

# How does Jewish Mission relate to – or is part of – World Mission?

by Armin Bachor, Evangeliumsdienst für Israel (edi), Stuttgart/Germany  
at the 10th LCJE European Conference in Kiev, Ukraine - 28-30<sup>th</sup> April 2014

## Introduction

In this paper I would like to answer two questions. Firstly: why do we need to be involved in Jewish mission? I would like to give some biblical insights that might encourage and reassure those being in the ministry of witnessing about the Messiah to Jewish people. Secondly, I would like to give some suggestions how we as LCJE may draw attention to our task of those who do not see the urgency of bringing the "gospel to the Jew first" as stated in Romans 1,16.

## 1. The People and the Nations - Observations in the Book of Psalms

Creation, Revelation and Redemption. This triad spans time from eternity to eternity and traditionally sets the framework for Jewish and Christian theology and thinking.

„Bereshit bara elohim“ - in the beginning God created. In creation God marks the beginning. He sets time, facts, statues and rules. Creation is where God reveals himself in general terms to mankind.

By special revelation God explains what he has been doing since creation with mankind in general and with and through his Chosen people Israel, the sons of Jakob, in a special way. Furthermore God has been revealing his will through his words. He gave his Thora (Tanach) to his chosen people. Only to them. And through them the nations were blessed with this wonderful guideline for life. The Thora as God's wise advice has been the essential light for Israel. Israel cherished Thora, protected and carried it to the nations. The world was illuminated by God's solemn will wherever they decided to embrace this light. Enlightened on their way Israel as well as the nations would not miss the mark if they decided to obey and follow God's ways.

Redemption, the need of man to be in peace with God, was provided by God for his chosen people Israel in his stipulations of Sinai. They experienced reconciliation and peace by trusting God's gracious provision of repudiating sin through substitutional sacrifices.

Through the Messiah, Jesus, God provided full forgiveness to his chosen people and for all nations. Salvation is from the Jews. The Jewish Messiah Jesus is the redeemer of the world.

In God's dealing with mankind he chose to reach out to all mankind by mediation of his chosen people. Thus this people and all the nations always have been interrelated. 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.

## Linguistic distinction

The further revelation progresses within Scripture, the brighter we see the clear linguistic distinction between Israel and the nations.

In the Hebrew Tanach the terminology for depicting the chosen people Israel (*am*) and the nations (*goyim*) is still interchangeable. The translation of the Tanach into the Greek language seems to be more concise. The singular term *laos* (people) in the LXX (Septuagint) almost always is describing Israel as ethnic entity in distinc-

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tion from the term *ethne* designating all non-jewish nations. The New Testament is building upon this clear distinction.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas language is still somewhat vague with reference to Israel and the nations the *theological* concept of the interrelationship of Israel and the nations is much more obvious.

### Reading the Book of Psalms

In the book of Psalms we find various examples how the chosen people Israel are being related to the nations:

1. Nations turn against God and at the same time against his chosen people Israel (Psalms 2:1; 9:16-18; 33:10; 83:1-5; 94:1-5).
2. God remains LORD in spite of all opposition from man (Psalms 7:8-10; 96:9-13). God is ready to judge and annihilate the nations (Psalms 9:5-9; 9:16; 9:20).
3. The nations will bring their praise to God (Psalms 86:8-10; 117; 148: 11-14)
4. Israel is God's treasured possession, his special and unique people because he has chosen them to be holy to himself (Psalms 33:12; 135:3-5). In Psalms we read 48 times the term „my people“. This term is never used for any other nation except the sons of Jacob, Israel.
5. God is the shepherd of his chosen people. He leads them (Psalms 100:3-5; 79:10-13), loves and cares for them (106:4-5), protects them from enemies (28:8-9; 125:2) but also calls them for obedience (147:19-20; 78:1; 81:9-14).
6. Once in a while God lets his people be trampled on by the nations (14:4; 94:5.14; 44:10-17).
7. The shepherd of his flock has been promising them redemption and peace (Psalms 3:9; 14:7; 85:2-4; 29:11; 85:9; 122:6; 128:5-6).
8. God's chosen people know how to praise Him (Psalms 89:16-18; 144:15).

### Prophetic Psalms

This short summary shows that the Book of Psalms does not only describe historical facts of the past and present. It is deeply prophetic. The Book of Psalms seems to be one important „hermeneutical key“ that opens up the understanding for the unique unity of the „Hebrew writings“ (\"Old\" Testament) with the „Messianic writings“ (or Greek writings; \"New\" Testament). There is *no* gap between an „Old“ and „New“ Testament. There is just one story with one message.

Widely read by Jews and Christians for centuries the Book of Psalms seems to be the central connecting point between the Hebrew and Messianic writings of Scripture. Biblical Theology is concentrated here. The concepts of creation, revelation and redemption are being summarised and interrelated by the use of a highly condensed language. Though the book of Psalms is not part of the *Nebiim* (the Prophetic writings), the second part of the Tanach, it is highly prophetic in nature. The psalms even anticipate the fullness of redemption and the goal of recreation of all things.

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolph D. Gonzales, „To the Jew First and Also the Gentile, Capturing the Fullness of Matthews's Commission, Part 1,“ *Mishkan*, no. 62 (2010): 59-68

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### „Prospective hermeneutics“<sup>2</sup>

The Book of Psalms encourage us to pause and take time to think through what has been revealed and done so far in God's dealing with his chosen people and through them with the nations. At the same time the Psalms open our mind and heart to understand the fulfilment of God's redemptive plan in the future by sending the Messiah to complete the redemptive work by his suffering, death and resurrection and to restore all things at his second coming.

The Psalms direct our biblical hermeneutics to become „*pro-spective*“, that means „looking forward“ in salvation history from the "prophesied Messiah" in the Hebrew writings into the future where the Messianic writings of the Bible declare the "revealed Messiah".<sup>3</sup>

### Challenging "retrospective hermeneutics"<sup>4</sup>

In my discussions with those who hesitate to subscribe to Jewish Mission I discover that they hold to a retrospective hermeneutic. They commonly argue that one needs to interpret the Old Testament *only* through the grid of the New Testament. NT concepts are read back into the OT. They tend to suppose a sort of „superiority“ of the New Testament over the Old Testament.

They „look back“ (retrospective) from the Christ-event in the NT as the only key for interpreting the OT.

The NT is dealing mainly with the "church" they suppose. The church is being consciously or unconsciously assumed to consist of *Gentile* believers from all nations regardless of the fact that the body of Messiah is made up from Gentiles and Jews who believe in the Messiah Jesus (Ephesians 2:11-22).

Retrospective hermeneutics states that the New Covenant is for the (Gentile) church - in spite of the fact that Jeremiah is talking to his own Jewish people in Jeremiah 31:31-37. Various prophecies depicting Israel's future are taken to be promises for the life and development of the gentile church in this world. The call for repentance through the prophetic message in the Hebrew writings often is inconsistently not geared toward the church but to the secular, political realm of society.

It is widely forgotten that the descendants of Jakob as ethnic entity are part of the one body of Messiah, called the church.

Retrospective hermeneutics might be often influenced by various principles of classical replacement theology. Therefore the Jewish people are forgotten to be addressed with the „Besorah“, the Good News of forgiveness through Messiah Jesus.

If one reads the Bible in a „prospective“ mode from the Hebrew writings **forward** to the Messianic writings, it becomes inevitable that the Jewish people re-

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<sup>2</sup> I created this term to designate the proposed idea of reading the Bible in correspondence to Lukas 24, 27: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Please be invited to discuss with me a "messianic hermeneutics".

<sup>3</sup> There is no inferiority or superiority between the Messianic Writings (New Testament) and the Hebrew Writings. They are complementary to each other. The direction of focus is crucial.

<sup>4</sup> I created this term in correlation to "prospective hermeneutics".

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main the foremost „*nation*“ to be addressed with the gospel of salvation through the unique son of God, the Messiah Jesus.

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### The Book of Psalms and Mission

The Book of Psalms conveys already how God's mission to reach out to his chosen people and through them to the nations (Psalms 67) is one *complementary* task.<sup>5</sup>

God as the great shepherd of his flock is continually calling his people back to give heed to his voice and leading and to put their trust in him (Psalms 147:19-20; 78:1; 81:9-14).

God is king of the whole earth and he reigns over the nations (47:6-8). Psalms 47:9 depicts the unified people of Israel and the nations praising God: „The nobles of the nations assemble, along with the people of the God of Abraham, for God has authority over the rulers of the earth. He is highly exalted!“ Psalms 102:19. „May this be written down for a coming generation, that people yet to be created may praise the LORD“.

The *goyim* will recognize God, and they realize how God is saving his chosen people (67:2; 126:2).<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The Jesus-way in Missions

God's mission is taking "two steps in one direction". In the Book of Psalms as well as in other Hebrew writings of Scripture God firstly calls his chosen people Israel to trust into him and his promises of his Messiah. In a second step, Israel is selected to be a witness of their great God to other nations. Two steps on a one way road. This mission of the elected people has the character of a synchronous dynamic.

In the Messianic writings God calls his people Israel first to put faith in the „realized promise“, the revealed Messiah. The call into the trust relationship to God is followed by the mandate to call others to faith: „Jesus sent out these twelve, instructing them as follows: “Do not go to Gentile regions and do not enter any Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the house of Israel“ (Matthew 10:5-6).

This is one side of the complementary task to complete God's mission and this mission still won't be finished at the second coming of the Messiah: „I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes“ (Matthew 10:23).<sup>7</sup> Peter and John, two Jewish believers in Jesus,

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<sup>5</sup> A. Von Dobbeler, „Die Restitution Israels und die Bekehrung der Heiden: Das Verhältnis von Mt. 10:5b-6 und Mt. 28:18-20 unter dem Aspekt der Komplementarität, Erwägungen zum Standort des Matthäusevangeliums,“ *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 91 (2000): 18-44. See also: Rudolph D. Gonzales, „To the Jew First and Also the Gentile (Part 2),“ *Mishkan*, no. 63 (2010): 20-29.

<sup>6</sup> These Psalms depicts a time frame that goes beyond the point in salvation history we are located today. For example Psalm 87 is describing the future role of the city of Jerusalem when the surrounding nations will be in peace with Israel

<sup>7</sup> This prophetic announcement by Jesus - if we do not consider it as fulfilled - bears interesting insights for the existing messianic believers in Israel today.

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are reported to be saying to their own people: „There is salvation in no one else! For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by whom *we* must be saved (Acts 4:12)“.

Saying this suggest that there are not two different mission commissions in Matthew 10 and 28. They are not different in a sense of being of another kind. They are distinct, being of the same kind and expressing two aspects of one and the same task. They are complementary. <sup>8</sup>

### Complementary mission as expression of an Enlargement Theology<sup>9</sup>

There is only one way to be reconnected to God for Jews and non-Jews: faith. That applies for pre-messianic Israel and in the same way for the Jewish part of the body of Messiah after his resurrection and ascension. This also applies to all *nations* either living BC or AD.

In the Hebrew and Messianic writings the nations are depicted as the ones who *join* believing Israel in the fellowship with God they themselves already have been enjoying. There is only *one* new covenant as the basis for building up the body of Messiah applying to Jews and non-Jews.

There is *one* mission with *one* message. Though there are different methods how to communicate this message to different social and religious groups among Jews and non-Jews.

I believe to win others for getting involved in Jewish mission we need to challenge their retrospective biblical hermeneutics. Their „church-centered“ hermeneutics might lead them to contrast World Mission and Jewish Mission. They tend to dissolve the unique relationship between them rather to just distinguish them. Jewish Mission and World Mission relate to each other in a **complementary** way.

### „Boiled Egg Approach“

Mission is not white or black. It is white and yellow. Like an egg it contains both white and yellow. You need white and yellow, if you want to enjoy eating an egg, otherwise it is not an egg.

Jewish Mission and World Mission are complementary. Methodology and contextualization of the message differ. The content remains the same. The target needs to be distinguished.

To further utilize the picture: The fried egg symbolizes a position of getting close to mixing the two contextualizing approaches. To take it further: the scrambled egg is an egg, but the distinctives are lost. Only the „boiled egg approach“ keeps both aspects of missions in a healthy balance.

### The ultimate test

God’s Mission to our world is to save mankind from sin and death: „Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in a their humani-

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<sup>8</sup> Gonzales, *Mishkan*, no. 62 (2010): ????

<sup>9</sup> Alex Jacob, *The Case For Enlargement Theology*, 2nd Edition(Saffron Walden: Glory to Glory Publikation, 2011)

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ty, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death. For surely his concern is not for angels, but he is concerned for *Abraham's descendants*. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. For since he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted“ (Hebrews 2:14-18).

There is no religious or cultural advantage on the side of any nation, including Israel, that would qualify mankind for *salvation* apart from the redemption provided in the Messiah Jesus. Even Israel needs to accept Jesus as Messiah and saviour.

Witnessing about the Messiah to Jewish people is the ultimate test for our belief that there is today only *one* way for *all* mankind to be reconciled with God, that is through faith in Messiah Jesus.

Israel, the chosen people, has been „naturally“ close to God: „To them belong the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from them, by human descent, came the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever! Amen“ (Romans 9:4-5). If Israel needs Messiah - in spite of their natural closeness to God - in order to participate in the New Covenant established in the blood of the Messiah, how much more do the nations need the Messiah who have been „alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world“ (Ephesians 11:12).<sup>10</sup>

**The urge for World Missions evolves from the urgent need for Jewish people to get saved by confessing faith in God's son and savior Messiah Jesus.** There is only one way. The Jesus-Way. At the end *all* the glory and honour belongs to the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus.

### 3. Jewish Mission as catalyst for World Mission

In the LCJE network we need to engage those who are hesitant or even critical about Jewish mission into discussion with us. We need to challenge their hermeneutics. Therefore we need to paint in clear colours our position of „prospective hermeneutics“ and by that contrasting their retrospective view in interpreting the Scriptures.

„If Christian mission to the Jewish people is rejected, the door is wide open to a rejection of Christian mission to other peoples.“<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>There are always certain cultural and religious aspects that need to be respected and honored - and some of them need not to be changed. World Mission can learn from Jewish Mission to develop this sensitive awareness in cross-cultural ministry.

<sup>11</sup> Kai Kjær-Hansen, „Jewish Evangelism ad Edinburgh 1910, Edinburgh 2010 and Cape Town 2010,“ *LCJE Bulletin*, Issue 104 (May 2011): 10

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Therefore LCJE needs to continue to play an active role in the Lausanne Movement. We constantly need to restate our arguments, even if it sometimes takes „a lot of discussions and ‚stubbornness‘ from the LCJE group.“<sup>12</sup>

Beside this there are many principles that can be applied to World missions by practicing Jewish mission. Let me mention three of them:

### **a. Keeping ambitious but realistic expectations about conversions**

„Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Seeing that I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I could provoke my people to jealousy and save some of them“ (Romans 11:13).

Paul has a realistic view of his ministry if he doesn't expect large numbers of his own Jewish people to be converted to the Messiah. This should be applied to the mission among the nations. It helps keeping the level of frustration down and stirs up praying for the ministry.

### **b. Sensitive contextualization**

No other religion and culture has been criticised more harshly by other nations than the Jewish people. The theological concept of modern Antijudaism has been constructed in the center of the Christian church since the first century AD and has been developed into a world wide political scheme of Antisemitism.

The lowest point of envy and hatred against the Jewish people was reached with the Shoa in Europe executed by Nazi Germany.

Keeping this in mind helps us to engage in social and spiritual encounters with Jewish people today in a sensitive, respectful and responsible manner. This principle can be applied to all other nations. World mission is reaching out to.

### **c. The return of the Messiah and social justice**

Messiah Jesus is coming back. In engaging with more religious Jewish people we will touch on the subject of waiting for the Messiah. The testimony of the Messiah to Jewish people will help to guard World mission from being preoccupied with the current trends in missiology of transforming our present societies socially and politically.

The danger is there that various forms of social gospel concepts or liberation theology could lead to disillusion and cause those involved in them to give up on the whole task. World Mission is to be done with the expectation that the consolation, the only hope for this world is returning soon. When Messiah Jesus enters this world the second time (Hebrews 9:28), he will renew this world in such a way our social and political programs will never be able to accomplish.

## **Conclusion**

I believe in the supremacy of the Messiah Jesus being the divine Saviour for Jews and non-Jews alike.

I believe in the primary task of the body of Christ to bring the gospel of salvation to Jews and all other nations.

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<sup>12</sup> Kjær-Hansen: 11



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I believe in the complementary approach of Jewish mission and World mission.

With those arguments in mind, we will enter the arena of World mission within the Lausanne Movement and beyond. Our contribution will be appreciated. Especially young people in the Mission movement need to be challenged with our view.

The following words of Kai Kjær-Hansen are encouraging and motivating: „We take the discussion and do it in a respectful way and on the clear assumption that we are part of the same family. May we in LCJE continue the discussion and conversation and state our critique in such a way that it may benefit our cause in the Lausanne Movement as such. My personal opinion is that the Lausanne Movement needs LCJE, and that LCJE needs the Lausanne Movement - also in the future.“<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kjær-Hansen: 13