

Messianic Jews Cultural Outreach Strategy

By

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Mission Statement

To help our sister Nazarene churches carry out Romans 1:16 and reach the Jewish person with the Good News, as effectively as the Gentiles have been reached, through the planting of Messianic Congregations of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States and Canada.

Evangelistic History to the Jewish Culture

To relate a brief history of evangelism to the Jewish culture is to go back to what we in the Traditional Church refer to as, the “Day of Pentecost” where the early evangelistic efforts were very effective; some 3000 Jews responded to the first altar call. There were literally thousands upon thousands of new Jewish and Gentile believers losing their lives to the tyranny of Roman emperors. Satan made sure that schisms were driven between the Jews, Jewish believers, and Gentile believers, leading to the decline of evangelistic efforts and bringing it to a grinding halt at about 320 A.D. at the council of Nicea.

It was at the council of Nicea and in the years that followed, where we see Gentile believers in leadership taking control of the organized church and moving it into an antagonistic relationship with the non-believing Jewish communities in the Roman Empire, rejecting their traditions, culture, and customs. Every Jewish tradition in the church, including the annual Jewish festivals, were either discarded or changed to center on non-Jewish traditions and holidays, many of which were developed around pagan traditions and holidays. The Jewish community, (both believers and non-believers alike), were excluded from this new Greco-Romanized church which accused the Jewish community of rejecting and killing Jesus, their Jewish Messiah. This is particularly important, because out of this era of antagonism, accusations, and separation came an insidious doctrine that is prevalent in many denominations, especially the Roman Catholic Church. This doctrine is called Replacement Theology, and it has done immeasurable damage to our evangelistic efforts. It suggests that because the Jews supposedly committed deicide and thus rejected God, God's response was to reject them as His chosen people; therefore, there is no need for the church to evangelize those whom God has rejected anyway.

Over the centuries, Replacement Theology, with its anti-Semitic teachings, has caused the Traditional Church to commit atrocities against the Jewish culture. This was done through such leaders as the early church fathers of the second, third, and fourth centuries, the Popes of the Roman Catholic Church, Martin Luther, as well as many other church leaders outside the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, and this period climaxed with the extermination of some 6 million Jews at the hands of Nazi Germany during WWII.

Justin Martyr was a converted gentile philosopher who died a martyr in Rome. Justin's second-century *Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew* represents the “the prototypical contract of the Christian protagonist triumphant and the nervous Jew on the defensive.” Justin argues his case with Trypho by stating that Jews are separated from other nations and

“justly suffer.” Justin specifically hammers home his point by focusing on the fact that Jewish cities are “burned with fire” and Jews are “desolate,” forbidden to go up to Jerusalem, “for you have slain the Just One, and His prophets before Him; and now you reject those who hope in Him.” (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 93)

In the third century Origen wrote similarly, “And these calamities they [the Jews] have suffered, because they were a most wicked nation, which although guilty of many other sins, yet has been punished so severely for none, as for those that were committed against our Jesus.” Again, in clear terms, the suffering of the Jewish people is directly related to their “sin” of rejecting Jesus. (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 94)

In the Middle Ages, Christian culture largely excluded Jews. Jews sought to avoid social, economic, and ecclesiastical pressures by living in secluded quarters of cities. They were considered useful primarily for one purpose, money-lending. This isolation from the larger society led Christians to accuse Jews of being a pariah people. Stripped of many personal liberties and victimized by an elitist “Christian” culture, Jews were required to wear a distinctive hat or patch sewn on their clothing. The very idea of “Hebraic” was commonly equated with “satanic.” (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 98)

The Church launched the First Crusade in 1096. Pope Urban II called for soldiers of Christ to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslim invaders. On the way, however, the “infidel” Jews suffered gravely at the hands of the Crusaders. Thousands of Jews who had refused baptism were murdered in the streets. Numerous mass suicides also occurred. Synagogues were torched. But with all the persecution, most Jews steadfastly refused attempts at conversion. (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 99)

The Inquisition and expulsion of 1492 resulted in thousands of torturings, burnings at the stake, and at the stake, and forced conversions. Jews were ordered to leave Spain or face death. Many Jews converted to Catholicism in Public, but remained Jews in private. These Jews were known as Marranos. More than 150,000 others fled Spain, but they were not allowed to settle in Western Europe. Eventually, however, these refugees made their way to North Africa, Morocco, and eastern Mediterranean lands. (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 99)

I present these excerpts from Marvin Wilson’s book *Our Father Abraham* as a few examples of how Replacement Theology has affected the lives and culture of the Jews and, in turn, affects our evangelistic efforts among them today. To state that the Jewish culture has become a protectionist culture is an understatement. For centuries the Jews have sought to protect themselves by living in as much isolation as they were allowed to. It is this isolationism that drove the Jewish communities to become very tight and close relationally. Thus, every attempt to evangelize them, no matter how well intended, was met with an icy resistance and antagonistic response to the message as well as the messenger. Martin Luther, who was pro-Israel at the beginning of his ministry, found out just how resistant the Jewish people could be to the Gospel.

However well-meant or kindly intentioned Luther’s attitude was at the start, he changed. When he saw that Jews failed to respond to the Christian message, he became hostile toward them. He issued a series of vitriolic pamphlets, including *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543). (Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 100)

Cultural Characteristics and Considerations

The most outstanding characteristic of the Jewish culture is the natural dividing line between the Tanak (Old Testament) and the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). In the Rabbinic teachings their thought is that, Jews, have their God and the Christians have theirs, His name is Jesus and He is not the same as the God of the Jews.

In fact, in order to achieve an understanding of the Jewish culture, let me introduce you to our stereo-typical couple at Beth Simchat known as Phoenix Phil and Scottsdale Sarah.

Phoenix Phil and Scottsdale Sarah are two Jewish individuals who live and have married within their culture. We get a better understanding of them by answering the following questions.

1. What are the obstacles in helping Phil and Sarah to understand and accept Jesus as Messiah if they are:

Orthodox – Teach that the Christian church is poly-theistic in its belief in the trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Christian church is an abomination to the Lord and to be not only avoided but treated like the dirt on the bottom of their shoes. Any Jew who accepts to the Christian God also becomes an abomination and is no longer Jewish. In fact, they are considered dead and the family will often hold a funeral in their memory.

The challenge here is convincing Phil and Sarah in the Tri-unity of Elohim (the Godhead) and that Elohim is echad, which is the Jewish word meaning one or a single unit made up of the sum of its parts. This is the Hebrew word that is used in the “Shema” (Duet. 6:4) which is the holiest prayer in Judaism. Traditionally the Orthodox also teach that the Messiah is yet to come and will usher in the era of world peace since they hold that the Messiah will rebuild the Temple and reinstate the Davidic Dynasty.

The challenge here is convincing Phil and Sarah that prophecies of their Tanak actually teaches that the Messiah will come twice. The first time, He had to come as the suffering servant whose shed blood is the atoning sacrifice so that sinful man may stand before God in friendship and peace. Since only God can forgive sin; He had to provide the perfect sacrifice so that our sin can be forgiven. Also the prophecies teach that world peace will occur with Messiah’s second coming.

Conservative – Although the Conservative sect (denomination in Christian terms) also believes that the Christian Church practices poly-theism and hold the Messiah is yet to come; the challenge is not so much on the timing of Messiah’s coming, as it is the concept that acceptance of Jesus means that Phil and Sarah would no longer be Jewish. Indeed, in the Conservative mindset, Jesus did not fulfill any of the Messianic prophecies.

Reformed - deny the concept of an individual messiah altogether, and see future human efforts as bringing about a perfect world. This makes

evangelism difficult, in that the Reformed Jew practices a form of religion that leads them through traditional ritual allowing them to revel in their Jewishness, but lacks the intimacy of a personal relationship with God. The challenge in reaching Phil and Sarah here is to show them how they can preserve their traditions and see how those all point to Jesus.

2. What are the obstacles of discipleship for Phil and Sarah, once they have accepted Jesus as Messiah if they are:

Orthodox – Teach Phil and Sarah that Jesus has not “replaced” their traditions, but has fulfilled them thereby allowing Phil and Sarah to have a personal relationship with God and that He will not forsake them as their Orthodox community has.

Conservative – That the new believer will avoid what they still perceive as “Christian” terms like “Jesus”, “trinity”, and “Christ”.

Reformed – That the new believer giving up control and realizes they can nothing in and of their own power.

Let’s look at the first question again, only this time Phoenix Phil and Scottsdale Sarah are two Jewish individuals who have married outside their culture.

1. What are the obstacles in helping Phoenix Phil and Scottsdale Sarah to understand and accept Jesus as Messiah if they are:

Orthodox – The challenges are the same as already mentioned plus the guilt they may already feel by marrying out of their faith, and thus being ostracized by the Orthodox sect. Thus, the one thing they may feel they have left of their former culture is their NON-acceptance of Jesus.

Conservative - The challenges are the same as previously mentioned plus their desire to raise the children Jewish which again is their only tie to their former culture, as well as their aversion to anything Christian, i.e. Jesus.

Reformed - God and religion are not important enough to them anymore except for the God-shaped emptiness that all sinners experience. One of the traditions that they miss most is the form of religion that they practiced in the synagogue.

Demographic Strategy and Considerations

We are open to starting a Bible Study in any city where there is a significant Jewish population that meets our demographic criteria, our strategy is to begin our congregational planting efforts by starting Bible Studies in the ten cities in the United States and Canada which have the largest population centers of Jewish people. These cities have been identified as and listed not in size order but in the order of priority:

1. Boston
2. Chicago
3. Philadelphia
4. Toronto
5. Miami
6. New York City
7. Phoenix
8. Montreal
9. Los Angeles
10. San Francisco

Since each of these cities have a large and varied Jewish population, it is our intent to limit our evangelistic endeavors to those family units of the population that we believe will be the most receptive to the Gospel. These prime areas will have the following criteria in common:

1. The areas will be heavily populated with cross-cultural marriages with a Jewish spouse and a Gentile spouse.
2. A large percentage of the households will have 2 incomes.
3. There will be an average of 2 children per household.
4. The primary wage earner will earn a minimum of \$30,000 annually and will most likely be in management or self-employed.
5. The possibility of the primary wage earner commuting to work will be very high.
6. There will be several Reformed Jewish synagogues in the area which will outnumber the Conservative and Orthodox synagogues.
7. The families will dine out regularly, will be very involved with home improvements, and will own two cars with one of the vehicles being a mini-van.
8. The children will be active in synagogue, school, as well as other community activities such as the arts.

We will evangelize and disciple any individual who is earnestly seeking to know the truth regarding Jesus as the Messiah. However, in limiting our focus to those who meet the above criteria, we will be far more fruitful in our evangelistic efforts that way, than trying to evangelize a segment of the Jewish population who are not ready to receive the Gospel and are most generally antagonistic toward it. The following is a quote from the Jewish Outreach Institute website:

We've known since the publication of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey that 52% of Jews are marrying outside their faith (compared with just 9% prior to 1965). However, a recent JOI survey has shown that the majority of interfaith couples are still not being reached by the Jewish community.
(<http://www.joi.org/library/research/manual.shtml>)

In a survey of the Jewish community by the Jewish Outreach Institute, the following results regarding cross-cultural (interfaith) marriages were found:

ATTRACTING INTERFAITH FAMILIES

A key issue was whether the participants attracted by the funded programs were interfaith respondents or non-interfaith disconnected Jews, or both. Since only 6% of the survey respondents had been active in interfaith-specific programs-which represented

only 3 of 11 funded programs-overall participation in the outreach programs by significant numbers of interfaith respondents was not guaranteed.

Nevertheless, interfaith respondent participation in the programs was a reality. Four-of-ten survey respondents indicated that they were in an interfaith relationship (either at the time they completed the survey or when they attended the program).

Obviously, interfaith households participated in the interfaith specific programs; 86% of the respondents in these programs were either currently in an interfaith relationship or had been in an interfaith relationship at the time of program contact. The remaining 14% were either divorced parents of children of interfaith marriages, or by the time of program attendance the previously "interfaith" couple now viewed themselves as a Jewish couple (after either a formal or informal conversion of the non-Jewish partner).

For many of these interfaith families, participating in an interfaith specific program was important. One Jewish-born female in the interfaith Baby Steps and First Steps project (Detroit) had been minimally involved previously. For her, the most memorable program component was:

"...[the] opportunity to meet and share with other interfaith families and [to be] introduced to the basics of Judaism in a comfortable format."

In addition to the impact of interfaith-specific programs, significant numbers of interfaith households were attracted to Jewish life experiences through the outreach programs open to both interfaith families and unaffiliated Jews, especially through the grassroots Jewish community programs and the celebrations-public outreach projects. Of the 352 surveys returned from the Toronto, Portland and Denver programs (viewed as representatives of a broad category of grassroots Jewish community efforts to attract interfaith and unaffiliated Jews), 45% were returned by interfaith respondents; similarly, 34% of celebrations-public outreach respondents were interfaith.

Thus, the goal of attracting large numbers of interfaith households to Jewish programs is partially accomplished by creating and funding interfaith specific programs (Interfaith Connections, Stepping Stones, etc.). But, creating and funding more broad-based outreach programs that seek to attract disconnected Jews, regardless of their interfaith/non-interfaith status, can be equally successful, if not more successful in attracting interfaith households. None of the grassroots or the celebrations-public outreach programs has attracting interfaith participants as their central mission, but since the interfaith are part of the broad base of disconnected Jewish households, outreach programs for unaffiliated Jews also reach out to interfaith Jewish households.

Of a total of 289 interfaith respondents who completed surveys, only 14% had participated in interfaith specific programs, while 86% had participated in more generic outreach programs.

<http://www.joi.org/library/research/impact4.shtml>)

The evangelistic question is then; if a Jewish organization such as the Jewish Outreach Institute understands the importance of addressing the vulnerabilities and need to specifically reach out through programs and draw this specialized community back into Judaism, then why not address the cross-cultural side with the same vulnerabilities with our evangelistic efforts? Isn't that the pattern that Jesus used by going to those who were hurting needing healing, those who were rejected by main stream religious leaders needing comfort and a sense of wholeness, and those whose hope was gone because

no one cared enough to touch their lives? We, the Messianic Church of the Nazarene, through our form of worship and discipleship, could be the only Jesus to whom this segment of God's chosen people may ever respond.

Strategy Considerations

For reasons stated in the "Evangelistic History of the Jewish Culture" and "Cultural Characteristics and Considerations," the Jewish people have a natural aversion to evangelistic efforts, especially efforts that do not take their culture into consideration. Because of their widely held belief that the Christian church is poly-theistic, all the atrocities that have been waged against them in the name of the church and more predominately the cross and Christ, and the fear that if they accept Jesus as their Messiah they will no longer be Jewish, they will automatically write off all evangelistic efforts that do not authentically reason with them and present the Gospel within their traditional cultural context. One of the main reasons that Beth Simchat was able to reach 5 Jewish men in 2004 to the point that they accepted Jesus as their Messiah and were baptized, is directly attributed to our evangelistic efforts, using elements such as their traditional Sabbath form of worship, teaching them that the New Covenant spoken of by the Prophet Jeremiah, was fulfilled in Jesus. For these reasons, our church plants will take on a very Jewish appearance, dialect, and style of worship.

Hebraic vocabulary -

There are several terms that we do not use but find their Hebraic equivalent. During the crusades and especially during the holocaust in WWII, many of the atrocities committed against the Jewish people were done in the name of the church, cross, or Christ. For this reason we use the term "congregation" for church, "stake" or "tree" for cross, and "Messiah" instead of Christ. The words "cross" and "Christ" are especially offensive to the Jewish people and depending on which sect (Orthodox, Conservative, or Reformed) of Judaism you speak with, will determine the response of indignation you will receive. Most Jews will let you know in no uncertain terms that they are not interested in what you are saying and then will mentally shut you off and walk away from you. There are some in the Orthodox sect who will get very verbally abusive before they walk away. In either case, because of the use of offensive vocabulary, the opportunity of witnessing to that Jewish non-believer has been lost.

There are also Hebraic words that we use, not because their traditional Christian counter-parts are offensive, but because they have been mistranslated when used by the Christian Church. The most important of these terms is the word, "Torah". The traditional Christian church has translated Torah to mean law and while law is a secondary meaning of Torah, it is not the primary meaning and such passages of scripture in the New Testament such as Matthew 5:17 ("Don't suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to do away with them, but to give them their full meaning" [CEV]) really do not fully reflect the meaning of what Jesus was saying. If, in most scriptures such as Matthew 5:17, we apply the primary Hebraic meaning of Torah, which is "teaching," we quickly understand that Jesus never intended to do away with the Torah or teaching, but to fulfill its teaching that the only atonement for sin takes place through a blood sacrifice. Torah also teaches that only God can forgive sin, so it is only through the shed blood of the God-man, Jesus, in which sin is truly once and for all forgiven. It is for this reason that our church plants will openly use

many of the common Hebraic terms that point to and will help the Jewish people to find their true Messiah, Jesus.

Days of Worship –

Saturday is the Jewish day of worship. In order to minister to Jewish people in an environment in which they are familiar, we too hold services on Saturdays to accommodate the needs of their culture. It is also traditional for the Jewish people to have special evening services on the Feast of Trumpets and Day of Atonement. We hold such services, showing how Jesus fulfills these Biblical feasts.

Form of Worship –

The worship style of Beth Simchat is a mixture of Traditional Christian Church and Traditional Synagogue. The reason for this style is in direct correlation to our primary ministry target. Our goal is to reach the cross-cultural (interfaith) families. One of the largest reasons that this segment of the Jewish community is most vulnerable is because of the anxiety over the loss of cultural identity as spouses seek to please each other in their religious practice. Non-Jewish spouses find it difficult to gain acceptance in the synagogue, even if they convert to Judaism, while Jewish spouses have problems understanding and connecting with what they were taught as children and what they are being taught in the Traditional Christian Church.

A typical Shabbat worship service is as follows:

1. Blowing of the Shofar and the reading of a Psalm - (Call to Worship)
2. 30 – 45 minutes of Praise and Worship – (both Messianic and contemporary Praise hymns are used.)
3. Family Prayer Time w/ Prayer for Israel – (Family Altar)
4. Time of Hebraic liturgies – Shema, V'ahavtah, Aaronic benediction over children, reading from the Torah portion for the week, etc.
5. Drash – (Sermon)

It is important to understand that the underlying theme in every Shabbat service is that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel who, according to the prophets, has to come not just once but twice, first as the “suffering servant” and then as our “Conquering King!”

Vision Statement

To start at least one Bible study in our Congregational fiscal year of 2005 – 2006 in one of the ten largest cities in the United States and Canada. To plant at least four Bible Studies in the fiscal years of 2006 – 2007 and 2007 - 2008.

Considerations and Qualifications For Facilitators of the Bible Studies

The ideal situation would be to find Jewish individuals who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah and have come to a spiritual maturity where God is calling them to a deeper

role in His service. They will also have had some Biblical and Theological training. The reason that this would be the most ideal situation is that not only would the Jewish believer have the Biblical gifts and skills needed to lead a Bible Study, they would also have the necessary insights and knowledge of the Jewish culture of which they are a part. However, the reality is that we will probably need to help Jewish believers to develop their Biblical knowledge and facilitator / pastoral skills to lead the Bible Studies, or, help Gentiles to develop their Biblical and cultural skills in order to more effectively communicate to and be accepted by an unsaved Jew.

Each prospective Bible Study leader will be required to attend New Church University for planting instruction and evaluation. Each leader will be required to take the online study course, "The Hebraic Foundations of our Faith." This course will be conducted in two 6 week sessions via the Internet through the Arizona District School of Ministry and will be divided by a 3 week interlude in which two of the weeks will be spent in Phoenix, Arizona, working with the staff of Beth Simchat HaMashiach Church of the Nazarene. The staff of Beth Simchat will help the leaders in preparing for the start of their Bible Study which will begin within 30 days of their return home. The Bible Study leaders will begin their Bible Study groups by teaching the 12 week course, "The Hebraic Foundations of our Faith," which they have just been taught.

Further Educational Considerations

To assist leadership and laity in their efforts to better evangelize and disciple the Jewish people, the Messianic Strategic Readiness team will work with the Arizona District School of Ministry, as well as with any of our colleges and/or universities, to develop a course of study to better equip the Church of the Nazarene to evangelize and disciple the Jewish culture. This course of study will include such subjects as "Introduction to Jewish Thought," "Rabbinical History," "Rabbinical Literature," Hebrew, etc.

Considerations and Qualifications For Bible Study Facilitators

In developing leadership for the Bible Studies, several factors need to be considered. The following is a discussion of each factor:

1. The ultimate goal of the Bible Study is to plant a new congregation in the Church of the Nazarene with its mission to introduce Jewish people to Jesus their Messiah and to disciple everyone who believes in Him. For this reason, the life expectancy of this Bible Study as a Bible study is limited to the length of time it takes to develop a core group of individuals who will form the new congregation. Everything that this Bible Study does must move it toward the ultimate goal.
2. The intermediate goal of the Bible Study is to develop a core congregation and leadership for the congregational plant. For this reason, the first twelve weeks of the Bible Study will be a time of introducing participants to the Hebraic roots of their faith by the pastor/rabbi leading them through the study that he has/is

completing online.

3. Since the emphasis of the congregation will be predominately limited to the Jewish culture, it is necessary for the entire leadership team to be trained in the vernacular of the Jewish culture, as well as its traditions, philosophies, and world view.

Because of these considerations, it is necessary that the entire leadership team, especially the pastor/rabbi, meet the following qualifications:

1. The pastor/rabbi must be a congregational planter as set forth by New Church Specialties and must attend the New Church University.
2. The pastor/rabbi must have the written recommendation of the Senior Pastor of the Mother Church witnessing their long term life-style of one called to full-time Christian ministry.
3. All members of the Leadership team must be trained for ministering to the Jewish culture.
4. All members must have an obvious love for the Jewish people that had been openly displayed prior to applying to be a part of this leadership team.
5. All members must have a teachable spirit and must openly live a balanced Christian experience that witnesses to the fact they have received heart purity and their sole desire is to live in obedience to God regardless of the cost.