

Is Jesus the Only Way?

BY DAVID BRICKNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A television talk show host was interviewing two well-known Christian leaders. “Are you saying that if someone doesn’t believe in Jesus they are going to hell?” he asked, his expression clearly indicating that surely no one would be that ridiculous.

“I believe what Jesus said,” replied the first Christian leader. “He said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.’” The host pushed further. “So then according to you, Jews, Buddhists, anyone from a different religion is condemned. Is that what you are saying?” “What I am saying,” replied the Christian leader, “is exactly what Christianity has taught for 2000 years.” Turning to the other panelist for support he continued, “You are a minister of the gospel. Wouldn’t you agree with me that Jesus is the only way to salvation?”

The second Christian leader shifted uncomfortably in his chair, cleared his throat and said, “I believe that God is reaching out to all people and searching for them regardless of their background.” “Yes,” the first leader pressed, “I agree, but won’t you agree with me that Jesus said He is the only way for salvation?” Try as he might, that first Christian leader was never able to pin the second man down on the issue.

Unfortunately, the television show concluded on that note of uncertainty. Any unbeliever watching the show would surmise that Christians cannot agree on whether people need to trust Jesus for salvation. What a sad indication of a current condition in the body of Christ. I believe the condition is not so much doctrinal as it is cultural. We live in a society that venerates tolerance as one of the highest ideals—and scorns truth as little more than an opinion with delusions of grandeur. Unless the church insists on a counterculture mentality, we will fall prey to the influence

of the culture around us. And members of that culture are duty-bound to make sacrifices on the altar of tolerance. So we find ourselves sacrificing our willingness to be unequivocal about certain matters of urgent truth.

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I don’t think that second clergyman on the TV talk show actually believed wrong doctrine; I think he was afraid to be seen in the “wrong” light. He didn’t want to be put in a box, to be labeled as a narrow-minded, intolerant, fundamentalist. And how many of us do? We reason that there must be a better way of sharing the gospel, a way that allows people to hear us without dismissing us out of hand. How will they accept the truth if they reject the messengers? And so the need for acceptance subtly shifts from our message to ourselves.

I can identify with this problem. I have spent some time of late in debates on secular radio talk shows. Invariably the issue of whether Jesus is the only way for salvation arises, and when it does, it dominates the discussion. I have been asked, “Are you telling me that all the Jews who died in the Holocaust who didn’t believe in Jesus are going to hell?” When you hear a question like that, it is easy to see why even the strongest Christian might want to fudge on the answer. Perhaps you are aware of different ways of responding to challenges like that:

- God isn’t in the business of sending people to hell. We can get there just fine on our own. God is interested in saving people from hell and that is why He sent Jesus, to rescue us from our own bad choices.
- Look, I am just one beggar telling another beggar where he has found bread.
- If you are absolutely confident God will forgive you of your sins apart from Jesus, why worry about those of us who believe He is the only way?

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- Or my favorite: “The real question here is whether or not Jesus is the Messiah. If He is true, then we had better listen to what He says and believe in Him. If He isn’t the Messiah, then no one should believe in Him.”

Yet these and many other answers shift the question around to allow us to avoid stating the matter with the same blunt intensity Jesus Himself used.

He said, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). He said, “Except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). He said, “Unless you believe I am you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Jesus never tried to persuade people to like Him; He wanted people to follow Him. He required a radical change from all who wanted to follow Him, and He wasn’t afraid to say hard things to people. He wanted their devotion—not their admiration. And when people left Him because it was uncomfortable to stay, He turned to his most faithful followers and asked, “Will you leave me also?” Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:67,68).

When you get right down to it, the simple answer to the question: “Is Jesus the only way to salvation?” is “Yes.” Jesus is the only way to be saved. Those who refuse to believe and receive Him will be judged and condemned.

Now don’t get me wrong. I don’t believe that our strategy should be telling people to “turn or burn.” The gospel is good news, and it should address the deepest needs of the human heart. We do need to make every effort to present the gospel so that it can be heard and understood by those we are trying to reach.

Many Christians have difficulty stating this because their ears have been sensitized by the world to hear it as harsh and uncaring. Sometimes the truth deals with matters of harsh consequences, but it is never uncaring to make people aware of those consequences—how else are they to avoid them? Those who refuse to accept the truth of those consequences will reject us and label us to keep us at a distance. Therefore, some reason, how can we witness to those who keep us at a distance? Shouldn’t we do whatever is necessary to stay close to those we want to win?

* *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* Epistles to Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, page 175

We should not seek rejection, and we should do what we can to make sure that if we are rejected, it is for the right reasons and not because we are personally obnoxious. But we make a big mistake if we confuse our witness as being an exercise in gaining the favor of a hearing instead of declaring the truth. It is wrong to presume that people need to like and accept us in order to believe what we say. And that is the trap.

When we see personal acceptance as a prerequisite for evangelism we are already on the slippery slope to a watered-down gospel. When we feel uneasy about answering hard questions we need to ask ourselves a different hard question, “Whom are we protecting, the person asking the question or ourselves?” If we are truly concerned about the other person, we have to keep the big picture in mind. In every encounter we are dealing with an immortal soul who will either spend eternity rejoicing in God’s presence, or else suffer utter and unending separation from all that is good.

Sometimes the best way to answer a direct question is with a very direct answer. The harsh reality of judgment is often a tool in the hand of the Holy Spirit. Moishe Rosen tells the story of a Jewish actress in Hollywood he met during his ministry in Southern California. This actress had a housekeeper who had known her for many years. One day the housekeeper got saved and went to witness to her employer. She couldn’t read and no one had offered to teach her how to witness politely. She had obtained a gospel tract, however, which she shoved into her employer’s hand, saying, “You are a sinner and an adulteress and you are going to hell unless you repent and believe in Jesus.” No one would advocate that approach, but the Holy Spirit used it—and that actress came to Christ.

The Bible says, “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6). F.F. Bruce, in commenting on this verse wrote, “If Christians practice grace of speech, it will not desert them when they find themselves suddenly confronted by the necessity of defending their belief. Nor will their speech be acceptable if it is insipid.”* We must find the proper balance of grace and salt. We must speak the truth (that’s salt) in love (that’s grace). May God grant us the courage to speak the truth, and the grace to do so in love.

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AN UNAVOIDABLE ISSUE TO OUR JEWISH PEOPLE WORLDWIDE.**

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The Beat Goes On

Have you ever thought about using your musical gifts to make the messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide? We are looking for team members for our

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For more information contact Stephen Katz at (415) 864-2600, ext. 125. Email: mal60@jewsforjesus.org.

Planning for the Future?



We are not supposed to boast about big plans (James 4:15), but as God's stewards it sure helps to have a strategy for dealing with the resources He has entrusted to us.

If you need to create a financial plan for the future but are not sure where to begin, the Jews for Jesus Stewardship Department can help. If you complete the enclosed card and return it to us, we will be happy to send you information on preparing for the future through estate planning and gift annuities.

If you don't know what a gift annuity is or how it can help you plan: A gift annuity is a permanent agreement between you and the charitable organization of your choice. You contribute cash (or appreciated assets) and the interest from your gift provides you with income for life and, if you are married, for that of your spouse. You decide whether you'll

begin receiving the income immediately (as soon as the annuity is established) or at a future time of your choosing.

If you decide to establish a gift annuity with Jews for Jesus, you will receive a regular income from your gift. Then when you go to be with the Lord, the balance of the funds will go to the work of Jews for Jesus, bringing the gospel to the Jewish people.

Unless you specifically request otherwise, all “planned gifts” (bequests, gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, etc.) go into an endowment fund. We don't spend the original gifts, but only the income. That way, friends can continue contributing to our evangelistic projects long after they have gone to be with the Lord.

If you would like more information to help you create or update your plan, please return the enclosed card to us.



A Bit about Simhat Torah

“Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16).

This year the holiday of *Simhat Torah* (**Sim-khat Toe-rah**) falls on October 3. This festival is a time to savor God’s Word. The holiday follows on the heels of the reflections of *Rosh Hashanah*, the repentance of *Yom Kippur* and the thanksgiving of *Sukkot*. *Simhat Torah* means, “rejoicing over the Law.” And that is precisely what Jewish people do during this holiday!

Simhat Torah not only celebrates the completion of the cycle, but at the same time, the holiday ushers in a new season of reading and studying God’s Word.

Songs and joy fill the synagogue as people take turns carrying the Torah scrolls around the sanctuary, displaying them before the congregation with reverence and pride. Children join the pageantry in a parade behind the scrolls, waving flags and dancing with smiles and laughter. As the scrolls pass by, many people kiss their fingertips before reaching out to touch the elaborate Torah coverings. All the people join together to sing songs of appreciation and awe for God’s excellent Word.

Unfortunately, all too many have never read the Scriptures for themselves; and for some, the elaborate coverings are the most they will ever see of God’s Word. For them, the joy is little more than catching a wave, being swept up in the feelings of the moment.

As Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus, might we be in danger of singing and celebrating God’s Word while becoming removed from it?

God promised the Jewish people that He would write His law on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31). He kept that promise through His Holy Spirit, making His Word come alive in our hearts through the Messiah Y’shua who *is* the Word

You won’t find *Simhat Torah* in the Bible, but it is a traditional holiday marking the completion of a cycle. The *Torah* or Law (first five books of the Bible) is divided into 52 “bite-size” portions. Every Sabbath, Jewish people read the weekly Torah portion and thus complete the cycle of reading the first five books every year. On *Simhat Torah*, the weekly portion includes the final passage from Deuteronomy as well as the first passage from Genesis.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING BIBLE ...



incarnate! Even so, it’s easy to fill up on the tidbits the world offers, so that our appetites for God’s Word become dull and we take His Word for granted.

Simhat Torah can remind us that we are never “finished” with God’s Word; that we always have more to gain by reading and meditating on it over and over again. It can also remind us to match our inner reflections to the outward show of joy we have in our worship services, as we sing of

our love for God and His Word. There is nothing wrong with experiencing pleasure in the singing, the music and outward signs of celebration, as long as we remember that the real joy—the joy that lasts—results from a steady diet of God’s Word. If we will open our ears, our hearts, (and our spiritual stomachs), God will use His Word to bring us into an ever-deepening relationship with Him. If we will feast on the Word of God in the Messiah Y’shua, our hearts truly will be full of joy and our mouths will proclaim His praise!

Good Not Good Enough?

Most of us know unbelievers, whether Jewish or Gentile, who are such good people that we have difficulty believing that when they die, they will not enter the Kingdom of God. Everything in our finite minds wants to assure us that, somehow, God will make an exception for these people. We remind ourselves that we should not judge. “Only God really knows their hearts,” we may tell ourselves. While we are not to judge according to our own perceptions, and while it is true that only God knows the heart, we cannot deny the words of Jesus when He said, “You must be born again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

When I meet people who find it hard to accept that Jesus is the only way, I like to point to a man named Nicodemus in John chapter three.

Here is a perfect example of a good Jewish man. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council. From this brief description, we can assume a few things. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus was a very religious man. He believed in God, prayed, fasted, attended religious services and gave of his tithes and offerings. As a member of the Sanhedrin, he had earned a position of respect and had knowledge of Jewish law. And, unlike many of the others in his situation, he had come to Y’shua believing good things about Him, seeking answers. What did Jesus tell this righteous, well-respected and, I believe, godly man? That he must be born again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

At first, Nicodemus did not understand. The terminology made him do a double take: “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (verse 4). But as I reflect on this man, I can’t help thinking it was not merely the terminology that caused him to do a double take. I imagine a man of his standing might have wondered why God would not be happy with who he was and what he was doing. Indeed, if anyone deserved to be on God’s

good side, wouldn’t it be this very pious man, Nicodemus? It must have been a real shock for him to hear that, even with all of his qualifications, there was no way for him to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven apart from a supernatural act of God. And although Nicodemus may have been nominated “most likely to succeed” by his friends and neighbors because of his good deeds and religious life, God was not impressed.

By the time we get to John 19:39 we see Nicodemus identified as a follower of Jesus, as he brought about 100 pounds of myrrh and aloe for His burial. The verse describes Nicodemus as being the one who “at first” came to Jesus by night, implying that at this point he is openly identifying himself as a follower. Jesus had told Nicodemus that, as good as he was, he needed to be born again to enter the kingdom of God . . . and apparently Nicodemus believed Him.

Let us remember that Jesus Himself dictated the requirement for entrance to God’s kingdom: “You must be born again.” It is something that only God could do for Nicodemus. It is something that only God can do for all the “good” people we encounter in our everyday lives. If we care about those people, we need to take God’s Word seriously so that we do not shy away from sharing the truth. Some may be offended to hear that only an act of God can save them . . . but others, like Nicodemus, will listen.

—Sharon Freeman,
branch leader
Fort Lauderdale, Florida



Through Various Means

Methods of evangelism certainly have come a long way since Philip met up with the Scripture-reading Ethiopian along the Gaza road. Now people witness along different roads, including airways, cyberspace and subway stations. Still, the message of the gospel remains the same, and the way that God plants His truth in an open heart is timeless.

Avner had just such an open heart as he read and searched the Scriptures from his small town in northern Israel. When he saw an advertisement (sponsored by a local ministry) in the national newspaper, he responded to the offer of free gospel literature. When he came across a response card in the back of a gospel book, he cut it out and returned the request for more information. When one of the more recent Jesus films was broadcast on the national cable television network, Avner watched—and even recorded—the movie.

One of the ministries he had written to passed Avner's name on to me for follow up. When I showed up unannounced at his door, he wasn't a bit surprised. He was a searcher. He had been requesting more and more information about Y'shua, so my appearance at his door seemed perfectly normal—just another step in this long journey in faith. He was quite happy to open his door to a stranger offering to talk with him about Y'shua.

For my part, I never know what to expect when doing a “drop in” visit. But as soon as our conversation began I sensed that Avner was an unusually open person. He listened well and had keen insights from the *Tenach* (Jewish for “Old Testament”). As a child Avner had studied in a religious Jewish school and was very well-versed in the Scriptures. His willingness to listen to the gospel showed that the seed of faith had been planted and prepared by the Master Gardener.

It came time to ask Avner if he wanted to pray and ask Jesus into his life. He readily acknowledged that Y'shua is the Messiah. He understood his need for a Savior based upon the fact that he needed forgiveness from sin. The Lord had prepared this man's heart, and at the appointed time I was there to continue the work of God in Avner's life. He prayed with me to receive Y'shua into his life. Before I left his home that afternoon we agreed to meet again in a few days for further Bible studies.

Living in a town without a Messianic congregation left Avner without easy access to fellowship, so the time we spent together was critical. I remember at the end of our first discipleship lesson, his response was, “Are you leaving so soon?” The hour had passed quickly. I spoke with Avner

on the telephone between visits as he had many questions, often from a passage of Scripture he was reading. In this way I had the privilege of seeing Avner grow in his faith.

I marvel at the various means that the LORD uses to bring people to Himself through the Messiah Y'shua. In Avner's case, there were letters, television programs and finally a missionary knock at the door. God uses whatever means He chooses to bring about the effect He desires—and we are blessed each time He lets us be part of that process!

—Efraim Goldstein
missionary
Israel



Jews for Jesus founder Moishe Rosen gives answers for

What Do You Say When They Say...

“I can’t consider Jesus because the prophecies that you say describe Him are all talking about someone or something other than the Messiah. Isaiah 53 (actually 52:13-53:17) refers to Israel. The word you point to in Isaiah 7:14 is technically not “virgin” and Psalm 2 where it talks about God’s son is really referring to King David or the Land of Israel.”

The fact of the matter is, there are answers to each of these objections. But judging by the way the statement is framed, the person wouldn’t accept your answers, but would merely give more examples of why he or she cannot believe in Jesus. You have to realize that these probably are not real questions where the person is looking for an answer. They are basically objections or excuses. If you provide a reasonable answer and the person is able to admit that your answer makes sense before raising another question, then it is worth your time to research and answer other issues he or she may raise. But if you get an impatient sounding, “Well, I don’t know about that, but what about this. . . .” you are dealing with roadblocks, not real opportunities.

When a young man asks a pretty young woman out on Saturday night and she tells him that she has to wash her hair, he should get the idea that she simply doesn’t want to go with him. Any woman who wanted to go out with the young man would arrange to wash her hair earlier or later. But if he keeps asking, each Saturday there will be a different reason, or maybe even the same reason. Should he change the day to Sunday or Friday, she just has to become more imaginative with her excuses. As long as she does not want to go with him, she will find a reason not to do it.

I'm sorry, Saturday night I'm uh, washing my hair and uh, out of the country and I've got a uh, . . .



find fault with Christians (e.g. anti-Semitism, the Holocaust) or plead utter ignorance. Yet there are Jewish people who are willing to consider the gospel seriously. So how can you tell if someone is giving you an excuse or an honest objection? You can ask a question of your own: “Do you mean that if I can give you a reasonable explanation of _____ (such as why Isaiah 53 speaks of the Messiah, and not Israel) that you would be willing to ask God to show you the truth about Jesus? And if He shows you that Jesus is the Messiah, you would have the courage to take a stand for Him?”

When you ask the question, always give the person a way to escape. God doesn’t drive people into corners (a notable exception might be Jonah). In general He presents His good news as an opportunity to which people can respond. Let people back away if they want, and then use the powerful secret weapon that God gave you. That weapon is prayer.

Prayer Prompters

Please pray for:

-  courage for Christians everywhere to care enough to tell the truth in love concerning Jesus as the only way
-  boldness mixed with humility for our missionary staff, and that our ministry will spring from genuine love and obedience to God
-  Avner to continue to grow in faith and to be a light to other Israelis (p. 6)
-  salvation for Yitzchak and Neera, Morrie, Boris, Leigh and Nick (p. 8)
-  grace and strength for new Jewish believers Larissa and Inna (p. 8)
-  spiritual growth for new Gentile believer, Beryl (p. 8)

When Jewish people don’t want to go with Jesus, they find reasons not to do it. They’ll either find fault with the texts,

From **Fort Lauderdale**, branch leader Sharon Freeman reports, “During a Saturday night sortie (tract-passing expedition) an Israeli named Yitzchak recognized me from last year’s Las Olas Art Festival. He and his wife Neera now live in Houston, Texas, where a good friend has been telling them about Jesus. They seemed genuinely pleased to discuss the gospel with me. Neera listened intently as I told them that the bottom line was whether or not Jesus was telling the truth—and then remarked that their friend had told them the exact same thing! Please pray for Yitzchak’s and Neera’s salvation.”

From **Chicago**, office worker Melanie Rose reports, “My father, Morrie, surprised me a couple of years ago by telling me he had picked up some Jews for Jesus materials at his favorite used book store. He had actually purchased one of our books of testimonies as well as an audio tape, ‘The Jewish Case for Jesus.’ This was the first time he had shown any interest in what I believe. Since then he has attended a couple of our events and has even attended a conference of Jewish believers in Jesus. God certainly seems to be working in his heart, but as of this writing my father has not come to faith in Y’shua. Please pray that God gives him grace to take that step.”

In **Moscow**, outreach worker Edward Granovsky reports, “I have been praying for my unsaved family for a long time. Recently I was talking about Jesus with my aunt Inna on the phone—and she asked Him to forgive her sins and to be her Lord and Savior! She then gave me my cousin Boris’s phone number and I will call to tell him the gospel. I do not expect it to be an easy conversation! Please pray with me for my relatives’ salvation.”

From the **Ukraine**, outreach worker Dina Markova reports, “A Christian named Nadezhda met a young Jewish woman named Larissa and wanted to witness to her—but wasn’t sure how. She asked me to call Larissa, who agreed to meet with me the very next day! Larissa listened attentively as I told her that Jesus is the promised Messiah. She recognized her sin and prayed a prayer of repentance during our first visit! Praise the Lord!”

Missionary Lev Leigh reports from **Johannesburg**, “A Jewish woman named Leigh used to be part of the Lubavitch movement in Brooklyn. She married an

Orthodox Jewish man in a *shidduch* (arranged marriage) and they moved to Israel. Sadly, Leigh and her husband got divorced, at which point she withdrew from Orthodoxy and returned to South Africa. The good news is, now she is a real seeker and is very attentive as we study the Gospel of Matthew together. Please pray for Leigh’s salvation.”

In **London**, missionary Mark Landrum reports, “For the first time in my life I’ve been having lower back trouble. So I decided to hand out broadsides near the office, where I could refill my tract bag without carrying a fully-loaded one. When I returned for more broadsides, I met an unsaved Jewish man who had stopped by the shop. He came back for another visit and was eager to learn more about Y’shua. Please pray that Nick will accept Y’shua as his Messiah.”

Missionary Rahel Landrum in **London** reports, “During a difficult sortie I noticed a woman standing behind me, waiting patiently for me to give her a tract. I talked with her and discovered that she believed in Jesus, but had never accepted Him into her life. She was a missionary’s dream! She asked me, ‘How do I pray to accept Him? Tell me the words I have to say.’ I led her in the prayer, and afterwards she had a big smile on her face. Please pray for Beryl’s spiritual growth.”

From **Israel**, outreach worker Moshe Shuai reports, “Katie and I, along with three volunteers, went to the Metallica concert for an outreach. For me it was the closing of a circle. About seven years ago, this band came to Israel for the first time. I was a teenager, and attended the concert as a big fan of theirs. This time I came as messenger from God to tell people that the real star is Y’shua. Please pray for the thousands of Israelis who were there, and for those with whom we had conversations.

About a week after that outreach, we organized another at the “Festival of Love” (our July newsletter told about an Israeli who got saved at that festival a year ago). We had eight volunteers and it was a good outreach. It lasted from Wednesday afternoon to Thursday morning, as the concert-goers boarded buses at 4:00 A.M. to return to their homes. That is either the earliest sortie or the latest I’ve ever been on, depending how you look at it!”

