

Jewish Believers and World Evangelization

## "To the Jew First..."

### The Meaning of Jewish Priority in World Evangelism

by Bill BJORAKER

The phrase, "...to the Jew first, and also the Gentile" (Romans 1:16c) seems jarring to many modern Christians. What does this mean, practically, for the evangelical world mission enterprise? Is this stated Jewish priority currently applicable to all missionaries? Must the large blocs of unreached peoples (Approximately 10,000 unreached people groups among the Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Chinese and Tribals) wait until all evangelical missionaries have gone first to all the Jewish people of the world? Or was this a historic priority, fulfilled in the first century? And what does this priority mean? Is it a time-related sequence mandated here? Is it an essential priority? Or is this a theological principle of some sort?

Taken at face value, "to the Jew first," strikes the ears of many egalitarian-minded western Christians as Jewish elitism or favoritism. They assume that such an elitist view cannot be correct, and so suppose it must refer to a historical obligation that was fulfilled in the first century and is no longer an applicable principle today. Or perhaps it was just good practical mission strategy for the first generation of followers of the Messiah, but times have changed.

Jesus the Messiah had practiced and commanded Jewish historic priority (first in time sequence) before the Apostle Paul had so practiced it in the Book of Acts and stated it in his letter to the Romans. Messianic Jews often protest when a strictly missions-strategic interpretation is given to this in the Messiah Yeshua's earthly ministry, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). After the resurrection, the Messiah instructed the disciples to begin evangelization in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, 8). This was good mission strategy, as I will assert below. But Jewish believers, at least, sense that mere pragmatic strategy is not the whole picture in all that Paul meant in saying in Romans 1:16 that the Gospel is, "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." So what does it really mean? This article will attempt to answer this question.

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*Bill BJORAKER has been a missionary to the Jewish people for 23 years, and is a specialist in Jewish studies. Bill and his wife Diana served eight years in pastoral and teaching ministry at Beit Immanuel in Tel Aviv, Israel. They founded Operation Ezekiel in southern California to "communicate issues of destiny to the Church and the Jewish people" and have worked in this ministry for 12 years.*

## The Exegetical Question

First, let us do some exegetical spade-work. The original Greek text of Paul's phrase in Romans 1:16c is "*Iudaio te proton kai Helleine*". The word "*proton*" is key here. It means "first." Isn't that profound? So far, so good (or shofar, sho good!) But first in what way? The trusted Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich Greek lexicon helps us out. It tells us that, used as an adverb or adjective in the New Testament, *proton* can specify time, meaning "*first in time, earliest*" in a sequence of things or events. This use of *proton* would bear the meaning of a *historic priority*—the gospel should be brought first in time sequence to the Jewish people.

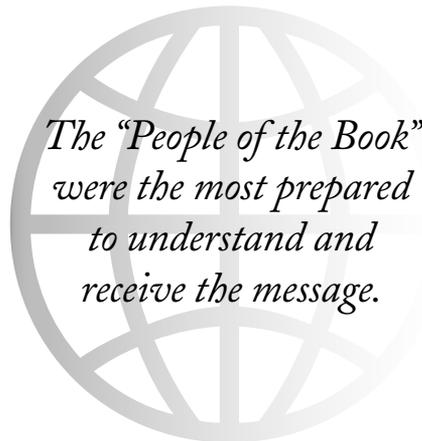
It can also mean rank or degree, "*first, foremost, most important, most prominent*" or "*in the first place, above all, especially.*" This can imply a priority of position, or being first in an order of priorities. This use of *proton* would bear the meaning of a *positional priority*—the gospel has first relevance to, applies firstly to the Jewish people. The lexicon states that this second meaning is the one used in our phrase, Romans 1:16c.<sup>1</sup> David Stern translates it well here, "*to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile*" (Complete Jewish Bible).<sup>2</sup>

## The Expository Answer: So What Does It Mean?

**A Historical and Positional Priority**  
Positional priority need not exclude historic priority. In much of the Hebrew Bible, words have double or more uses. "Both/and" is often more Hebraic; "either/or" is more often a Greek category. Though Paul wrote in Greek, he had a Jewish mind. But beyond this, we will see that the narrative of Scripture will bear out both senses of priority. That the gospel is "*to the Jew first*" has meaning beyond a mere historical obligation that was required to be fulfilled in the first century, and was fulfilled then, and hence has no current application. A positional priority means more is involved than mere practical mission strategy. There are salvation-historical and theological reasons for this priority, rooted in

God's plan for world redemption, and His covenantal history with Israel. The gospel *applies* to the Jewish people, in the first place, or especially so. It is a message born and formed among the Jewish people, and delivered by the Jewish Messiah.

Even though Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, his pattern was to go first to the synagogue in a given city, and there proclaim the Messiah promised by Israel's prophets had indeed come. The synagogue was where the people of God were gathered around the *Torah*, the *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and the



*K'tuvim* (Writings), all of which speak of the Messiah.

The "People of the Book" were most prepared to understand and receive the message. This was the most obvious starting point and platform for Paul's message. He had an open door as a Jewish rabbi to speak in the synagogues, and had he spoken to the Gentiles first the Jews would not have listened. The Jewish people implicitly understood that the message of salvation would come first to their people. As Isaiah prophetically said to his people, "*Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given*" (9:6a). We conclude that "*to the Jew first*" signifies both a *historic priority*, and a *positional priority*, based on God's covenantal history with Israel. The former is based on the latter.

## Not Jewish Elitism

That this is not God's favoritism, or a Jewish elitism or chauvinism is seen in Romans 2: 9-11,

*Yes, He will pay back misery and anguish to every human being who does evil, to the Jew first and then to the Gentile; but glory and honor and shalom to everyone who keeps doing what is good, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile For God does not show favoritism* (Complete Jewish Bible).

The responsibility and accountability of the Jewish people is commensurate to any privilege they have by virtue of their election.

As the prophet Amos had said centuries before, "*Of all the families of the earth, only you have I intimately known. This is why I will punish you for all your crimes*" (3:2). As the Messiah said, "*To whom much is given, much is required*" (Luke 12:48). Far from it being the case that Israel/the Jewish people are a pet nation, as some have misunderstood their election to be, Israel is called to be a servant nation whom God holds in great accountability. Israel's election was for the sake of the nations, to be "*a light to the nations*" (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1-3; Acts 13:47). She was the vehicle by which God would bring the Scriptures and the Savior to the world.

The people of Israel/the Jewish people have suffered greatly because of this election. It is from the bloody womb of Israel that the church was born. Consequently, all non-Jewish people owe an eternal debt of gratitude to the Jewish people.

## Effective Strategy Besides

This was wise and effective mission strategy for the great Apostle to the Gentiles. The Jewish people were called, cultivated and conditioned to be a missionary people. Thus, those Jewish people that embraced Messiah would be best equipped to be evangelists and missionaries. The best strategy to catch the most fish is not to do all the fishing yourself, but to recruit the most effective fishermen who can catch the most fish.

Paul also knew that there were many "God-fearers" who were attending the synagogues. These were Gentiles who were attracted to the God of Israel, through His people fulfilling their call as a "*light to the Gentiles.*" *Note the implication of this: it is not correct to say*

that Israel totally failed in her calling to be a light to the Gentiles. These Gentiles joined themselves to the synagogue and were allowed to worship the God of Israel with the people of Israel. Some went the whole way and became proselytes to Judaism (which required circumcision). Consequently, by going to the synagogue first, Paul would also be reaching the most receptive Gentiles in the area. They were a natural cultural bridge for the gospel to cross into the Gentile world. This was excellent mission strategy. But it was so, because it was based on 2000 years of salvation and covenantal history.

### The Question of a Present Jewish Priority

We have yet to determine whether or not there is a *present* Jewish priority in 21<sup>st</sup> century world evangelization. Is the sequence and practice of the Apostle Paul in the Book of Acts, going literally and always to the Jew first, intended to be a *modus operandi* for missions in all countries and at all times in history? Does this mean that every single believer and every evangelical mission agency today should always in every country, at all times seek out any Jews in the area first and witness to them *before* telling any Gentiles about Yeshua?

#### The "Mechanical Protocol" Approach

Those who take what I call "the mechanical protocol" approach to applying this principle would say "yes". They would say that Paul's pattern as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is *prescriptive* for mission practice for all times and all places, and must be literally, rigidly and arbitrarily applied, regardless of any other factors. However, while being faithful to positional Jewish priority, other missiological considerations lead me to a somewhat different conclusion, which I will call the "meaningful present priority" approach.

The "Meaningful Present Priority" Approach Paul's calling and ministry context, situated as he was at the beginning of the establishment of the church, meant he was required by protocol and covenant faithfulness to go and

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announce first in the synagogues that Messiah had come. These Jewish communities had not yet heard, even once, that Messiah had come. It was only fitting and proper that he should do this. It is the logic of covenant faithfulness, in that it fulfills God's promises of bringing salvation to Israel. Yet God's heart for the nations bursts forth through Paul. Accordingly, the apostle would say to the synagogue in Antioch,

...It was necessary that God's word should be spoken to you first; but since you are rejecting it, and judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life- why we're turning to the Goyim! For that is what Adonai has ordered us to do: I have set you as a light to the Goyim, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:46-47; Paul quoting Isaiah 49:6, Complete Jewish Bible).

Once the Jewish people in a given locality had opportunity to hear and understand the gospel, Paul would move on to the Gentiles. Paul was motivated by the driving thrust of his calling to the nations. To "the regions beyond" was Paul's watchword (II Corinthians 10:16).

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the advance of God's mission to the world has moved well beyond where it was in Paul's day. The modern evangelical missionary movement is now reaching to the hidden and unreached peoples in the most remote and restricted access areas of the globe, to fulfill the task of the Great Commission. Many of these are located where there are no Jewish people. These unreached peoples have never yet once heard the name of Jesus or a salvation message. The practical realities of the geography and population of certain nations, the wise stewardship of resources (time, money, workers), and the passionate heart of God that all peoples be reached and saved before they enter eternity, all argue for the momentum of Matthew 24:14, "This gospel shall be preached in

all the world, as a witness to all peoples, and then the end shall come." As a current missions song says "... to the ends of the earth, Oh Lord."

The Lausanne "Thailand Report on the Jewish People" states it this way:

There is, therefore, a great responsibility laid upon the church to share Christ with the Jewish people. This is not to imply that Jewish evangelism is more important in the sight of God, or that those involved in Jewish evangelism have a higher calling. We observe that the practical application of the scriptural priority is difficult to understand and apply. We do not suggest that there should be a radical application of "to the Jew first" in calling on all the evangelists, missionaries, and Christians to seek out the Jews within their sphere of witness before speaking to non-Jews! Yet we do call the church to restore ministry among this covenanted people of God to its biblical place in its strategy of world evangelization.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the positional priority of the Jewish people, a "meaningful present priority principle" and application must be drawn. Throughout the ranks of the whole evangelical mission movement today, regardless of whatever people group to whom an individual or an agency is called, cultivation of a sense of respect for, gratitude to, and prayer for the Jewish people is in order. The Jewish people are beloved, as Paul says, "for the sake of the fathers" (Romans 11:28), or as the New Living Translation puts it, "... the Jews are still his chosen people because of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The people from whom our salvation came, and to whom the Gospel first applies, must have an abiding place of importance in the hearts of all God's people. I recommend, therefore, that mission leaders, whether in Indianapolis, Istanbul, or Irian Jaya, adopt these three practices:

*First, foster an awareness of and love for the Jewish people.* This is easy when teaching the Bible, as 77% of the

Bible is the Old Testament, written in Hebrew, and much of the New Testament also takes place in the context of Jewish people. But we need not only an awareness of the ancient Jewish people, but of the 14 million Jewish people presently living throughout the world today. Christians need to know something of their culture and demographics, and the fact that only about 1% of the Jewish people embrace Jesus as Messiah (an unreached people group by some definitions). There are many Jewish communities within the 10/40 Window. Frontier mission church planting teams may be in close proximity to them.

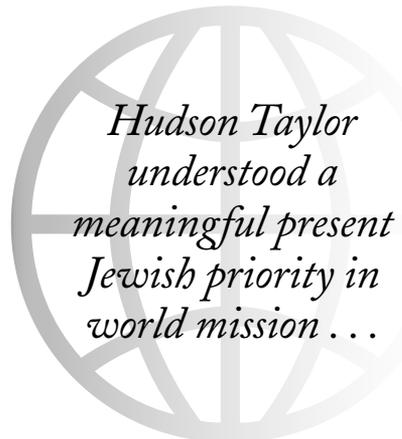
*Second, practice regular prayer for the salvation of “all Israel”* whomever we serve, and wherever we serve in the far-flung mission fields of the world. Scripture exhorts us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).

*Third, encourage giving to Jewish missions/ministries.* In fact we have a direct command on this point, “... For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things” (Romans 15:27). Paul’s mature theology of the mystery of Israel and the Church is articulated in Romans chapters 9 through 11. He reveals God’s intention for a mutual reciprocity between Jewish Israel, and the Gentile Church in the outworking and consummation of salvation history. As the church was *birthed* out of Israel in the first century, so in a symmetrical movement the Church must work to bring *new birth* back to Israel in the last centuries. Is it not a scandal that so few of our evangelical colleges and seminaries train missionaries to the Jewish people? Can it be said that there is a reciprocal Gentile evangelical Christian effort afoot that is bringing new birth back to the Jewish people today?

### Hudson Taylor and John Wilkinson Had it Right

A story well known in Jewish mission circles is told from the “Great Century” of missions (the 19<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury<sup>4</sup>) by Joseph Hoffman Cohn, son of Leopold Cohn, the Hungarian Jewish Christian founder of the American Board of Mission to the Jews in 1897. It involves two great missionaries. The first is J. Hudson Taylor, who founded the China Inland Mission in 1865. Taylor was called and committed to reaching the Chinese, but he also had a Biblically informed vision for the world. The other is John Wilkinson, the founder and director of the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, one of the great Jewish missions of its time in Great Britain.



He also had a Biblically informed vision for the world.

At the first of every year, John Wilkinson would receive a check from Hudson Taylor with a note: “To the Jew first.” And within the next few days, Hudson Taylor would in turn receive a check from John Wilkinson, with a note: “. . . and also to the Gentile.”

Hudson Taylor understood a meaningful present Jewish priority in world mission, even though he, like Paul, was called to the Gentiles. Does your mission organization, or the ones you support understand this priority? John Wilkinson, though called to the Jews, also understood God’s heart for the nations. Do Jewish evangelism organizations and Messianic Jewish congregations understand God’s heart for all peoples . . . to the ends of the earth?

### “... But Equally to the Gentiles” What Does This Mean for the Messianic Jewish Movement?

In this context it should also be stated that central missionary calling of Israel/the Jewish people to be a “*light to the Gentiles*” (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1-3; Acts 13:47) need not and does not negate the important and ongoing calling of Jews to affirm and maintain their Jewish identity, to live a Jewish lifestyle, to keep the Jewish life cycle, etc. Of course, Jewish believers will live as Jews. That is who they are. Jewish identity is God-given. The faithful Jewish Remnant today (Messianic Jews) has an important missiological role toward three bodies—the international Jewish Peoplehood, or “All Israel,” to the Church universal, and the Gentile nations globally:

- 1) *Toward the Jewish People*, in that they witness to the truth that Yeshua of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah, and that Jews who embrace Yeshua as Messiah remain Jewish.
- 2) *Toward the International Gentile Church*, in that they remind her that the Christian Faith is not a, neo-Gnostic, ethereal, New Age type mysticism, but that Christianity’s roots and foundation are in the concrete history of Israel, rooted in space-time verifiable events, and whose God is the God of Israel who acted in history for Israel, and who still preserves the Jewish people today. The Messianic Jews are the link between the Church and the Jewish people, being members of both bodies.
- 3) *Toward the Global Family of Nations*, in that they, with the Gentile Church, keep before it the truth about God’s character: that He exists, and is the God who revealed Himself to Israel and supremely through Jesus the Jewish Messiah, is superintending the story of History, and is faithful to His promises to preserve the Jewish people unconditionally.

This threefold missional role is integral to the calling of Messianic Judaism,

and will be important witness in the earth at least until the Second Coming of the Messiah. This role requires them to be a recognizably Jewish people.

### Jewish Identity Crises and Fulfillment

As the modern Messianic Jewish movement has emerged there have been many Jewish identity crises among Jewish believers. This is understandable given the sorry history of Jewish-Christian relations. Now as the movement is maturing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are still long discussions and internal, yet I hope not inter-minable, controversies about Jewish identity. Am I Jewish enough? Are you Jewish enough? Are we Torah observant enough?

As a Gentile brother, and missionary to the Jewish people for 23 years, allow me to humbly offer to the movement the following perspective. I believe that as the Messianic movement broadens its horizons to respond in a greater way to the mission of God to all peoples, to God's heart for the nations, the Jewish identity issues will work themselves out more readily. Let me explain.

There is now and will always be a diversity within the Messianic Jewish movement of greater and lesser intentional Jewish identification, and of greater and lesser observance of Jewish tradition. There is a continuum from very orthodox style of Messianic Jewish synagogues, on the one hand, to the older "Hebrew Christian" style of believers who worship in Christian churches, on the other hand. There has never been uniformity among Jewish people on these matters, and never will be. Nor need there be. When an excessive amount of time, energy and focus is invested in these Jewish identity issues, the movement becomes distracted from its higher calling: To be "a light to the nations." Only the Jewish Remnant, the Messianic Jews can fulfill this calling and destiny. In reaching the nations, the Messianic Jewish movement is actually embodying a significant dimension of Jewish identity, and fulfilling Israel's call and destiny.

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When the focus of the movement and of individual Jewish believers is on consecration of resources (prayer, money, time, training) to reach the lost (*the Jews especially, but equally the Gentiles*), then the Jewish identity issues can take a more secondary order of priority, and much will serendipitously come into place. The Hebrew for "Jews" ("Yehudim") literally means "Praisers" (implying, *Praisers of God*). When Jewish people are instruments to bring unsaved Jews and Gentiles to vitally and experientially encounter the Living God, through the Messiah, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they are most unquestionably fulfilling their divine calling, their *raison d'être* as Jews. They are reproducing themselves spiritually among the nations by creating more praisers of God. The Father seeks such praise and glory, because the greatest human fulfillment is in knowing God and glorifying and enjoying Him forever. He wills to have a redeemed company from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" before His throne on That Day (Revelation 5:9b, 10).

Accordingly, maintaining ethnic Jewish identity is important, but the greatest means of achieving Israel's calling to be a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6), mediating the knowledge of True God to the nations, is by rising to truly become that missionary people. This cause must take a high place in the order of priorities of the Messianic Jewish movement. It is true that *doing*—and ministry—flow out of *being*. But being is also formed and realized by doing. Community for the sake of community stagnates. A community that gathers around a cause greater than itself flourishes. Further, that cause must be greater than the survival, renewal or growth of its own ethnic group. This is exactly the challenge God gave to Israel through Isaiah in 49:6a. I give three English

translations of the first phrase below (bolding emphasis mine),

**You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me ...** (New Living Translation).

**It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya'akov** (Complete Jewish Bible).

**It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to...raise up the tribes of Jacob,**

and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;

*I will also make you a light to the nations.* (New King James Version).

When Jewish identity becomes an end in itself, or as the major pursuit of Jewish believers, it can never be fulfilled. This is an application of what could be called "the Messianic Paradox," stated by Yeshua,

The one who seeks to save his or her life [read Jewish identity] shall lose it; but the one who loses it [read Jewish identity] for My sake and the Gospel's, shall save it (Cf. Matthew 10:39, Mark 8:35, Luke 17:33, John 12:25).

Though these verses apply primarily to individual response to the gospel and repentance unto salvation, the principle of death and resurrection, of giving up in order to gain, is applicable to various aspects of life—in grasping we lose; in releasing and laying down, we gain. This is not to be taken too far; I am not saying Jewish believers should give up their Jewish identity. I am rather pointing to a higher order of love and priority that transcends it. When this love is supremely pursued, it at least helps to properly order Jewish identity.

Having said that, I do not mean to say that no attention should be given to discussion and grappling with how the Messianic movement can more fully identify with, and show solidarity with the broader Jewish peoplehood, the normative Jewish community, "all Israel." Nor I am saying a greater

mobilization for, and deeper involvement in God's mission to reach the Gentiles will automatically solve all the issues of identity, Jewish cultural expression and tradition observance. That would be simplistic and reductionistic. But I am suggesting that Messianic Jewish congregations who focus obsessively on Jewish identity are in danger of missing the fulfillment of that identity. In contrast, those who lay down their lives to fulfill the apostolic passion to, "*bring about the obedience of the faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake.*" (Romans 1:5) are well on their way to actually fulfilling their identity as the seed of Abraham, who saw the innumerable stars representing the redeemed of all the nations as fulfilling God's promise to him.

### Integrated Messianic Jewish World Vision

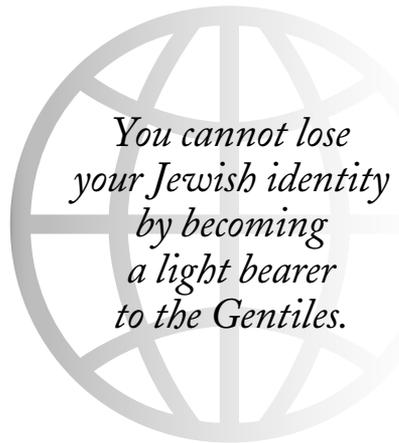
There is an understandable pastoral concern among Messianic Jewish rabbis and congregational leaders today that the call to world mission, to be "Great Commission believers", will siphon off Jewish believers needed as workers in the Jewish harvest field. I think the principle or *modus operandi* that will allay these fears is stated in the Messiah's post-resurrection commission to his Jewish disciples in Jerusalem,

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

These Jewish believers were instructed to first be witnesses to their own people group, the Jewish people. But they were not to stop there. Eventually they would go to Samaria (Philip and Simon Peter), and finally toward the ends of the earth (Paul and Barnabas, and their associates).

This was not then and should not be today an "*either/or*" vision ("Either I go to Jerusalem, or Samaria, or to Kazakhstan"). Nor is it meant as rigidly progressive action sequence of "*first/then*" ("First we all go to Jerusalem, and when we have finished there, then we will go to Samaria,

and then after that to Kazakhstan"). Rather the pattern is this: some of these first Messianic Jews stayed in Jerusalem, some went to Samaria and Antioch. When Paul and his apostolic band were sent out to the Mediterranean world from Antioch (Acts 13), other Jewish believers were still ministering in Samaria and Jerusalem. Paul had a vision and calling to the Gentile peoples, but he retained a heart for Israel, and was still involved with Israel. Thus, the correct understanding for Messianic Jews of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an integrated



vision for world mission based on Acts 1:8. This means a vision for our own people group, and *simultaneously* a vision for the unreached peoples, with a focus on the ones to which God may lead a given congregation.

Consequently, if a messianic Jewish congregation has a vision that reaches only to Israel/the Jewish people, they have not gone far enough. They can develop a "*both/and*" integrated vision that encompasses the Jews especially and also the Gentiles. The Apostle Paul had such a vision. Hudson Taylor had such a vision. Though they were missionaries to Gentiles they understood, "*to the Jew first.*" John Wilkinson had such a vision. Though he was a missionary to the Jews, he understood, "*and also to the Gentiles.*" Do Messianic Jewish leaders and congregations today understand, "*and also to the Gentiles*?"

If you are a Messianic Jew, you need not foreclose on the option of a possible call to be a missionary to

a Gentile unreached people group. God is calling Jewish believers today as missionaries to unreached people groups. There are approximately 10,000 of them, largely among the 1 billion Hindus, 500 million Buddhists, and 1.3 billion Muslims for whom Yeshua died, and who will go into a dark eternity without responding to the Gospel. You cannot lose your Jewish identity by becoming a light bearer to lost Gentiles. On the contrary, you are fulfilling it. A "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5), the great Apostle Paul was such a missionary. If you answer such a missionary call, you are in good company.

Having said that, Jewish believers should work in partnership and cooperation with your messianic leaders to develop a vision for your congregation. One should not abruptly abandon Jewish evangelism or Messianic congregational ministry to go to Timbuktu.

However, you can educate yourself about the state of world missions, and can influence your congregation toward an integrated world mission vision that includes Jewish evangelism as well as supporting efforts of those in frontier missions to the unreached. This would include mobilizing prayer for the unreached peoples, mobilizing others to go as missionaries, supporting efforts of existing agencies and/or partnering with them, and investigating other ways your congregation can creatively contribute to the cause of completing the Messiah's Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

There may be a few from your congregation who are called to go with a mission agency as part of a church planting team to an unreached people group. Think of how it would enrich your Messianic congregational life to have a few of your members representing you on such a team. They would send exciting stories home from the front lines, and as your congregation supported and prayed for them, they would feel connected to the significant work of reaching those masses who still wait to hear the good news about Yeshua for the first time. Jewish believ-

ers who were part of such a team, say into the Hindu or Chinese world, would be able to influence their team members and its sending agency with God's heart for Israel. Your congregation's horizons and influence would expand. Thus, both that people group's and Israel's salvation would be advanced.

## Conclusion

The great Apostle Paul, the first Jewish missionary to the Gentiles, in his mature theology in Romans chapters 9 through 11, perceived a great reciprocity in God's salvation plan between Jewish Israel and the Gentile nations. Zion blesses the Gentiles; and the Gentiles bless Zion. If Gentile evangelical Christian mission agencies would hear Paul's word,

*Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the Jews turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when the Jews finally accept it (NLT, Romans 11:12)*

while the Messianic Jewish movement heard more clearly the passionate heart of God for the nations through his ardent servant that

*the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16).*

then the Messiah would see the fruit of the travail of His soul more quickly.

If Gentile evangelical Christian mission agencies today would truly heed the first part of Romans 1:16c, "... to the Jew first" and the Messianic Jewish movement would truly heed the last part, "and also to the Gentiles" we would all hasten the consummation of God's redemptive plan for the world. **IJFM**

Bill Bjoraker  
Operation Ezekiel  
zeke2@earthlink.net

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Bauer, Walter, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1952, University of Chicago Press, Fourth Edition, pp. 732-734.

<sup>2</sup> David H. Stern's *The Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanach (Old*

*Testament) and Brit Chadasha (New Testament)*, was published in 1998 by Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., Clarksville, Maryland, USA, and Jerusalem, Israel. It is available through Messianic Jewish Resources International (a division of the Lederer Foundation). For more information, see <http://www.messianicjewish.net>.

<sup>3</sup> The Thailand Report on the Jewish People, entitled *Christian Witness to the Jewish People*, is #7 of a series of "Lausanne Occasional Papers" (LOPs) emerging from the historic Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE) held in Pattaya, Thailand, June 1980. The report was drafted by the "Mini-Consultation on Reaching Jewish People." For full text of LOP#7, see <http://www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/LOP/lop07.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Following the great Evangelical Revival of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Wesley, Whitefield, etc.), the great missionary societies were born, among which the "Church Missionary Society" (CMS) in 1799, and the "London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Among the Jews" (now CMJ) in 1809. Lord Wilberforce and Lord Shaftsbury changed British government policy in favor of a return of the Jews to their homeland, and lobbied the Ottoman Empire to that end.

What grabbed the current political headlines in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was political Zionism and the Balfour Declaration of 1917 ("*His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...*"). But what preceded the birth of political Zionism was a spiritual movement begun by men who came to faith in the Evangelical Revival. They understood from the Bible that God's covenant faithfulness to Israel/the Jewish people had not expired, ("For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" Romans 11:29), and this meant that God in His providence would yet restore the Jewish people to the land of their fathers, and to the God of their fathers through a movement to Messiah. They believed the Church must align herself with these Divine purposes.

And indeed, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century there was a movement to embrace Jesus as Messiah among Jews in Europe, during which people like Franz Delitzsch, Alfred Eidersheim, and Adolf Saphir—great Biblical scholars—were saved. The spiritual movement had created the climate that encouraged the political movement. James Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, was part of this general theological milieu.