

# COMMENTS on ARMIN BACHOR's PAPER, "How Does Jewish Mission Relate to – or is part of - World Mission?"

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## **A Continuing Message to Proclaim**

Let me begin by saying how strongly I agree with the main themes of Armin Bachor's paper. He has done a wonderful job in capturing in a brief paper many important ideas and challenges facing Jewish evangelism today. The following statement in his paper summarizes one of those key themes: "God in steering salvation history has revealed that Israel and the nations are never to be separated from one another though they need to be distinguished."

Amen! Our challenge is to present that message and that truth is an ongoing one. It is a process that is never-ending, since – although that truth is clear to us – it seems to be hidden under a veil for much of the Church, just as the majority of the Jewish people have a veil over their eyes in recognizing that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah. Armin rightly quotes my predecessor, Kai Kjaer-Hansen, who wrote: "We constantly need to restate our arguments, even if it sometimes takes 'a lot of discussions and 'stubbornness' from the LCJE group."<sup>1</sup>

## **Progress within Lausanne**

While this is most certainly true, we must also note when real progress has been made. The honor and distinction given to Jewish believers and LCJE were strongly affirmed at the Lausanne Global Leaders Forum in Bangalore, India, in 2013. We hope that that process will continue, but we can never assume that it will happen on its own.

And that is only within the Lausanne Movement. The Church at large is another situation. While much progress has been made in accepting Jewish believers and Jewish evangelism in our generation, it is still very far from what it should be. One might have hoped that, after 2,000 years, the Church – meaning the Body of Messiah worldwide – would by now more clearly understand and accept this fundamental truth of Scripture of bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people (Romans 1:16) as a *priority* of World Mission and of the complementarity, as Armin points out, between World Mission and Jewish Mission. *Some* have understood it in each generation, but they and we have largely been a minority within the greater Body of Messiah. The following two wonderful quotes, however, by Franz Delitzsch and Jacob Jocz, respectively, highlight this truth very well and complement the central theme of Bachor's paper:

"For the church to evangelize the world without thinking of the Jews is like a bird trying to fly with one broken wing." *Franz Delitzsch*

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<sup>1</sup> Kai Kjaer-Hansen, "Jewish Evangelism and Edinburgh 1910, Edinburgh 2010 and Cape Town 2010," *LCJE Bulletin*, Issue 104 (May 2011): 11.

"We must, however, remember that if it [the church] has no Gospel for the Jews, it has no Gospel for the world." *Jacob Jocz*<sup>2</sup>

### **"Just One Story"**

I appreciate Armin's formulation of 'prospective' versus 'retrospective' hermeneutics and his view of the Book of Psalms as serving as the *hermeneutical key* between the Tanach and the New Testament. He defines Psalms as being "the central connecting point between the Hebrew and Messianic writings of Scripture." For my part, I would add the book of the Prophet Isaiah as well to that definition of *hermeneutical key* for many of the same reasons that Armin mentions Psalms, but that is a minor point. The main idea is that there is no gap (or should not be in our understanding) between the 'Old' and 'New' Testaments. As he states: "There is just one story with one message."

One other important point about 'retrospective hermeneutics' can be made. Some persons holding this view are "often influenced by various principles of classical replacement theology," as Armin notes in his paper. It should be reiterated, however, that not all who hold to this type of hermeneutics embrace replacement theology. That being said, those holding a 'retrospective' view sometimes ignore Romans 11 nearly as much as the synagogue traditionally ignores Isaiah 53! Both are 'inconvenient' chapters in Scripture for those who want to ignore the obvious truths that these two chapters teach, respectively, about the role of the Jewish people, the salvation of Israel and the Messiah.

### **Evangelistic Points of Reference**

When Christians have a proper 'prospective hermeneutics,' they will more clearly understand the connecting points in Scripture between, as Armin puts it, the '*prophesied Messiah*' and the '*revealed Messiah*'. This understanding helps form our approach to evangelistic outreach in Jewish Mission. Further, the relationship and unfolding in Scripture between the 'prophesied' and 'revealed' Messiah reminds me of another point of reference in a traditional Orthodox Jewish understanding of Moshiach [Messiah]. There is a long tradition in Hasidic Judaism especially of believing that the Messiah could be revealed in any generation if that generation was worthy enough or if other factors are met. This possible Messiah is sometimes referred to as 'the presumptive Moshiach' according to how some Jewish observers frame the concept. The 'presumptive Moshiach' is not necessarily the same as the 'halachic/definitive Moshiach' – *the one who actually fulfills* the Messianic prophecies. Thus, one could have many 'presumptive' messiahs throughout history but none who was actually *yet* the definitive Messiah, in the view of Orthodox Judaism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I first came across these two wonderful quotes by browsing Amy Downey's Tzedakah Ministries website at: <http://www.tzedakahministries.org>. Tzedakah is an agency member of LCJE. I do not have the original citations at hand.

<sup>3</sup> See my paper discussing this concept further in Melnick, J., "The Struggle within Chabad Lubavitch: Views on King Messiah and Isaiah 53," [www.lcje.net/papers/2003/melnick.doc](http://www.lcje.net/papers/2003/melnick.doc)

Discussing this relationship in Orthodox Judaism over 'presumptive' versus 'halachic/definitive' messiahs, combined with our own understanding in Scripture of the 'prophesied' versus 'revealed' Messiah, could be another useful key in our overall witness.

### **Matthew 10:23 and Our Future**

I also appreciate very much Armin's comment on the prophetic nature of Matthew 10:23: "I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes." He says: "This prophetic announcement by Jesus bears interesting insights in relation to existing messianic believers in Israel today." This should not discourage us. Instead, it shows us that Jewish Mission, as well as the rest of the Great Commission, goes on right until the end! They go hand in hand together – our joint outreach to the Jewish people and to the Nations. They are *One Message* – a single Gospel – and represent all our hopes in the only One by whose Name men and women, Jew and Gentile, can be saved.

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