



## Barriers that Prevent Christian Witness

By Steve Cohen

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## **Hurdling Barriers that Prevent Christian Witness**

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 is Important**

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.

## **Remember the Need**

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.



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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.

### **Your Role**

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.



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## For More Information

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