jamaica	300		
Singapore	300		
Dominican Republic	250		
Philippines	250		
Syria	250		
Thailand	250		
Armenia	200		
Bahamas	200		
Suriname	200		
South Korea	150		
El Salvador	120		
Iraq	120		
Tahiti	120		

Cities with the Largest



## Glossary

*Aliyah* The going up. 1. The honor extended to worshippers to ascend the reader's station to recite the blessings over the Torah is called an *aliyah*. 2. *Aliyah* is also the last word in the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Chronicles 36:23). It means: "let him go up". This is the basis for the "law of return", the right of Jewish people from any country in the world to immigrate to Israel. Sadly, there is one exception. If you are Jewish, but you believe in Jesus, you have do not have the right to immigrate to Israel.

*Am Ha Aretz* "The people of the land". It is an idiom that means illiterate people or an ignoramus. Rural people had few opportunities for education. According to Jewish tradition, the *Am Ha Aretz*, the ignoramus, may not occupy a position of importance in the Jewish community, regardless of lineage, economic standing or accomplishments.

*Applecorps* Apple of His Eye Mission Society supporters and volunteers who actively participate in Jewish Missions work in their local community.

*Aufruf* The Calling Up. A ceremony calling the groom to the Torah at the Synagogue on the Sabbath preceding the wedding day.

*Bar Mitzvah* "Son of Good Deeds". Similar to confirmation in the church, this is the ceremony that recognizes that a son has become responsible as a man. The 13 year old is now eligible to make Aliyah (read Scripture) and be counted to make a minyan for prayers. He may act in any capacity as a man.

*Bris* Covenant circumcision. When a male child is 8 days old, he is brought into the covenant when the foreskin is cut by a *Mohel*. It creates a lasting bond between the child, his people and God.

*C.E.* Common Er. Since the more popular "A.D." is an abbreviation for the Latin "Anno Domini" which means year of the Lord, Jewish people have come up with an alternate abbreviation.

*Chai Y'shua* Hebrew for Life in Jesus. We believe that eternal life is found only through faith in our Messiah.

*Challah* Priests share of the bread. It is served at all Sabbath and holiday meals. It is a symbolic observance of the command to contribute a portion of the bread to the priest.

*Chumash* *The assigned readings from the Torah and the Neva'im, like the pericope system of readings in the church.*

*Chuppah* The Bridal Canopy. The bride and groom enter what appears to be a tent as a part of the wedding ceremony to symbolize the union of the two under one roof.

*Conservative Judaism* A form of Judaism that is doctrinally in the 'middle' of the Orthodox on one extreme and Reform Judaism on the other. It was a reaction to the liberal *Reform Judaism* movement. They do not necessarily believe that all of the Bible is inspired by God and inerrant, nor do they necessarily teach that members should try to keep all of the law or kosher rules. However, many members do believe these things.



notes:

*Day of Atonement* According to Leviticus 16, this was the one day of the year when the High Priest went into the inner sanctum of the Temple to offer a sacrifice for even his unknown sins and those of the rest of Israel. See *Yom Kippur*.

*Days of Awe* The ten days of penitence between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

*Diaspora* The dispersion of Jewish people throughout the world. Many believe that it is a fulfillment of God's judgment because the Jewish people failed to obey God as set forth in Deuteronomy Chapter 28.

*Dual Covenant Theory* The false teaching that Jewish people do not need to have faith in Jesus in order to have eternal life.

*Echad* Hebrew for one, often in the sense of a complex unity. There is another word, '*yachid*', for the number one. The Shema (Deut. 6:4) ends with *echad* for one (Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.) *Echad* is also used for the unity of a man and a wife and even for a bunch of grapes.

*Feast of Firstfruits* The celebration time when the portion of the harvest was brought up to Jerusalem to replenish the storehouses and provide for the priests. They were given no portion of land, so they could not grow their own crops. They received a tithe from the rest of Israel whom they served as mediators before God and men.

*Feast of Passover* The eight day festival to remember the freedom of the Hebrew people from slavery and bondage under Pharaoh in Egypt. The word "Passover" comes from the protection from the angel of death the Hebrew people experienced as a result of obeying God's Word. When they sacrificed a perfect lamb on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nissan and put some of the blood on the top and sides of the doorposts of their homes, the angel of death passed over them. Unprotected homes all lost their firstborn children in the 10<sup>th</sup> plague as described in Exodus Chapter 12.

*Feast of Purim* Casting of lots. This Feast recalls the events in the Book of Esther when the evil Haman tried to destroy the Jewish people. Esther, the Queen, and Mordecai, were able to defeat Haman. The celebration often involves skits in which the character who plays Haman is booed.

*Feast of Unleavened Bread* *Matzoh*, or unleavened bread, is a major part of the Feast of Passover. This is the time during the Passover season when all leaven is removed from Jewish homes and only unleavened bread is eaten. This is in memory of the hasty departure from Egypt when there was insufficient time for the bread to rise.

*Galut* Exile, living away from the land of Israel.

*Gemorrah* Commentaries on the *Mishnah*, part of the *Talmud*, finished in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

*Goy* Literally Gentile, or Greek. It is sometimes used in a derogatory manner to refer to someone who is not Jewish.

*Goyim* Gentiles or Nations. In Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, the Jewish people are called to be a "light to the gentiles" (*'goyim'*).





*Haftorah* The reading during worship in the synagogue from the *Nevaiim* (the Prophets) after the reading from the *Torah*.

*Haggadah* Literally, "The Telling". It is a book of narratives, poetry, stories, games and traditions that is used to obey the command in Leviticus Chapter 12 to tell the story of Passover each year. There are more than 3,000 different Haggadahs in existence.

*Halakah* Accepted Law. Portions of the *Talmud* dealing with legal decisions.

*Hanukkah* The only popular Jewish holiday that is not based on the Bible. The reason is the events that are remembered at Hanukkah occurred after the Canon of the Hebrew Scriptures was closed. The focus is the "miracle of the oil". According to tradition, after the Jewish people defeated the Syrian invaders, and rededicated the Temple, there was only one days worth of consecrated oil to burn in the Temple. The miracle was that this small amount of oil burned for eight days until more oil could be consecrated. Jesus was in the Temple for Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, according to John Chapter 10. Many believe that the unnamed heroes of the faith referred to in Hebrews Chapter 11 include the Jewish men who, against all odds, defeated the Syrians. King Antiochus made worship of the God of the Bible and even the reading of the Bible crimes punishable by death. Many Jewish people gave up their lives rather than deny their faith.

*Hanukkiyah* The candleabra with a place for nine candles. There is one light in the center that is higher than the others, called the *Shammes*, or servant light. The *Shammes* must be lit first, and then its light may be used to light the other eight lights, one for each of the eight days of the miracle of the oil. The holiday lasts for eight days. Each day another light is lit. Similar in appearance and often confused with the *Menorah*, but the later has only seven lights.

*Hasidic Movement* Hasid literally means "pious one". It was founded by Baal Shem in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It emphasized emotion, faith, prayer and loyalty to the Tzadik, the spiritual leader. One branch is *Chabad*.

*Hoshanah Rabbah* The seventh day of *Sukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a procession around the altar, chanting of Hosannas, and the waving of the *lulav*, a specially made branch.

*Kabbalah* Literally 'handed down'. It refers to Jewish mysticism. The most authoritative source is a book called the Zohar, an interpretation of the Pentateuch by Rabbi Simon Ben Yohai in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, allegedly under the inspiration of Elijah. Most believe it is actually the work of Moses de Leon in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

*Kaddish* A prayer that is recited as a memorial to the departed, although it is entirely devoted to the praise of God.

*Kashrut/Kosher* Fit, Proper. Usually refers to ritually acceptable food. Some foods are forbidden (eg. pork) and others must be prepared and eaten in accordance with strict rules. For example, meat and dairy must never be eaten together. Some things are *pareve* (*parve*), that is neutral, but may still be prepared in a way that is *kosher*.

*Ketuvim* The Writings. The Hebrew Bible has three main divisions: the *Torah*, the *Nevaiim* (the Prophets) and the *Ketuvim*. The name *Tanakh*, synonymous for the Bible, comes from the combination of these three words. The *Ketuvim* begins with Psalms and ends with 2 Chronicles.



*Ketubbah* The “written document”. The mutual obligations of marriage that are read after the placing of the ring. The marriage ceremony ends with the breaking of a glass, possibly symbolizing the destruction of the temple. The idea is that the couple will not be truly happy unless they help rebuild Jewish life in Israel and serve all Jewish people everywhere.

*Kibbutzim* Literally “group”. A collective agricultural group or community in Israel.

*Kippa* Also called a *yarmulke*, it is a head covering of uncertain origin. It has become a sign of reverence and obligation. The Talmud contains a mother's advice to her son: “cover your head that the fear of God may be upon you” (Sabbath 156).

*Kohen* Priest. Judaism is not a classless society; rather, there are three “classes” within the structure of Jewish society: *Kohen, Levi and Yisrael*. The *Kohen* is a descendant of Aharon, the High Priest, the brother of Moses. His task is to work in the Temple, be involved with the offering of sacrifices, and with Blessing the Congregation of Israel. The Priest holds the highest status in the People of Israel, thus he is called up to the Torah first. The *Kohanim* are a subset of the Tribe of Levi. Thus, every *Kohen* is a *Levi*, but not every *Levi* is a *Kohen*.

*Kol Nidre* All Vows. Chanted on the evening of Yom Kippur. It is a prayer to be absolved from all oaths made for the coming year between man and God- either impulsively or by force.

*LIJE* “Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism”. LIJE is a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS Board for District and Congregational Services. It is affiliated with The Apple of His Eye Mission Society through a shared vision statement known as the Apple Core Values.

*Matzoh* Unleavened bread. It is required at Passover, a reminder of the bread that was eaten in haste as the Hebrew people left their bondage and slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt.

*Mazel Tov* Good luck (but from God; not from superstition), or congratulations.

*Menorah* The seven branch lampstand that was in the Temple as provided in the Bible. It is usually not found in a synagogue because it was to be in the Temple.

*Messianic Jew* The word ‘Christian’ is a synonym for the word Messianic. It literally means a follower of the Messiah, or Anointed One. A Messianic Jew is a person who was born into or converted to Judaism who believes that *Y’shua* (Jesus) is the Messiah.

*Messianic Judaism* In one sense, the Jewish followers of Jesus since his death. Since the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a movement among Jewish believers in Jesus to worship Jesus in a Jewish way. The congregations adopt Hebrew names (i.e. Congregation Chai v’Shalom, Life and Peace) and include Hebrew chanting and some traditional aspects of Jewish worship in the services. The services often begin with the *Shema*, but the worship clearly recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah and the atonement for sins. Many of these congregations have varying percentages of both Jewish believers and Gentiles.

*Mezzuzah* A parchment scroll attached to the right side of the entrance to a Jewish home. It contains the *Shema* and another verse from Deuteronomy 11 that contain the words, “ and you shall write them on the doorpost of your home. There is a small opening in the container through



which you can read 'shaddai' which means 'almighty'. It shows that God is central in the lives of those who live there, and that they are blessed because of him.

*Midrash* Interpretation of a verse of Scripture.

*Mikveh* The ritual bath for purification. To remove "impurity", Jewish tradition calls for immersion in the *Mikveh*. Immersion is also required upon conversion to Judaism.

*Minyon* Number. In Judaism, a *minyon* (*quorum*) of at least ten Jewish men who have been *Bar Mitzvah* is required for public worship or prayer.

*Mishnah* Part of the *Talmud*, a commentary on the *Torah* completed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century.

*Mishpocha* Family. The family is the basic unit in Jewish life. Self fulfillment comes through rearing of the family. Many believe that through the family, Jewish people find everlasting life.

*Mitzvot* Command, observance, good deed. There are 613 commandments in the Hebrew Scriptures, 248 of which require action, and 365 of which prohibit something.

*Mohel* One who performs a *Bris* (circumcision).

*Navi* (*plural - Neviim*) The Prophets. The prophetic writings in the Tenakh beginning with Joshua and ending with Malachi.

*Ner Tamid* The eternal light in the house of God symbolizing the faith of the people of Israel.

*Orthodox Judaism* Until the reform movement, there was no need for a further description. All Jewish people were Orthodox. In many ways, the roots come from the Pharisees.

*Pentatuch* The Torah, or the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

*Pesach* Hebrew for Passover.

*Pharisees* In the days of the Second Temple, these were the interpreters of Scripture. They believed that the entire Bible was the inspired word of God, not just the *Torah*. They tended to represent the lower economic classes.

*Pidyon HaBen* Redemption of the first born. On the 31<sup>st</sup> day of life, a feast honors the symbolic redemption of a child, often giving a gift to the *Kohen* or *Rabbi*.

*Pilpul* Method of dialectic study through comparison and contrast.

*Pirke Avot* Ethics of the fathers. It is the ethical tractate of the *Mishnah* in the *Talmud*.

*Rabbi* Teacher. The spiritual leader of a Jewish community. They are trained in a seminary and ordained by a Rabbi of great reputation.

*Reconstructionist Movement* A new trend in Judaism. The emphasis is not on religious ideas but on the advancement of community organizations, Jewish culture and art and a just social order.



The concept of the supernatural is not emphasized; rather the focus is on the power for good that is in man.

*Reform Judaism* Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this movement was a reaction to the rigid doctrines and isolation of the Orthodox. There was initially a desire for more beautiful services in the synagogue. It became even more liberal in the U.S., eventually rejecting Zionism, the idea of Jewish nationhood, and even the need for the Hebrew language.

*Rosh HaShannah* The head of the year, or New Year. It begins in the fall, and precedes Yom Kippur by ten days. According to Jewish tradition, the world was created on *Rosh HaShannah* and the Messiah will come at the sound of the *Shofar* on *Rosh HaShannah*.

*Ruach HaKodesh* The Holy Spirit.

*Sadducees* In the Second Temple era, the party of the economic elite. They only believed in the Torah, but differed with the Pharisees in how it should be interpreted.

*Sanhedrin* The High Council of the Jews. At one time there was a great council of 71 members, and later a small council of 23 members. They made religious and legal decisions.

*Seder* Order - A Passover Seder is the order of the service which includes the meal and the other activities.

*Shemah* Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." A traditional element of Jewish worship.

*Shabbat* The Sabbath begins at sundown Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. This is the day that the Lord set aside for us to cease from our daily labors, rest and reflect on Him.

*Shammes* The Servant. One meaning is the center of the nine candles on the *Hannukiah*. The other meaning is a person who helps with everything that occurs at the synagogue.

*Shavuot* Pentecost. One of the three annual "pilgrim" festivals. The Bible required that all Jewish people were to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem to make a grain offering from their firstfruits. After the destruction of the Temple in the year 70, the focus of the holiday changed to the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Although the Bible does not provide a date for the giving of the law, or connect it to Shavuot, this tradition has existed for a long time.

*Shivah* Seven - Jewish tradition of mourning the loss of a close loved one calls for a time of *sitting shivah*, The first seven days of mourning. The nearest kin stay home for seven days while others come to visit and pray.

*Shmeni Etzerat* The eighth and last day of the Festival of Sukkot, it is a festival of thanksgiving.

*Shofar* Rams horn. It is sounded on Rosh Hashanah. The rabbis teach that Satan hates the sound of the shofar.

*Shulhan Arukh* The code of Jewish law laid out in table form identifying the 613 Commandments God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

*Siddur* The Jewish Prayer Book. It contains prayers for daily, Sabbath and Festival Worship.



*Simchat Torah* Rejoicing of the law, the day after the last day of *Sukkot*. It honors the end of the annual cycle of the public reading of the *Torah* and celebrates the beginning of a new cycle which begins with the reading from Genesis Chapter 1.

*Sukkah* Hut, tent or tabernacle. The people are to live in the *Sukkah* with its sparsely foliated roof to remind them of God's protection as they wandered in the desert.

*Sukkot* The Feast of Tabernacles. It comes just five days after *Yom Kippur*. It lasts for eight days and celebrates the final in-gathering of the harvest. It is one of the three "pilgrim" festivals when everyone was required to go to the Temple in Jerusalem.

*Synagogue* The Greek word for the *Beth HaKnesset*, or house of assembly. The place where a Jewish community meets for worship.

*Tallit* Prayer Shawl worn by worshippers during synagogue services.

*Talmud* The most important writings in Judaism after the Bible. It is comprised of sections called the *Mishnah* and the *Gemorrah*, which include law and legend, interpretations of Scripture and moral precepts.

*Tanakh* The Hebrew Scriptures consisting of the *Torah*, the *Neviim* (the Prophets) and the *Ketuvim* (the Writings).

*Tannaim* [plural of Aramaic *tanna*, one who studies or teaches] Jewish sages of the period from Hillel to the compilation of the Mishna. They functioned as both scholars and teachers, educating those in the synagogues as well as in the academies. Their opinions are found either in the Mishna or as collected in the Tosefta. After the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70), Johanan ben Zakkai reconstituted the academy at Jabneh (see Jamnia), where the work of the Tannaim flourished.

*Tashlich* Casting Off. On *Rosh Hashanah*, after the afternoon prayer service, the tradition of going to a river or stream to symbolically cast off their sins in the water.

*Tefilin* Phylacteries. Bible verses inscribed on parchment enclosed in two small leather cases that are attached to the arm and head when at prayer. This practice is based on Exodus 13:9.

*Teffillah* Prayers.

*Ten Days in July* The annual summer outreach training event conducted by The Apple of His Eye Mission Society.

*Teshuva* Repentance, or turning toward God.

*Theophanies* Appearances of God in human form recorded in the Bible.

*Todah* Thanks. *Todah Rabbah* means Thank you very much.

*Torah* The Pentatuch, or the first five books of the Bible. Sometimes *Torah* is used in the sense of the entire Hebrew Scriptures.

notes:



*Tsuris* Troubles. Many are the troubles and worries of the Jew. A common quote is, "if you desire life, you must expect suffering." He who has no troubles can have no sympathy from those who do.

*Tzedekkah* Righteousness. Good works or acts of charity. Many Jewish stores have a *tzedekkah* box where peopl can give small amounts of money dedicated to various needy causes.

*Yachid* The number one.

*Yahrzeit* The anniversary of death is celebrated with the lighting of a candle. Often no birthday is celebrated because, "Life should be remembered and evaluated at the end of the journey rather than at the beginning."

*Yehudi* Jew. The name Jew comes from the descendants of the tribe of Judah. After the exile of the 10 tribes from the Northern Kingdom, Israelites from any of the 12 tribes gradually began to be called Jews.

*Yetzer Ha Rah* The evil inclination. According to Jewish tradition, man is ruled by two impulses. The evil inclination and the good inclination.

*Yetzer Ha Tov* The Good inclination.

*Yizkor* May He Remember. On Yom Kippur, and on the last day of each of the three required festivals, a memorial for the dead is recited to remember the souls of the departed.

*notes:*

