

## **Borough Park Symposium**

### **Keruv as Guiding Principle for Proclamation of the Good News**

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Strategies and methods will always be the outcome of specific worldviews. Let me illustrate what this means. Before the destruction of Gush Katif, leading rabbis proclaimed: "היו אל תהיה" (it shall never happen).<sup>1</sup> This false prophecy was based upon a certain worldview that assumes a God who operates according to predictable patterns. The strategy and the methods resulting from it were: Since they have God on their side, all the would-be evacuees had to do was to hug their opponents, or as their slogan said: "we have love and it shall win." This was a strategy of compliance rather than resistance. The result of that strategy was a resounding failure.

Now, if present strategies of the proclamation of the Good News and the methods resulting from them are to be understood, we must try to understand what shapes the present and prevalent Messianic Jewish worldview. Only after such a process wherein we are rigorously honest with ourselves and willing to be vulnerable – even to the point of discomfort – can present existing strategies be truly identified and examined for their actual value.

The following is my attempt to explain through my own personal experience, ongoing studies and convictions, how present strategies of proclamation were shaped. I will then evaluate them and suggest alternatives; and here I'd like to call attention to the following: though the descriptions below happened in Israel, much of this could easily be applied to the North American scene as well as to Europe and the former Soviet Union, with only minor modifications. In this regard, Israel is part of contemporary Western culture – these observations fit perfectly.

### **Scenes that Shape the Messianic Jewish Worldviews**

When I came to faith in 1980, those who welcomed me and nurtured me in my new faith were two Mennonite missionaries who were allowed to conduct services in an Anglican Church. This scene that welcomed me was anything but Jewish. At the time, I could care less. I was raised in a secular Kibbutz and was soaked with anti-religious sentiments. My lack of interest in Judaism and my new zeal for Jesus made me easy prey.

Enthusiastically, I drank from the wells of Christianity. My sources of inspiration were Christian figures and Christian books. I familiarized myself with the biography of James Hudson Taylor and the meditations of Oswald Chambers. For the first time in my life, I heard names like Wesley, Spurgeon, Stott. My teachers, preachers and spiritual leaders weren't Jewish, could hardly speak Hebrew, had no appreciation for Jewish thought and had but little knowledge of Jewish history. Unaware, and out of my new devotion to Jesus, during the 1980s I became a Protestant Christian – *de facto* if not *de jure*. Though this happened to me in the 1980s, similar experiences continue to dominate the "conversion scene" today.

Yet there are some differences between then and now. In the past, Israelis came to faith through sporadic missionary activity carried out by either professional Protestant missionaries or by enthusiastic Evangelicals who came to Israel mainly from England and North America. Today, many of the Israelis come to faith either through Israeli friends or through Israeli missionary-oriented activities. Still, many continue to come to faith

(repentance should I say) by encountering Christians – missionaries or not. The result is a steady, albeit slow, increase in the numbers of "Messianic Jews" (a term used here in the broadest possible sense, meaning Jews who believe that Yeshua is the Messiah).

In the past, leadership was largely held by Christian missionaries. Today leadership is predominantly held by American Jews, American "wannabe" Jews and American Christians. Where Jewish Israelis are in leadership, they have received their education, if they have any, in Christian institutions either in North America or Great Britain. In addition, with the influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, Russian-speaking people began to establish new congregations and assume leadership positions in existing congregations. Yet, though names of people and organizations have changed, in essence, present-day leadership is operating in the same way as their missionary predecessors did. Though now Hebrew is the spoken language in most places, modes of operation and models of leadership that grew out of Evangelical worldviews are still dominating the scene.

In the past, there were few indigenous Israelis in the various congregations. Today, their growing numbers have been a catalyst that fuels a Jewish self-awareness which was unseen before. Israelis who come to faith face an identity crisis in the status quo – existing Hebrew-speaking Evangelical congregations. Most suppress their frustrations. A few are beginning to express their faith in Jewish terms – not as a missionary ploy but out of an existential need and a sense of integrity.

In the past, most Israelis came from secular backgrounds and were the only ones of their family who accepted Yeshua. Today, second-generation Messianic Jews tend to follow their parents' convictions; they prefer contemporary secular Israeli values (Right-wing liberals) over the values of Israeli religious communities. There are many second-generation Israeli believers, particularly children of mixed marriages, who still feel more at home with the Christian community than with Israeli society. Today, as it was before, most new believers are young (20 to 30), from secular backgrounds and with no university education.

In the past, Israelis in general thought that Messianic Jews were simply converts to Christianity. The general attitude toward them was a complete lack of appreciation or incomprehension, to say the least. Now, the general public seems to accept the fact that there are those Jews who believe in Jesus – and that's okay. There are two primary reasons for the change of attitude. Messianic Jews now fulfill their national duties. They are law-abiding loyal citizens who serve in the army – some in elite units. But the change of attitude is largely due to the expansion of post-modern ideologies. Secular Israeli society sees value in accepting, and even elevating, oppressed minority groups. Liberal values of human rights and democracy steer secular Israelis toward accepting Messianic Jews even when they don't like what Messianic Judaism represents. At the same time, religious Jews of all shades are maintaining the traditional negative attitude toward Jesus-believing Jews.

In the past Israeli believers had a sense of unity because they were few in number and did not question the validity of the Christian beliefs bestowed upon them. In the 1980s, Passover conferences organized by young Israeli believers were able to draw hundreds from all over Israel. Today however, the Messianic community is far from being united. For the most part, division runs along Christian denominational lines. There are also divisions for purely personal reasons. However, the most significant division is that which runs across religions. What characterizes Messianic Jews in Israel is that, though they are called Jews, in practice they resemble Western Christianity in

every way. This is why, for example, most Messianic Jews don't care about mixed marriages; and even see value in intermarriage – providing the spouse is a "believer" (based upon Galatians 3:28: "there is neither Jew nor Greek.")

Against this trend there are those who think that loyalty to Yeshua must also mean loyalty to Judaism (in one form or another). This creates a profound division, so much so that one must talk about *two* communities of Messianic Jews. This division transcends mere theological differences in that those who express some form of fidelity to Judaism are viewed by many as heretics, plain and simple. From the other side, there are those "religious Messianic Jews" who tend to view "Christian Jews" through the traditional Jewish lens. The result is that there is hardly any dialogue between the two groups. Presently, those Messianic Jews who adopted the beliefs of Western Christianity are the overwhelming majority.

The dominance of this group can easily be seen through the way Israelis are drawn to the different conferences organized by Charismatic congregations and organizations. In contrast, those who seek to establish deep and meaningful affiliation with Judaism can hardly gather a minyan (10 Jewish men) for a prayer.

### **Outlining the Way "Mission" Is Viewed**

The facts described above make it easier to outline the present dominating worldview of most Messianic Jews concerning what the "Mission" is. Again, taking the risk of presenting myself as a "typical" Messianic Jew, I encountered an enthusiastic young man from the American Charismatic movement who presented Jesus to me in simple terms: he is the one who can save me from the apocalyptic vision of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. But whatever the personal circumstances may have been, upon accepting Jesus, I began to learn the Bible from people who themselves were trained in a particular form of Christianity. Therefore, even with their genuine love toward Israel, they could only teach me what they knew, and what they knew wasn't even remotely Jewish.

Yet, and this is where the difficulty begins, I wasn't aware of the fact that I had been ushered into a particular brand of Christianity. I was told that I was getting the pure "truth." The result was that in addition to my genuine repentance experience, my entire worldview began to be shaped in the image of that of my teachers. In particular, I started to see the world as divided into two groups of people: the good guys – the "believers" and the bad guys – the "non-believers." Among the "bad guys" were, of course, the Catholics and any other Protestant denominations that did not cater to my newly acquired Evangelical mindset. In this tightly knit scheme I viewed the "non-believing" Jews in the same way I viewed any other infidel, be they Muslims, Presbyterians or Buddhists.

And into this new world of mine came also the idea of "evangelism" – a word not found in the Jewish vernacular. Evangelism, as I understood it, meant telling others that Yeshua is the Messiah. The action of the telling itself became of paramount importance to me because of the particular meaning given to the familiar verse, "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The first thing I learned from that verse was that of the few new commandments Jesus gave, this was probably the most important. The highest achievement of any "believer" is to convince others that Jesus is the Messiah. The more people you "bring to the Lord," the better you are in the eyes of God. It is not surprising that the new role

models I was adopting were the great English missionaries of the 19th century. I use the term "missionaries" here, though in actuality I was trained to think of two kinds of missionaries. The worse kind were those Catholic missionaries who did all sorts of bad things to the people they wished to convert. The good kind of missionaries were those who were willing to dress up like Chinese or live in the jungles to convince the heathens that the good Lord is a true gentleman.

The second thing I learned from that verse was this: a "true believer" is the one who thinks like you. To turn one into a "believer" meant turning one into a good Evangelical (as it was in my case). Less than that result meant that something was not working out properly in the process of conversion. If, God forbid, one has decided to become a Lutheran, it meant that he wasn't really saved.

The third thing I learned from that verse was that to be completely and absolutely saved, a would-be "believer" had to dress up in white and get himself "immersed," not baptized, by a "spiritual leader" who will dip him in water, back first, and say: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Anything less than that, if one had water sprinkled over him by a priest or was baptized only in the name of Jesus, his baptism was good for nothing and he was yet to become a true believer.

Being convinced of the absolute importance of evangelism, based on what I was taught, I formed a nice, portable, sound bite of this "good news." In a nutshell (and it was always presented in a nutshell because I had to present it while standing on one foot as it were), the "Mission" was to deliver this piece of good news:

Jesus is the one promised by the Old Testament's prophets to save all people from their sins. The wages of sin is death and all men sin. But, Jesus' blood has the power to atone for the sins of those who believe that he is Messiah and God. Those who believe that and that he died and rose from the dead are granted forgiveness through God's grace. The "believers" are joined into one Body of Messiah, also called *Ecclesia*. The "believers" are the only ones to escape God's wrath and are going to enjoy eternal life. In this Body, Jews and Gentiles are united in brotherly love made possible through abolishing divisions of religion, gender and ethnicity. Those who are part of the body are the only ones who serve God in spirit and truth. Therefore, only those who are in the *Ecclesia* are empowered by the Holy Spirit to understand and do God's will.

When I shared this good news with people, the general response was bewilderment rather than the expected hostility. Family members, friends, colleagues and innocent bystanders looked at me in a funny way while they desperately tried to figure out what in the world I was talking about. Generally speaking, while everybody knew something about Yeshu, no one ever heard of Yeshua. Secular friends did not know what to do with sacrifice and religious acquaintances couldn't figure out how Moses managed to disappear from my grand picture.

At first I attributed the bewilderment to "spiritual blindness" and "fat hearts" but slowly I began to realize that they genuinely couldn't understand what was so good about my news. Armed with my newly formed evangelical worldview, I did not even think about the possibility of flaws in my presentation. How could there be flaws if I received the truth straight from heaven's representatives on earth?

But, as I now turn to explain, as far as Jews are concerned, my version of the good news lacked the "good" part of the "news." The most obvious element lacking from that version of the good news was Israel's unique relationship with God. Though the vast majority of Messianic Jews agree that the Jewish people are important, they don't really know what to do with them. After all, if there is a New Covenant, Jews, along with everybody else, need to join the New Israel (which looks suspiciously like the same Western Christianity from which this notion has been birthed). In this kind of worldview,

Jews are viewed like any other people. They are like the Zulu, French or Tamil. The only difference is that they once had a glorious past. But after the Ecclesia (also known as Church) was created by Jesus, individual Jews are called to join the Church, just like everybody else. The "Willowbank Declaration" that defines the LCJE's approach to "Mission" says it clearly (Lausanne Consultation for Jewish Evangelism, where not a few Jewish missions and organizations are represented):

We affirm that much of Judaism, in its various forms, throughout contemporary Israel and today's Diaspora, is a development out of, rather than as an authentic embodiment of, the faith, love and hope, that the Hebrew Scriptures teach. We deny that modern Judaism with its explicit negation of the divine person, work, and Messiah-ship of Jesus Christ contains within itself true knowledge of God's salvation (article III.14.).

In this kind of message, Jesus becomes the forfeiter of the very covenant Jews were willing to die for and not break. And in this regard, all Messianic Jews should remember that all Jews who live today owe their lives to their forefathers' obedience to that covenant that gives them their God-given identity.

So if you are Jewish, what is so good about news which announces that the "Old Covenant" went up in smoke more than 2000 years ago? If you are a Jew who cares about these things, the prospect of a wholesale abandonment of the covenant and people is simply horrendous. Little wonder that such news attracts mostly Jews from secular background. These were the people who at first did not care about such things as a covenant. Yet even they, with their wounded understanding, cannot comprehend a gospel that calls for their demise. This is why even those who insist on calling themselves "Jewish Christians" will not consider erasing the word "Jewish" from this bewildered term.

To summarize: the worldview that shaped the concept of "Mission" which I initially adopted resembled in many ways the classic (even orthodox) Christian worldview. Where the good news is concerned, I saw the Jewish religion in a typical Christian fashion – a pharisaic-legalistic-outdated religion that resents true spirituality. My version of the gospel did not have a place for Judaism or for Jews as a religious entity. I thought that the New Covenant was a total and clean break from the Old Covenant with its outdated Law. My good news called for *sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura* and *solus Christus* as is usually understood. This was my worldview out of which came my good news' proclamation strategy and methods.

### **Contemporary Strategy and Methods of Good News Proclamation**

From the above descriptions it should come as no surprise that the most prevalent contemporary strategy for the proclamation of the good news among Messianic Jews relies heavily upon the 19th century Protestant models of "Mission," particularly the English Missions out of which missionaries like Christian Friedrich (Joseph Samuel) Frey, Adolf Saphir and Paul Levertoff came.

As it had before, today Messianic Jewish Mission activity relies upon Christian theology just as it depends upon Christian resources. Until today, a missionary has always been a paid professional who spreads the version of the good news that he learned from his particular Church (Anglican if you are English, Lutheran if you are German etc.). This means that each mission organization is not truly independent but reflects the theology of those who support it theologically and financially. In the case of Jewish mission organizations, the money that sustains these organizations comes primarily from Protestants whose views toward Jewish Mission is more or less the same as it was before.<sup>ii</sup> Practically it means that to sustain their activity, Jewish mission

organizations form their identity and activity around Christian parameters. So for example, though today many Christians are in favor of "Jewish expression of faith in Yeshua the Messiah," their tacit expectation is that it will be done in a way that conforms to the basic tenets of Christianity.

Turning to "strategies," "methods" and "effectiveness" of our "proclamation," it should be clear by now that these marked words which initiate our discussion are heavily Christian. "Mission," as was said above, is not simply a word that reiterates Yeshua's command. Rather, "Mission" is a term loaded with presupposed ideas about what the Good News to the Jewish people is. So to repeat, the present-day sense of "Mission":

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. ... evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. ... Jesus still calls all who would follow him to ... identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world (Lausanne Covenant).

To implement this grand vision, the basic strategy is for every "true believer" to do whatever possible by peaceful means to convince every living Jew that Jesus is the Messiah. This strategy is supposed to be implemented through roughly three methods: proliferation of written and verbal "proof texts" that Jesus is the Messiah, adaptation of some form of "Jewish life style" and establishing "good witness."

The distribution of "proof texts" is done primarily by means of a "tract" that can be verbal or written. This "tract" is designed in such a way that it can be delivered quickly and indiscriminately to as many people as possible so that they will immediately learn about the possibility that Jesus is the promised Jewish Messiah. This narrow focus of "tract" distribution does not allow for any nuances, nor can it; the tract and its messenger are forced to present a cryptic version of "good news."

The second item of the strategy entails the adaptation of some kind of Jewish life-style. Its purpose is to better convince "non-believing Jews" that Jesus is not against but for (Messianic) Jews. This method includes not only the use of religious artifacts and costumes but also the use of Jewish religious texts. The last one was disgracefully used in the disputations of the Middle Ages by converted Jews; and there are modern examples of that approach as well. Those who use it operate under the assumption that it serves the grand purpose of the proclamation if they will do as Paul supposedly did: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews" (1Cor. 9:20). There is much to be said about this kind of approach; the least is that it is dishonest and attributes dishonesty to Paul.

The third method that is now gaining much favor is that of "good witness." Samples of a good witness include anything from joining the Israeli army to running an honest business and having a good marriage. Donating money to "non-believing" Jewish organizations, which is now gaining popularity, is an example of this "good witness" approach. The underlying assumption here is that "good witness," or living according to a particular understanding of the teaching of the New Testament, has the power of persuasion and conviction.

These three methods do not exhaust all modalities, but it does seem that almost all other methods employed today are coming out of them (these will include Bible studies, home groups, public debates, web pages, books, articles, use of public media and so

on). In addition, it should be remembered that every method used today is culturally and legally permissible. Mission activists use these to their advantage under an umbrella of Western liberal values such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech and human rights that are embodied in laws protecting the same. Today the proclamation of the Good News to the Jewish people is possible in an unprecedented scale due to the modern, even post-modern, understanding of democracy. Ironically, the worldview that calls for gay rights also allows for mission activity (at least for now). The use of democracy for the advance of Jewish mission presents an enormous ethical problem since by depending on it, mission activists cannot deny, for example, the right of Muslims for peaceful Jihad.

### **Keruv as an Alternative to "Mission"**

What was described up to this point – and it should be clear by now – is that in truth, much of what calls itself Messianic Judaism in fact resembles an exotic Christian sect rather than a Jewish one. One can argue until blue in the face that the Israeli Supreme Court was wrong when in 1989 it reached the decision that Messianic Jews are people who belong to another religion. Yet the judges were no fools. Long ago the Jewish people had reached a decisive decision to reject the kind of good news described above. They refused the Gospel which in the name of Jesus called them to convert to another religion. They refused the gospel which in the name of Jesus called them to break their unique covenant with God. They refused the Gospel that forced them to identify with the culture of their historical oppressors. They refused the Gospel which called them to compromise monotheism and reject Talmud, Tradition and their cherished customs.

In the new worldview that has been forming inside me for more than 10 years, I now say: the Jewish people had and still have every possible right to continue to reject this version of the Good News. No sane Jew is willing to forfeit the welfare of his people for the sake of his own personal destiny. This kind of an approach is traditionally called betrayal, and rightly so. Paul was willing to be cut off from the Messiah for the sake of his people. The history of Messianic Jews sadly shows the opposite pattern; more often than not, they quickly adopt the worldview of their former oppressors. Of the few glaring exceptions is the forgotten, misunderstood and tragic figure of Stanislaus Hoga. Hoga, a Polish-born Jew, immigrated to England in the 1820s to work with the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews. Only after helping Alexander McCaul to write the *Old Paths* – a severe attack on the Talmud and Judaism, he realized how damaging the activity of his day's mission societies was. At a heavy personal price, Hoga left his former friends and re-entered the Jewish fold.<sup>iii</sup> Of his former colleagues he said: "they love the Jews so much that they live upon nothing but Jews."<sup>iv</sup>

Strategies and methods amount to very little if they are based upon questionable worldviews. Israel's mighty army accomplished very little in Lebanon War II because the IDF worldview didn't have within it elements like "decisive victory." The same is true with the Good News. Who could tell how much money and human effort were spent over the last decade alone in the relentless attempt to save the Jews? Some say that one billion dollars and countless numbers of people, from professional missionaries to simple folks, were attempting to "spread the good news" in multiple ways. Yet with so much effort, the results are still very much arguable.

The reason for such poor results, as I have tried to explain, is that it does not really matter what strategies we devise and what methods we employ so long as the Messianic Jewish "Mission" is to even insinuate the alteration of Judaism as we know it

today. As long as this will continue to be our predominant sense of mission, Messianic Jews will insure the continued rejection of the Good News by the vast majority of the Jewish people.

Instead of this traditional "Mission" approach with its "proclamation of alienation," Messianic Jews should consider replacing it with the "proclamation of Keruv." Keruv is a Hebrew word that comes from Karov, "near." Keruv is a mission to call Jews to draw nearer to God, first by familiarity to their own religion and tradition. The Jewish people, as taught by Yeshua, cannot comprehend the Good News apart from Moses (Jn. 5:46). Bringing the Good News outside of such context is what turns Keruv to "Mission." Accordingly, real keruv has in it elements of reassurance and hope for the Jews as people under covenant.

In his little-known book, *A New Vision for Israel*, Scott McKnight restores the worldview which can enable to bring in keruv rather than alienation. The good news of Jesus, says McKnight, is that he came to restore national Israel:

The most important context in which modern interpreters should situate Jesus is that of ancient Jewish nationalism and Jesus' conviction that Israel had to repent to avoid national disaster. Jesus' hope was not so much the "Church" as the restoration of the twelve tribes ..., the fulfillment of the promises of Moses to national Israel, and the hope of God's kingdom" (p. 10).

According to this understanding, the Good News that the kingdom of God is at hand, and indeed has arrived, is necessarily linked to national Israel's restoration. This being the case, today's national Israel that is called to enter the Kingdom can be identified only through Jewish Tradition (Judaism). It goes without saying therefore that any proclamation that seeks to tamper with the Jewish identity inevitably finds itself at odds with the idea of the restoration of national Israel,<sup>v</sup> and because of it, with Israel as an identifiable, unified entity that enters as such into the kingdom.

Keruv therefore means first and foremost that the proclamation is done by trustworthy Jews. In this way, the methods of "proof texts," "Jewish life style," and "good witness," comes into play, but from an entirely different angle; it becomes a state of being rather than a method, or a tactic (only) to "win people for Christ." Living as Jews as an existential statement is what turns the "proof text," the "tract" from a method to a living thing. After all, didn't the apostle call us to be a living epistle, a living "tract" rather than using scripture verses as a kind of weapon? Understand what I am and am not saying: these methods listed before should not be simply discarded. What I am saying is that ideas such as "good witness," "proof texts" and "Jewish life style" should become for Messianic Jews a complete, integral, honest state of being rather than tactical maneuvers.

So again, to outline the idea of Keruv more clearly, the "strategy" for our proclamation of the good news (as defined by us) is to live first of all as trustworthy Jews. This can be achieved only if Messianic Jews come to the conclusion that upon the existence of the Jewish people rests the redemption of the world. "The world exists because of Israel since it is written: 'Thus says the LORD: If it had not been for my covenant, I have not established day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth.'"<sup>vi</sup> The Messianic Jewish Good News concerning this is that Israel without Yeshua is only a shadow of what it ought to be.

Trustworthy Jews do not despise, ridicule or even hate their religion. "Love the Jews but reject their religion" is an intolerable approach. The Gospel that publically proclaims statements such as "the rabbis are our worse enemies," "the Siddur is poison," "Tefilin, I spit on it," is a Gospel of hate. And it is almost beyond belief to hear a little girl saying

she should "throw the Siddur into the garbage cause that's what mom told me I should do."

Instead, Messianic Jews must go out of their way to draw others nearer to a Jewish way of life by personal example but also by making past traditions and beliefs more understandable and friendly to the disconnected and the disillusioned. The Good News here is not that Yeshua came to destroy Judaism but that he is the greatest Sage, the ultimate Tana and it is in his power to rejuvenate our religion so that it can become what it ought to be.

Any community of Jews that fails to restore love and appreciation for their past inevitably will be viewed as hostile to any kind of meaningful Jewish future. This is true not only concerning the Messianic Jewish community but to any other Jewish community that tries to establish itself by reinventing Judaism. The crisis Zionist Israel faces today is an outcome of an ideology that tried to create a "new Jew" who is free from the shackles of tradition. Yoseph Haim Brenner expressed this new vision best: "Israel has no messiah – let us make mighty soldiers to live without messiah." Today, Israelis in unprecedented numbers are drawn nearer to Judaism and to a spirituality that had not been previously available to them. This trend is a testimony to the depth of the crisis, and to its possible solution. Statistics show that outside Israel, "new Jews" of any kind assimilate themselves into oblivion. Trustworthy Jews on the other hand are those who work hard toward strengthening the Jewish people by first of all helping them to draw near to the religion of their forefathers. Out of this mindset should also follow loyalty to the state of Israel. Messianic Jews should join the IDF, to give but one example, not because this is expected of them from the modern democratic state of Israel. They should join the army and contribute to Israel because it helps to secure the future of the Jews.

"Good witness" is something that further substantiates trustworthiness. Toward the very end of his life Paul was still able to say: "Brothers ... I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers." If he did, his witness couldn't be called "good witness" or "trustworthy witness" (הַנִּמְאָג תּוֹדֵעַ), and he wouldn't have had three Jews to talk to. Yet today, Messianic Jews think they can be a good witness by assuming some kind of moral stand which some call Biblical. Yet, in its religious context, a good witness, a trustworthy witness cannot stand apart from the Torah. This should be explained further.

Until modern times, within the framework of Judaism, no "non-observant" Jew was permitted to give a testimony in a Jewish court of law. Maimonides summarized this position succinctly: "the one who does not live according to Scripture, Mishnah or Derech Eretz, he is held as wicked (רָשָׁע) and is disqualified to bare witness" (Mishne Torah, Hilchot Edut, 11:1). This conclusion is a logical extension of the demands of the Torah, such as "You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness" (Ex. 23:1). So if any Israelite who rejects the Torah cannot testify, cannot be trusted with minor things, who will listen to his testimony concerning the most important things?

One should truly marvel at the fact that only a handful of commentators as well as generally thinking believers pay attention to Yeshua as the example of the trustworthy witness. For his Good News to be heard, to be trusted, he had to be obedient to the Torah (anyone claiming otherwise disqualifies him from being the Messiah). It is the same with all the early apostles and disciples. Jews would have not given Peter the time of day had they known he enjoyed eating pork with Cornelius (as many say he did). If the followers of Yeshua were known to disregard Moses, quite simply, the name of

Yeshua would have been forgotten.

And there is no difference today. Messianic Jews cannot be surprised if their witness is ignored at best. They cannot stand in opposition to Moses and speak for God. It is simply incredible to think of the possibility that a Jew can be faithful to God and at the same time unfaithful to Moses. Accordingly, good witness is possible only in the context of trustworthy observant Messianic Jews whose ultimate authority for the two Torahs (shebechtav and shebe'al-peh) is Yeshua: "Torah that man learns in this world is *hevel* before the Torah of Messiah" (Kohelet Raba on Ecc. 11:8). Accordingly, there is great news in telling that he calls Israel: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden" (Mat. 11:29).

Within such contexts it is easier to understand what it means for the Messianic Community to be a living "tract." In a manner of speech, the proof text is in the pudding. One can quote all the right verses in the world in an attempt to convince others that Yeshua is the promised one, but it will be to no avail if the proclamation erases the rest of the promises given to Israel; which is exactly what Christians did for the last 1800 years. Again, it can be said that with Jews, strategies and methods do not work because of their "blindness." But this is really the easy way out, a way to avoid self-examination. A living epistle must live out righteousness which in turn will give credence to their "proofs." Here again, the Good News is that if the promises concerning the Messiah were fulfilled, surely the promises concerning Israel will be fulfilled as well.

And concerning righteousness, though I do believe that it is Yeshua who made me righteous, it is really incredible to think of righteousness apart from Torah. Righteousness is not a theological concept. It is a life lived according to God's expectations which were outlined for us in the Bible. To say that Yeshua made me righteous and disregard the Mitzvah is not convincing, and this is to say the least.

Just as we believe about Yeshua, the Bresslev Hassids believe that Rebe Nachman of Bresslev is "Tzadik, foundation of the world whose righteousness protects us and all Israel (לארשי לכ לעו ונילע נגי ותוכז מלוע דוסי קידצ)." Yet even so it doesn't even dawn on them that he exempts them from remaining meticulously observant. The same is true for Messianic Jews. They need to learn from the early disciples who didn't think that Yeshua exempted them from observance at all. Rather, they believed that he called their righteousness to exceed that of the Pharisees, an ideal they strived to accomplish. Messianic Jews will do well to learn from them how to become a living epistle.

As a way of life, as an existential statement, the strategy of Keruv as outlined here does not depend upon "results" to validate itself. Noah did not produce any results for 120 years despite the fact that he fulfilled all the requirements needed from a trustworthy witness. If the Messianic Jewish strategies and methods for the proclamation of the Good News are built upon productivity and various business results models, then they inevitably must turn to expensive marketing strategies, with all that it entails (brokers, lawyers, fund-raisers, campaign managers, trade-marking, lawsuits, manipulative slogans etc.).

Finally, because Keruv is a statement of love, it does not need to dress and undress itself to accommodate the desires of the communities to whom it speaks. The good news of Yeshua has the power to speak to the heart of the most adamant secular Jew and to the heart of the ultra-orthodox. I know many Messianic Jews who are all too happy "to be a secular Jew for the sake of the secular Jew" but (with the exception of a few Gentiles), I have yet to see a Messianic Jew who is willing to be an ultra-orthodox for the sake of the ultra-orthodox. The truth is that neither is desirable. Instead, the

Messianic Community must form its own unique religious lifestyle in a way pleasing to God, and man. Working upon the principle of Keruv, the Messianic community should be able to produce that sweet scent that will attract others to the kingdom of God, and this scent, it should be obvious, should not come out of our eau-de-cologne but out of the nature of our being.

<sup>i</sup> This was the cry of former chief rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, and there were others. The cry itself is based on Ezekiel 20:32.

<sup>ii</sup> Moshe Aumann, *Conflict & Connection*, Gefen Publishing House, 2003. See also interview with the Christian Embassy's president Malcolm Heading in, Tsvi Sadan, 'Where Is the Christian Embassy Heading?' Kivun, 53 (September-October), 2006, pp. 8-9 [Hebrew].

<sup>iii</sup> See more on him in Beth-Zion Lask Abrahams, 'Stanislaus Hoga – Apostate and Penitent,' Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society, 15, 1946: 121-149.

<sup>iv</sup> S. Hoga, 'Jewish Emancipation and the Conversion Society,' The Jewish Chronicle, 3.9.1847, p. 231.

<sup>v</sup> I want to refer the reader once again to Aumann's research in *Conflict & Connection*, where he too concludes that the Church may tolerate Jews but not Jewish sovereignty.

<sup>vi</sup> Torat Hamincha of R. Yaakov son of R. Hananel Skilli, sermon 21. The translation of Jer. 33:25 follows his interpretation.