



Lutheran–Jewish INTERMARRIAGE

A Manual for Couples,
Families and Counselors

by Milton Kohut

Foreword to the 2017 edition:

Since 1996 I have preached and taught in over 300 congregations in four different countries. And so many times I have heard from our dear church members their concern because their (usually) daughter has married a Jewish man. There are so many questions to deal with for this issue, and we as a ministry have been addressing these questions since our inception!

Much has changed in our ministry since this booklet was originally published. So I thought I would take this opportunity to update the reader on what is going on in the LC-MS within Jewish missions.

In 1973, at the encouragement of Rev. Bruce Lieske, their pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia submitted a memorial to the 1973 convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, titled "To Facilitate Gospel Proclamation among Jews." The synod ultimately referred this issue to an ad hoc committee, headed by Dr. Erwin J. Kolb then the Executive Director for Evangelism of the LC-MS. You can find these and related documents in *Witnessing to Jewish People* by Bruce J. Lieske available through our website at www.lije.org on the "Resources" page.

This beginning grew into what is now Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism (LIJE), founded in 1981. Rev. Lieske became its Founder and first Executive Director, and LIJE became the first mission society outreach of the LC-MS since World War II. There are 6,000,000 Jewish people in the United States, accounting for 45% of world Jewry.

To minister to this community, we help prepare congregations for ministry to Jewish people through preaching, teaching, writing and workshops while developing branches that are active and intentional in evangelism to the communities where God has placed them. We affirm and seek to be faithful to St. Paul's proclamation, "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile**" (Romans 1:16).

The vision of LIJE is two-fold:

- First, LIJE seeks to engage in intentional evangelism within every significant Jewish community in the United States, sharing Y'shua (Jesus) with all people and especially the Jewish people.

- Secondly, LIJE seeks to connect congregations for training in evangelism and to help our churches understand the Jewish roots of their faith.

This booklet was written by Milt Kohut in 1987 and he served as our missionary to our Los Angeles, CA branch from 1988 to 1990. He worked to help facilitate those goals with the expressed goal of opening mission branches in every city in the United States with a population of 20,000 or more Jewish people. There are 39 such areas in this country!

When this booklet was published, I was not a believer in Jesus, having been raised in a Jewish home in Denver, CO. I came to faith in 1991 through the ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church in Denver, and began my ministry with a Jewish outreach organization in Denver, CO, called Menorah Ministries where I was serving as a volunteer missionary on the campus at the University of Colorado. By 1996 I was attending Concordia Seminary and had not heard much about the existing Lutheran mission to the Jews when I met Steve Cohen. He was then the field counselor and advisor to LIJE. In 1996 he left Jews for Jesus and came full-time with LIJE and moved to St. Louis. We worked together to found The Apple of His Eye Mission Society, which was ostensibly intended to be a missionary training center, working with LIJE. But it ended up effectively operating as a competing mission to the Jews, causing a lot of confusion within our church body. So Steve and Bruce decided to separate their work. Steve left the ministry of LIJE but continued to operate under LIJE's street name of "The Apple of His Eye."

Because of all this confusion, LIJE determined to open new mission branches under the name of "Burning Bush Ministries" to distinguish itself from Steve's new ministry, and in 1999, opened a new branch of mission in Detroit, MI, the first of "Burning Bush Ministries."

However, two branches of ministry were still open, St. Louis and New York, operating under the "Apple of His Eye" name. Both branches were attached to messianic-Lutheran congregations, Congregation Beth El in Queens, New York, and Congregation Chai v'Shalom in St. Louis, where I have the privilege of pastoring. (Our Los Angeles branch had closed by 1996.)

Congregation Chai v'Shalom was founded in 1998, celebrating its first worship service on April 18, 1998, about a year-and-a-half since beginning mission work in St. Louis. Then, in 2005, Bruce retired and LIJE called me to serve as its second Executive Director, and has moved its offices to St. Louis, MO, where it continues a variety of ministries under the structure of LIJE, such as The Apple of

His Eye, Burning Bush Ministries, and Aish HaEmeth, our Center for Jewish-Christian studies.

Unfortunately, in 2008 our ministry and congregation in Queens, New York closed as the missionary there took a call to serve a traditional Lutheran congregation. But, we have opened new mission stations in Atlanta and S. Florida, and continue to minister in Detroit, St. Louis and Orlando, and work with partner ministries to serve in the Ukraine and in Israel. We are actively working with congregations in the New York metro area to reopen our New York branch, and would love to work with congregations in the Los Angeles area to reopen that station. **LIJE continues as a faith-ministry of the LC--MS, and as such relies on the regular support of those to whom God has called to sustain it with their gifts and prayers.**

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"

(Matthew 9:35-38).

--Rev. Kevin Parviz, Executive Director



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PREFACE

Some issues which confront the church do not affect a large percentage of the total membership, even though the issue may be a matter of grave concern for those involved. One of those issues is intermarriage between a Lutheran and a Jew. It is a concern of serious consequence not only to the couple involved but also to their families and friends as well as the pastor and congregation.

For several years the Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People has sensed a need in the church for guidance in this area of intermarriage but were uncertain as how to respond to that need. Their dilemma was resolved when they became acquainted with Milton Kohut from Lakeview Terrace, California, a Jewish believer who is also a member of a Missouri Synod congregation.

It was an answer to prayer! Mr. Kohut not only experienced a mixed marriage but also had some writing experience. He responded to the request and worked closely with the Task Force to produce this booklet. The manuscript went through several revisions and is now presented to the church with the prayer that God use it to help those who are involved in any way with the marriage of a Lutheran and a Jew; such as:

- couples contemplating marriage or already married
- parents and families of those getting married or already married
- pastor—or others—who are able to counsel couples planning a wedding
- anyone who has a Jewish person in their family relationship or among their friends.

This booklet is written in a manner that it can be given to individuals to read for themselves or can be used as a resource and preparation for discussions and counseling.

All Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People
The Board for Evangelism Services
Erwin J. Kolb, Executive Secretary
1986

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1

INTRODUCTION

Why Is This Book Necessary?

This booklet has been prepared as a response to the concern voiced by pastors, counselors and families to the increasing number of Lutherans who are marrying Jews. While intermarriage of Lutherans to members of other Protestant denominations and Gentile unbelievers also gives rise to serious concern, it is the specific phenomenon of Lutheran-Jewish intermarriage to which this booklet is addressed.

The author of this booklet is a Jew who is a believer in Yeshua, the Jewish way to say Jesus. He is married to a Gentile believer and has grown spiritually through the counsel, love, prayers and fellowship in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The thoughts expressed and suggestions offered will not presume to expand upon the significant and excellent body of work already done by the Synod's Board for Evangelism Services and its Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People. Nor will it attempt to provide a manual on Christian marriage. That has been done often and well.

What I will attempt, however, is to provide a personal perspective based on experience and observation, and offer specific suggestions on how to handle recurring problems associated with Jewish-Christian intermarriage.

It should be understood at the outset that the dilemma posed by Jewish-Christian intermarriage is not restricted to the Christian community. The increasing number of Jews who are betrothed, or are already married to Christians has prompted widespread concern on the part of the American Jewish community as well.

Consider these statistics recently reported by highly reliable sources within the Jewish community:

- Forty percent of American Jews marry non-Jews, according to Egon Mayer, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College, New York.
- One out of every two American Jews who marry in the 1980s will be divorced by 1990, reports Alvin Schiff, Executive Vice-President, Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York.

American Judaism fears the erosion of traditional Jewish family life through the large numbers of its young people who are leaving the faith of their fathers through intermarriage and subsequent abandonment of observant practices and identification as Jews.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Rabbi Maurice Lamm, former senior rabbi of the orthodox Beth Jacob congregation of Beverly Hills, California, sees the threat of increasing intermarriage as . . . “the means of the destruction of the Jewish people in no uncertain terms.” (VIEW Section, April 19, 1985.)

The Council on Jewish Life of the Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles views the problem of intermarriage in somewhat less severe language, but still cautions that “the possibility of intermarriage has become a painful reality for many families and poses very serious concerns for the organized Jewish community.” (*Ibid*)

A noted Jewish theologian, Emil Frankenheim, goes far beyond either of his colleagues by declaring that the growing number of Jews intermarrying with non-Jews, insures the “posthumous victory of Adolph Hitler.”

Yet, while Jewish leaders deplore the growing incidence of Jewish intermarriage, and declarations similar to those quoted abound, programs developed throughout the Jewish community generally are not aimed at discouraging intermarriage as much as they are geared toward finding accommodation.

Typical of these programs developed in recent years by various Jewish agencies is the one sponsored by the Commission on Reform Jewish Outreach in Los Angeles. Entitled “The Times and the Seasons: A Jewish Perspective for Interfaith Couples,” it consists of eight sessions during which interfaith couples meet to exchange ideas, concerns and stumbling blocks to the life they are trying to build together. Such concerns involve the separation and alienation many Jews experience from their families, establishing a home in which diverse religious and ethnic cultures abound, and working out a balance between the need for closeness and the need for individuation which are often complicated by the significant differences in background and experience of the interfaith couple.

The program also explores questions about Jewish tradition, beliefs and practices and how they can be accommodated in a mixed marriage.

While this form of open discussion and confrontation is healthy from a social perspective, and provides a forum for the venting of frustrations born of different traditions and beliefs, it does not touch the vastly more vital subject relating to the spiritual dimension of the marriage.

It does not deal with the major issue confronting a mixed marriage couple—their relationship with almighty God. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as Lutherans, our approach to the question of Jewish-Christian intermarriage must have as its primary focus, a right relationship with Him. Everything we say and do as we counsel and lead must be supported by that basic contention.

Can we lead a Jewish-Christian couple toward Christ through a marriage service which eliminates references to Him in order to accommodate the feelings of the Jewish partner, family or friends?

How do we deal with the anguish, frustrations and questions of the Lutheran member who is determined to marry outside the faith? Where do we find the resources to counsel on matters relating to the upbringing of children, reli-

gious conversion, ritual observances, relationships with in-laws, and other pressing matters of spiritual and social concern?

These are serious questions and they deserve serious and thoughtful answers. The Church has an obligation to deal honestly and forthrightly with them, and this booklet has been designed to focus squarely on those issues.

The following chapters are structured to address these vital issues:

Chapter Two: The Spiritual Nature of Marriage

- Does God forbid marriage between races, religions?
- What is the Biblical basis for the marriage relationship?
- Can a Lutheran pastor participate in a joint Christian/Jewish wedding?

Chapter Three: The Church's Response to the Irretrievably Committed

- How to counsel a couple intent on an interfaith marriage?
- Conversion: Is there a satisfactory way to deal with the question?
- Prenuptial agreement for interfaith marriage.

Chapter Four: The Do's and Don'ts of Inter marriage

- How to counsel families and friends of the Lutheran member in an interfaith relationship?
- Sample encounters on the subject of conversion to Judaism.
- Social relationships with the Jewish family; understanding their culture and traditions. Tips for Lutheran in-laws.
- Upbringing of children in a mixed marriage: Baptism or Circumcision—One, None, or Both?
- The wedding ceremony—Between believers, Unbelievers, Messianic?

Chapter Five: The Jewish/Christian Wedding Ceremony

Appendixes

- Jewish holiday observances, literature and language, ceremonies and customs, theology and the Jewish view of Christianity.
- Glossary of terms, agencies and reading list.

The chapters have been structured so that each can stand alone and be extracted for distribution as specific needs arise. My prayer is that the information presented will be used for God's glory in providing a powerful witness to His Son, Yeshua, the promised Messiah of Israel.

2

THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF MARRIAGE

My wife and I were married on December 29, 1956, in a "chapel" on the Las Vegas strip by someone who called himself a minister. Had we asked, he would have performed the ceremony standing on his head, whistling "Dixie" and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in Swahili. All for a price, of course!

I was 23 and a lieutenant in the Air Force. Shirley was 21 and in her last year of nurses' training. I grew up as an Orthodox Jew but had given up the practice of my faith. She was a Gentile. Neither of us knew, or cared to know, the Lord of the Universe.

So, when the minister intoned the traditional words of the marriage vows and blessed our union in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, we did not receive, nor understand, the significance of that pronouncement.

Eight months later, two days following Shirley's graduation from nurses' training, we went through a second ceremony at her home church in Pasadena. This time, however, it was in full traditional wedding regalia, with flowing white gown, flowers, bridesmaids, and best men and ushers all bedecked in formal military attire.

But even though the wedding took place in a Christian church, the Founder of that church was conspicuously absent from the ceremony.

Because of the sensitivity we felt for my Jewish father's feelings, Shirley and I asked the pastor to conduct the service without mentioning or referring to Christ Jesus. In our ignorance, we somehow felt that such a little compromise wouldn't hurt, and might in fact, allow my father and the other Jewish guests to feel more comfortable and less ill-at-ease.

To our surprise and gratification, the pastor agreed. We thought he was quite noble and accommodating, and we were content to recite our vows without asking the blessed presence of Incarnate God.

Many years later, when we became a part of His body, and reflected on our two earlier marriage ceremonies, we were struck by the insolence of what we had done. And we were convinced of the need to recite our vows for yet a third time, but under the gentle, loving, forgiving and anointing power of our living Lord.

On New Year's Eve, 20 years after we had sniggered our way through the charade in Las Vegas, we stood before the altar of Christ Lutheran Church in San Pedro, California, our three sons at our side. And, in the presence of our brothers and sisters in Christ who united their hearts with ours, we recited our vows once again. But this time it was under the blessing and in the holy presence of Messiah Jesus.

Although we had both come to the Lord two years earlier, the symbolic restatement of our vows on that New Year's night in 1976 started us on the road to a beautiful learning experience and deeper understanding of a Christian marriage. We discovered that, instead of hindering the expression of our personal identity, freedom in Christ helped us to know ourselves better even as we become more a part of each other's life. And this seeming contradiction made perfect sense when viewed from God's, rather than man's perspective.

Through a better understanding of God's Word we were led to see how a marriage apart from Christ, in which God was left on the outside of our relationship instead of inside as the Lord of our lives, only led to introspection and selfishness, and hobbled rather than enhanced our full development as individuals.

From God's Word, we learned to recognize the hard choices that confront every couple, but are often clouded and distorted by the urgency of their desires.

- The gratification of personal desire and self-fulfillment; or
- Unrestricted service to God.

As each of us is drawn closer to Christ, we have also grown closer to one another. Under the influence of His Word and Spirit, our relationship has been enriched in ways that we never dreamed possible.

Certainly one of the most difficult truths to learn and accept is what the apostle Paul teaches us in the 13th chapter of his first epistle to the Church in Corinth—that true love doesn't consume, doesn't seek its own gratification, but rather seeks the gratification of the person loved.

That is the first, and certainly the most important consideration, in marriage counseling. But the ideal relationship from God's perspective can be so many words on paper to a young couple who seeks churchly sanction for their interfaith marriage. The Biblical truths about the marriage relationship, as defined so beautifully throughout Scripture, will have little or no impact, if the driving motivation of the interfaith couple is to seek the *appearance* of a church wedding, while avoiding its inherent responsibilities.

The manner in which a marriage between a Lutheran and a Jew will be celebrated is a difficult dilemma. There is the urgency of the Lutheran parents, desperately eager to have a wedding amid familiar and socially acceptable surroundings. Their hope is to have a pastor officiate at their child's wedding, even though such an observance will be compromised. The pastor may also feel pressured by the Jewish member's family, who may ask him to participate in a joint wedding service along with a rabbi. And in the midst of this, there is the young couple, undoubtedly confused, not wishing to hurt either of their families, and wanting only to be married within an "acceptable" spiritual environment.

If the Lutheran member's parents are long-time members, faithful in church work and active in lay ministry, the temptation to accommodate their wishes will be very strong.

Both sets of parents may well have met earlier and arrived at a compromise position which they present to the pastor as a *fait accompli*. After all, they may reason, we all believe in God. What can be wrong in "adapting" the wedding ceremony just a little so that all parties will be happy, especially the bride and groom?

Faced with that situation, what does a pastor do? How does he respond?

A wedding ceremony conducted jointly by a Christian pastor and a rabbi is not an acceptable solution. It leaves the impression that Christianity and Judaism are equally true and valid. This obscures or denies the essential Christian truth that Christ is the only way to God and to salvation. No Lutheran pastor should be party to that.

Nor in fact should a Jewish rabbi even consider agreeing to such an arrangement if he follows the tenets of established Jewish law.

Marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew is forbidden by Jewish law. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, the original Biblical prohibition against intermarriage was God's Word in Deuteronomy 7:3: "You shall not make marriages with them (the seven nations), giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons."

The Talmud elaborates on the law, according to the *Encyclopedia*, by extending the prohibition to "all heathen nations," as indeed is understood by Ezra (9:12; 10:10-11). (*Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1965, p. 203.)

It goes on to state that since Ezra's time, in contrast to the period of the First Temple, intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews is forbidden by Jewish law and is invalid . . . "unless the non-Jewish partner has first converted to Judaism."

On the Christian side there is the clear mandate contained in 2 Corinthians 6:14: "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" This passage calls upon Christians to avoid spiritually compromising involvements with non-Christians.

Certainly, marriage to a non-Christian, Jewish or other, may well be such a spiritually compromising relationship for the Christian partner. Commitment to God's Word and work may be weakened through the influence and example of the non-Christian mate. The Christian party must be alerted to this danger and cautioned against it.

On the other hand the Bible does not explicitly condemn marriage to non-Christians. There is also a mission opportunity in such a marriage. Many an unbelieving person has been brought to saving faith in the Messiah through the loving example and faithful witness of a Christian spouse. Consider the advice of Peter in 1 Peter 3:1 and of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:16.

A pastor who has been asked to officiate at a Lutheran-Jewish wedding may wish to point out to the couple and their parents several key Scriptures and lovingly admonish them to meditate on them, and pray that God would show them the truth of His Word.

What if the couple agrees to a ceremony conducted by the pastor alone, but requests that he omit distinctively Christian statements? This, too, is totally unacceptable. How can a Christian pastor agree to subtract Christ from an act of Christian worship?

What if the Jewish person agrees to “go along with” a proper Christian ceremony, although he or she does not believe or mean the Christian things said? The pastor may wish to remind the couple that their marriage should begin with honesty, and if they wish the name of God invoked, their wedding vows cannot be spoken only as a legal and socially acceptable means of living together. If their vows are combined with hypocrisy their entire relationship may well be undermined by falseness.

Certainly all marriage counseling should emphasize the divine origin of marriage and the marvelous blessings which God gives in marriage. In that regard, it may be beneficial for the couple and their families to examine some of God’s own Words as recorded throughout the Hebrew Bible and the New Covenant. Start with Proverbs 18:22: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.”

Continue with the beautiful words found in Proverbs 31:10 ff.

Look at Genesis 2:24-25 and Matthew 19:4-6, which bespeak a bond sanctioned and blessed by almighty God and which describes a supernatural relationship of two separate individuals who, having been bonded by the sanctity of marriage, are now *one flesh*! This “oneness” of the marriage relationship should encourage the couple to prayerfully consider both the physical and spiritual manifestation of their commitment to one another.

Receive the blessing of Hebrews 13:4a where the marriage bed is held as a specific symbol of the sanctified union.

Consider the deeply spiritual nature of marriage as described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:24-25. Nowhere in Scripture is the marriage relationship more clearly defined than in comparing it to the relationship between God and His people. The admonition here is for the husband to literally die to self so that by total subjection of his own body and will to serve his wife he emulates what Christ did for His Church.

By studying these and other truths from God’s Word both the Lutheran member and the Jewish partner can receive the building blocks, yes, the spiritual foundation, for a lasting marriage. And, more important, through that introduction the Jewish partner may be drawn into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

The approach naturally leads to the always troublesome question of conversion, and the Church’s response to the irretrievably committed. This is the subject of the next chapter.

3

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE IRRETRIEVABLY COMMITTED

God does not want His people to be involved in spiritually compromising relationships with unbelievers. There can be no second-guessing this basic principle (see 2 Cor. 6:14, Deut. 7:3, Ez. 9:12, 10:10-11). So what is the appropriate response when a member of Christ's body chooses to marry an unbeliever?

The answer is to point out patiently, yet firmly, the spiritual hazards of such a marriage.

Once having done that, what if the person still insists that she or he cannot live without him or her? And that they will marry regardless of what we say?

First, understand what *not* to do. Don't insist that the unbelieving partner convert to Christianity. That presents an ultimatum that may chase the believing member out of fellowship and out of the Church. While many Jewish people have taken Christian instruction, received baptism and become members of Christian congregations all as a perceived necessity for acceptance by family and friends, their commitment frequently fades after the full bloom of romance has passed. As commitment fades, reversion usually sets in; not back to Judaism, but to ignoring God completely.

For them, "religion" becomes a matter of resentment. The demands they feel placed upon them become inhibitors, not only in their relationship with God, but also with their spouse. That resentment can lead to disillusion in the marital bond and result in separation or divorce.

In general, then, it is not wise or fruitful to try to coax or pressure the unbelieving partner toward conversion to Christianity if he or she has not shown a genuine interest or receptiveness toward such a commitment. Let the Holy Spirit lead the partner in His time through a gentle and loving witness.

If the Jewish partner is not ready or willing, but the Gentile partner is firm in his or her belief in the risen Christ and there truly exists an irrevocable commitment to marriage, how do we counsel the Christian partner?

The Church cannot desert one of its own. We certainly do not "write off" that individual. The believing partner should still be welcome to participate along with Christ's body in congregational activities, receive the Sacraments, and remain in fellowship.

The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 that the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her believing husband. And they are not to divorce. We

must stand on that Word and believe, through prayer, that God will deliver the unbelieving partner of that union to faith in Yeshua (Jesus).

Peter's First Epistle, 3:1, also urges believing wives to persevere in their faith so that their husbands, "though they do not obey the Word, may be won without a word by the *behavior* of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior" (RSV).

The emphasis is on the word "behavior" because a believing wife married to an unbelieving husband—and vice versa—must allow their actions to speak stronger than words. Through those actions the Holy Spirit of God can work.

If, however, the Gentile partner is wavering in Christian faith, and does not have as a foundational fact of life the truth of the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness through the blood of Messiah, what do we do? How do we counsel? Obviously, both partners are in spiritual trouble, without a firm foundation or commitment to lead them.

In that case, there are no hard and fast rules of counseling that would apply. Each person must be considered on the degree of his or her spiritual maturity at the point of counseling. And the pastor must seek fervently the Holy Spirit's guidance to suggest a course of action. This situation is undoubtedly the most troubling and disturbing from the perspective of effective Christian counseling for the irretrievably committed mixed couple.

In counseling such a couple, please remember that there is a chance that later down the road one or both may be won to Christ. Hold that hope in prayer and uplift the couple to God's holy throne of Grace.

Most often, with such a couple, the troublesome question of child raising comes up, usually by the parents of either partner and occasionally by the couple themselves. You will find, however, that the couple is at a point in their relationship where their physical attraction blinds them to any long-range considerations involving the responsibilities of parenthood. If asked about how they intend to raise their children, the usual response may be, "Oh, we'll just wait until the children are old enough to decide for themselves."

That is an outright cop-out avoiding the issue and must not be countenanced. Admonish them to read Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Counsel them that they must not take the easy way out and follow the line of least resistance by putting off their responsibility as prospective parents. If that plea fails, you will have at least presented them with a Godly challenge.

PRENUPTIAL AGREEMENT

When faced with a couple who are irretrievably committed, and one of them is a Lutheran, a prenuptial agreement should be encouraged. Far too often, serious problems arise after the wedding because the couple were so anxious to "get married" that they ignored or refused to seriously entertain the notion that hard choices would have to be made concerning family, children, ritual observances and a host of other concerns.

The church should counsel the Lutheran partner that a premarital agreement signed or at least agreed to by both the bride and groom is a positive means of placing God's essential plan for a lasting marriage into the forefront of their thinking *before* the marriage ceremony.

While there is no hard and fast format for such an agreement, it should at a minimum cover the following items. Even if there is no written agreement, these items should be seriously discussed:

1. **Spiritual orientation of the children.** The Lutheran partner should express his or her clear desire that the children born of the marriage be brought up with a firm belief in the promised Messiah of Israel, Yeshua (Jesus). Further, the Lutheran partner should express willingness to encourage the children to learn and understand their Jewish roots, and not deny them the fulfillment that can be theirs with that understanding.
2. **The Messiahship of Jesus.** The Jewish partner should make a sincere inquiry into the Messiahship of Yeshua, while at the same time supporting the mate who is a professing Christian in his or her adherence to the church and the practice of a spiritual life based on the Word of God.
3. **Attempts to convert.** The unbelieving partner will not attempt to draw the believing mate away from faith in Christ, nor in any way try to influence the children to follow any belief other than the one grounded on God's Word, and proclaimed by His Son.

All of that is fine and acceptable *if* the believing partner is a man. God's Word makes it unmistakably clear that the husband is the spiritual head of his house, and the wife should submit to his spiritual authority just as he submits to Christ's authority. Of course, an unbelieving wife, or a believing one who is weak in faith and submission to God's Word, may not acknowledge the reality of spiritual authority. Or, if acknowledged, agree it belongs to the husband. However, she should be made aware of the Christian basis for the agreement.

If, however, the unbeliever in the relationship is a man, and the believer is a woman, how can we reconcile this seeming contradiction to Scripture by having the unbelieving man agree to spiritual conditions requested by his wife? As a non-Christian he is not in a position to exercise his spiritual responsibilities and may not even be aware of them.

In this case the stipulations of the prenuptial agreement must be presented to him in a gentle and loving way, with the emphasis placed on his role, as defined by Scripture, as the head of his house.

A scenario of such a circumstance could follow this approach:

PASTOR: (To unbelieving man) "In His Word God has ordained the husband to be the spiritual head of his house. That is a heavy, yet noble, responsibility. And since you have chosen not to be responsible for the spiritual direction of your household, and your intended wife has professed her belief in Christ as Savior and Lord, her obligation is to follow God's direction in bringing her children up in His love and truth. Therefore, to avoid a conflict later in your marriage, and to start out your lives together in a manner that is supportive of your wife,

will you agree to these stipulations? Even though you personally do not subscribe to them, your wife should have the assurance that you support the spiritual direction of your family that is so vital to her.”

Unless the man has an aversion to anything Scriptural, he should be able to accommodate the acceptance of such an approach. And, while a legal-appearing prenuptial agreement may be a hard nut for him to swallow, it at least establishes a clear and uncompromising view of the responsibilities of marriage as seen from God’s perspective.

To review:

- Point out the serious problems in a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever.
- Do not insist on conversion to Christianity as a condition of marriage.
- Do not exclude a believing partner from the Sacraments, but lovingly stand on God’s Word that he or she will be used as an instrument to bring the unbelieving partner to faith.
- Suggest a prenuptial agreement between a committed Christian and an unbeliever that clearly defines the spiritual dimensions of their relationship, and calls for a serious investigation into the Christian faith by the unbelieving spouse.

Certainly the most important consideration in every facet of marital counseling is to pray for God’s guidance to be honest, firm and loving. Of all pastoral duties, one of the most difficult is to say “No.” Yet, under certain unbending circumstances, that is the only appropriate response for a pastor. He will then have to face the disappointment of the bride and groom, and of their parents and friends as well. And often the temptation to compromise just a little seems to be the line of least resistance, and the temptation to make that compromise becomes most persuasive.

When that occurs, pray fervently for the courage to stand your ground for the Gospel’s sake.

4

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF INTERMARRIAGE

Once a Roman matron asked Rabbi Jose bar Halafta: "How long did it take the Holy One, blessed be He, to create the world?"

He said to her: "Six days."

"And from then until now what has He been doing?"

"The Holy One, blessed be He, is occupied in making marriages."

"And that is His occupation?" the woman asked. "Even I can do that. I have many men slaves and women slaves and in one short hour I can marry them off."

"Though it may appear easy in your eyes," he said, "yet every marriage is as difficult for the Holy One, blessed be He, as the dividing of the Red Sea."

Then Rabbi Jose left her and went on his way.

What did the matron do? She took a thousand men slaves and a thousand women slaves, placed them in two rows and said: "This one should wed that one, and this one should wed that one." In one night she married them all. The next day they came before her—one with a wounded head, one with a bruised eye, another with a fractured arm and one with a broken foot.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked.

Each one said: "I do not want the one you gave me."

Immediately the woman sent for Rabbi Jose bar Halafta and said to him: "Rabbi, your Torah is true, beautiful and praiseworthy."

"Indeed a suitable match may seem easy to make, yet God considers it as difficult a task as dividing the Red Sea," Rabbi Jose acknowledged.

- Genesis Rabbah 68:4, *Talmud*

We don't know if the commonly used expression "A marriage made in heaven" is legitimately attributable to the Talmud, but it well defines the view, prevailing still in many parts of the Jewish community, of the sacred nature of marriage.

Even among modern day Jewish young people whose personal association with the synogogue or Temple, forms of worship and the ancient traditions of the faith may be far removed from those of their parents or grandparents, there still remains a powerful bond to those traditions. And the church must be sensitive to those feelings and able to communicate not only a knowl-

edge of them, but also an appreciation of their importance to the Jewish community.

Marriage has historically been among the most sacred and revered events in Jewish life. The Talmud states: "The unmarried person lives without joy, without blessing, and without good" (Jeb 62b).

The ordinary term for marriage itself is *Kiddushin*, denoting sanctification. It is so called because, as it is stated in the Talmud: "The husband exhibits his wife to the whole world like an object which is dedicated to the Sanctuary." (Kid 2b) By this definition, the wife is set apart in the strictest chastity.

The Talmud goes on to state: "When the husband and wife are worthy, the *Schechinah* is with them. It is based on the fact that the letters of the Hebrew word for husband (ish) and the wife (ishah) form an anagram of the two words denoting 'God' (Jah) and 'fire' (esh)" (Sot. 17a).

It is vital for the church to understand the deep reverence attached to marriage by Jewish thought and tradition. This is especially relevant in today's world, where divorce is so commonplace and marriage vows are taken so lightly.

We can be sure that the divorce rate of Jewish young men and women (projected to be 50 percent by the 1990s) is the cause of great anguish within the American Jewish community. And part of that anguish centers on the growing number of Jews who marry non-Jews.

The church must be armed with awareness and sensitivity to the fears and alarms of the Jewish people, and it must be prepared to meet the reproach, hostility and open defiance to its perceived role as encouraging Jews to leave the faith of their fathers by intermarrying with Gentiles.

Certainly a great challenge facing church leaders is the inevitable confrontation with anxious Lutheran families of mixed marriage couples who are seeking explanations, answers and a better understanding of their roles in relating to their soon-to-be new in-laws.

Lutheran families will be confused and apprehensive about the role they are expected to play, not only as part of a mixed marriage wedding ceremony (many will perceive that their own deep traditions are being usurped and its relevance diminished), but also of their future relationship with the parents and other family members of their child's Jewish spouse. Their fears may range from a lack of understanding of the tenets of the Jewish faith, to uncertainties over how they can relate their faith in Jesus to a belief structure that denies that He is Lord.

The pastor will be faced with these and countless other concerns, and the remainder of this final chapter will be devoted to a discussion of several of the most pervasive concerns. It will provide some answers which hopefully will prove effective in creating a climate of better acceptance and understanding, and enable the pastor to present a reasoned course of action.

Certainly high among those concerns is the possibility of the Lutheran partner in a mixed marriage relationship being approached by the prospective Jewish in-laws with the suggestion that he or she convert to Judaism.

Here is a sample scenario of such an encounter.

Q. "So, you're getting married. That's wonderful. But you know, it would be so much better if you both could be of one religion. Then your children would know who they were. They wouldn't be confused Have you ever considered becoming a Jew?"

A. "Yes, I have. But from the bottom of my heart I believe that Jesus is the Messiah, that He rose from the dead. And in order for me to honestly convert to Judaism I'd have to say that I no longer believe that, when I do. I can't pick and choose what to believe. It's something a person believes or they don't. I'm willing to try to understand and fit in with Jewish culture and teach my children to respect their Jewish heritage. But I cannot undergo a ceremony where I have to deny what I believe to be true."

Another approach is to adopt the time-honored Jewish way of answering a question with a question, with a little humor thrown in.

Q. "Have you considered converting to Judaism?"

A. "Oh, I suppose I have. The same way that you probably considered converting to Christianity . . . (pause). Have you ever considered converting to Christianity?"

A. "Well, no, I haven't."

Q. "Oh. Why not?"

This approach can take a deadly serious and potentially threatening verbal exchange and lighten the level considerably. It can also make a positive statement about the firmness of your spiritual commitment, while at the same time bringing their own conviction of faith into subtle question.

Whatever the response, be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit when you witness to your prospective Jewish in-laws. Always show them kindness and respect and a willingness to learn about their Jewish heritage and traditions.

HOW DO WE ACT AT THE WEDDING?

Another major concern will involve the Lutheran family's participation in a mixed marriage wedding ceremony. If the ceremony is to be held at a "neutral" location—lodge hall, hotel, private home, country club—and the ceremony conducted by a judge or justice of the peace, there will be sadness and a sense of loss by the Lutheran family.

There will certainly be a feeling of emptiness in such a ceremony, and the Lutheran family should be counseled to expect that reaction. They can be comforted to know that sometime in the future, if the Jewish partner can be won to Christ, there can be a second ceremony as there was in the author's life.

The best way to counsel in this type of circumstance is to urge the family to persevere in their faith, and remind them of the encouragement they can draw from one of the Scriptures mentioned earlier, 1 Peter 3:1-2.

The family can attend and participate in the marriage celebration with a joyful and peaceful spirit because of Christ's assurance that He will never leave or forsake us. And they should be encouraged to pray fervently for both the unbelieving marriage partner, and the families as well, that they might be won to Christ through His light that will shine through them.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH A JEWISH FAMILY

The family of the Lutheran wedding partner may wonder about the appropriateness of practicing certain social customs they accept as being proper in a Jewish home. Assure them that good manners and common sense are acceptable in *any* company. And that their Jewish in-laws are probably just as concerned about creating social *faux pas* as they are!

There is nothing wrong or inappropriate about being kind and considerate. Jewish families for the most part have assimilated into the American mainstream since the early days of the American ghettos. The likelihood of offending them by displaying common courtesy is remote to nil.

There are, however, a few minor pointers that may be helpful. If the Jewish in-laws are observant orthodox Jews—that is, if they practice kosher dietary laws, observe faithfully the Friday sunset to Saturday sunset sabbath, and other tenets of a strict religious life, it would be wise to refrain from inviting them to a social gathering on the Sabbath. A simple phone call or short note before a gathering will usually suffice to learn of their preferences.

Obviously, if they are observant, and they do come to your home for a social gathering, don't embarrass them by offering forbidden foods such as pork products or shell fish.

Offensive jokes, however seemingly innocent in Gentile company, can often be devastating in mixed company. Also, such expressions as "I Jewed him down," or even a reference to commonly accepted Jewish characteristics as related to banking, finance or entertainment, can have a decidedly negative impact on your Jewish in-laws.

Finally, although it may appear to be self-serving, avoid telling the latest "Jewish joke" you heard at the office. While Jews thrash each other with dialect stories with impunity, they take serious offense at non-Jews who do the same.

If a Lutheran family treats their Jewish in-laws with the same degree of courtesy and respect they expect for themselves, and are aware of and sensitive to some basic observances unique to the Jewish experience, there should be absolutely no problem in establishing and maintaining a sound and friendly relationship.

BAPTISM OR CIRCUMCISION? ONE, NONE, OR BOTH?

Jewish tradition calls for all male babies to be circumcised on their eighth day as proscribed by God through His instructions to Moses. Christian doctrine calls for water baptism as a sacrament between man and God. In a mixed marriage household, which command do you follow? One, none or both?

If the non-Lutheran member has agreed to the prenuptial conditions described in Chapter Three, there should be no doubt or hesitation in having the baby baptized.

But what of the Jewish tradition of circumcision?

Granted, male babies are circumcised almost on a routine basis by Jews and Christians alike, since it has long been established as a healthy practice. But in Jewish tradition, circumcision is far more than a routine snip of minor

surgery. It is a sign of God's covenant with His people, and the religious act—called a briss—is sacred even among non-observant Jews.

The fact that circumcision as ordained by God is indeed a revered tradition among Jews should present no problem for the Lutheran mate or his or her family to accept. It is perfectly acceptable and, indeed, preferable, that both ceremonies be performed. The beautiful observance of a briss can be an occasion of loving co-mingling of the Jewish and Lutheran families. Hopefully, the Jewish family will respond in kind when the baptism takes place. Such an occasion can provide an opportunity for a new covenant witness to the Jewish family, by showing them how God's symbol of redemption was completed through baptism.

STRUGGLING WITH TRADITION IN THE HOME

Depending upon the degree of observance of traditional holidays that either member of the mixed marriage bring into their relationship, there will be times when strains develop over how and what is to be observed.

It would be well to sit down and carefully discuss these potential trouble spots *before* the marriage, but realistically that rarely happens. They occur normally during the most sacred holiday periods—Christmas, Passover, Easter, and Hanukkah.

Even though Hanukkah—the Festival of Lights—and other Jewish holidays rarely occur on the same day of the year due to the nature of the Jewish calendar, Hanukkah always coincides with the observance of Christmas. As such, the potential for conflict of the joint observance in a Jewish-Lutheran home can create severe strains, especially in a new relationship that hasn't had an opportunity to mature.

The story is told of a family that attended a Hanukkah celebration at Jewish Sunday school and, on their way home, bought a Christmas tree. Carol Towarnicky, writing in the Knight-Rider newspaper chain, reports that the mixture of the two sacred traditions may make both Jews and Christians uneasy. She mentions the Jewish woman who was spending her first December with her Gentile mate. She invited friends over with the words, "I'm putting up my first Christmas tree, and if I'm going to be struck dead, I want my friends around."

She continues by saying that if they are to survive, mixed couples must cope with compromises and inconsistencies—and yes, the sadness—of December.

The only way to deal with the inconsistencies is to talk it out as clearly as possible, no matter how silly or inconsequential it sounds. A Jewish person may have a very difficult time even hearing, let alone singing, the words to "Silent Night."

Alas, many of these emotional crises don't begin to surface until long *after* the wedding. So strive to review both parties' priority lists as far in advance as possible. It is far better to come to an understanding *before* the crisis, rather than attempt to deal with it at the time it occurs.

For a more complete description of the major Jewish holidays please refer to the *Glossary* section.

5

THE JEWISH/CHRISTIAN WEDDING CEREMONY

We have addressed the problems that can occur in a Christian-Jewish marriage, the trauma that can develop among the families of those couples, and the appropriate Lutheran response to conversion, joint wedding ceremonies and accommodation to social and cultural differences.

What we haven't discussed, however, is the accepted manner in which the wedding of a Jewish believer in Jesus and a Lutheran can be celebrated. In such a wedding there can be a beautiful blending of Jewish Christian feeling and tone that will be pleasing to the Lord (for He'll certainly be at the center of it!) as well as an opportunity to show how a bonding between a Jew and a Gentile under the anointing power of the Holy Spirit can be a marvelous witness for those Jewish people present who don't yet know the Messiah.

Presented below is an order of service that has been employed at several Jewish/Gentile weddings. The location of the service can be at a church, but is not necessarily limited to such a facility. The author has attended several ceremonies at such diverse locations as a hotel ballroom, a Messianic Synagogue, and a non-Lutheran Protestant Church.

Order of Service:

1. **Prelude** — Standard musical prelude, or Messianic music. The Chuppah (canopy) and Chuppah holders enter and take up positions followed by the officiating pastor and Jewish Christian cantor.

2. **Processional** — Wedding party enters and positions themselves in a traditional manner.

3. **Invocation** — First given in Hebrew by the cantor, then in English by the pastor. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. . . . Blessed is she who comes in the name of the Lord."

4. **Opening Blessing** — Chanted in Hebrew and then in English: "He who is supremely mighty, He who is supremely blessed, He who is supremely sublime, may He bless the groom and the bride."

5. **Blessings Over the First Cup**: Traditional, in Hebrew and in English. "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine. . . . Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast hallowed us by thy commandments, and hast given us command concerning forbidden marriage; who hast disallowed unto us those that are betrothed, but has sanctioned unto us such as are wedded to us by the rite of

the nuptial canopy and the sacred covenant of wedlock. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hallowest thy people Israel by the rite of the nuptial canopy and the sacred covenant of wedlock.”

6. The Marriage Ceremony: This can be the standard exchange of vows, mini sermon addressed to the bride and groom, special music, or anything else desired and agreed upon by the pastor, cantor and families concerned. At the conclusion of the exchange of vows and rings, the groom says, “Behold, thou art consecrated unto me with this ring, according to the law of Moses and Israel, and according to our faith in the Messiah.”

7. Blessing Over the Second Cup: The seven benedictions are chanted in Hebrew by the cantor then spoken in English by the pastor. The version printed below combines the traditional seven benedictions of the Jewish marriage with the added celebration of fulfillment through the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua.

“Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast created all things to thy glory. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of man. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast made man in thine image, after thy likeness, and hast prepared unto him, out of his very self, a perpetual fabric. Blessed art thou, O Lord, Creator of man.

Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, ruler of the universe, creator of the bridegroom and the bride . . . of gladness and joy, happiness and rapture, companionship, fellowship and love. Lord our God, may there soon be heard in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of the wedding jubilation as the Messiah, who is the bridegroom to all who believe, returns to this world to gather those who belong to Him.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who summonest all people to attend the marriage festival at the return of Messiah, who brings joy to Israel and the nations.” (The second cup is drunk, the glass is broken under the grooms left foot.)

8. Pronouncement: — For as much as (name) and (name) have covenanted together according to the teachings of the Scriptures and the laws of this state, I, as a minister of His Word, and by the authority vested in me by the laws of the state, and looking to heaven for divine sanction, pronounce you husband and wife. Therefore, let all men take care in the sight of God; this Holy covenant shall ever remain sacred.”

9. The Benediction — The Aaronic benediction may be then chanted in Hebrew and followed in English, followed by the traditional recessional and reception.

For further information on variations of this type of wedding ceremony, and for contact with Jewish/Christian missionaries who can provide help, including a cantor, contact any one of the agencies listed in the back of this booklet.

CONCLUSION

We have merely scratched the surface in the situations listed above. The reading list found at the back of this booklet contains several excellent and well-documented books, periodicals and articles that go into these and other subjects in far greater detail. It is commended to the careful reading of the irretrievably committed couple, their family, and the pastor.

A word of caution: Many of the referenced books and periodicals have been written from a Jewish perspective and are obviously slanted toward a strongly biased view, much as this booklet is biased toward the Christian view of marriage. As you read and recommend others to read those books and articles, please do so with an understanding and appreciation of that bias. The various publications have been recommended as a means of providing specific examples of Jewish thought, tradition and attitudes to better enable you to counsel wisely and effectively.

APPENDIX A

COMMON QUESTIONS CHRISTIANS HAVE ABOUT JEWISH PEOPLE

By Steve Cohen

INTRODUCTION

In the course of human interaction in our mobile society today, we often find opportunity to encounter people from ethnic and religious backgrounds different from our own. With a view toward a better understanding on the part of Christians or Jewish people, the following questions and answers are offered. While no list can be exhaustive, we do feel these questions will foster better understanding and sensitivity to Jewish concerns.

1. What does it mean to be a Jew

Some people over the centuries have measured Jewishness by the degree of religiosity presented. Judaism today finds expression in three major branches—Orthodox (very strict), Reformed (very liberal), and Conservative (a middle ground). There are also smaller splinter groups. Many Jewish people are not religious in everyday practice. Some are even agnostic or atheistic, and yet they strictly maintain their Jewish identity in non-religious terms through adherence to tradition and a heart for Jewish concerns and issues.

Some people have maintained that Jewishness is determined nationally. The Jewish people inhabit every continent of this earth. We can't say that the majority of the 16 million Jews alive today are not Jewish simply because they do not live in Israel.

Other people have said that Jewishness is racial. But there are Falashan (black) Jews, oriental as well as occidental Jews. Some have said you are a Jew if your mother is Jewish but if you have a non-Jewish mother can you still be Jewish? The Bible seems clear. The genealogical records in the Old Testament are through the male, with a few female names sprinkled throughout. So it seems that if *either* parent is Jewish the child born to the family is Jewish too. So if it is not religious, racial, or regional, what is it that determines Jewishness?

In Genesis 12:1-3, God chose Abraham and gave him a covenant. In His sovereign will He, by Isaac, Jacob and the 12 Tribes, established a diverse "people" whose purpose was to bring forth the Law of Moses, the Prophets of Israel, the land of Israel, the building of the Temple and the first Advent of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. God has established the Jewish people. In doing so many obstacles have been overcome throughout history that has enabled the Jewish people to remain as a people even today. It is through the

promises of God, such as Jeremiah 31:35-37, that we see in the continued existence of the Jewish people the fulfillment of God's promise.

2. Who is a gentile

The Hebrew word, *Goy*, literally means "from the nations" or "not of the 12 Tribes of Israel." Anyone not born a Jew is considered a gentile.

3. How do Jewish people view Christians?

The majority of Christians are gentile. Also, the religious life of Christians seems so different from Jewish settings: church instead of synagogue, English instead of Hebrew, hymns that differ, the New Testament is used and Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter seem so "un-Jewish." Finally, Jesus is not viewed as the Messiah. Compound that with many atrocities done "in the name of Jesus" and we sense that Christianity is far from Judaism. It's viewed as "ok" for a gentile to believe in Jesus, but not a Jew. A double standard exists.

4. What holidays do Jewish people celebrate

Leviticus 23 outlines the cycle of the major holidays (except Purim and Hanukkah).

A. The Sabbath

As Queen of all the festivals, God ordained the Sabbath weekly from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. No work was to be done. Time was to be spent with the family and at synagogue for prayer and study. Some Jewish calendars give the exact sundown time for certain geographical locations so candles can be lit to welcome the Sabbath into the home.

B. Passover (Hebrew: Pesach)

Passover comes in the spring time and is really three festivals rolled into one eight-day celebration—the feast of the Passover Lamb, the feast of Unleavened Bread, and the feast of Firstfruits. The story of Passover is primarily found in Exodus 12. Jews were enslaved to Pharaoh. God remembered His covenant with Abraham and He heard the cries of the people so cruelly oppressed. After plagues, our people were set free. Passover is one of three "pilgrimage to Jerusalem festivals" because the only place to sacrifice the pascal lamb was at the Temple. Today there are no sacrifices, so an extended home service is observed. For seven days no leaven is found in Jewish homes after Passover eve. This reminds us of the haste in which we left Egypt. The bread did not even have time to rise. Without the Temple the feast of Firstfruits has lost its focus as a major holiday. The priest would wave before the Lord a part of the wheat loaves and pray for the upcoming agricultural season.

C. Shavuot (Hebrew for weeks)

Seven weeks after the festival of Firstfruits, the people were to bring to the Lord a token of the early grain harvest as an offering in Temple. This was called the Festival of Weeks or Shavuot. Fifty days after the exodus, according to Jewish tradition, the Law was given on Mt. Sinai. Since there is no Temple today to bring the early grain harvest, the giving of the Law is the main emphasis in the celebration of Shavuot.

D. Rosh Hashanah (Hebrew for Head of the Year)

Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the High Holy Days. For a 10 day period in the early fall, Jewish people ready themselves for the Day of Atonement by making amends with their fellowman for vows and wrongful deeds. Only when one has made himself right with others can he seek forgiveness from God. It also marks the beginning of the New Year in the civil calendar.

E. Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)

This is the holiest of all the days in the Jewish calendar. On this day, man stands before God, confesses his sins, and seeks God's forgiveness. Leviticus 16 gives the Biblical requirements for Yom Kippur. They center around the ministry of the High Priest and the sacrifice of animals, whose blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies on this day alone. Also the scapegoat had the sins of Israel confessed over it and then was led away from the camp of the people to signify the removal of their sins. Leviticus 17:10-11 says there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. Then how is forgiveness found today since there are no sacrifices? Rabbis today say a Jew needs to do three things to obtain forgiveness at Yom Kippur:

1. Pray and fast all day.
2. Repent and return to God's ways.
3. Give to charities to meet other people's needs.

By doing these three things he thereby makes his own atonement. This is *not* a Biblical notion, it must be pointed out, but the Rabbi's teaching.

F. Sukkot (Tabernacles or Booths)

Four days after Yom Kippur comes Sukkot. Temporary dwelling places (booths) are constructed and brightly decorated with the bounty of the earth. It is a pilgrimage festival to Jerusalem. The booths remind us of our 40 year wanderings in the wilderness and further instruct us that we are but sojourners on this earth.

G. Hanukkah (Hebrew for Dedication)

When the Syrians destroyed the Temple about 150 B.C., God raised up a small band of warriors and eventually gave them victory. But when they entered the Temple they saw its utter desecration. Furthermore, only enough oil was found to light the Menorah for one day. Tradition holds that by a miracle one days' supply lasted for eight days, long enough for more oil to be prepared. The Temple was rededicated and today this minor holiday is commemorated by the lighting of candles for eight days and the exchange of gifts.

H. Purim (Hebrew for Lots)

Based on the Book of Esther, this annual "party" is a time to rejoice in God's sustaining the Jewish people. The whole book is read or re-enacted telling of Haman's plot to destroy the Jews and how Esther was used by God to intervene. Special three-cornered pastries are eaten (Hamentaschen) and everyone has a good time. But the seriousness of the message is not lost in the joviality of the occasion. Others since Haman have tried to destroy the Jews, but God's promises are faithful (Jeremiah 31:35-38).

I. Christological Implication

Surprisingly, each Jewish holiday mentioned has some Christological implication. Most Jewish people are ignorant of this fact. A handy reference tool is Victor Buksbazen's *The Gospel in The Feasts of Israel*, published by the Christian Literature Crusade. If you know someone Jewish, why not study this book together?

Missouri Synod's Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People has published a series of Bible studies on the Jewish Festivals which review the Biblical basis, the development through history, the observances today and the fulfillment in Christ. These studies can be used for individual or group study. Order from The Board for Evangelism Services, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63122-7295.

4. Do Jewish People Believe in Jesus?

Though a tiny fraction of the Jewish people teach that Jesus never did live, most acknowledge that Jesus, a Jew, did live and teach and was crucified. But He is viewed merely as a man, perhaps a prophet. Some say that he, being a man, made himself out to be God. In fact, just the opposite took place. He being God took on the form of man. There has never been a census taken of Jewish Christians, but it is estimated that there may be 50,000 North American Jews who believe in Jesus as their Messiah out of a North American Jewish population of about 6-1/2 million.

5. What do Jewish People Believe about Messiah?

Orthodox and most Conservative Jews believe Messiah is a human who will come to bring peace to earth and sit on the throne of David. Reformed Jewish people view Messiah not as a person, but as an "age of peace" and look to a coming Messianic age. Doing good and making this world a better place to be helps prepare for this Messianic age. Those Jews who believe in Jesus acknowledge that He is the God/man-Savior and Sin Bearer, who came, and will return.

6. Do Jewish People Observe Christmas?

Those who believe in Jesus as Messiah do. Most other Jews do not. Yet it is common in our pluralistic society for Jewish people to socially involve themselves at various gatherings. This does *not* necessarily mean there is an adherence to the religious tenants of Christianity. Rather it is a demonstration of a desire to fit in with the mosaic of society showing tolerance for the beliefs of others.

7. How do Jewish People View the New Testament?

The New Testament is seen as a piece of Christian literature and therefore not for regular Jewish use. Its theme of Jesus as Messiah goes counter to the claim that the Jewish Messiah has not yet come. Some portions of the New Testament, such as those which speak about Jewish leaders plotting the death of Jesus, appear anti-Jewish on the surface and are often quoted by Jews out of context. The New Testament is not seen by Jews as divinely inspired. The Jews who believe in Jesus do wholeheartedly accept it.

8. Aren't the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus?

NO! Before the world began it was preordained that Jesus would come, live as a Jew, and willingly offer His life as the price to be paid for our sin. He, being God, could only give up His life, no one could take it from Him. Furthermore, crucifixion is not a Jewish method of execution. It was a Roman method. It is true that all strata of society played a part in His death from the Roman leaders to the Jewish leaders, to some everyday folk (Acts 4:27). All humanity is ultimately responsible for His death. Our sin needed payment. We are incapable of making that payment. He made it for us (Romans 6:23, John 3:16).

9. Do Jewish people think Christians are anti-Semitic?

This is a hard question. Unfortunately such suffering has come to Jewish people in the name of Jesus, the Crusades, the programs, the Holocaust. Even Martin Luther wrote some scurrilous things about the Jews in his treatise "On the Jews and Their Lies." A Christian should not hate or kill anyone! It seems a wide gap to many Jewish people who do not know what Jesus taught, but only see what people who say they are His followers wrongfully do in His name. Steps need to be taken to show Jewish people that followers of Jesus are not anti-Semitic.

10. What is the Jewish view of a Jew who believes in Jesus?

Opinions vary widely depending on religious orientation, traditional and familial values. Though Jewish people differ on many issues, they are united in denying that Jesus is the Messiah. A Jew for Jesus is seen as a lost soul, some say an ex-Jew, or an apostate. Some even go so far as to hold a funeral for a Jew who believes in Jesus. There is often much social pressure put on the Jew who is considering following Christ. As Christians become more forthright and direct in telling others about Jesus, they shouldn't be taken aback if there is a strong initial negative reaction to the Gospel.

11. Can a Gentile become a Jew?

NO! For a Jew is born a Jew. But after study, a Gentile can adopt the religion of the Jews, Judaism. That person is then considered a proselyte. Some people convert to Judaism out of marital convenience, others out of a sincere desire to adhere to the Jewish religion. Any convert to Judaism must deny the Messiahship of Jesus. In general, conversion to Judaism is initially discouraged as an attempt to test the sincerity of the potential convert.

12. What does Judaism teach?

Judaism does not have a fixed dogma or creed. It is said that if you have three Rabbis discussing one issue you'll have five opinions. Judaism is monotheistic and orientated mostly to life in this world with very little attention given to life in the hereafter. The writing of Jewish scholars over the centuries has molded Judaism and its three major branches today:

A. Reform Judaism is the most liberal of the three branches. It upholds the oral and written traditions over those of men inspired by God.

B. Conservative Judaism is a middle-of-the-road compromise between the other two. It blends both tradition and modernity. It recognizes the revelation of God to man while trying to adapt to today's concerns.

C. Orthodox Judaism is most traditional and ritualistic. It maintains that the Torah (the five books of Moses) are given to man by God, just as the Talmud is given.

Of the Jews who are identified with one of the branches of Judaism, about 20 percent are Orthodox, 50 percent are Conservative, and 30 percent are Reformed.

13. What is the Bible for Jewish people?

The Jewish people accept the books of the Christian's Old Testament as their inspired Scriptures. They call it the Tenach. The Jewish community has their own translation of their Bible in which the books are arranged in a different order. In addition to the Scriptures, Jewish people use as sources for their teachings the following:

A. The Talmud: A set of Rabbinical commentaries made up of the Mishnah (the Way), direct Rabbinic commentary on the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), and the Gemorrah (the Completion) made up of Rabbinic commentary on the Mishnah. In the Soncino Edition, the Talmud consists of 18 volumes.

B. The Siddur: This is the Book of Worship. It lists the order of prayers for the various worship settings. Many Jewish people know the liturgy by heart, even the Hebrew.

14. What do Jews believe and practice?

A. Immortality: Most Jewish people live for today, although the more religious ones do focus on the world to come. That position of hope is based on the good deeds done here on earth, and on the hope to find favor in the eye of God on Judgment Day. On the other hand, Reform Jews and non-religious Jews have little concern for an afterlife and some even contend that all there is to life is what we have on earth now.

B. Heaven and Hell: These are viewed as mainly Christian concerns. There is reference to "The Bosom of Herahaur" and the "Pit of Sheol," but there is a lack of definition that focuses on eternal punishment. For some of the very religious Jews "Gar Edeu," or paradise, is the reward for a righteous life here for fulfilling the Commandments.

C. The Mezuzah: The ornament on doorposts of Jewish homes with Scripture portions on the inside. The mezuzah serves as a reminder of the commandments given that are all to pass on to our children and meditate on them as we go out and come in through the door (Deut. 6:69). Some use the mezuzah as a sign of good luck as they kiss their fingers and then touch the mezuzah.

D. Magen David, Star of David: This has become the symbol of the Jewish people. Its origin is lost in antiquity. Many speculate about the symbolism of the triangle intersected but most is just that, speculation. The seven branched candle stick symbolizes the light since Jewish people are called to be Lights to the Gentiles.

E. The briss: The briss, or circumcision, is the fulfillment of the commandment to circumcise the males on the eighth day as a sign of God's everlasting covenant of Israel. Circumcision does not mean salvation in the Christian sense. Even though a Jewish child is circumcised, there is still a need for a spiritual birth to enter into God's kingdom. This, we believe, is the Baptism instituted by the Messiah Jesus.

F. A Rabbi, or Teacher: The Rabbi is the spiritual leader of the Jewish community. Much as a minister leads a church, Rabbis go through an education process and then are called to congregations to serve. Rabbis will supervise the *entire spiritual life of his congregants from birth to death.*

G. Bar-Mitzvah — Bat-Mitzvah: A Bar-Mitzvah (son of the commandment) for a boy at age 13 and a Bat-Mitzvah (daughter of the commandment) at age 12 for a girl is akin to confirmation. The child is recognized as an adult for religious purposes and has full standing in the religious community.

H. Yiddish: Hebrew, which is thousands of years old, is the language of the Old Testament. Yiddish was spoken by the Jews of Europe and is a mixture of Hebrew and other European languages. With the advent of modern Hebrew, it began a steady decline in popularity.

I. Shalom and Mazel Tov: Shalom means peace. It is frequently used to say hello or goodbye. Mazel Tov is an expression to say congratulations.

J. Kosher: Kosher is Hebrew for fit or proper. It is used to denote a dietary style of preparation with certain prescriptions and prohibitions accompanied by Rabbinic supervision. To keep a kosher home means to follow these regulations.

APPENDIX B

Glossary of Terms

agunah: Literally, an "imprisoned woman." A woman whose marriage is terminated in fact, but not by the law. Such a woman has no legal proof of her husband's death, or no legal divorce. She is not able to remarry.

ahavah: Love, such as love of God, of good or evil, or one's neighbors, etc. It is distinguished from *yichud* love, which is the Jewish concept of marital love.

am ha-aretz: One who cannot be trusted on ritual matters. Folk usage; an ignoramus.

arusah: Betrothed woman, betrothed women (*arusot*).

ashkenazim: Specifically denotes German Jewry and their descendants in other countries. More broadly, the entire Ashkenazi religious and cultural complex in contradistinction to Sephardi, originating in Spain.

basar echad: One flesh.

bedeken: The veiling of the bride by the groom before the wedding ceremony.

be'rit: Covenant.

be'rit nissuin: Marriage covenant.

bet din: A Jewish court.

be'tulah: A virgin.

birkhat erusin: Blessings of betrothal.

chatan: Groom.

chillul ha-shem: Defamation of God's name; disgracing the Jewish religion.

chuppa: The bridal canopy; as a legal term, the ceremony that completes the marriage.

da'at: Willing consent.

edim: Witnesses.

erusin: Betrothal, the first part of the marriage ceremony; not an engagement, technically. In modern Hebrew "erusin" is "engagement."

eshet ish: A married woman.

ezer: Helpmeet; companion.

gemillut chasidim: Acts of kindness.

ger: Convert to Judaism.

ger arayot: A “lion proselyte”; one who converts to Judaism for ulterior motives.

ger tzedek: One who converts to Judaism out of religious motives.

gerusha: Divorce.

get: A Jewish religious divorce.

gilui arayot: The uncovering of the nakedness; Biblical euphemism for prohibited sexual acts.

giyoret: Female convert to Judaism.

hakhnasat kallah: The tradition of accompanying the bride during the wedding; funds for poor brides.

Halakhah: The body of Jewish law as written in the Talmud.

Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights celebrating the Maccabean victory.

havchanah: A 90-day waiting period following a divorce or **chalitzah**, or death of a husband, that serves to determine pregnancy.

havdalah: Separation; blessing recited at the conclusion of Sabbaths and holidays.

ikkar ketuba: The essential condition of the marriage contract; namely, the **mohar**, a promise of a cash gift of the groom to the bride in the event of divorce or the husband’s death.

ish: Man.

ishah: Woman.

ishut: Laws of matrimony; marital state.

kallah: Bride.

karet: Excision from the Jewish people; punishment decreed by heaven, usually a shortened life or sudden death.

kavanah: Intent.

ke’dushah: Sanctity; “set above” society.

ke’lal yisrael: Rabbinic term used for the Jewish community as a whole, in regard to its common responsibility and relationship with God.

ketubah: Marriage contract.

kiddush: The blessing before the Sabbath meal.

kiddush ha-shem: The sanctification of God’s name, extended to include active avoidance of actions likely to bring disgrace on Judaism.

kiddushin: Sanctity; the betrothal stage of marriage that precedes *nissuin*; also used as a synonym for marriage.

Kittel: A white garment worn by some on high holidays; also worn on festive occasions by many and by grooms at their weddings; also dress for the deceased.

kosher: Permitted, correct.

mamzer: Offspring of incestuous or adulterous union (singular); *mamzerim* (plural); *mamzaret* (feminine); *mamzerut* (the state of being a *mamzer*).

mattan: Additional gift made by the husband and included as a standard condition of the marriage contract.

me'kudeshet: Dedicated (to); sanctified; betrothed.

metarakhta: Aramaic term for divorce used in the marriage contract.

Midrash: A genre of rabbinic literature extending from talmudic times to the 10th century, which constitutes an anthology of homilies and forms and running Aggadic commentary to specific books of the Bible.

mikvah: A ritual pool used for purposes of ritual purification.

minyán: A group of not less than 10 adult Jewish men which serves as the basic unit of community for purposes of Jewish prayer.

mitzvah: Commandment; commonly used as a "good deed."

mohar: A cash gift promised in the marriage contract by the groom to the bride. It is so important that it is called "the essence of the *ketubah*."

mored: One who refuses obedience, especially a husband or wife who refuses marital duties; *morodet* (feminine).

mumar: Apostate; convert to another religion; especially one who is an opponent of Jewish law.

naddan: Dowry.

nikhsei melog: The bride's private property, only the "fruit" of which belongs to the husband during marriage.

onah: The obligation of the husband to maintain regular marital relations with his wife.

oneg: Pleasure, enjoyment, delight, as in *oneg shabat*, Sabbath delight.

panim chadashot: "New faces" required for the recitation of the seven marriage blessings during the first week of marriage.

pe'ru ure'vu: "Be fruitful and multiply."

Purim: Holiday celebrating the victory of the Jews over the Persian enemies in the time of Esther and Mordecai.

Rosh Hoshana: The Jewish new year.

Sages: When capitalized, refers to the Rabbis of the Talmud.

Sefer Torah: The scroll of the Torah.

Sephardim: Jewish religious and cultural complex of Jews whose ancestors lived in Spain or Portugal before 1492.

shadkhan: Matchmaker.

shalom: Peace.

Shavuot: Holiday of Pentecost; the Feast of Weeks, celebrated seven weeks after Passover.

Shekhinah: The indwelling of God's presence.

shelom bayit: Domestic peace.

she'mad: Conversion of a Jew to another religion.

she'tar: Contract.

Sheva Berakhot: Seven marriage benedictions recited first under the marriage canopy.

shidukh: Marriage match.

shidukhin: Conditions established upon an agreement to marry.

Shiva: Seven days of mourning following the burial of one of seven relatives.

shofar: The ram's horn blown on the New Year and at the close of the Day of Atonement.

simchah: Joy; rejoicing or party.

Sukkot: Feast of Tabernacles or Booths.

ta'avah: Sensual desire.

taba'at: Ring.

taharah: Ritual purification.

tallit: Prayer shawl.

tefillin: Phylacteries; black leather boxes bound to the arm and head during prayer.

te'naim: A formal engagement contract.

tevilah: Immersion in a *mikvah*.

to'avah: Abomination; evil.

tosefet ketubah: The *mattan*, an additional gift included in the marriage contract promised by the groom to the bride in case of death or divorce.

tum'ah: Religious impurity.

tze'niut: Modesty, privacy.

yada: Knowing; refers to physical rather than spiritual (e.g., carnal knowledge).

ye'diah: Knowledge (as in *yada*).

yichud: Together; a couple alone in a room or enclosure; privacy; the term used to describe the Jewish concept of marital love; the ceremony that effects the second and final stage of the marriage ceremony.

Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement.

yosher: Righteousness; fairness.

APPENDIX C

Reading Reference List

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Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism, 7207 Monetary Dr., Orlando, FL 32809-5724. An association of Missouri Synod congregations and individuals interested in Jewish evangelism. A Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Newsletter, materials, tracts, and presentations.

Messianic Jewish Movement International, P.O. Box 30313, Bethesda, MD 20814-0313. Describes itself as “a movement within Judaism for Messiah Yeshua.” Produces materials and emphasizes training institutes on how to share the Gospel with Jewish people.

Messianic Ministry to Israel, P.O. Box 587, Chattanooga, TN 37401. Evangelistic ministry in Hollywood, Florida, and Phoenix, Arizona. Bimonthly magazine *Star of Hope*.

Million Testaments Campaigns, 1211 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Provides prophecy edition New Testaments and tracts to anyone who will share them with Jewish people.

Task Force on Witnessing to Jewish People, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295. A Task Force of the Board for Mission Services of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Assists districts and congregations to establish ministries to Jewish people and works with **Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism** in calling full time missionaries to Jewish people.

Notes



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