

LCJE Bulletin

Issue 117, August 2014



Networking Jewish Evangelism

LCJE

Lausanne Consultation
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From the Coordinator

As this issue goes to press, the latest ceasefire in the war in Gaza has been holding, and the 'Red Alerts' on my iPhone app which have flashed notices of incoming Hamas rocket attacks against Ashdod, Ashkelon, Metula, Kiryat Shmona, and cities throughout Israel have ceased for now... Even in the midst of war and uncertain times we can say with fervent Messianic hope and expectation, 'Next Year in Jerusalem!' - which for believers is also another of saying, 'The King is Coming!' - the subject of our devotional.

AustralAsia. The Fourth Bi-Annual AustralAsia LCJE Conference was held at Stanwell Tops (Sydney), New South Wales, Australia, from 21-24 July 2014 (see cover photo). Natasha Michailidis has prepared a summary of the conference (p. 4), which has been described as "the smallest in attendance" but "the best" AustralAsian conference thus far. Photos from the conference can be found at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bobmendo/sets/72157645784457316/>

The next AustralAsian conference is scheduled for June 2016.

South Africa. LCJE South Africa will be holding its next biennial conference in Mowbray, South Africa from 31 October - 1 November 2014. This conference will focus on the testimonies of Jewish believers from South Africa. The conference theme is, "Our Journey: Meeting the Jewish Messiah." Contact LCJE South Africa Area Coordinator Cecilia Burger for more information at: simchaministry@gmail.com

Japan. As your International Coordinator, I am scheduled to visit LCJE Japan from 17-29 September. I ask your prayers as I share the message of our network and Jewish evangelism with churches and other friends of LCJE throughout Japan.

In other articles in this issue, Renae Kooy (Life in Messiah International) gives us an update on the "In Search of Shalom" project. Next we have Mike Moore's paper (Christian Witness to Israel, UK) given at the April 2014 European conference in Kiev on "A History of Jewish Mission in Europe."

We review Matthew T. Wilson's fascinating new book, *The Ruth-less Church*, which gives a remarkable new interpretation of the Book of Ruth - in terms of Jewish evangelism! You'll need to read the book to see all the reasons why, but, in summary, Wilson provides a marvelous explanation of how the Book of Ruth is closely related to Romans 11 and how Gentile believers are integrated into God's plan for reaching the Jewish people with the Gospel.

In this issue we remember one of the pioneers of Messianic ministry in Israel, Warren Graham, with an historical look back at Warren's life and impact as compiled by Linda Graham.

Finally, we close this issue with one of the papers presented at the recently concluded AustralAsia conference, "The Jews in Acts," by Dr Ashley S. Crane of Harvest West Bible College.

Next Year in Jerusalem!

In our sure hope for the coming salvation of Israel. *Jim Melnick*
Isaiah 45:17: "Israel shall be saved by an everlasting salvation..."

Front cover photo: Group photo of attendees at LCJE Fourth AustralAsia Conference, Stanwell Tops, New South Wales, Australia

'Next Year in Jerusalem!'

By Jim Melnick, LCJE International Coordinator

'Next Year in Jerusalem!'

Long before Israel was established as a state in 1948, these words made up the famous centuries'-old declaration at the end of the Passover seder - one that expressed Messianic hopes for some, but for nearly all at least a general hope in a Jewish future somehow connected with the Land of Israel.

In a worldly sense, that future today often looks quite bleak. It also looked quite bleak more than 35 years ago.

"Farewell, Israel!"

Russian Jewish author and screenwriter Ephraim Sevela (Efim E. Drabkin) published a book in 1977 titled, *Farewell, Israel!* Sevela was a famous refusenik who was one of the early Jewish emigrants from the USSR to Israel. He enthusiastically embraced his new homeland and was reportedly wounded during the Yom Kippur War. However, he later became very cynical and disillusioned with life in Israel. He concluded that Israel had no future, that it was doomed.

Sevela closed *Farewell, Israel!* with these words: "This century will pass and in the new one there will be no Jewish nation." He also thought that the nations of the world could end up destroying "all things living." At the end of the world, though, there would still be one gazing down upon mankind with "sad, Jewish eyes from the walls of the churches, our last kinsman, the Son of God, Who came forth from the belly of a nation loved by none." (1)

Even today, those words move me deeply, but Sevela was quite wrong: Israel has survived into this century, and there are indeed many who love her. But his deep sadness and resignation reflect the failure of political



The Western Wall - Kotel

Zionism by itself alone to continue to inspire new generations as earlier ones. There must be something more. There must be a real hope that 'Next Year in Jerusalem!' is not just a saying but actually means something more substantial. Beyond the 'Masada complex', what comes next for this tiny nation that is so hated and despised by so many enemies on every side, a world where global anti-Semitism is once again on the rise? For believers, the Scriptures give us hope, but for those who don't believe the Scriptures, there can be little hope - only bleakness.

As far as I know, Sevela never found such hope, but I earnestly hope that he did. He passed away four years ago in 2010. In the intervening years he continued to produce many books and films and became a sort of cosmopolitan traveler. I once had the opportunity to briefly share my faith with him in a small apartment in Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, New York. He was dismissive of most of what I said, but he readily accepted me and the sincerity of my desire to

reach him with the true 'Good News'.

'A Future and a Hope'

We who have the Messiah truly have "a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11). But that promise in Jeremiah is also directed to the Jewish people: "You shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart." (29:13)

Our hearts' desire within LCJE is to share that great hope with the Jewish people. Our 10th LCJE International Conference - scheduled for a year from now in Jerusalem - will be built around that hope. When we now say, 'Next Year in Jerusalem!,' we are speaking about much more than just the timing of our conference; we are also proclaiming a core tenet of our faith: that there is hope because 'The King is Coming!'

*Jim Melnick
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References

1. Ephraim Sevela, *Farewell, Israel!* (1977), pp. 294-295.

The Fourth LCJE AustralAsian Conference - July 2014

By Natasha Michailidis, LCJE AustralAsia and 'Yeshua Tsidkenu'

Smallest but best so far

The Fourth AustralAsian Conference at Stanwell Tops, NSW, although the smallest in attendance, was the best so far by many accounts.

Whether it was the location which had us isolated just within our group, or the people who attended, or the programme, or because we are getting to know each other better by now- or all of the above, it does not matter - it was wonderful! The programme was varied, and there was much to think about!

What was so encouraging was the humility and honesty in sharing by the participants.

We all felt comfortable with each other; there was no striving or competition and people were free to share from the heart not only the "successes" but also the disappointments and the struggles.

The first evening session was a field report by Mark Warren from "David House" Ministry, sharing on what seemed at first a disappointment and the winding down of a ministry but is turning out to be a new door and an adjustment to the modern realities of a digital world.

Fraser Harding gave us ideas in his talk on "Gentiles in Jewish Ministry" about how to use any opportunity to witness to Jewish people and the many ways he has been able to do it.

A practical and inspiring session was shared by Scott Brown and Bob Mendelsohn on "How to start a ministry from the ground up." This was very honest sharing, and we heard from two people who have experienced the successes and the lows of ministry. Many questions fol-

lowed that session. The evening session of the first full day began with Celebrate Messiah's Mark Polonsky's testimony of salvation and the remarkable physical healing he received.

Reflections on CATC

We next heard from Kon Michailidis, pastor of "Yeshua Tsidkenu" congregation in Sydney. He gave his reflections on the "Christ at Checkpoint" (CATC) Conference. His observation was that the stated goal of the conference to bring understanding and reconciliation, while sounding good in theory, in practice turned out to be terribly biased and distorted, was an attempt to delegitimize Israel, often not even addressing Israel by name, preferring the name 'Holy Land'. He further stated that, in his view, even if unintentional, the conference might stir up more radical Islamic terror, and that depicting Christ at the Checkpoint was just the type of imagery that in the past was associated with, or resulted in, anti-Semitism.

Rahel Landrum also shared this topic. She saw the problem as a crisis of identity. The Arab Christians are identifying themselves as Arab Palestinians with a strong affiliation to their ethnic Arab Muslim brothers and their desire is to be freed from under "occupation." The primary identifier in one's life determines one's thoughts and actions and alliances. One's identity as a believer in Jesus should take priority over any other identifiers to which one clings.

Reports from the Field

The 'Reports from the Field' were encouraging in that we

heard not just about "numbers" but about "turning corners" and "at last something is happening" type of stuff.

We rejoiced as we learnt from Scott Brown about his outreaches to the young Israeli backpackers in the South Island of New Zealand and how that ministry to Israeli youth is booming. Mark Landrum reported on the new premises of JFJ Bookshop in Bondi Junction, Sydney and the growth in the number of visitors to it.

We heard about "Yeshua Tsidkenu" Russian Messianic Congregation's new outreaches to Russian Jews in the eastern suburbs, the heart of the Jewish area in Sydney. It was wonderful to hear how the Lord has been leading them in prayer and fasting and is blessing the few meetings they already have had.

Mark Polonsky reported on the ministry of Celebrate Messiah. The project and vision for a Messianic Centre in the heart of the Jewish population in Caulfield, Melbourne is still very much alive. They are now reviewing the plans for a cheaper and probably better alternative to the original.

Dr Darrell Bock, Professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, was the key speaker. He blessed us all greatly with his humour, gifted teaching style and the depth of fascinating insight into scripture. His main theme was: "What got Jesus in trouble with the Jewish authorities". He expounded over a few days the significance of and the problems caused with the religious authorities by Jesus' various claims: of personal authority over the Sabbath; over forgiveness of sins; over purity; over the temple;

about Himself as one who would be vindicated in His resurrection; that God had acted on His behalf; that He would sit on the throne; and that He would judge.

Dr Ashley Crane, Principal of Harvest West Bible College gave a fascinating talk on "Cross-cultural ministry; Church and the Jews - how does that work?" He shared how he received some valuable insight from an aboriginal leader about people having primary and secondary allegiances. If one wants to get something from a person, one has to offer them something of more value than what they presently have. Primary allegiance is what we really are inside. A person has to be saved in their primary allegiance, which is the area that is of most importance to them. We have to ask what the primary allegiance is for the Jewish people.

A very practical and useful talk was presented by Dan Secomb on apologetics, titled "Failures and lessons I've experienced in apologetics." He shared his experience of not doing due diligence or taking the time

to research a particular topic thoroughly, exerting too much energy regurgitating the same old argument; taking what someone says as gospel without investigating their claims. He discovered that he could save time and effort by keeping an archive of arguments, quotes and articles for future conversations.

Scott Brown, Director of Celebrate Messiah in NZ, gave a very deep and informative presentation on relativistic post-modern Western society, with its deliberate departure from absolutist paradigms and philosophies. He used the illustration of the recent history of baseball. Previously, umpires called it 'as it is'. Then they called it 'as they saw it'. Now 'it isn't anything until they call it'. He shared how the old rules no longer apply to the perspectives of the emerging generation and how with the changes come new opportunities to relay Good News in ways that will gently convict and genuinely inspire young hearts and minds.

Bob Mendelsohn concluded

the conference with some practical advice on "Finishing well". He shared his thoughts that in order to finish well, we have to start well and learn how to pace ourselves. We need to have a purpose and set a strategy to get there. We need to map out our resources, map out what the liabilities and the assets are, map out our roadblocks and be honest. When we win, celebrate and shout. When we fail, write it down, learn...

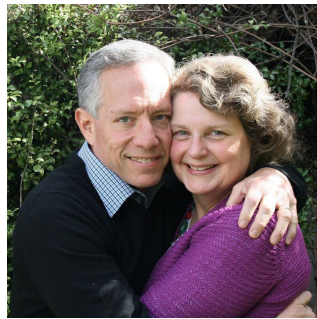
And so ended another wonderful LCJE Conference, and we all wanted to have more! New friendships were formed, and old ones strengthened. We await 2016 if the Lord tarries!

*Natasha Michailidis
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PHOTOS BELOW:

Clockwise, from upper left:

(1) Dr Darrel Bock and LCJE AustralAsia Area Coordinator Bob Mendelsohn; (2) Scott and Margie Brown - ministering in New Zealand; (3) Fraser Harding and Daniel Willis; (4) Natasha Michailidis (author of this article), praying for Mark Polonsky.



"In Search of Shalom" - An Update

By Renae Kooy, Life in Messiah International

In Search of Shalom

Where do you go online with spiritual questions? This problem intensifies when you are Jewish and your question involves Yeshua. Where is a safe place to have a spiritual conversation?

'In Search of Shalom' has been established to provide a safe and anonymous space for members of the Jewish community to openly ask questions and dialogue about Yeshua. We are working hard to learn how to best employ the internet and social media in evangelism.

Interested seekers can connect with trained volunteers through chats, and soon by text messaging and phone calls. By triggering thoughts about the existence of God, Messiah and true peace through advertisements on Toronto city buses, our internet and social media sites have offered the opportunity for people to anonymously ask questions. The site allows for total anonymity—leaving the seeking individual without worry of being ridiculed for asking questions regarding Messiah. The web application was designed by Need Him Ministries. Since its launch in Toronto in September 2013, the Lord has already allowed us to acquire a collection of wonderful conversations with seeking men and women!

When a conversation first begins, you never know where it's going. Maybe this person saw an 'In Search of Shalom' advertisement asking, "What is true peace?" while updating his Facebook



In Search of Shalom logo

status and curiosity led him into a chat. Or maybe the word "shalom" caught the attention of a Jewish mother riding the Toronto bus with her kids. Who knows how the Lord will lead our Jewish friends and family to the site? There is no limit where the conversation can go once a chat begins. However, one thing is for certain, the Lord delights in the proclamation of Messiah to His Jewish people.

One of our trained volunteers in France took a chat from Joshua, a teenager from the U.S. After back and forth questions and conversation about forgiveness and repentance, Joshua made the decision to put his trust in Yeshua as Lord and Savior!

Curiosity brought Rachel to the 'In Search of Shalom' site, and, after a two hour conversation with a volunteer from Canada, she promised to read Isaiah 53. We have had the privilege of encouraging Jewish believers who have been ostracized from friends and family. We have been encouraged by the opportunities and responses from our outreach. Please pray for the Lord's continued blessing as we seek out new ways to engage the Jewish community.

After 'In Search of Shalom' had been in operation for a few months, we received a call from a reporter for the *Jewish Tribune*, the largest Jewish weekly publication in Canada (60,000-plus circulation). She interviewed members of our Toronto team, who were kind and forthright. While the reporter was critical of us, we pray the mention of the project will drive people to come and chat!

Ministries have limited resourc-

es, and that includes personnel. But what we cannot do alone as ministries, we can do together with those individuals who share our burden to reach the Jewish people with the gospel message. That is the vision and the purpose of In Search of Shalom.

Our volunteers have a passion for Jewish outreach and are committed to the project. They are trained to respond to inquiries and to share the gospel message with boldness, but also with Jewish sensitivity and sensibility. The volunteer also knows how to best acquire contact information so that the caller can be referred to a local evangelist.

The level of commitment (number of hours per week) is determined by the individual volunteer in discussion with In Search of Shalom leadership. Each volunteer needs to have access to an efficient computer with high-speed internet capability.

If God blesses and we are able to go global, we will need a large volunteer base to receive calls and texts twenty four hours a day in multiple languages. Please prayerfully consider becoming part of our In Search of Shalom as a volunteer.

We learned a great deal through our Toronto launch. We proved a small local staff supported by internet volunteers can mount a large campaign. Some issues were also uncovered and we are currently awaiting the launch of an interface upgrade resolving those issues.

Next Steps

Next planned steps will include:

- A Brooklyn campaign.
- A Russian-focused project.
- A focus on cities representing smaller Jewish populations in which there are no local staff on

the ground.

- Our web design is being crafted to handle multiple language platforms simultaneously. We are excited to see where the Lord will take us next, as He is the provider of all our resources.

If you're ready to begin the process of becoming a partner ministry or a volunteer, simply go to:

www.insearchofshalom.org/volunteer

Life in Messiah International has provided the vision and initial structure for this endeavor. New Covenant Forum in Toronto has made significant investments of time, staff and resources. The project is built on the platform provided by Need Him Ministries. We have been encouraged by multiple staff from Jews for Jesus and by gifts from CJF Ministries in San Antonio. God has also provided gifts from individuals who have caught the vision and are encouraged to see ministries working together. We welcome your involvement. Browse the website, and then contact Steve (SWilliamson@LifeinMessiah.org) for more information on partnerships.

As 'In Search of Shalom' is a collaborative effort between other ministries and trained volunteers, the project is best accomplished by including as many organizations and interested individuals as possible. As a volunteer with In Search of Shalom, you will help to make this God-sized vision a reality.

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A History of Jewish Mission in Europe – Successes and Failures

By Mike Moore, General Secretary, Christian Witness to Israel, UK

'The Good Old Days'

Apart from the weather, the national obsession of the English is 'the good old days': those times everyone remembers when the sun shone all day and every day (except when it rained), when Christmas was always white (except when it rained) and when you could always get a decent cup of tea. Some English Christians dream of a golden age of missions; those 'good old days' when, armed with nothing but a King James Bible and a change of socks, Englishmen single-handedly converted entire heathen tribes and sometime nations to Christianity and cricket. Failure, if it could be called that, occurred only when those courageous Englishmen ended up on the dinner plates of cannibals or were dispatched by heathen savages, armed to the teeth with spears and bows and arrows,



Mike Moore

before the missionaries had the opportunity to convert them. The early history of Jewish missions in Europe was, as we saw on Monday at our conference, full of spectacular successes. But there were also failures – not the kind where missionaries were martyred – but episodes and incidents which hindered and marred the work.

Scottish Mission of 1842

For this paper, I want to focus on the Scottish mission of 1842 and the problems that attended that historic venture. In the second half of the 19th century, as many as a quarter of a million Eastern European Jews came to faith in Yeshua the Messiah but the going was not smooth. Regrettable mistakes were made by both the missionaries and the mission boards to whom they were accountable. For the material in this paper, I am in debt to John S. Ross for his superb history of Scottish missions to the Jews in the nineteenth century. Dr John Duncan is regarded as the pioneer Scottish missionary to the Jews, but a year before Duncan was sent to Pesht, the Scottish church sent Daniel Edward and his assistant Herman Philip to pioneer a work in Iasi in Moldavia, a city whose Jewish population numbered 25,000.

Mission work at Iasi and 'herem'—excommunication

The committee in Scotland took the decision to attempt a work at Iasi in full knowledge that the Orthodox Church would not tolerate any kind of missionary work among their own members, and Edward and Philip discovered early that opposition could be avoided only by confining their ministry to the Jewish community. However, when they presented the gospel to Jewish people in Bottuschan, the outcry that followed almost led to their arrest and imprisonment. The figure behind the opposition was Rabbi Aaron Moses Ben Jacob Taubes, who was to prove himself a formidable enemy of all Christian missionary work amongst his people. Rabbi Taubes threatened the 'herem' – excommunication – to any member of the community who dared even to have any contact with the missionaries. Those under the 'herem' were to be excluded from the community and no one would be permitted to teach offenders, work for them or help them in any way, unless they were in need of the necessities of life. Following the baptism of Benjamin Weiss, a Jewish merchant, in 1844, Edward experienced hostility from the Jewish community.

In spite of persecution, Edward baptised five Jews in the next year, but opposition from the community took a considerable toll on Edward's health. The committee in Edinburgh instructed Edward to return to Scotland for a few months of rest and recuperation. When he returned to Iasi, he was accompanied by his new bride, Catherine. Mornings in the mission house

were dedicated to study, but Catherine wrote home to say that they were 'continually interrupted by Jews calling.' On one occasion, Catherine reported, the house was 'almost full . . . upwards of sixty people, and about twenty-five long bearded [Chabad] Jews.'

Things took a turn for the worse

Things took a turn for the worse, however, when John Mason, a doctor from Scotland opened a dispensary in Iasi hoping, so he said, through his medical skill to help break down the barriers between the missionaries and the Jews. According to Catherine, Mason was 'rash'. He had given refuge to a young Jewish boy who had quarrelled with his parents and said he wanted to become a Christian. A riot followed and angry Jews surrounded Mason's home, demanding that the boy be handed over. By this time Daniel Edward and Herman Philip had been joined by Alfred Edersheim. The missionaries complained to the committee in Edinburgh that Mason 'seemed to entertain views and adopt practices . . . inconsistent with the character and objects of the mission.'

The complaint was vague, but it is possible they were questioning Mason's claim to be a physician. When the missionaries substantiated their allegations against Mason with hard evidence, the committee instructed him to leave Iasi with immediate effect. The disgraced Mason settled in Constantinople, from where allegations of misconduct were made against him concerning 'his conduct with Rebecca.' Who Rebecca was and what Mason's 'conduct' with her was remains

unclear but a letter written by James Julius Wood states that Mason's 'conduct' involved a 'fall into sin and temptation.' 'The follies and foibles of Mason had,' says John S. Ross in *Time for Favour*, 'discouraged the missionaries, diverted their energies, unfairly discredited their work and weakened their witness.'

Another discouragement

Nor was the dismissal of Mason the end of the struggle. Another discouragement soon rocked the work in Iasi, involving no less a figure than Alfred Edersheim, whom the Edinburgh committee had appointed to support Edward. Here, too, the facts are uncertain, but Edersheim had apparently got into difficulties with the committee over his confused marriage intentions. Although Edersheim confessed his fault, he was suspended from the ministry and had his salary withdrawn.

Following his marriage, Edersheim's suspension was lifted, but it appears that the real problem was the tension that existed between Edward and Edersheim concerning financial matters. Edersheim was vindicated, but the committee declined to reinstate him as a missionary on the vague grounds that it would be 'inexpedient in existing circumstances' for Edersheim to return to Iasi.

And so, tragically, due in part to what seems to have been some lack of transparency on a minor issue, a strained relationship with Daniel Edward and heavy-handedness on the part of the committee, the Free Church of Scotland lost the services of one of the most notable Hebrew Christians of his generation, and one of the first fruits of its own missionary work. Despite Mason and Edersheim's

removal from Iasi, the storm had not abated, for Herman Philip found it impossible to work with Daniel Edward and joined the United Presbyterian Church as their missionary to the Jews in Alexandria.

Greatest encouragement – fiercest opposition

As if that in itself was not enough, the greatest encouragement Edward was to experience in Iasi turned out to be the catalyst for some of the fiercest opposition he had to endure.

After Rabbi Nahum Birman and his three daughters were baptised, on the orders of Rabbi Taubes, a mob of more than a thousand Jews assembled outside Birman's shop hurling abuse and stones at him. The city authorities issued instructions that any Jews found on the streets should be beaten, and with the arrival of two platoons of Cossacks and a detachment of Germans, the situation appeared very ugly. As Daniel Edward himself put it: 'Could they have gotten [Birman], they would have minced him to shreds.' When Birman and his daughters moved in with the missionaries for safety, the focus of hostility shifted to the mission house, which was surrounded and intermittently stoned.

After an attempt was made to break into the house one night, Catherine teetered on the edge of breakdown.

In addition to all the other problems and discouragements, Iasi was visited by a cholera epidemic.

Outlook Seemed Bleak

The outlook for the work seemed bleak, but Edward later reported that the epidemic had created many opportunities to share the gospel. When staring death in the face daily, many people reflected on their eternal destiny and asked questions about the next life. However, the Edwards had had as much as they could take.

As they considered leaving Iasi there was another outbreak of cholera, and revolutionary activity provoked the Prince of Moldavia to seek assistance from the Russians, who entered the city in July. The impact on the local economy of a camp of 30,000 Russian soldiers was crippling as the cost of living sky-rocketed and provisions became increasingly scarce.

Birth of Their First Child

Amid opposition, revolution and epidemic, Catherine gave birth to their first child, a daughter, and Daniel wrote to the committee requesting permission to commence a fresh work in Lvov [Lv'iv]. Lvov

seemed a suitable location to open a new chapter in the history of the mission but after little more than a year Daniel and his wife and daughter were expelled by the Austrian government.

Despite numerous difficulties

Despite numerous difficulties, great discouragements and fierce opposition, the mission in Iasi was by no means fruitless. About thirty Jewish people had been baptised, and, although some fell away, the work did not grind to a halt. A decade or so later when Rev. Theodore Meyer visited Iasi, he found a number of Jewish believers who came to faith through the ministry of Daniel Edward, including Nahum Birman, Naphtali Horowitz and Michael 'B', a young man who had survived the cholera epidemic and went on to become librarian to the Prince of Moldavia. In addition, Meyer encountered a Mr Weiss and Samuel Neuman, who had become unordained missionaries to their own people.

All of this serves to demonstrate that God uses flawed instruments to accomplish his purposes. Also, if I might modify one of Robert Murray McCheyne's hymns, the experience of the Edwards encourages us to believe:

When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know -
Not till then - how much I owe -
Or how much I have, by his grace, been able to accomplish.

*Mike Moore
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Gentile Believers Sacrificing for Unredeemed Israel: A Review of *The Ruth-less Church* by Matthew T. Wilson, Yeshua's Harvest Ministries

By Jim Melnick, LCJE International Coordinator

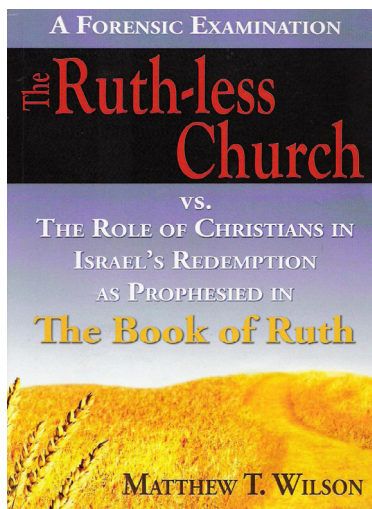
A Forensic Examination of the Book of Ruth

This is a remarkable and significant book. The full title expresses the book's thesis: *The Ruth-less Church vs. The Role of Christians in Israel's Redemption as Prophesied in The Book of Ruth*. My hope is that the book will be widely read and used as a backdrop for the Church to better understand the role of Gentile believers in loving Jewish people and seeking to win them to the Messiah.

Author Matthew T. Wilson describes his approach to the Book of Ruth as "a forensic examination," and he indeed approaches his subject matter, in part, as a forensic scientist.

Yeshua's Harvest Ministries and "Living Stones" DVD

Forensic science (think "C.S.I.") was Wilson's career field prior to his serving as president and director of Yeshua's Harvest Ministries, based in Woodland Hills, California. Matthew is also the host of the Living Stones Television (LSTV) series (if you've never seen Yeshua's Harvest Ministries' amazing DVD "Living Stones" 90-minute documentary about Israeli believers, you should request free a copy. See www.YeshuasHarvest.org for more information). There is also a Study Collection that is available to go with the book.



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The 'Classic' Interpretation of the Book of Ruth

To better introduce his main theme, Wilson spends some time discussing what we might refer to as 'classic' Biblical interpretations of the Book of Ruth. Boaz is sometimes referred to as a type of 'Messiah' and Ruth as a type for the Church, and the marriage of Ruth and Boaz is then interpreted as symbolic of the great marriage between the Messiah and His Bride, the Church.

While this view is popular for its typology, Wilson believes it is wrong. He says that the Book of Ruth is not about the future spiritual marriage of Messiah and the Church but about something else entirely, something in the here and now. That is indeed a new per-

spective that all of us involved in Jewish evangelism should be aware of and examining closely. Wilson writes that the symbology in the Book of Ruth is "an amazingly detailed picture of how the Lord will bless the faithful Gentiles who have grafted themselves to Israel and have blessed Israel in its time of difficulty... It is a reminder that Gentiles **must** intercede for Israel" (p. 175)

The Ruth-"like" Church versus the Ruth-"less" Church

As we consider the character of Ruth and her famous love for her mother-in-law Naomi, we are reminded that the Church should be more like Ruth and not less like her. Wilson writes that Ruth is "the prototypical Gentile believer." (p. 107)

He says: "By God's grace, Naomi's disobedience became mercy for Ruth." (p. 280) What does he mean by this? How was Naomi disobedient? Wilson traces Elimelech and Naomi's (and their sons') trek to the land of Moab (Ruth 1:1-5), which Wilson explains, based on Deuteronomy 23: 3-6, showed disobedience to God's command to the people of Israel with respect to Moab. (pp. 61-73)

As his wife, Naomi following her husband Elimelech to Moab, but the family's disobedience cost them heavily.

Naomi lost nearly everything, except for the love of her daughter-in-law Ruth. In a worldly sense, she also had nothing to show for all of the

years spent in Moab. She came back to Israel empty-handed, in a dry and wasted state, as a widow without anyone to lean on - except Ruth.

And she tried at first to push Ruth away, to give her the opportunity to live her own life and to return to her family in Moab. Ruth refused. Instead, she was determined to cling to Naomi. By doing so, Ruth eventually became enormously blessed, although all that would come later.

Comparison of the Book of Ruth with Romans 11

If Naomi's family had not been disobedient, then Ruth would never have had the opportunity to learn about the God of Israel instead of the false gods of Moab that she would have grown up with.

So, in this way, Jewish disobedience brought about mercy for Ruth, the Gentile woman, providing for her a pathway toward salvation through the God of Israel. But even as Ruth now had the opportunity to know and love the God of Israel, we see that the Book of Ruth itself "...is about the redemption of Naomi and her family line" - representing the Jewish people. (p. 152)

Thus, both Jew and Gentile come to faith in part by helping each other and loving each other. What an amazing analogy this is to Romans 11! As the author concludes: "The evidence throughout Scripture testifies that Jews and Gentiles are inextricably linked in both their destiny and calling." (p. 296) Amen!

Wilson continues: "...Naomi is a powerful type and prophetic picture of unredeemed Israel *today*. In the Romans 11 picture of the olive tree, Naomi was also cut off, but by God's grace she will be grafted back in..." (p. 84)

Interceding versus merely 'Comforting' Israel

We next compare Ruth's persistence in standing by Naomi's side

and helping her with a picture of how Gentile believers should intercede on behalf of unredeemed Israel. Ruth stayed by Naomi's side, helping her day by day after they both returned together to Israel. In the same way, all believers should seek the comfort and security of the Jewish people. We saw this kind of concern among those men and women termed 'Righteous Gentiles' who hid or protected Jews during the Holocaust. Today we honor their courage and memory.

Today, the State of Israel exists, and there are a number of believers and organizations who are committed to coming alongside Israel as a people and bringing comfort to them, just as Ruth brought comfort and support to Naomi.

Almost anyone involved in Jewish evangelism will very soon discover the plethora of Christian organizations and individuals that raise money to stand by Israel or to bring 'comfort' to Israel and the Jewish people, but who do little or nothing to share the Gospel with them. This is deeply troubling on many levels. Wilson describes the situation as follows: "[m]any are offering comfort and care, a commendable expression of love, but... Israel is not being spiritually fed by them or through them. Israel needs to be fed the Word or they will starve. They will perish in their sins." (p. 301)

He adds that "...many good and sincere people...want to support Israel. Giving a meal and a blanket to a person in need is a gift of love. But there is no greater act of love than sharing the free gift of eternal life which is in Yeshua, the promised Jewish Messiah." (p. 330)

How can Gentile believers go about doing both? - i.e.,

showing love toward the Jewish people while also bringing them the Gospel?

Gentile Believers Should Sacrifice Themselves for Unredeemed Israel

As Ruth lived a life of sacrifice on Naomi's behalf, Wilson believes that the Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans is asking Gentile believers in Rome (and, by extension, all Gentile believers in Messiah) to live similar lives of sacrifice on behalf of Jewish people who do not know the Lord. He believes that Paul in Romans is pleading with "Gentiles to sacrifice themselves, just as Paul was willing to do, for unredeemed Israel." (p. 272)

The 'Ruth-like Church' should be interceding for the Jewish people, "giving herself up, as it were, to ask, plead and even beg God to redeem Israel." (Romans 12:2) (p. 208)

Constructive Criticisms

I think a good book review should usually include some constructive criticisms. In the case of *The Ruth-less Church*, the first, strangely enough, regards the title. I hope that this book receives a wide reading, but unfortunately, unless one becomes familiar with the book, many people will probably just see the first three words in the title. They may think that this is a book about whether the Church is or should be "ruth-less" - as opposed to the book's main thesis, which is that the Church needs to be more like Ruth! I am not sure what kind of more arresting title Matthew might have used and still have introduced this subject matter, but I hope that the title will not be a barrier to more believers hearing about and reading the book.

Seeing and Interpreting 'Types'

The second criticism has to do with structure, or more precisely, the length of time spent in the book discussing certain aspects of the secondary evidence that supports the main argument of the book.

Let me begin by discussing how we look at Scriptural 'types': Joseph, for example, is a 'type' of Messiah. His story of suffering is often compared with one of the 'types' of Messiah found in the Tanach: Messiah ben Joseph, or the 'Suffering Servant'. This suffering Messiah is contrasted with the conquering kingly Messiah, Messiah ben David (Messian Son of David). We see the picture of both 'types' in Messiah Yeshua.

However, in seeing a 'type,' although there are aspects of both Joseph's and David's lives where there is strong symbolism and correlation with Jesus' life and ministry, there are also many aspects to both of their lives where there is no connection. In other words, if we try to do a one-to-one comparison of the respective lives of Joseph and David to Jesus, then at some point the 'type' analogies will begin to break down.

For example, David the shepherd boy tending and caring for the sheep is a 'type' that can be related to Jesus as the 'Good Shepherd' caring for our souls. However, David the adulterer does not.

So, we can only take 'types' so far. But they still remain extremely important in our understanding of Scripture. According to Matt's formulation of the deeper meaning behind the Book of Ruth, I can definitely see how Naomi can represent unredeemed Israel and Ruth represents Gentile believers who should be helping the Jewish people while seeking their redemption. This is the main thesis of the book. It is beautiful

in its construction as well as its relevancy to Jewish evangelism. As a scientist might say about a new scientific theory that ties many things together, this view is an 'elegant' one!

I hope that it will inspire and challenge many.

But I think the book strains the argument too much at some points. Attempts to make the formulation 'fit' across some aspects of the Ruth-Boaz-Naomi story begin to take us off point from the main argument. An example of this is comparing the six measures of barley that Boaz measured out to Ruth (Book of Ruth 3:17) with the 144,000 Jewish believers mentioned in Revelation 14, which is quite a stretch. (pp. 218-222). Although the author readily admits that this is "quite speculative" in nature, some of these speculations detract from the main thesis, in my opinion.

Another more central example might be comparing Boaz with a very old man as well as with God the Father, the Ancient of Days. (p. 159) This is fine as a type and symbol but only to a point. Push the typology too hard and it becomes somewhat brittle. For example, Boaz was startled when he found Ruth lying at his feet (Ruth 3:8). While we might see Boaz as a 'type' of God the Father, I don't think we would ever say that God the Father is 'startled' by anything we do. So, many of the typologies work well and can be instructive but only if we do not try to push them too hard. A lighter touch achieves the desired result.

An Action Plan for Blessing the Jewish People

The last two chapters of the book present an action plan for Gentile believers who seek Israel's redemption. "Loving Israel," Wilson writes, "includes helping Israel on its journey back home physically *and* spiritually... It

means helping them find their relationship with their God and Savior, their promised Messiah. Loving Israel means being willing to bless them even when they are still bitter...Just as Ruth was a conduit for Boaz to show his love and care for Naomi, we need to let God use us as a means to bring blessing to Israel." (pp. 304-305) This should include intercession and sacrifice on behalf of Israel's redemption. Matthew writes of the special importance he sees of the partnership needed between the 'Ruth-like Church' and Messianic Jewish believers in Israel and Messianic Jewish ministries throughout the nations. (pp. 317-321).

'Restoration-ism!'

One statement Matthew makes in the book just delights me immensely (actually he makes many, but I would like to draw attention to this one in particular!). This is when he discusses what he says is "...the role of Gentile believers in the redemption of Israel **and the restoration of all things.**" (emphasis added) (p. 142) God will bring restoration. He shall indeed redeem His people as He has promised. God's honor and His Word will be satisfied. The earth that has been cursed since Adam's sin will be restored - "we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." (Romans 8:22)

History is going somewhere - it is not just the result of random, unconnected events, and the Jewish people remain right in the center of it. With this book we can approach the Book of Ruth with a new understanding of its connection to Jewish evangelism and see how God wants to use us to change the world.

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Warren Graham (1937-2014)

Pioneer in Messianic Ministry in the Land of Israel

Compiled by Linda Graham

Arrival in Israel

Warren and Linda Graham arrived in Israel on August 10, 1964, with two young sons. Though representing the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Warren was soon convinced that instead of trying to build a mission-based work, the right modus operandi for Israel was to work under the headship of national leaders, not duplicating the efforts of others, but contributing what God had put into their hands. The C & M A accepted and encouraged this approach.



Warren and Linda Graham and family - the early years. Used by permission

Starting in Beersheva

The young family began their ministry in Beersheva. They believed that in order to reach the South for the Messiah, it was important to work with others. Olavi and Ester Syvanto and Ruth Lawrence were already there, and they all worked together. They welcomed Operation Mobilization and YWAM teams, who helped especially in the summer day camp ministries.

Becoming a Part of Israel

The Grahams became a part of the community around them. They had not known much about modern Israel, Jews and Judaism before moving to The Land. However, God's call on their lives for that country was indisputable, and they felt it was important to learn these things from the people and the country themselves. This included learning Hebrew so well that it became a part of their daily life and who they were. Language is culture, and culture is tied up with language. Another

important element of ministry strategy, which influenced Warren and Linda's future was their deep love for God's Word and their desire to see it flourish in the lives of children, youth and adults. Warren and Olavi went to outlying places on a regular basis to hold Bible studies with contacts and scattered believers. Warren assisted Olavi in his sortees of Bible distribution in kibbutzim and schools.

Each summer the couple organized day camps for the children of contacts, not knowing that it was against the law to include just any child. They had Bible lessons, stories, games, food, handcrafts, and just plain fun. It was to be the forerunner of their future.

While in Beersheva, a young man who had come to faith was invited to weekend Bible conferences organized by Israeli Messianic leaders. In order to

see what he was being taught there, Warren always went with him. He soon was asked to be one of the teachers.

In 1970 the Grahams were transferred by the C & M A to Jerusalem, and Warren became the field director for the C&MA. They lived in the C&MA headquarters building. Three daughters were added to the family. The children attended the Israeli public schools, and Hebrew was pretty much the language of the home. The OM team moved with the Grahams from Beersheva, and soon a student ministry came into being, with a coffee bar and an outreach onto the university and college campuses. Arnie Fruchtenbaum and his wife came to live in what the students affectionately called The Graham Cracker Castle and were soon involved in Bible studies and discipleship ministries.

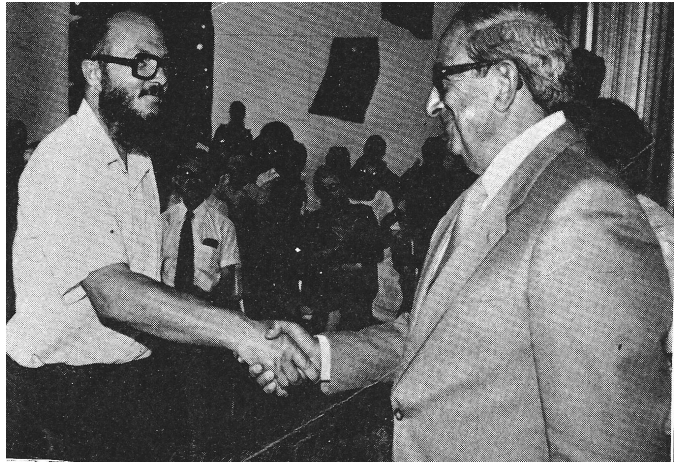
Some genuine students, followers of the Messiah, rented rooms in "the Castle", and helped with the outreach. Many times the rooms were full, as was the floor space on the balconies, with seeking students who were backpacking around the world. It was a haven for volunteers from the kibbutzim. This ministry continued until the Grahams had to move out of "the Castle" for health reasons in 1983. From the mid 70's and until Warren and Linda were transferred back to Beersheva in 1997, Warren was a volunteer ambulance driver for Magen David Adom and Linda volunteered in the children's schools, also serving as vice chairman of the school board.

When the children were out of the home, Linda worked on a master's degree in Biblical Hebrew, first at Hebrew University and then at Ben Gurion University. Due to Warren's health, she was not able to finish. When the C & M A transferred the Grahams to Jerusalem in 1970, they inherited a church service for a handful of English speakers. However, feeling called to the Hebrew-language Israelis, it was natural for them to attend the emerging Messianic Assembly. In time Warren became an elder, and Linda led the children's ministries.

Day Camps Launched

In the spring of 1971 Warren suggested to the Board of Elders that the Assembly hold a day camp for the children of the congregation. The program, which ran from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day for a month except Shabbat, filled a great need for Messianic families. Each year congregations in other cities asked to send their children. By the third year a dormitory was added, and it became a full camp program for the month of July.

At that time there was little for children in the congregations, and



Warren Graham meeting then Israeli President Navon. Used by permission

those who were scattered in outlying areas had nothing. The camps became a microcosm of the emerging Messianic movement in Israel.

As more couples came to faith and more believing families immigrated, the numbers grew, and the group was divided into two, with only two weeks for each age group. About that time there were teen agers, and teen camp was added. In later years it was necessary to divide the children's camps into four sets of ten days each. Since there were no teen ministries in most of the country, weekend conferences were begun every six weeks. For a time this was done for the middle schoolers as well, but due to lack of staff was finally dropped. At Pesach and at Hanukkah longer conferences were held for both middle schoolers and teens. In both the camps (children and youth) and the conferences, Bible study and related planned and devotionals were the center of the program, like the hub of a wheel - with all the other activities growing out of them. Warren and Linda believed that the cooks were the stars of these ministries, and that effectual and memorable Bible study had to be fun, interesting, and interactive. The camps were a place where every congregation sent volunteer

cooks, counselors, teachers, and participants even though they may not all have "gotten along" on other issues. A program of teen helpers, first in the kitchen, then as learning counselors and then full-fledged counselors was implemented, along with steadily developing training seminars before each summer of ministry. All counselors, both adults and teens, were urged to be a part of the planning sessions for each of the activities. Thus, the program was enriched with additional ideas, and the counselors were slowly learning how to plan camps and conferences themselves.

One of the greatest joys of the program was to see those who had "grown up" in the camps become camp directors, program directors and teachers, and eventually hold positions in congregational leadership. "Perhaps we played a part," says Linda. Since early days in Beersheva, Linda, a teacher by profession, saw the complete lack of Hebrew-based children's curriculum, and with each Sabbath school class she taught, she wrote

the lessons down and made pupil response pages. She was invited by various congregations to teach the Bible to children, but she had no curriculum to put in their hands. Her dream was to produce Hebrew-based lessons that reflected Israeli culture. Warren was her chief encourager.

Developing a Curriculum

For every camp or conference, Linda wrote all of the lessons and provided visual aids. She also wrote devotional materials for the campers, with some left over to do at home, in an effort to prolong a habit begun at camp. Out of these endeavors, Medallion Ministries was born. When Warren and Linda retired, their daughter Debby Nalbandian, an Israeli-American citizen and a trained, gifted teacher and writer, sensed God's directive to take over the leadership of Medallion. From very humble beginnings, with one writer-producer, one editor and borrowed art work, it has grown to a group of Israeli writers, several editors, a number of illustrators, regular volunteers, and a web site, with the aim of putting God's Word into the hands of teachers and parents in Israel's Messianic congregations in a way that enables them to successfully teach their children and youth. The name reflects the vision: 'Medallion' is an acronym in Hebrew meaning: 'From God's Word For Children and Youth'. Linda continues to spend some hours most days writing and doing other jobs for the ministry.

After Warren and Linda were transferred to Jerusalem in 1970, they continued spending parts of every week in Beersheva to make sure the ministry continued there. In the early 1970's the congregation felt that a part-time pastor was not enough to fill the need, and asked to become independent from the C & M A. Warren saw this as a step forward and helped it happen, offering his continued services under their discretion and direction. He was invited to help in preaching and on



Warren Graham (center) served as a volunteer driver in the Israeli ambulance service for 25 years, including during the Lebanese war. Used by permission.



Warren with other early Messianic leaders in Israel, from left to right: Elias Sarikas, Warren, Slomo Ostrovsky, Yaakov Goren, Victor Smadja. Date unknown. Used by permission.

other levels. At the same time, the Messianic Assembly in Jerusalem, which had been granted the use of the C & M A facility at 56 Prophets Street, wanted to buy it. But where would they get the money? A very large gift, from a long-time donor to the C&MA enabled this. In 2000 the Grahams were transferred to Arad, where they became a part of a core group from the Beersheva Assembly to plant a congregation there. The couple had celebrated the Sabbath and held Bible studies with a believing family there every other Friday evening during their first term. It was a fitting close to their ministry.

It is all about Him

Whenever Warren spoke about their ministries, he always emphasized that the story was not about

them, but about the great God, calling them, leading them, opening doors, and working. It is all about Him.

Feeling that they would live out their lives in Israel, it was something of a surprise when God led them back to the States in 2006. Though they were sure in their minds that this was truly God's way, it took several years for their hearts to catch up. Warren, who had been ill since at least 1997, went to be with Jesus on April 28, 2014, finally released from his years of suffering, to the glorious freedom of the sons of God.

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"The Jews in Acts"

By Dr. Ashley S. Crane, Fourth AustralAsian Conference - July 2014

1. Introduction

Frequently the use of 'the Jews' in Acts has caused a misunderstanding in the church wherein missions to the Jews is left to a few specialist organisations. Three times Paul declares in Acts that he is leaving the Jews and turning to the Gentiles, which has often fueled the withdrawal of missions to the Jews. It can be confusing dealing with the varied interpretations of 'the Jews' in Acts, with many admitting it can be "quite dizzying to see the same verses quoted as evidence for opposite interpretations" (Wills, 1991, p. 631) **(1)** Some claim Luke distinguishes between individual Jews who accept or reject the Gospel, and others claim Luke rejects all Jews collectively because they rejected the Messiah (Sanders, 1986, p.111).

Yet we must ask if Acts holds all Jews responsible for this shift to the Gentiles, and if this shift is due to a Jewish rejection of the Gospel? It is important that we clearly comprehend Luke's intent, particularly in light of the past 2,000 years of church interpretation that has often led to violence against the Jewish people. This also has important and far-reaching impact upon evangelism strategies in today's local churches and mission organisations; is Paul's strategy of 'To the Jew first' still relevant?

We will examine the text of Acts first for the historical context, and then for the literary, seeking clarity for



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how Luke viewed the Jewish people, and his usage of 'the Jews,' and if Luke announced an end to the church's Jewish mission.

2. Historical Context

2.1 Inside or External Criticism?

Firstly, we should attempt to establish if Luke saw himself within Judaism or separate, and if he saw Jewish covenantal observance as an ongoing lifestyle for those Jews who had accepted Yeshua as their Messiah. If Luke saw no continuance of Jewish lifestyle and did not see himself within the framework of Judaism, then those who view Acts as anti-Semitic would have grounds for their arguments. If, however, Luke is writing as one within Judaism then the speeches and treatment of 'the Jews' must be seen as an in-house critique, and claims of anti-Semitism are invalidated. **(2)**

Although scholars like Sanders and Haenchen (Sanders, 1986, p.123), portray Luke vehemently rejecting the Jews, we may

observe Luke's writing being favourable to things Jewish, making fine distinctions in a way one would omit were they declaring a rejection of the Jewish people (5:17; 17:2; 21:20; 22:12; 23:6; 24:14-16; 28:17). This detailed concern of Jewish ways suggests Luke knew, embraced and enjoyed Jewish life. Luke gives "a great deal of attention to Torah observance. His heroes, **(3)** Jesus in the Gospel, Paul in Acts, are observant Jews" (Salmon, 1988, p.79; also Wills, 1991, p.631). Hence, the speeches of Stephen, Peter and Paul that Luke transmits in Acts containing strong criticism of the Jews can be seen as in-house criticism, the same type of criticism found in the Prophets and Josephus, who criticized various groups of Jews, yet "we would not say that Josephus was anti-Jewish" (Wills, 1991, p.646). Lowe (1987, p.271) also points out, these criticisms in Acts, and those by Yeshua in the Gospels, "are comparable with criticisms ... found in rabbinic literature." **(4)** One would hardly declare the Talmud, or the Prophets in Tanach, as being anti-Jewish or anti-Israel, and so we should hesitate claiming that similar criticisms contained in Acts are such. We may agree with Salmon (1988, p.79) that it is conceivable to view Luke "as an insider, a Torah-observant Christian Jew."

2.2 Jews Out / Gentiles In?

Some claim God's original purpose for sending Yeshua was not to save the Jewish people but the Gentiles, claiming Acts shows God's rejection of Jews and the establishing of God's Kingdom with the Gentiles.

Sanders (1986, 127) claims that in Luke's Gospel, that Yeshua "make[s] it clear to his audience that they were never the intended recipients of God's salvation, which is a salvation for the Gentiles." (5) Yet it is unlikely that Luke's Gospel or Acts promotes such an anti-Jewish bias as "its context is to lead the listeners to repentance and accept Jesus as the Messiah (2:36-38)" (Wilch, 1991, p.50). These 'listeners' in Acts include both Jewish and Gentile; some accept, and some reject, the Yeshua message.

Many scholars today hold that Luke did not portray Jewish exclusion in the church; he merely saw Gentile inclusion (13:47; 15:16f), for Acts is "a tale told within the history of Israel rather than at the expense of the Jews" (Tiede, 1986, p.143). Bock (2012, p.300) points out the Gentiles "needed salvation because of their association with idolatry. This inclusion did not take place at the expense of the mission to Israel but out of it and alongside of it." (6) In fact "nowhere in Luke-Acts does the idea occur that gentiles replace the Jewish people (as opposed to individual Jews)" (Lowe, 1987, p.270). Any inclusion of Gentiles was never at the expense of the Jewish people, nor did Gentiles receive salvation "only because of Jewish rejection, as an afterthought or as a second choice" (7) (Tannehill, 1986, p.130). Hedrick (2012, p.303) says Luke's use of some Jews as rhetorical anti-heroes who "are not able, in his narrative, to thwart the divine will; in fact, their very failure to seize the opportunity is used to indicate God's immediate plan for the church. This periodic reversal helps to explain the rhetorical use of 'the Jews' in Acts."

Luke believed in Jewish atonement / salvation in Yeshua (Acts 2:36), and his "narrative is a call to Israel to repent by accepting Jesus" (Tyson, 1992, p.25). It is important to remember that Acts reveals an exclusive Jewish church until Peter's vision led him to Cornelius (Acts 10:26). Yet this story tells only of

Cornelius' household accepting Yeshua, and not a mass conversion of Gentiles. Even following Stephen's stoning we find those scattered from Israel were preaching only to Jewish people in the Diaspora (11:19). However, God's eternal plan of salvation included the Gentiles as Gentiles without their converting to Judaism, as was the finding of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). This Council declared God always planned to include the Gentiles, and their inclusion was not because of Jewish rejection; the majority attending this Council were Jews who had not rejected God's Messiah. God, in his wisdom, had called a Pharisee named Saul, Rav Shaul, for the specific ministry of reaching the Gentiles, without any suggestion that this calling was due to Jewish rejection (Acts 9:15). We may also observe there was no significant number of Gentiles in the church until "Paul's mission got underway at the end of the second decade" [Acts 13-14] (Lowe, 1987 p.280).

Although Rav Shaul received this direct call to reach the Gentiles, he was never able to forget his own people (Rom. 9-11), seeing the Gentiles as being grafted into the Jewish root (Rom. 11:17), and not replacing the Jewish people (Rom.11:1-2). He frequently reached out to his fellow Jews and typically started his outreach in any new area with the Jewish people (see below). As noted above, an underlying theme of Acts is how the Gentiles can believe in the Jewish Messiah and yet still remain Gentile (Act.15). (8) One purpose of Acts is to give support for Gentile inclusion, not Jewish exclusion or rejection (9), thus giving "legitimacy to Gentile mission without ever suggesting that Gentile supremacy is the final will of God" (Tiede, 1986, p.151). Therefore outreach to Jewish people is

still current in Acts and today.

2.3 Luke: the Goyim Lover?

We may also examine how Luke viewed the Gentiles in Acts. The first observable aspect is "Luke has no romantic view of the Gentiles" (Tiede, 1986, p.51). Luke portrays Gentiles as also opposing the Apostles and rejecting the Gospel message (see list below); as Bock (2012, p.288) observes, "Luke does not always blame the Jews." We may observe the majority of Gentiles reached in Acts were the God-fearers (10), and not the pagan Gentiles who often reject God's Word when they hear it (17:32). These God-fearers found in Acts "are a very special group of Gentiles, more semi-Jews than Gentiles" (Jervell, 1988, p.12). Gager (1986, p.99) says God-fearers were "in some meaningful and official sense, a member of the Jewish community," God's plan for Gentile salvation is seen throughout the Tanach, and prophesied would occur with the coming of the Jewish Messiah (Isa.9:1; 49:6; Amos.9:12; Joel.2:28). This finds fulfilment in Luke's message of Acts with the movement to include the Gentiles. Many of the major characters in Acts, especially those proclaiming the Good News, are Jewish people; the use of 'the Jews' is therefore mentioned in a rhetorical contrasting style, in a way similar to John's Gospel (see below).

3. Literary Context

3.1 'Them Jews!'

At 2009's Australian LCJE, I presented a paper covering the use of the phrase 'the Jews' in John's Gospel. (11) Based on a careful examination of the text, we established four (4) different applications by John, none being anti-Semitic, but rather

rhetorical. **(12)** Much of the reasoning for the use of 'the Jews' in John's Gospel also applies to Acts, where 'Jew/s' occur about 81 times. We may also find a similar breakdown in Acts as in John's Gospel: **(13)**

- **Its natural sense, simply 'Jewish people':** (Acts 2:5, 10; 9:22; 10:22, 28; 11:19; 13:5, 6; 14:1; 16:3, 20; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:2 (2x), 4, 5, 19, 24; 19:10, 14, 17, 33, 34; 21:21, 39; 22:3, 12; 24:5; 25:8, 10; 26:3, 4; 28:29).

- **As 'Judeans': people who live in or near Jerusalem:** (Acts 10:39).

- **Jewish people hostile to the Yeshua message:** **(14)** (Acts 9:23; 12:11; 14:2, 4, 19; 17:5; 17:13; 18:12, 14, 28; 20:3, 19; 21:27; 24:18).

- **The Religious Authorities: in Jerusalem** (Acts 10:39; 12:3; 21:11; 22:30; 23:12, 20, 27, 30; 24:9, 27; 25:2, 7, 9, 15, 24; 26:2, 7, 21; 28:17, 19); in Antioch Pisidia (13:45, 50); 14:5 (Iconium).

Here in Acts, we may add two new groups:

- **Jews who accepted the Yeshua message:** **(15)** (Acts 2:5x10x 41; 3:4 (implied); 6:7 (implied); 9:31, 42 (implied); 13:43; 14:1; 14:19 (implied), 16:14, 15 (Lydia and her household); 17:4 (Thessalonica); 17:12 (Berea); 18:2, 4, 8 (Corinth); 18:20 (Ephesus, implied), 18:24; 19:8, 10 (implied), 19:17; 20:21; 21:20 (Jerusalem); 28:24 (Rome).

- **Gentiles hostile to the Yeshua message:** **(16)** Acts 12:3, 11 (Herod); 13:50 (Antioch Pisidia); 14:4, 5 (Iconium); 14:19 (Lystra); 16:20 (Thyattira); 17:5 (Thessalonica); 17:13 (Berea); 18:17 (Corinth); 19:23-

41 (Ephesus); 24:27 (Felix).

As noted above, all Luke's major players in Acts are Jewish; some accept and some reject the message that Yeshua is the promised Messiah. Gentiles also, some accept and reject this message; there is no record of any mass Gentile conversion upon hearing the Gospel message such as happened with the Jews (Acts 2:41; 3:4; 5:14; 21:20). Many of the opposing Gentiles in the list above were leaders of their communities, who appear to operate out of the same fear of jealousy and losing power or position as the Jewish leaders (see Bock, 2007, p.46). Yet not all leaders rejected the message; Bruce (1988, p.8) comments that "in Acts a variety of officials, Gentile and Jewish, show goodwill to Paul and the other Christian missionaries, or at least admit that there is no basis for the accusations pressed against them by their opponents." Thus, by an examination of the various rhetorical uses of 'the Jews,' and noting that many thousands of Jews accepted Yeshua; we do not find any wholesale or national Jewish rejection of Yeshua as Messiah.

3.2 Three times: 'Off to the Goyim'!

Rav Shaul's philosophy of outreach 'to the Jew first' stated in Rom.1:16 informs the mission paradigm in Acts, starting with 1:8 and concluding, as an inclusio, in 28:17f. Paul practiced this in his missionary journeys going first to the synagogue, establishing a pattern where "The Jews must be addressed first. If they reject the gospel, the missionaries are free to begin the second phase of their mission" (Tannehill, 1986, p.130). There are three main occasions in Paul's journeys where some claim a supposed national rejection by Jews of the Gospel resulting in him turning

to the Gentiles (13:46; 18:6; 28:26). A lesser example is seen in 14:5. Wills (1991, p.644) sees this pattern to the extent that "Where there is no Jewish opposition there is no dramatic expansion of the mission." These three 'rejection events' have generated much of the debate concerning 'the Jews' in Acts, with scholars differing greatly over their conclusions. To Sanders, these three events show a universal rejection not just of these Jews but of all Jews to the point where "Luke has written the Jews off" (Sanders, 1986, p.118). **(17)** However, Wills (1991, p.632) cautions that "we must be careful not to see a blanket condemnation of unrepentant Israel."

The hope of 'the promise,' and Yeshua's resurrection, are tied to David in both Peter's and Paul's speeches, declaring Yeshua as the fulfillment of the Messianic hope promised to the Jewish people (2:25-31; 13:22,32; 23:6; 26:6). Tannehill (1986, p.131) states that this "should guide our interpretation of 13:33." This message of Yeshua as the Davidic Messiah had to be preached first to the Jews in order that they repent (13:46 c.f. 3:26). The result was "many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed" (13:43; See list above).

By going first to the Jews meant Paul did not have to spend any lengthy time explaining Israel's salvific history or of Messiah, just his identity as Yeshua; the hearers knew what Paul was saying and could therefore quickly accept or reject Yeshua as Messiah. There were always those who accepted, and these formed the foundation for further ministry and congregational life.

We find the first 'Jewish re-

jection' in Pisidian Antioch when most of the city returned to the synagogue the following week after Paul's first message, and the non-believing Jews began to oppose Paul (13:45). Here we see a shift in usage of "the Jews" to where "it becomes an abbreviation for 'the Jews who disbelieved'" just as in John's Gospel (Lowe, 1987, p.270). This usage shift, also repeated in 14:2; 17:4; 17:12;18:2; 20:19, demonstrate it is "commonplace to see in Luke-Acts the underlying theme of division of the Jewish people ... between Jesus' opponents and supporters" (Lowe, 1987, p.268). When these opponents become abusive to the point of blaspheme (blasphemoutes) Paul transfers the focus of his ministry towards the Gentiles, which completes the previously mentioned "pattern in which initial missionary successes are met with resistance, almost always by Jews, which is in turn followed by movement [to the Gentiles] and new successes" (Wills, 1991, p.639; see 13:45 cf. 18:6). We may note that there were always Jewish believers following these Synagogue visits.

Yet Sanders (1986, p.118) states that Paul so rejected the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (13:46, 51) that he "does not speak to or about 'the Jews' again until he is in Corinth delivering the second such announcement." Perhaps Sanders' bible omits 14:1 or 17:2, 10 that declares Paul 'as his custom was' goes to the synagogue, thus showing any 'rejection' is local and not national, and only focused upon those who refused to believe; there is no reason to continue reaching out to these Jewish people. This

mission's 'pattern' is repeated in 18:6; 28:28. Paul's words in 18:6 "your blood be on your own heads, I am clean," must be "understood in the light of the necessity laid on Paul to speak the word of God first to the Jews, as mentioned in 13:46" (Tannehill, 1986, p.134). Paul's words are likely a veiled reference to Ezek.33:5 where if the people disobeyed, their blood would be on their own heads and the watchman was freed of any further obligation to that community. Yet, "this is not a complete abandonment of the Jews (18:19; 19:8; 28:17-24)" (Bock, 2007, p.579). Importantly, in all these cases, Paul is not declaring his rejection of them, but theirs of Messiah Yeshua; "so rejection and lack of salvation are their responsibility" (Bock, 2007, p.463). However, the Synagogue sadly eventually becomes the abode of those refusing to believe, while the believing Jews join with Gentile believers, increasingly in home gatherings. **(18)**

The third occurrence of 'rejection' from unbelieving Jews and Paul turning to the Gentiles is in 28:28. Sanders (1986, p.118) believes this final rejection "applies probably to all Jews and not just of Paul's Roman hearers." Sanders' reasoning for this is Paul's quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10. But we may agree with Salmon's (1988, p.81) point that "In Rome ... the distinction Luke makes is not between Jew and non-Jew. His distinction is between believing Jew and non-believing Jew. All are Jews." Those present, and Luke's audience, would have understood this point. As this statement was made in Rome we may propose that this statement also included Gentiles who hardened their hearts against the Gospel message.

This is likely given the general charge that the message of Yeshua as Messiah was "spoken against everywhere" (28:22). Bock (2007, p.755) also states "Paul cites the passage to warn the audience that the nation of Israel is falling into the national pattern of not believing and of reflecting hardheartedness. Paul is like Isaiah, and the present Jewish community is like the ancient nation." **(19)** Isaiah was not anti-Semitic, nor was Paul and Luke!

These final verses of Acts do not "report that Paul turned away from the Jews with finality, but rather that he received and [still] preached to 'all' (28:30-31)" (Wilch, 1991, p.52). Importantly, "Acts 28:28 makes no mention of turning from anyone. There is no remark that Jews have been excluded, only that the gospel will be preached to Gentiles, and they will respond" (Bock, 2007, p.756). We also propose that Paul's attempt to reach the Jews in Rome shows Paul, nor Luke, had wholesale rejected the Jewish people; Luke in fact finishes his writing exemplifying 'to the Jew first.'

3.3 The Jews killed the Christ

We briefly examine one final area; the charge that 'the Jews killed the Christ.' **(20)** Importantly, the only time in Acts that guilt over Yeshua's death was laid at the feet of 'the Jews' was in Jerusalem (all Israel: 2:36; Religious Authorities: 4:10; 5:30; 7:32), and in Caesarea (10:39 Peter's reference to 'Jerusalem' implies the Religious Authorities). Therefore all but 2:36 is directed at the religious leaders in Jerusalem, or those under their influence. Within Peter's charge of the religious authorities 'murdering' Yeshua, comes the purpose statement

"to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins" (5:30-31. To which Bock (2012, p.286) says "Here a call to repentance is tied to a fresh offer of forgiveness of sins. It is not too late." Yet, when speaking outside Israel, Paul appears to excuse the Jerusalemites' guilt by saying they acted in ignorance (13:27). The charge of the Jews killing the prophets by Stephen (7:51, 52) "was employed as Jewish self-criticism before Christianity, as well as [found] later in rabbinic literature" (Lowe, 1987, p.279). This charge also was levelled at the Religious Authorities. **(21)** This, as above examples, again appears to be

'in-house' criticism against the actions of their leaders, and not a charge into the Gentile world.

4. Conclusion

Overall, we may conclude that Acts shows "no final separation or fundamental hostility between Jews and [Gentile] Christians" (Wilch, 1991, p.52). Acts reveals there were Jews and Gentiles who accept the message of Yeshua the Messiah, and there were Jews and Gentiles who reject the message. Bock (2012, p.287) finds "Luke continues to have his characters plead for Jews to accept Jesus." **(22)** Paul reaches both Jews and God-fearers ini-

tially in the synagogue, but the Gospel had to expand beyond these boundaries to the Gentiles, and so begins the process of reaching Gentiles in the marketplace, outside the confines of the Synagogue. This removal permits the Gospel to reach a far greater audience even "to the ends of the earth" (Act.1:8), while still starting 'to the Jew first.' This mission's paradigm should still be practiced today with a conscious effort to reach Jewish people to their Messiah. Those churches that are not located in a Jewish area can support those who are, and financially support the many Messianic Jewish ministries that exist in these days around the world, and in Israel.

References

1. "These two explanations of the portrayal of the Jews in Luke-Acts are so different that one almost wonders if the representatives of the two opposing views have been reading the same edition!" (Sanders, 1986, p.113).
2. One example is Chrysostom, the 'golden mouthed': "The synagogue is worse than a brothel...it is the den of scoundrels and the repair of wild beasts...the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults....the refuge of brigands and debauches, and the cavern of devils. [It is] a criminal assembly of Jews.....a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ....a house worse than a drinking shop.....a den of thieves; a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, the refuge of devils, a gulf and abyss of perdition" (Brown, 1992, p.10),
3. Wilch (1991, p.53) says "Although this is an emotionally charged issue, not every statement that is conceivably detrimental to Judaism should for that reason be stamped as anti-Judaic."
4. Hedrick (2012, p.303) points out "According to the early rhetorical theorists, the comparison may be made between two like elements, between two similar elements but with one preferred, or between one worthy of blame and the other worthy of praise. Luke uses this rhetorical strategy to portray individual Jews as heroes of God's plan, to depict some Jews as understanding and following those leaders, but also to depict some Jews as anti-heroes."
5. Turner (2008, pp.76-77), after examining Jesus' strong denunciation of the Jewish leaders in Mat.23, concludes "No one can doubt that the language of Matthew 23 is severe, and that it castigates certain Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day in terms that make genteel modern folk extremely uncomfortable ... neither should it be extrapolated to apply to the Jewish people as a whole, either then or now." Turner finds Jesus' criticism as in-house and done with love and respect (Matt.23:37).
6. Sanders stands strongly that the use of 'the Jews' in Acts is anti-Semitic.
7. For more, read Bock (2012) *The Theology of Luke and Acts*: chapter 13.
8. One may be excused thinking that God was caught out by a supposed wholesale Jewish rejection of Yeshua, and then, as an afterthought, decided to walk over to the Gentiles in the hope they would accept his offer of atonement.

9. "The new community was no longer going to be a purely Jewish institution, but it also did not sense a calling to abandon its connection to Judaism. Once the church decided that Gentiles could enter without being circumcised, the issue became how law-sensitive Jewish believers and Gentiles could co-exist" (Bock, 2007, p.37).
10. "Where he turned away from the Jews and towards the Gentiles, this is only to be understood locally and is mentioned in order to stress the justification for the Gentile mission, which had not met with general approval in the church" (Wilch, 1991, p.52).
11. There is some debate over Luke's use of *theosebhs*, with some feeling the usage of this word was an invention of Luke's, as there little support for its usage outside of Acts (See Gager, 1986).
12. Crane, A.S., "The Jews' in John's Gospel: Anti Semitism or Culture?" LCJE Bulletin 98 (Dec 2009): 12-17.
13. See Hedrick's (2012, p.303) comment above about Luke's rhetorical use of hero and anti-hero.
14. While Bock (2012, p.287) correctly says that "not every reference needs to be examined to see the point Luke is making," we nevertheless provide this detailed list as it is the primary focus of this particular paper.
15. Some of these could be included into the 'Religious Authorities' section, but it is often unclear if these opponents are people in general or just the leaders.
16. This list demonstrates that not all Jews rejected the message of Yeshua as often claimed by many.
17. This list demonstrates that some Gentiles also rejected the message of Yeshua. Gentiles who accept Yeshua are not mentioned, as the purpose of Acts is the movement to the Gentiles.
18. Sanders (1986, p.115) believes the "Jews are by nature and congenitally obstreperous and opposed to the will and purposes of God and have been, as a group and nations excluded from God's salvation." Sanders has the tone, content and reasoning which make up the best anti-Semitic literature, particularly when he mentions Jews "are the murders of Jesus" (Sanders, 1986, p.122). Wilch (p.53) correctly points out that expressions such as these "are scientifically and ethically irresponsible exaggerations that contradict the facts and Christian love, which continues to work toward the redemption of the Jewish people."
19. It is unknown if the believing Jews continued fellowshiping at the Synagogue, or if they did, how long this practice continued. It is also unknown with any certainty if the believers chose to leave the Synagogue, or if they were expelled for their belief in Yeshua as Messiah.
20. "As one Jewish scholar points out, 'Paul believes ... the only true expression of Judaism includes faith in Christ ... This is implied too in Luke's portrait of the first Christians. Faith in Christ was not to be an act of pietism for an elite, but was to be the new norm for Judaism. Those Jews who do not accept Christ are sinners'" (Cohen cited in Keener, 2003, p.150).
21. "The death of Jesus appears only under this double viewpoint: willed by God, carried out by guilty men" (Wilch, 1991, p.50). And again "It was the general human guilt that prompted God to surrender the Messiah Jesus as the atonement for all" (Wilch, 1991, p.53).
22. This charge has been often quoted when during times of Jewish persecution, as almost a right or obligation to avenge Yeshua's death. That he died on a Roman cross is typically ignored or overlooked.

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