



**LAUSANNE
CONSULTATION
ON JEWISH
EVANGELISM**

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ON JEWISH EVANGELISM
BULLETIN**



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From the Coordinator

The Sixth International LCJE Conference 12-17 August 1999, New York

Jewish Evangelism on the Eve of the Third Millennium

In August 1999 - on the eve of the third millennium - The Sixth International LCJE Conference will be held in New York. Hofstra University's beautiful 238-acre campus, recognized and registered by the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, is a perfect and affordable setting for our LCJE Conference.

Charge

* Conference fee, all meals and coffees, accommodation (5 nights) in shared double room, USD 550

* Conference fee, all meals and coffees, accommodation (5 nights) in single room, USD 700

* Young leaders (under 35): Conference fee, all meals and coffees, accommodation (5 nights) in shared double room, USD 400

Registration and full payment are to be made by 15 June 1999. We welcome registration as soon as possible.

Additional programs and registration forms can be ordered from the LCJE Conference Office.

Registration and payment to:

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Ellebækvej 5,
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Tel +45 8622 6470 Fax +45 8622 9591 E-mail lcje-
int@post3.tele.dk

The Consolation of Israel

I have just re-read the moving story in Luke 2.21-36 of the encounter between Joseph and Mary with the infant Jesus and the aged Simeon. It was Simeon's description of the Messiah as "the consolation of Israel" that caught my attention. Jesus, at the outset of his ministry, accepted the job description outlined in Isaiah 61 which included a ministry of comfort to all "who mourn in Zion".

Throughout his life our Lord not only cared for the distressed but he himself endured unimaginable distress, becoming the embodiment of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. According to such passages as Hebrews 2.17-18, one reason why Jesus endured suffering was to qualify him for his ministry of compassion and encouragement. So Hebrews 4.15 informs us that ... "we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses".

In order to continue his ministry of consolation Jesus announced that after his departure he would send his people "another Comforter". His very language indicated that he had in mind one whose ministry would match his own love and care.

In Sanhedrin 98b The Talmud referred to the coming Messiah as the Comforter of Israel and linked this idea with Lamentations 1.6: "For these things I weep; my eye, my eye overflows with water; because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed."

Even those with only a passing knowledge of Jewish history will recognise the suffering of the Jewish people who stand in need of comfort. Yet it is common for Jewish writers to caricature evangelism as an insensitive act of hostility; such thinking gave rise to the recent failed attempts in Israel to outlaw evangelism. Christian witness to the Jewish people in our post-Holocaust age raises many difficult questions about sensitivity and appropriate methodology but we believe that evangelism is something that our compassion for the Jewish people and our condemnation of anti-Semitism requires.

What could be more appropriate than to point suffering and sorrowing people to the One who came to "console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness"? (Isaiah 61.1-3). We seek to follow the example of Jesus himself who, seeing the Jewish crowds as "sheep without a shepherd", was moved with compassion and instructed his disciples to pray that the Lord would raise up those who would bring to them the Good News (Matt. 9:36-38).

It is impossible, as some have suggested, to comfort Israel with deeds but not with words. God rebukes such confusion and commands us to speak His word to suffering people. "Comfort, yes, comfort my people!" Says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem..."

John Ross

LCJE St. Louis – A Personal Report

By Kirk Gliebe, Director of Devar Emet Messianic Jewish Outreach, Chicago, IL

Attending a North American LCJE is always a good time. Where else can you rub shoulders with so many other people committed to and focused on Outreach among Jewish People. This year's conference in St. Louis was no different. Although a little smaller than normal probably because of the upcoming International Conference in New York this August, it was still an exciting event filled with spiritual challenges and thought provoking papers. In my reflections I want to first go over some of the papers that particularly interested me so that if you missed the meeting you can at least get a small taste of what went on. I will then conclude with my own personal thoughts on the conference as well as on the LCJE.

This year's agenda was packed full with both practical as well as theoretical ideas to enhance our efforts in reaching Jewish People. Kai Kjær-Hansen and Bodil Skjøtt both gave separate presentations about the believing community in the Land of Israel, focusing on the number of believers as well as their demographic background. This paper was eye opening as so often we hear in the US of many thousands of Jewish believers in the Land, yet without any serious factual



data to backup such amazingly large numbers. Kai and Bodil have based their study on interviews with the Israeli leaders of the believing community and have taken great pains to keep it both balanced and accurate. The final and full report will be presented in Mishkan this summer so you had better get your subscription now! An LCJE Veteran, Dr. Louis Goldberg, gave another important paper. He gave a very insightful paper on the Presence of "Law" in the Book of Galatians. As always his approach brought forth some new ideas on this topic. I for one am looking forward to his complete work on this subject, as his presentation was simply a small section of a larger work he is doing related to this. Michael Wechsler of Chosen People Ministries (A fellow Gen X'er) also gave a

very interesting paper on the Peshitta (some of you might know it better as the Syriac Version of the Bible). Michael argued that he felt Jewish believers could very well have written it as it follows quite closely in the Hebrew Scripture portions to the Jewish Targumic literature of the time. For those of you who missed the Conference this would be a good paper to order. A new area of interest was presented this year by Joshua Sofaer, a missionary with Jews for Jesus and another Gen X'er. His paper on Sephardic Jews in North America not only provided much needed historical background for most of those attending the conference, but it also informed us of how this "other half" of the Jewish Community differs in custom and practice in many ways from the typical Ashkenazi American. We also were blessed with Alan Shore's teaching and drama.

Besides the special papers dealing with specific areas of interest, some regular features of the LCJE Conference also blessed us. We were brought up to speed on what the Media has said about us in the last year from Susan Perlman. This year's report concentrated on Israel, Messianic Congregations, Opposition Articles and Pro

Articles, How the Jewish Community Looks at Itself, Our Pop Culture, Legal Issues and Susan's always interesting Potpourri. Several outstanding local leaders also challenged us in our devotional times. And of course we can't ignore our regularly yearly business meeting (thankfully it went fast). One thing I missed this year though was Dr. Art Glasser's book review time. Please Dr. Glasser, we miss you!

As I now turn now to my own personal reflections I have to begin by expressing my thanks to those who made this conference possible: Fred Klett as our North American Leader and Kai Kjær-Hansen our beloved International Leader. Without Leadership and Vision we have no LCJE. I was saddened to hear that

our "parent" institution, the LCWE, is now pretty much out of business. As a student at Moody Bible Institute in the Mid 80's I heard quite about that body and its work to promote world evangelism. But it seems that they suffered the loss of these two essential elements: Leadership and Vision. As an evangelist\missionary\whatever... and the director of a small Outreach in Chicago, I have come to rely on the LCJE as an association not only for knowledge and insight, but also as a place to network with other people who do what I do: Jewish Evangelism. I also have come to view it as a special time of unique fellowship. I don't think that I am the only one who views the LCJE like this. It is my hope that as we begin a new millennium that

we as members will seriously consider our own roles in this important and unique Association. We can show our support by actively attending conferences, and by encouraging our staff people to attend these conferences as well and to be active within the LCJE. It was nice for a change to have some younger people attending and speaking. For the long-term integrity of this Association we need to proactively be recruiting and promoting and building another active generation of evangelists\missionaries\whatever... within the ranks of the LCJE whether they are a part of our own organizations or not. If you missed this conference you missed a good time. Plan to come next year. And, oh, by the way, bring a friend!

Facts and Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

Bodil F. Skjøtt from the Caspari Center, Jerusalem, and myself are working on a survey of all the congregations and groups in Israel, which includes counting the Jewish believers in the country. To our knowledge, this has not been done earlier, which is somewhat surprising. We

have listed all the congregations and groups we know of by name. If critics of our survey think we have left any out, we will, of course, welcome any new information.

The survey is being carried out for Mishkan. In connection with the 50th anniversary of the foundation

of the State of Israel, the editorial board decided to dedicate three issues to the history of the Messianic Movement in Israel. The first two issues carried valuable and engaging, but also challenging articles, by Menahem Benhayim, Baruch Maoz, Gershon Nerel, and Lisa Loden – to mention

some of the Messianic Jewish authors. Ahead of us is the third issue with a survey of all the Messianic congregations, fellowships and groups in Israel that we know of, and the conclusions to be drawn from it. This will be published, according to schedule, this summer.

We have met and interviewed close to 60 leaders in person. Apart from that, Bodil F. Skjøtt has had telephone contact with approximately 15 more. We have been positively surprised by the fact that not very many wanted to remain anonymous, and that many wanted to speak freely to us, although quite a few – not least among the Russian congregations – did not know us. A few new congregations have, for various and understandable reasons, wished to remain anonymous, and we shall respect this. Only a very few leaders have not wanted to speak to us.

We believe in openness. We assume that the Israeli anti-missionary organizations will also study our survey. But they already know the Messianic congregations pretty well. For example, we interviewed leaders of the Messianic Congregation in Beersheva in October 1998. On November 28th 1998 there was a big demonstration against the congregation – independent of our survey, of course!

In terms of numbers the survey tries to present a

general idea of what persons are regarded as members or part of the congregation's "core group." This includes:

1. The number of persons – adults and children.
2. Sub-categories of adults – the following four were applied:

- a. Jewish
 - b. Non-Jew married to a Jew
 - c. Non-Jew with Israeli citizenship (Arabs/Palestinians included)
 - d. Non-Jew without Israeli citizenship
3. Attendance: adults and children.

We have encountered some astonishment – and criticism – simply for having divided the congregation into these categories of people. Some have maintained that in doing so we create an unbiblical and theologically unsound division. The congregation made up of Jews and non-Jews is one, and we fully agree on this. The division is not made for theological reasons, but for statistical and missiological ones. This makes it possible, on the basis of information supplied by the leadership of the congregations, to ascertain how many Jewish believers in Jesus there are in the congregations in Israel. These figures can perhaps also be used externally and apologetically, for example in connection with the anti-missionary legislation which some religious parties in Israel are campaigning for.

If the overall number of Jewish believers in Jesus in the Messianic congregations is larger than assumed, there is every reason to rejoice and to continue working along the same lines as before. If the figure is smaller – even considerably smaller – it may be used in an internal analysis of the situation. It is a sad thing if our joy rests on numerical myths. It is equally sad if we cannot rejoice in realistic figures – however large or small they might be.

If prior to 1990 – before the massive immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union – it was difficult to speak about the Messianic Movement in Israel, it has not become any easier in 1999. The survey is scheduled for publication in *Mishkan*, issue no. 30, the summer of 1999.

MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

An extensive survey with profiles of the Messianic congregations in Israel is being prepared. Subscription can be made via e-mail: caspari@caspari.com.

Media Report

By Susan Perلمان, Jews for Jesus, San Francisco

This media report covers the time period of March 1998 through February 1999.

This year I've chosen to concentrate on the following categories: Israel, Messianic Congregations, Opposition Articles, Pro-Movement, How the Jewish Community Looks at Itself, Our Pop Culture, Legal Issues and Potpourri.

1. Israel

The media attention to the Anti-Missionary Bill in the Knesset continued to make its way into the religious press, both Jewish and Christian. The September 4th edition of *The Jewish Press* included the article: "Netanyahu Promises Norwegian PM Anti-Missionary Bill Will Not Pass." This article reported on an interview in *Ha'aretz* in which Prime Minister Bondevik asked Netanyahu to clarify his position and where the Director of Yad L'Achim condemned Netanyahu for his "concession to the missionaries."

I have also included one of the ads published by the Messianic Action Committee in Israel in *Ha'aretz* on the subject.

Christianity Today in its October 5, 1998 issue did a feature article on "How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend." Written by Tim Weber who teaches church history and is dean at

Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, this 11 page treatment gives a detailed history of dispensationalism and concludes by saying, "A new generation of dispensationalist scholars have toned down the excesses and sensationalism of its predecessors. He calls them "progressive dispensationalists" and says that though seeing a future for national Israel are less inclined to draw maps or make predictions. Several letters to the editor ran in a subsequent edition of *CT*.

Also on Israel is a piece on the Yad L'Achim protest at the Be'er Sheva congregation. I think the description of the event is quite enlightening.

There is also notice of the Hebrew language broadcast produced by Israeli believers in conjunction with *Trans World Radio*.

Under Israel, I thought to include the flurry of clippings in relation to Israel's Jubilee and the Orlando, Florida event called "Israel at 50" planned by the Christian Alliance for Israel. Netanyahu, Eckstein and others in the Jewish community distanced themselves from the event. But it was covered in the *Jerusalem Post*, the *Baltimore Jewish Times*, and by the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, to name a few who called the promotion of the

event deceptive because some of the organizers and speakers were messianic Jews. One article ended with the snide comment, "And once again, the 'completed' Jews have given us incomplete information."

2. Messianic Congregations

A significant number of articles came out this year profiling Messianic congregations. Temple Beth Israel in Central Kentucky is a messianic congregation recently formed by T.E.

Beckh'am. The Jewish community in the area is up in arms over it and an April 7th article in the *Herald Leader* contains quotes from the a local rabbi who said, "I will not recognize their rabbi as a rabbi, and I will not recognize them as Jews." Another rabbi said, "What can I say? They're welcome to try."

A follow up to the Dallas messianic congregation article last year with the shooting where the bullet struck their building, the perpetrator was sentenced to 12 years in prison (June 3rd, *National Jewish Post & Opinion*) The P & O ended their editorial with the comment, "Some local media including the *Dallas Morning News* refrained from calling the building a synagogue. However, some ignorant reporters treated the congregation as if it were really Jewish."

Other articles of note were an August 20th piece in Raleigh, North Carolina on Beth Lechem. This article contains some excellent testimonials of faith in Y'shua. The San Gabriel Valley Tribune did a feature entitled, "Jews, Arabs unite in worship" about an annual meeting in a Nazarene church in Pasadena for Jewish and Arab believers. Jan Rosenberg and Beth Zion Messianic Synagogue were featured in the Jackson Sun, December 18th in a very positive article as well. Their testimony and a clear statement of what faith in Jesus means came across. Also in December The Observer and Eccentric profiled Loren Jacobs as the head of Congregation Shema Yisrael. The article even included his email address and website.

Christianity Today did a feature article in September entitled, "The Return of the Jewish Church" by Gary Thomas. It was specifically focused on messianic congregations and profiled Beth Yeshua of Philadelphia, the MJAA, the UMJC. Thomas seems to be out of touch with a lot of what is happening and not happening in Jewish evangelism and even in the messianic congregational movement. Unfortunately, CT did not have fact checkers who knew enough about our very particularized field.

3. Opposition Articles

Not unlike previous years,

there is no lack of articles opposing the work of Jewish evangelism. The Star in South Africa published a letter on March 4th of last year, from the head of the Jewish Defense League there which threatened Jews for Jesus with these words: "It is intended that this letter also serves as a warning to these misty eyed missionaries that the weight of history strongly aided by the Jewish Defense League will ensure that they will follow the path of all the other enemies of the Jewish people...into the rubbish dump of history." This was followed up by a strong letter of protest that the newspaper carried a "hate letter" on its pages.

Later that month, Debra Nussbaum Cohen of JTA moonlighted an article for New York Magazine entitled, "Kosher for Passover?--as more and more Christians hold Seders to get in touch with their Jewish roots, some rabbis see appropriation, not appreciation."

In June, the duo of Skobac & Ciss of Jews for Judaism/ Canada were interviewed in the Western Jewish Bulletin on their anti-missionary activities. Jeff Forman of House of David was interviewed as well.

Several articles complaining about Jews for Jesus' summer ads appeared in New York and Philadelphia Jewish papers.

An article that is Israel oriented, but on opposition

from Yad L'Achim had an interesting chart on the number of missionaries targeting Israel for Mass Conversion. (Jewish Press, 7/24/98)

According to the chart, the number of missionaries has increased from about 1300 to 16,000 from 1970 to 1996.

Another barb at the Messianic Times came in an August 20th article in the Canadian Jewish News warning of its distribution in the Toronto area.

An interesting article from the UCLA paper, the Bruin complains about "flyer people" bombarding the campus and includes the broadsides being handed out as an example.

The traditional Jewish defense agencies have been going wild in their opposition to such innocuous items as the honoring the French Cardinal. ADL was upset since Lustiger is of Jewish parentage.

The JCRC of New York picketed outside of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City for hosting David Brickner.

The Canadian Jewish Congress, blocked a bill that would have enabled a Christian Bible College to get accreditation on the grounds that the college's faculty "made a career of focusing on Jews for conversion." Ultimately, the school dropped the "Jewish studies" courses it was offering.

An alleged "former messianic Jew" is profiled in the Forward on January 1st,

as bringing Russians back to the "True Way." Yitzhak Geyer, denounces the movement at a Brooklyn counter-missionary conference. Philip Abramovitz is extensively quoted as well.

The Canadian Jewish News called the Chosen People ad in the Globe and Mail in December as "deceptive and misleading."

Charges of fraud were leveled at a Dallas bookstore, Moses-Hillel & Co. which admits it is part of Baruch Ha Shem messianic congregation.

The Jewish Board of Deputies in England called a Jews for Jesus evangelistic billboard offensive and went to great lengths to have the entire hoarding removed. (Jewish Chronicle, 12/18/98)

We can see over the years, that opposition articles, more often than not are an occasion to amplify our gospel message. In most of the cases cited here, the individuals and organizations received more opportunity to make Y'shua known because of the controversy that the opposition generated.

4. Pro-Movement

Having said that, I always appreciate being able to present articles where the movement is given a fair hearing. The following are several examples.

The April 20, 1998 Fresno Bee reporter interviewed Moishe Rosen in the article "Jews for Jesus

founder still spreading message".

The Community Bible Study Newsletter featured the testimony of Sandy Sheller.

The Jewish Chronicle of London reported on Vladimir Pikman and Berlin's Beit Sar Shalom congregation allowing the believers to share in their own words what their meant to them.

The organ magazine of the Baptist General Conference did a three page article on Susan Perlman with encouragement for the denomination to be involved in Jewish evangelism.

David Brickner was given a lengthy interview in the Anchorage Daily News in July of 1998.

Jhan Moskowitz was featured in the Madison, Wisconsin Capitol Times with a clear gospel statement.

And Charisma Magazine devoted a major spread in their October 1998 issue to an article entitled, "The Messiah Visits New York City." This article by Peter Johnson profiled Gary Selman and Jonathan Cahn of "Two Nice Jewish Boys" as well the Jews for Jesus summer witnessing campaign in NYC, Bruce Cohen of Congregation Beth El and Jan Rosenberg of Beth Zion in Jackson, New Jersey.

The newest article I've brought is in the most recent CT, which profiles Messiah's Shofar, a Ukrainian Jews for Jesus music team and their

efforts in Germany.

5. How the Jewish Community Looks at Itself
I think we all find it helpful to keep a pulse, not only on where we are at, but where the community we are looking to reach with the gospel is at. The following clippings come at this point from different places.

The first article is a Purim comic strip that appeared in the Jewish Week in New York on March 13, 1998.

Next is a piece in the Chicago Jewish Star which came out just before Passover on the final preparations needed for Moshiah to come. It included a coupon with thirteen different boxes to check on what the person was committing themself to do to bring in Messiah.

A JTA release in April tries to delineate between the various flavors of Orthodoxy in the Jewish community and concludes that is quite confusing even to the Orthodox.

Continued clippings on the Orthodox/Reform/ Conservative controversy include one on June 12 by JTA on the conversion bill and the need for reconciliation between Judaism's major streams.

Jews in Cyberspace writer Jon Kalish gives some information on America Online's Jewish Community site (Jewish Week, July 10, 1998).

Some demographics from Jewish sources. The

National Jewish Post & Opinion quotes the American Jewish Yearbook 1998 statistics. An interesting note: In 1945 the world Jewish population was estimated at 11 million. It grew to 12 million between '45 and '58 but took another 38 years to reach 13 million. The Jewish Week reported on a study by the World Jewish Congress which predicted that diaspora Jewry (now estimated at 8.6 million) will fall to have that number within 30 years. It also mentioned assimilation statistics such as, worldwide Jewish assimilation at 50%, with Europe at 80%.

A very interesting piece by J. J. Goldberg to the Jewish Week in October speculates that Jews are not vanishing in America, "just evolving toward some new kind of Jewish identity." This identity is sorely deficient in an Jewish ethnic culture.

A chart in a similar article by JTA shows Jewish religious commitment at 35%, ritual observance at 50% and faith in God at 35%.

Jonathan Rosenblum, Orthodox himself, wrote an editorial for the National Jewish Post and Opinion (January 6, 1999) in which he excoriates American Jews for basing their identity on anything but Judaism as he sees it.

Another article on American Jews in particular by Rabbi Noah Golinkin in the Washington Jewish News outlines what he sees

as the problem areas for Jewish continuity: intermarriage, low birthrate, lack of home observance, lack of Hebrew knowledge and rate of joining Jews for Jesus and Messianic Judaism.

An article that just appeared on February 19 in the Jewish Week of New York by Dennis Prager which bears quoting. Says Prager, "Many Jews have adopted important beliefs and attitudes solely because these beliefs are the opposite of what they believe Christianity and Christians believe." He goes on to explain this power of "Not-Christianity" and why it is a tragedy.

Two interesting pieces that reflect on how the Jewish community sees itself when it comes to belief appeared in the Jerusalem Report May 1, 1998 and the Jewish Forward June 19, 1998 respectively. The first profiled the famous Brother Daniel (of Who is A Jew fame) and gave the history of this Polish Jew who became a Catholic priest and is looking to create his own brand of Hebrew Christianity. The second another look at "Who is A Jew" from the Ad Hoc Task Force of the Reform Jewish movement.

6. Our Pop Culture

Some articles that I just found interesting in that they reflect our culture, was one in an alternative magazine in England call Face which

picks up on the animated program, South Park and how Jews for Jesus has used it in a pamphlet to "promote its own alternative message."

A flurry of media seems to follow Jerry Falwell whenever he opens his mouth, this time in claiming that the anti-Christ is Jewish which the ADL and other Jewish agencies labeled as anti-Semitic.

Even the news items regarding our American president end up in getting a Jewish point across. James Besser, who is a syndicated columnist for many Jewish weekly papers did a piece entitled, "Ken Starr's Jewish Connections." And what, might you ask, are these connections, well first of all he has a Jewish wife. But even more interesting, he has a Jewish pastor (Lon Solomon) who is also identified as on the board of Jews for Jesus. The Los Angeles Jewish Times did a similar article picking up on Besser's lead.

Lon Solomon, responded to these articles and one of his letters to the editor appeared in a subsequent edition of the newspaper. It reads [include text here] Solomon was then featured in a Wall Street Journal piece called, "The Bible in the Beltway" and gave a forthright testimony again.

7. Legal Issues

Two legal items of note in our movement. Jews for Jesus' internet lawsuit in

which an anti-missionary lawyer misappropriated the Jews for Jesus name in his website continues to get press and as the case goes through its final appeals on the part of the anti-missionaries, more press is likely. A representative article is one that came out in the Daily Law Journal (hopefully read by many Jewish lawyers) which was entitled, "Jews for Jesus Seeking Protection of Its Domain Name."

The other, opposition from Canadian Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith Canada for Chosen People Ministries' attempt to trademark their logo which is of a menorah. Two Toronto lawyers spotted the trademark application by CPM and so went the sparks.

At least there has been some good publicity for the gospel from something that comes from lawyers. A television talk show in the Toronto area came as a result of this publicity.

8. Potpourri

I wanted to take some time to commend some letters to the editor that came out this year. Jonathan Bernd in the England newspapers responded to the billboard protests with letters such as one I've included in your packet. Likewise, Glen Harris wrote a great letter to the Detroit Jewish News on our friend, Rabbi Eckstein in which he applauded the fact that Eckstein's true colors

were unveiled.

An article to that effect in Christian circles came out in Charisma in September 1998 entitled, "Eckstein Won't Support Messianics."

Along the line of a letter to the editor was an editorial response that Zola Levitt made to an editorial by a Dallas area rabbi. Rabbi Ofseyer did a guest column in which he tried to make the case against Jews being for Jesus. Levitt responded a week later (May 30th Dallas Morning News) with a piece entitled, "Jesus: He remains the Jew's Jew". Levitt makes a very cogent argument for Jesus from a Jewish perspective.

An interesting twist on getting media, Newsday, the Long Island daily newspaper read by many Jews did a feature on Jews for Jesus entitled, "On a Mission". The same paper had turned Jews for Jesus down on advertising earlier, but through this article, which was three pages long, more was said than any evangelistic ad could have accomplished.

The final items in my Potpourri section all come from *Christianity Today Magazine*. In recent years, CT has done quite a bit on covering issues regarding Jews and Jesus. A more general article entitled "Are You Tolerant? (Should You Be?)" came out on January 11th. The writer admits his own dilemma with how he is perceived by unbelievers when it comes to a tolerance

quotient. He relates a story regarding his support of a Jews for Jesus staffer and his relationship to a Jewish unbeliever who teaches on the Holocaust for one of his classes. He asks if it should bother Christians to be considered intolerant. He asks if God is tolerant. A great think piece.

A final reflection on CT. This most recent issue, which included a positive news report on Jewish evangelism activity in Germany, also had an article on David Horowitz, an unsaved Jew who fights for the persecuted church, an advertisement for a book on Dr. Laura and a book review of David Klinghoffer's spiritual odyssey entitled, "The Lord Will Gather Me In." Klinghoffer tells how he became ba'al teshuvah. Here's what bothers me. The article includes some recommended reading by authors like Elliott Abrams and Yechiel Eckstein and the reviewer ends with sadness over Klinghoffer not being a Christian "Close; but close doesn't count" yet leaving the door a little open with the comment, "I cannot help hoping that he and I and our fellow believers are praying to the same Father, who gathers us with his triumphant love."

Reaching Sephardic Jews in North America

By Joshua Sofaer, Jews for Jesus, Los Angeles

An Intelligent Donkey

Two Jews, Ezra and Farhud, were partners; one lived in Mosul, and the other in Basra. They would send merchandise to each other, sell the goods, and divide the profits. The partnership had continued for twenty years, without the partners ever having met or knowing each other.

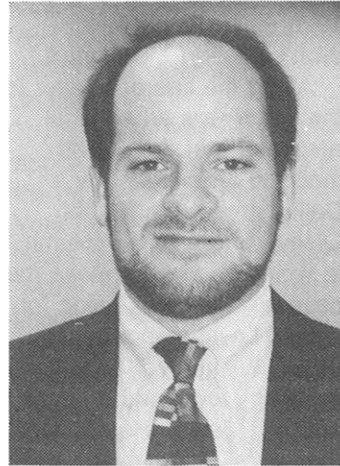
One day Ezra, the partner from Mosul, wrote to Farhud and said that he wanted to visit him. Farhud replied, "You are welcome."

The inhabitants of Basra are hospitable by nature, they love to offer a wholeheartedly gracious welcome to all visitors. When Ezra arrived in Basra on his donkey, Farhud met him and invited him to stay in his house.

Many steaming courses of delicacies were served at the midday meal – fruits and nuts, Hamin, and zalata. The guests ate well and enjoyed their meal and company. When Ezra was already full, Farhud served and yet another dish saying, "In honor of this house, eat this." The guest ate the dish, but he did so unwillingly because he was already full.

Then Farhud's wife came over and said to him, "In my honor eat this." Ezra ate this course as well, even though he didn't want to eat anymore.

Farhud's son and



daughter did the same thing. Ezra, too shy to refuse them, ate in their honor as well. Afterwards, Ezra took his donkey and set out for home. When the two reached the River Tigris in Baghdad, the donkey was thirsty and began to drink from the River. When the donkey finished drinking, Ezra wanted him to drink more.

"In my honor, drink more," Ezra told the donkey, but the donkey did not answer him, and did not want to drink anymore."

"In the honor of my partner Farhud, drink," he said, but the donkey did not answer him."

"In honor of Farhud's son and daughter, drink," but the donkey neither answered nor drank. Then he turned to the donkey and said "My donkey, my donkey, you have more intelligence than I have," and continued on his way to Mosul.¹

I added the aforementioned story to give you a flavor of Middle Eastern Jewry. Maybe Basra, Mosul and Baghdad are not places that you associate with Jewish things, but these were the places I heard about as a child; they were Jewish! The Shtetl stories that are familiar to the Eastern European Jewish experience are not part of my Jewish experience, nor are they the experience of thousands of other Jews living in North America. This paper is entitled "Reaching Sephardic Jews in North America." I need to give a disclaimer. Because of the focus of this paper, there are many world Jewish communities that are not mentioned. This is not due to lack of importance, but the do fall outside the scope of this particular paper at hand. The paper's focus is on the North American Sephardim.

Reaching Sephardic Jews is a subject very close to my heart and something I care deeply about. It's long been a desire of mine to bring attention to a segment of the Jewish people that has been largely forgotten by North American Jewish missions. Before I get into the bulk of the paper, I thought it would be good to give a brief introduction to my Jewish experience and let you hear who I am as a Jewish person.

I come from an Iraqi Jewish family. The Sofaers were in Iraq for many centuries, some say descending from the Babylonian exile in 586 BC. We know for sure that as of four generations ago, Sofaers were living in Baghdad. My great grandfather moved from Iraq to Rangoon, Burma, and began a business in the British colony there. Moving from Iraq to India at this time was common. In fact, at the beginning of the 20th century, India was a country with a significant Iraqi Jewish community. They called themselves *Baghdadi*. There were also two indigenous Indian Jewish communities known as *Cochin Jews* and *Bnai Israel*. Around 1920, the Sofaers moved from Burma to Bombay, India where my grandfather, David, met my Grandmother, Mozelle. Mozelle's family is also *Baghdadi*, but she was born in Alexandria, Egypt. Her family, the Ezekiels, had been out of Iraq for some time working in trading. One of the more exotic jobs Mozelle's father had was to sell Fez caps through northern Iraq and Syria. Nearly the same time as the Sofaers moved to India, the Ezekiels arrived also. David and Mozelle met, got married and raised a family in Bombay. My father and four of his siblings grew up in British India and moved to the United States in the early 1950's. I am first generation American born.

Something of notable interest is a connection that Jews from India had to New York City. Many of the *Baghdadi* Jews living and working in India produced textiles; silk, cotton, etc. The most famous company was the Sassoon Trading Co. Perhaps some of you have heard of it? For those of you who have family connections to the *shmatte* business in New York or London, Jews in India likely produced many of the raw materials. It makes me proud to have such a rich and exotic Jewish heritage.

Before going any further, we need to pause and define exactly what we're talking about when we say reaching Sephardic Jews. There are Sephardic prayer books, Sephardic dietary laws, Sephardic kippot, Sephardic music, but who or what exactly is a *Sephardic Jew*? The dictionary defines Sephardic Jews as "members of the occidental branch of European Jews settling in Spain and Portugal ..."² The dictionary definition however, does not pick up on the more common understanding of the term. This common meaning is an extremely important first step to understanding Sephardic Jews. In North America today, Sephardic has come to refer to all Jews not of Ashkenazic descent, not just Jews from Spain and Portugal. As a result, many of the Jews living in North America who would call

themselves Sephardic are not technically Sephardim. Confused? Let me try and explain.

In some ways, the difficulty in finding an accurate definition for the Sephardim can be explained in terms of a family. The family of Sephardim is made up of a variety of different backgrounds and cultures. Jews from Spain, Morocco, Italy, Greece, Israel, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, Iraq, and India are all part of the family. Within the family, the differences and uniquenesses are recognized. Individual groups of Jews are *Baghdadi* or *Persian* or *Libyan*. To those not in the family however, they are all *Sephardic*. I would, for example, feel comfortable referring to myself as *Sephardic*, even though my background is *Iraqi*. In 1984 there were an estimated 220,000 Sephardic Jews living in North America, excluding Israelis – 3.6 percent of the total North American Jewish population.³ Here, the Sephardim are a minority within a minority. Not only must they struggle for survival as Jews, but also as Sephardic Jews. In light of a much larger and better – organized Ashkenazi Jewish community, Sephardim have banded together as one group. One possible reason for this "family" mentality was a survival response to the broader Jewish community that defined Jewishness by Ashkenazi

standards. For the family of Sephardim, everything from language and food to religious observance is different from that of the Ashkenazim. Rather than explain all the differences, many non-Ashkenazi Jews choose to define themselves as one group - Sephardim.

As missionaries, does our terminology matter when talking with Sephardic Jews? Yes! Those of you who are Jewish believers appreciate it when a non-Jew takes the time and effort to gain a deeper understanding of your culture. Their care will often open you to a discussion you may not ordinarily have. In the same way, recognizing the distinctives of the Sephardim in the course of ministry will help to create a platform for witness. You may have found this principle to be true in ministry to Russians. Even a few words in their language can build enough rapport to delve into spiritual topics. The expectation among many Sephardim is that other Jews will either have no interest in their cultural distinctives or will simply see it as a novelty. Taking the time to discover the Sephardim will not only improve our witness, but it allows us to better understand the people whom God has put on our hearts to reach.

Through the course of this paper, I will briefly talk about a few of the different groups, mentioning their names as I go. For purposes

of brevity however, when I use the term Sephardim, I am using it in its broadest sense - as the "family" of Sephardic Jews.

The information I have to present comes from my own history as a Sephardic Jew, from real witnessing experiences, from conversations with others working to reach Sephardim, and from books on the subject of Sephardic Jewry. I do not intend to make sweeping statements regarding "the best" way to reach this particular segment of the Jewish community - you are leaders and strategists in a field that I am very new in. Rather, I will offer suggestions that may help you develop a strategy for reaching Sephardic Jews. My focus will be Three-fold: (1) to define *Sephardic* for our missionary work and purposes of this paper; (2) to give a brief history of the Sephardim in North America; (3) to give you five distinct cultural aspects of Sephardic culture that require a unique presentation of Y'shua.

Some may ask the question, "How did so many Jews get to so many different places?" God's promise in the Torah to scatter us has been a true one indeed!⁴ We are familiar with the Biblical dispersions of the Jewish people to Assyria, Babylon, etc., but the modern Diaspora is less understood. The modern Diaspora, beginning in the post-Second Temple period, spread east before it spread

west. We often think of Diaspora Jews as spreading into Europe, but prior to the 11th century, the majority of Jews lived in the Middle East and Mediterranean areas. During this time, Babylon was the undisputed center of the Jewish world and Jewry had a distinct Middle Eastern flavor.

With the advent of Islam in the 7th century, Jews found themselves part of a society that was amicable. Opportunities for social, political and economic advancement existed. Jewish people, by in large, comfortably fit into the Islamic world. Therefore, as Islam spread, so too did the Jewish community. Jewish people populated the Middle East, North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, Persia, and even the Orient. Through the first millennium, Jewish people were primarily Middle Eastern and not European.

Perhaps the best known period of Sephardic history is in 15th century Spain. The Inquisition and Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 halted one of the freest times in Jewish History. The late 14th and early 15th centuries are sometimes called the "golden age" of Jewish history. The atrocities committed to end this period are still recounted today and have left an indelible mark on the Jewish psyche. The Expulsion produced two significant changes in Spanish Jewry; a scattering of Spanish Jews all over the

world and a new group of Jews called Conversos, also called Marannos.⁵

Conversos confessed Jesus as Messiah under duress while secretly maintaining Jewish practices. Into the 16th century, living conditions in Spain worsened and these Conversos left for the New World and took an active role in the European and Spanish presence in the Americas. Mair Jose Bernadette, Professor of Hispanic Jewish History at Columbia University writes, "The Marrano Jews helped in the preliminary preparations making Columbus' discoveries possible. Even though Marranos met with difficulties in leaving Spain for the West Indies, in Tierra Firme [The New World] they managed to establish themselves in most every Hispanic settlement."⁶ The descendants of these Converso settlers were the first Jews to set foot in North America. It's of interest that relatives of these Conversos are still living in Mexico, the Caribbean, and New Mexico today.

The earliest recorded Jewish presence in North America was in 1654 when 23 Spanish Jews arrived in New Amsterdam from Brazil.⁷ The Jewish community grew slowly through the middle of the 19th century. 1776 is an early reference point for Jewish population. There were approximately one thousand Jews living in

North America, half of whom were Spanish in origin. I would like to mention the first recorded Jewish believer. Judah Monis, a descendant of Portuguese Conversos, immigrated to New York in 1717. Through the witness of Increase Mather and John Leverett, Monis confessed faith in Jesus as Messiah in 1722.⁸ No significant missions agencies were formed prior to the large influx of European Jews to North America. The Jewish community grew steadily in these years of early American and Canadian settlement.

The 19th century saw a radical change in the North American Jewish community. Professor Bernadette states, "[Up to] the middle of the nineteenth century, the Marrano Jews in the United States were, on the whole, the only Jews who counted in national life."⁹ The immense migration of German Jews beginning in the 1850's reduced the Spanish Jewish community to a minority. A early sign telling of this change came in 1825 when a group from Shereth Israel, America's first and very Spanish Synagogue, broke off and began Congregation Bnai Jeshurun, an orthodox and distinctly German Synagogue. These Synagogues would eventually compete for prominence among the Jewish elite. As German immigrants continued to flow

into North America, they formed communal organizations that would define not only themselves as German Jews, but would eventually define the Jewish community as a whole. The dominance of European identity in North American Jewry continues to this day.

In the later parts of the 20th century, the Sephardim saw an immigration of their own. Jews from Syria, Iraq, North Africa, and Persia would eventually give new life to a dying Sephardic community. Prior to this "new life," the Sephardim in North America floundered to find their own identity. Because of language, dress, food, and other cultural distinctives, The Sephardim were excluded from the mainstream of Jewish life. Daniel Elazar, author and Sephardic Jew, notes that "The Sephardim made several attempts to create country-wide organizations to link local communities with major efforts in 1912, 1928, 1941 and 1952, however, unlike the larger masses of Ashkenazim, the Sephardim, until recently, were unsuccessful in such attempts. In 1952 the World Sephardi Federation was reorganized and extended to the United States, but it was not until 1972 that the American Sephardi Federation was actually activated. Since then it has maintained a country-wide organizational structure."¹⁰ Not until the 1970's did the Sephardi communities have

a significant internal structure! The Sephardim are just now catching up with the broader Jewish community and inserting itself as a valid and unique part of the North American Jewish landscape.

New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, and Seattle are the cities in North America with the largest Sephardic communities. In the last ten to fifteen years, the Persian community in particular has grown in large numbers having its center in Los Angeles. In 1990 Jewish family services of Los Angeles estimated that there were 50,000 Iranian Jews in the Los Angeles area.¹¹ Unfortunately I can't give you accurate numbers of Sephardim in North America. Getting accurate demographic information is very difficult. The previously quoted 1984 number of 220,000 Sephardic Jews in North America is the most comprehensive number I have found. I have serious doubts as to its accuracy and suspect that it grossly underestimates the number of Sephardim in North America. Today the Sephardim are growing as never before, building Synagogues, publishing newspapers, putting up Web sites, and developing social and religious infrastructures. This may be looked at as somewhat of a "renaissance" of Sephardi culture in North America. The community continues to be small, but is growing fast in terms of its

acceptance and validity in the eyes of the broader Jewish community.

Now that we have a brief history of the Sephardim in North America, lets turn our attention to some elements that require a different and unique approach. In this section, I will give five points that are common to all Sephardi Jews. For these points, I will offer a suggestion that may help our witness to be more effective.

1. There is not the same antagonism against Jesus and the gospel message in the Sephardi communities as with European Jews.

In the course of mission work among Jewish people, this point is perhaps one of the most dramatic and challenging. This statement is not to say that all Sephardic Jews will be readily accepting the Messiah, but it does mean that within this community, there is a greater initial willingness to explore the gospel message. The idea that Jewish people do not have a predisposed antagonism toward Christianity flies in the face of what is expected. All of the books on Jewish evangelism I have ever read speak of the deep animosity the Jewish people have against the gospel message and Jesus. The walls that go up when talking to most Jews about Jesus are either not there with the Sephardim, or are much lower. Many younger

Sephardi Jews seem to have adopted an antagonism from their interaction with American Jews. The older ones however, are quite open to discussion. As an example of the kinds of relationships many Sephardim have with Christians, my family provides a unique and interesting example. Both my father and grandfather went to Christian schools, studied the New Testament and considered their relationships with Christians as some of the dearest they had. I would venture to say that this experience is quite uncommon among Ashkenazim.

When I was confronted with the gospel message I was curious and I asked a lot of questions. I didn't make a decision about my faith, but I seemed to have a freedom that many other Jews do not feel. My initial interest was not one of fear and trepidation, but an unhindered openness to exploring a new idea. An interesting observation to a potential reason for this difference, Abraham Lavender, professor in Jewish history, writes; "Sephardic Judaism, in contrast to an Ashkenazi "Ghetto" mentality, developed in a pluralistic society of relative tolerances and multi-dimensional values where the Jew could take the best of the non - Jewish humanistic cultural values, adapt them to express his Jewishness, and

still remain distinctly Jewish."¹² Professor Lavender catches onto something that is very true. Sephardim on the whole do not have the same affront to the gospel message because generally they don't see it as a threat. Even among Spanish Jews, the antagonism is not there.

Suggestion: First, do not raise objections that are not there. We've got a great opportunity to work within the freedom that the Sephardi culture has. We should take advantage of this cultural expression. Second, as we write literature targeted to Sephardic Jews and train missionaries, we should speak directly about Jesus. We can assume a positive and open response, not one that is suspect from the beginning. Using expressions to make the gospel more comfortable to the ears of the hearer is not needed because the level of discomfort is not as extreme.

2. Family obligations hold a much greater importance in making decisions of faith than does Jewishness.

It is rare that a Sephardi Jew will say to a Jewish believer that they are not Jewish if they decide to believe in Jesus. Jewishness is never in question. They may disagree with what you say or become angry, but there is never a doubt about the bloodline of a Jewish person. The issue is one of honor

and family pride. An aside to this is the first section of the book of Esther. The King was angry with Queen Vashti because she didn't obey to him - she shamed the king. As a result, the king replaced her. For Sephardim, the importance of honor is very similar to that of King Ahasverus. It is more common that investigation will be halted due to family pressure than reasons of Jewishness. Let me share a story that illustrates this point.

Paul, a Persian Jewish man in his mid-20's, had been a believer for about a year. During that time, he was meeting with a co-worker of mine, Stan Meyer, for discipleship. Paul had recently moved out his parents' house and was regularly attending church and active in his faith. One afternoon, Paul set up an appointment for his mother and sister to meet Stan at a coffee shop near their home. Paul's mother, obviously upset at Paul, asked Stan for two things. First that Stan would convince Paul to move back home and work for his father. This was not a problem, but in the course of the conversation, Stan mentioned that Paul would need to continue attending church and remain active in his faith. His mother stopped Stan in mid-sentence. She said that was no good. Paul could believe, that was no problem. He would remain Jewish. Going to church however, was an entirely

different matter. When Stan asked why, the mother responded that Paul's father said no. 'Paul can't go to church,' She explained 'If he disobeys his father's request, it brings shame on the family. While Paul is not married he must listen to his father. It is our tradition that the son listens to his father.' Just then, Paul's sister came into the conversation and said "If Paul does this I will never marry. You don't want me to die a virgin do you?" Aside from the theatrics, the problem that Paul's family had was not a questions of Jewishness, but that of family obligation. For Paul and many others like him, family plays a much greater role in deciding matters of faith than in many Ashkenazi Jewish families.

Suggestion: With family pressure and obligation as it is, perhaps there is validity in exploring evangelism directed to the household rather than exclusively to the individual. Biblically we see both methods of evangelism in use. The Sephardi family mentality may require a model that many of us, including myself, have not experienced much in North America. I am not endorsing this, but I do think that an approach targeting the "household" is worthy of our consideration and further exploration.

There is a great pride in Sephardi culture. Throughout the Sephardic Jewish community, there is a

feeling of great pride in their unique heritage. Sephardim have long felt the pressure to assimilate into the European Jewish community, something that many Sephardi Jews have done. Today, the North American Jewish community is in a new era that accepts Jewish diversity rather than quelling it. Sephardim are gaining a voice to express their unique expression of Jewish identity. Yet, there still remains a skepticism that many Sephardim hold when it comes to receiving an equal place in the Jewish community. This pride in Sephardi heritage is seen vividly in attending a service at New York City's Shereth Israel congregation.

Upon entering the Synagogue, you are met with a reminder that this is the first and oldest congregation in America, founded in 1695. The Upper West Side building is new. The first structure housing the congregation was built on Mill St. in Lower Manhattan. As you make your way through the building, the walls boast of the Sephardi contributions to Jewish life in America. Names appear like Edie Gorme, Neil Sedaka, and Nathan Cordozo. Men wearing top hats and tuxedos speak to each other in Ladino, a Jewish dialect of Spanish. The service is high and the Hazan sounds more like a professional opera singer than a cantor. The formality and sense of

majesty pervades everything done.

Suggestion: We have much to say to this small segment of the Jewish community because we too are a minority. Though we are not motivated by gaining validation by the Jewish community, affirming the unique heritage among Sephardim will go a long way in developing a good witnessing opportunity. By recognizing the richness of Sephardi culture, we open a door for witness.

4. Language, dress, food, and music are all different and unique.

We know what it is like having food done wrong. With Passover coming up, you may have memories of a matzah ball that is more closely resembled a golf ball? What if, however, the food on your plate was something completely different that you are familiar with? Our family ate Mugag, Hamid, and falliya – all Jewish foods! Cultural expressions like food, dress, language, liturgy, music and the like are what define a group. The Sephardim have wonderful and very exotic traditions. Traditions that have long been overshadowed by the European definition of Jewishness. When we talk about 'Jewish music' for example, many of us think of Klesmer. The mail order catalogue 'The Source for Everything Jewish' has a severe lack of anything

Sephardic! Foreign or strange traditions have been dismissed by saying, "Oh, that must be Sephardic." I can't express to you enough how important these elements are to Sephardic Jews. Let me give you a sense of this richness by listing a few different cultural expressions:

In Yemenite Jewish tradition, in addition to wearing a Talit, many Jewish homes had a fringed garment framed on the walls of their houses. The book of Numbers, in speaking about fringes on garments, says "And it shall be a tassel [fringe] for you to look at ..." Yemenite families, in an attempt to obey this mitzvah, thought of a unique way to look at the fringe. Many families put a fringed garment on the wall, so that whenever you go into a room, you would look at the garment and thus fulfill the mitzvah.

Spanish Jewish communities living in Mexico and the American Southwest will eat soup made of bread, water and salt before a funeral. The day of the funeral, they will fast. It is considered a way for the mourner to show respect for the person who recently passed away. Meat, fruit, and other tasty foods are not eaten near the time of the funeral. Doing so would be considered ostentatious and inappropriate.

In Iraq, all weddings were arranged. The betrothed couple was not allowed to

spend time together alone. Before the wedding, the bride to be would receive gifts of fruit and home made sweets on Purim from her husband's family. It was traditional to give 2 gold coins at a wedding. Instead of wearing a ring, the woman would wear golden bracelets of her ankles.

These practices tell us that not all Jews do things the same way. Is one way more Jewish than another? No, of course not. The form that many of these traditions take is as varied as the places where Jews live.

Suggestion: If your orientation is geared to reach only Ashkenazi Jews, try and broaden your focus. Don't assume that "yiddishkeit" equals Jewishness. Not all Jews are familiar with Yiddish or the 'New York Jewish' culture. My family spoke Arabic, Hindi, Hebrew, and Aramaic! Creativity and thoughtfulness is needed to explore and understand these Jewish cultures. As we do so, I believe that it will result in increased witnessing encounters.

5. Sephardim, particularly Jews from Arab lands, have a strong connection to Israel.

Recent immigrants to North America (less than 25 years) have a strong connection to Israel as the center of the Jewish world. Many speak Hebrew, have large families in Israel and feel connected through a common culture.

Israel is a country whose population is over half Sephardic. It is reasonable therefore that Sephardic Jews will have a greater affinity to Israel than Jews who have lived in North America for a longer period of time. Ashkenazim may refer to Brooklyn as "the old country." The Sephardim do not have the same immigrant experience. Often Sephardi Jews did not come through Ellis Island, they never lived on the Lower East Side, and didn't live through the history that took place in those years. As a result, Israel is the heart of the Sephardic world.

Suggestion: Learning and using Hebrew in our witness to Sephardic Jews is very helpful. Yiddish expressions do a great job in helping the Bible come to life, but only for those who to whom Yiddish is familiar. Sephardi Jews will respond much quicker to a Hebrew expression, even if they do not speak with language.

Through this paper, I've introduced you to some of the difficulty in defining the Sephardim. I have given you a brief history of North American Sephardic life and then tried to point out some unique aspects of Sephardi Jewish culture that require a unique missions approach. Let me now give you 3 applications that you can use in your ministry now. First, in your seminars about Jewish evangelism, include a segment on Sephardim. Talk about their differences and

discuss them on the same level of importance as the European Jews many are familiar with. Mention them as distinct and an important consideration in witnessing encounters. Second, hold a Sephardic holiday celebration. We have just finished celebrating Purim; a holiday set in Persia. Wouldn't it be great to have a Purim party where all the food, music, and other elements were Persian. Every Jewish holiday has ample room to include elements of Sephardi Jewish tradition. It doesn't take much – a word here and there will gain you credibility in the eyes of the Sephardim in attendance. And third, get a hold of a book on Sephardi Jewish life. You may want to even make this required reading for your staff and new trainees. I have included a reading list that you can use as a reference. All of the books are readily available at either a bookstore or a college library.

When I look at the Jewish community in North America, I see different groups. I'm afraid that by in large we as missionaries, have only seen one. The Sephardim are vastly under represented in the body of believers. My hope is that this paper will produce a more effective witness to the Sephardim. A thoughtful and diligent study of methods in reaching the entire scope of the Jewish people must include a plan of action to reach the

Sephardim. I hope that this paper helps you develop such a plan.

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 2. Bernardete, Mair Jose, *Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews*, New York: Sepher Hermon Press, 1982.
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 4. Elazar, Daniel, *The Other Jews*, New York: Basic Books Inc., 1989.
- If you are going to read one book this is the one. The numbers he gives in terms of demographics are somewhat outdated, but this is the best overview of the whole subject of Sephardim.
5. Goldberg, Harvey, *Sephardi and Middle-East*

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Notes:

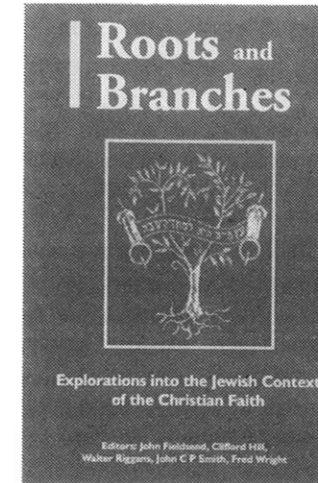
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2. "Sephardic", *Websters Collegiate Dictionary*, 1983.
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4. Lev. 26:33.
5. I choose not use the term *Marrano* because its use was derogatory in referring to Jews.
6. Bernardete, Mair Jose, *Hispanic Culture and*

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 12. Gino, Alisa Meyuhas ed., *Jews Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean world after 1492*, Portland: Frank Cass, 1992. Article by Abraham Lavender, "The Sephardic Revival," Pg. 311.

Don't miss the Sixth International LCJE Conference 12-17 August 1999 at Hofstra University, Long Island, New York. Registration now and until 15 June 1999. See page 2.

Book Review

Roots and Branches: Explorations into the Jewish Context of the Christian Faith By Theresa Newell, Shores Ministries, USA



Roots and Branches: Explorations into the Jewish Context of the Christian Faith (1998).
Published by the Prophetic Word Ministries Trust and The Centre for Biblical and Hebraic Studies, The Park, Moggerhanger, Bedford, MK44 3RW, UK.
Fax: 44-1767-641515.

Reading a collection of well-annotated essays around a given topic is a bit like sampling cuisine at a smorgasbord where, say, "fish" is the theme. All of it tastes good but there is also a subtle and sometimes not so subtle variety. That is assuming you are a fishophile! So for those for whom Second Temple

period history, the Jewishness of Jesus, the New Testament in context, Messianic Judaism, and related topics are of interest, this book will be a goodly feast. You may find yourself challenged and sometimes jotting notes with question marks in the margins. You may learn more from some essays than others, depending on what you bring to the topic and some pieces will interest you more than others, I would guess. Like the smorgasbord, you can pick and choose selectively. Reading *Roots and Branches* had a little of the feel of listening to a few days' worth of challenging papers being read at a typical LCJE conference. Challenging, stimulating.

A work done in love and as a tribute to a good friend's life is pleasing in the Lord's sight. While this is not a direct quote from Proverbs or the Talmud, the words came to mind as I digested this recently published book. The book is a compilation of essays by well-known biblical scholars and "Jewish roots" theologians who were colleagues of the late David Forbes. Forbes, founder of The Centre for Biblical and

Hebraic Studies in England, would have undoubtedly relished every page of this thoughtfully written collection by his friends on the subject which interested him most. "Nothing gave him [Forbes] greater joy than to be searching for new understanding of some passage in the Bible and looking for cross-references or historical and cultural contextualisation," the introduction states.

While the theme of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith runs throughout this Forbes tribute, the editors confess that they had trouble organizing the individual essays in the most coherent pattern and disclaim that they always agreed with all points in the essays. Having said that, I believe they achieved in this publication not only a worthy and apt commemorative to their friend but also a timely challenge for further scholarly discussion on each of the essays' topics.

The editors chose three topical divisions each of which contain three essays: Jesus in his Hebraic Setting; The Developing Faith; and, The Growing Tree. Trying to give the book cohesion was

Book Review

an admitted challenge. I would have been tempted to put Brad Young's essay, "Jesus, the Son of Man, and the Temple," between Fieldsend's work on Jesus and Paul and Frankovic's discussion of "The Kingdom of Heaven" based on Young's thoughts on Paul and how to live between "the already and the not yet" promises of Scripture. However, the editors' trinitarian arrangement worked as well as any and adds a bit of rabbinic mystique by weaving "three groups of three" right into the Table of Contents! I wondered if that idea come into the editors' debates. Beginning with three essays by colleagues at the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research – Bivin, Pryor, and Young – sets a strong "Jewish roots" theme for the collection that follows. While this school has revived a most needed area of biblical research, the debate over details which at root are Christological may have just begun among scholars. Some arguments are more speculative and matters of historical detail (did Jesus wear tefillin?) and some weightier issues (was Jesus a first century rabbinic sage who simply brought "innovations" to Judaism, [as Bivin contends on page 53], or was it a "revolution" which He launched?). Pryor

surfaces the debate of the historical Jesus with Jesus' own question, "Who do the crowds say I am?" His conclusion is that God Himself answers the question at the Transfiguration event (with all its Siniatic allusions) in Luke 9:35-36. Young looks at the introduction of "Son of Man" in the seventh chapter of Daniel with special reference to the history of the Jewish Temples, past and possible future ones. His reflections on 2 Thessalonians and Revelation as well as current Jewish thought on the coming of Messiah are good beginning points for further discussion and research.

I found myself making up my own categories as I read the book. The essay which fit my "most intriguing title" spot was Fred Wright's contribution, "The Priesthood of James, the Brother of Jesus." He cites two books published in 1997 on James which have brought this topic to the fore. Wright and others quilt together information from Acts 15, the testimonia of a second century Jewish believer Hegesippus, Josephus, and early church history texts (Tertullian, Eusebius, Clement and Jerome). Wright gives six possible scenarios which could tie these bits together about James and any relationship

this brother of Jesus might have had to the priesthood and discloses the one he finds most probable. A footnote I expected but didn't find in the Wright piece was F.F. Bruce's *The Spreading Flame* (The Paternoster Press, 1958, pp. 147-158), which presents this noted biblical scholar's discussion on the place of James in the early Jerusalem church. (Bruce contends that any thought of James exercising priestly functions and having the right to enter into the sanctuary proper is "the most obvious legendary embellishment," contra Wright). Also, I would add Dr Kenneth Bailey's works to Wright's footnote 50 re. the proof of the accuracy of transmitted oral history in the Middle East. Tied for the "essay with the most 'buy this new book' notes in the margins" category were John Fieldsend's and Walter Riggans' articles. (Riggans also wins the prize for the most [95] annotations). Their essays review two major topics of Jewish/Christian polemics, respectively: "From Jesus to Paul" and "Messianic Jews and the Definition of Jewishness." Plowing through subjects about which much has already been written and still saying something fresh and thoughtful is difficult. However, Fieldsend (Forbes' successor at The Centre)

and Riggans (known to many as author of a number of titles on the Jewishness of Jesus and Messianic Judaism), succeed on both counts. Both give clear reviews of the literature to date, clarifying (in the form of earlier misinterpretations, lack of precise nomenclature, or missing information) as they go.

Fieldsend cites N. T. Wright's two books, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (1991) and *What St. Paul Really Said* (1997) as the first "really radical thinking" on the topic of Jesus and Paul since E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* which, since its publication in 1977, "has become for many the benchmark by which all other work is judged." Fieldsend's bottom line question: Did Paul truly understand and faithfully interpret Jesus to the churches he founded and nurtured? (and, by implication, upending the popularly accepted teaching that Paul found Christianity, leaving the Palestinian Jesus behind?) Fieldsend also asks the hard questions which touch on Sanders' terms "covenantal nomism" for Palestinian Judaism and "participationist eschatology", a description of Paul's religion. Fieldsend calls for a closer re-examination of the Greek of Ephesians 2:11-13 and 3:6 and challenges scholars to think through the exact meaning of how Jews

and Gentiles are reconciled to God. Both are saved by the cross to be sure, but one (Jews) by way of fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and the other (Gentiles) by being brought into that same covenant by a "transfer." Riggans examines the complexities around the topic of today's Messianic Judaism and the definition of "who is a Jew?" By giving a synopsis of the four most important legal cases of Jewish believers who have sought Israeli citizenship in recent decades, Riggans brings the reader up to date on the basic data. More importantly he challenges Christian readers (Jewish and Gentile) to read how various Jewish "denominations" view a Jewish person who becomes a believer in Yeshua and the internal (to the Jewish community) questions this change poses. Is such a person a heretic? An apostate? Is the halakic definition of "who is a Jew?" to be used in answering the question of granting Israeli citizenship or is the secular/Zionist definition? This in the face of the fact that Israel's Supreme Court, before whom these trials have been heard, split on their votes based on difference of definitions and for various other divergent reasons? While Riggans can give no certain answer to the question of whether or when Messianic Jews will ever be accepted by the Jewish community at large as Jews,

he documents the complexities of the issue and the "on-the-other-hand" arguments within various legal and religious notions internal to both communities. Riggans begins his essay by setting forth "at least six major and complex historical factors" surrounding the definition of Jewishness. To these he adds a seventh: that since the late 60's an increasing number of Jewish people have become involved with various religious faiths others than Judaism. Pay attention to the footnotes on this one for current bibliography on the subject. Fieldsend's and Riggans' essays characterize the book's challenge to its readers to do further studies in all the topics introduced in this 250 page volume.

By way of minor criticism, I was a bit jarred by the inconsistencies from essay to essay of Hebrew spelling of transliterated words, of English/American spellings, of footnoting markings, and capitalizations. Letting a particular essay stand as submitted coming from different continents makes this particularly challenging for editors. But this is a small complaint over a presentation which not only would have pleased David Forbes, the man it set out to honor, but which will forward the very research to which he dedicated his life.