

# Handling Jewish Objections - An Overview

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## The Veil of Blindness

The New Testament tells us (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14-15) that we, the Jewish people, have a veil that covers our minds and our hearts, that even when we read the Tenach, we cannot see the Messiah. Only through faith in Yeshua is that veil removed.

## The Veil of Culture

But not only that, we also have the veil of culture. The problem that we face in bringing the gospel to Jewish people is the problem of enculturation. Jewish culture has an inbuilt defense mechanism against the gospel. This is obviously due to hundreds of years of resisting Christianity's claim that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. This rejection of Jesus' Messiahship has been further justified in Jewish people's minds because of the Church's shameful dealings with the Jewish People.

Jewish tradition has been built on the assumption that Jesus was not the Messiah and that the Jewish people are still waiting for revelation of the Messiah.

## "Implied Social Contract"

Within Jewish culture there is an "implied social contract" that Jewish people do not believe in Jesus and that it is impossible to be Jewish and believe in Jesus at the same time.

This is not necessarily a ver-



Lawrence Hirsch

bal contract, but, according to mainstream Judaism, not believing in Jesus is implied by being Jewish. Often a Jewish person may not be able to articulate what it means to be Jewish. However, that same person may be able to define what it means not to be Jewish, i.e. to believe in Jesus. In this way Jewishness is defined in a negative way - "Being Jewish is not believing in Jesus."

## The Problem of Perspective

Culture in itself is God-given and helpful for communicating the Gospel, since each culture has concepts of God, life and death, marriage and communal life. Each culture also has a language that can be used to communicate transcultural truths (Gospel truth). The problem is that culture can also blind us to Gospel truth.

All of us grow up within a certain cultural milieu. We grow up seeing matters per-

taining to life and faith from a certain cultural perspective. We are taught to assume a number of set things and our attitudes and behaviours grow out of these assumptions. The way we see things is the way we think and the way we act. Both Jewish people and Christians share the same Old Testament. Contained within the Old Testament is the evidence necessary to find out whether Jesus is the Messiah or not.

## Same Evidence, Different Conclusions

Both Jews and Christians look at the same evidence, yet come up with two different conclusions. Christians look at the Old Testament and see Jesus portrayed, page upon page of the writings of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets. Yet, Jewish people cannot see Jesus in the Old Testament, they just see the Old Testament.

This is because Jewish people have been brought up on the assumption that Jesus is not the Messiah. So when they look at the evidence, they cannot recognise the new within the old - the promise of Jesus in the Old Testament.

## A Light Is Switched On

When God regenerates a human heart, it seems that, all of a sudden, the light has been switched on. God totally reorientates our lives. We

gin to see things from a totally different perspective.

### **Need a Paradigm Shift**

Christians also need a paradigm shift in the way we present the Gospel to Jewish people. In the past, Christians have always tried to win Jews to Messiah by insisting that they "convert" and become "Christians." What often is meant by "conversion" is not an inward transformation, a born-again experience, but rather an outward change of religion.

### **Breaking Down the "Implied Social Contract"**

Fortunately, in the last few decades there has been a paradigm shift in the way the Gospel has been presented to Jewish people, and a Messianic Jewish movement of Jewish people who believe in Jesus has emerged.

Our task in Jewish evangelism is to break down this "implied social contract" that Jews don't and cannot believe in Jesus, by showing that Jesus really is the Jewish Messiah and that one can be Jewish and still believe in him.

This is done through sensitive and culturally relevant evangelism whereby the Gospel is presented in a way that is relevant to Jewish people.

### **Preach/Teach/Answer Objections through a Jewish Frame of Reference**

So, what we need to do is preach/teach the Gospel through a Jewish frame of reference. You might have to change some of your misconceptions of the New Testament.

**Understanding "The Law of Apperception"** - The "Law of Apperception" relates to teaching what is unknown or rejected through that which is known and accepted. In answering Jewish objections, we need to move people from what they already know and accept to what is unknown and rejected, using what they do know as a means for grasping what is still unknown so that they can understand it.

### **Emphasis on Continuity**

In answering Jewish objections I prefer to emphasize the continuity between Judaism and Christianity rather than the differences. Emphasising differences tends to create an "us and them" mentality or a "superiority mentality."

Rather, I would prefer showing how Jesus is God's way of salvation for both Jew and Gentile alike. Christianity is not superior to Judaism; rather I would say that Jesus is Superior. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one can come to the Father except through him.

### **The Greatest Question**

The major difference between Judaism and Christianity, though, is "who is Jesus?" This is the greatest question of all. This question has split history into two parts - B.C. and A.D. The answer to this question changes everything; it makes an immeasurable difference to one's eternal spiritual state-of-being.

### **Jesus is the Difference**

Jesus is the major difference between Judaism and Christianity. As the early Jewish believers (the early Church) tried

to convince their fellow Jews to believe in Jesus, non-believing Jews resisted their evangelistic efforts, and, in defence against the emergent messianic faith, the Jewish leaders began to develop alternative interpretations of Scripture as an apologetic against Christianity.

### **Raging Debate**

This raging debate between believers in Jesus and Jewish non-believers can be seen in the Book of Acts in the Bible and has continued throughout history.

Debates or disputations sponsored by the Pope in the Middle Ages took place between Jewish and Christian scholars, who argued about the differences between the two religions. This has continued to our own day (we have several DVDs available with some modern debates).

### **Tragic History**

Over the past 2000 years, we, the Jewish people, have built up a massive body of objections to faith in Jesus. And sadly, the tragic history of the Church's persecution of the Jewish people has given the Jewish people greater reason to resist the claims of Christianity.

### **Our Calling**

Our calling as people involved in Jewish evangelism is to attempt to overcome this tragic past and to present the true message of Jesus to the Jewish people.

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