

Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism Media Update
by Susan Perlman
February 22–24, 2016

This year's summary will include the following categories: Israel News, Jewish Evangelism, Vatican Statement on Jewish Evangelism, Jews and Evangelicals, Jewish Opposition to the Gospel, Anti-Missionaries, Christian Zionism, Anti-Zionism, Anti-Semitism, the Messianic Movement, Messianic Jews and U.S. Politics, San Bernardino Terrorist Attack, Books of Jewish/Christian Interest, Jewish Thought Pieces, Jewish Holidays, and, of course, the catchall of Potpourri.

These are just highlights and are not meant to be a comprehensive look at this past year of Messianic news. However I have included them in pdf form for those who wish to download them from the LCJE.net website.

As I point out to you each year, don't assume I've seen all the media out there on our movement. I always welcome getting your input to add to the mix for these reports.

Israel News

Any number of media outlets reported on twenty-year-old Messianic Jew Shai Sol Hever, who appeared on *Kochav Haba* (literally Next Star, the Israeli version of "American Idol"). Shai revealed on the show that she is a Jewish believer in Yeshua. In *HaShavua B'Ashdod, December 26, 2014* it was noted that this 20-year-old Messianic Jewish singer from Ashdod caught the public's eye with her audition and that she is working on an album of original songs.

Most recently the press release and statement coming out of Larnaca, Greece, has made the news. *Christian Today* reported on the statement released by the Lausanne Initiative for Reconciliation in Israel/Palestine affirming the unity as believers of Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews. The article noted that "while many Messianic Jews see the establishment of the State of Israel as a sign of God's faithfulness and believe its control over the Palestinian territories to be a part of God's promise to 'greater Israel,' many Palestinian Christians see the establishment of the State of Israel as a catastrophe for their people." While acknowledging those differences, the statement also says, "In spite of our different views, we commit ourselves to listen to one another, to learn from and respectfully challenge the narrative of the other, to critically evaluate our own narrative and to work towards an inclusive, bridging narrative." Dr. Richard Harvey, Messianic Jewish co-chair, said, "Only by taking seriously the command of Yeshua (Jesus) to love our enemies can we begin to see the transforming power of His message of Good News in our lives and communities."

The Larnaca Statement - January 2016

Preamble

We met together as a combined group of thirty Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians, in Larnaca, Cyprus, for the second consultation of the Lausanne Initiative for Reconciliation in Israel/Palestine, January 25-28, 2016. We worshipped, prayed and studied the Scriptures together. We formed and deepened friendships as we ate and drank and talked together in the fellowship of the gospel.

We unanimously adopted the following statement, along with the commitments it includes, and we commend it for study, prayer and action.

The statement affirms our unity as believers in Jesus (section 1), calls for mutual commitment to live out that unity in the midst of conflict and division (section 2), recognizes areas of challenge and theological disagreement and identifies where further work needs to be done (section 3), proposes practical actions that express hope for the future, especially amongst the next generation of believers in both communities (section 4), and calls for prayer and support for this initiative from the wider family of believers.

1. We affirm our unity in the body of Messiah

- Our unity has an intrinsically missional purpose, since Jesus prayed that we should be one in order that the world will believe the truth about Him.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17: 20-23)[1]

- Our unity is created by God through the Holy Spirit and we are commanded to maintain it in humility, gentleness, patience and love.

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

- Our unity embraces our diversity as Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians within the one body.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. (1 Cor. 12:12-14)

- Our unity was accomplished by the cross of Christ, by which the enmity between us has been abolished while retaining our distinctive identities.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Ephesians 2:14-18)

- Our unity is a condition of God's blessing on our communities.

*¹How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!*

*²It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.*

*³It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore. (Psalm 133)*

In the light of these and other Scriptures, we affirm the following paragraphs of the Cape Town Commitment: [2]

Love for one another in the family of God is not merely a desirable option but an inescapable command. Such love is the first evidence of obedience to the gospel, the necessary expression of our submission to Christ's Lordship, and a potent engine of world mission. [3]

We lament the dividedness and divisiveness of our churches and organizations. We deeply and urgently long for all followers of Jesus to cultivate a spirit of grace and to be obedient to Paul's command to "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

In the context of our conflicting perceptions and opinions, we nevertheless affirm our wholehearted assent to these convictions:

- We are united in our faith in Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, Saviour and Lord, and in the Good News of the Kingdom of God, which He preached, and for which He lived, died and rose again.
- We are united in the Body of Christ as a result of His reconciling work on the cross, and in our diversity we are all, equally and together, members of the one household of God.
- We belong together as one family;
 - we are committed to love and serve one another;
 - we need each other;
 - we share one another's suffering as members of one body.

2. We commit ourselves to live out that unity in the midst of conflict and division, and we call on our communities to join us in this commitment

2.1 In times of tension and violent conflict, relationships suffer, while suspicion, accusation and mutual rejection thrive. At such times it is even more essential that we who affirm our unity in the Messiah must uphold ethical standards of life that are worthy of our calling, in all our attitudes, words and deeds.

2.2 We recognize that we hold very different theological positions regarding the land, and also very different perspectives on the causes of the social, political and economic realities that impact the daily life of all who inhabit the land. Those realities include a range of disputed issues (such as: security; the occupation of the West Bank; Gaza; equality of citizenship in Israel; refugees; acts of lethal violence; the search for justice and peace, etc.).

2.3 Nevertheless, we insist that, whatever our theology or our views of current realities, we are called to live by the commands of Scripture and the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, even when we legitimately challenge one another in these areas. Conversely, we deplore those ways of speaking and acting that are incompatible with obedience to our Lord, and for which we need to repent.

2.4 Accordingly, we make the following commitments:

2.4.1 We will accept one another as God in Christ has accepted us, in spite of theological differences and disputed matters (Rom. 15:7). We also accept the responsibility this entails:

- to affirm and respect one another;
- to treat one another as brothers and sisters in the body of the Messiah at all times and circumstances;
- to seek to listen and understand even when we cannot agree;
- to behave towards one another with love, gentleness and patience.

2.4.2 We will refuse to denounce, dehumanize, or demonise one another or our respective communities. We will not “bear false witness against our neighbours”, “spread false reports” or “follow the crowd in doing wrong” (Exodus 20:16; 23:1-2). We will refrain from spreading gossip, rumours, slander, unfounded allegations and lies – whether by word of mouth, in print, or by social media, blogs, etc.

2.4.3 We will obey the instructions of Jesus in Matthew 18 in circumstances of dispute between brothers and sisters in our respective communities. We will not go public with our grievances against a brother or sister, or the ministries or organizations they represent, until we have spoken to them personally, and prayerfully addressed the issues along with other mature disciples of Christ.

2.4.4 We will pray for one another, seeking to look to the best interests of others rather than our own, bearing one another’s burdens, actively encouraging one another’s ministries and missional outreach, developing friendships and networks, and exploring ways to work together in gospel fellowship wherever possible.

2.4.5 We will make every effort to maintain our fellowship with each other as a witness to the unity of the body of the Messiah and to the boundless love of God for all people.

2.4.6 When we engage in legitimate challenge of one another’s actions, positions or teachings, we will do so in a manner compatible with the commitments above.

3. We recognize the following areas of challenge and disagreement.

While there is a need for further theological reflection and collaborative action in all the following areas, nevertheless we believe that our unity in the household of God challenges us also to make some common affirmations and mutual commitments in relation to them.

3.1 Understanding our different narratives

As Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians, we recognize that our historical narratives are often in conflict with each other and in many cases are mutually exclusive, particularly in relationship to the events of the past 100 years and the establishment of the state of Israel and the events leading up to it.

Many Messianic Jews see the return of the Jews to the land and the establishment of the state of Israel as a sign of God's faithfulness to His people Israel. Many see Israel's control over the territories as necessary to maintain security and prevent further escalation, and some see it as part of God's promise to greater Israel, and view military service as a duty to their country.

Many Palestinian Christians see the presence of the Christian church in their land as a testimony to the faithfulness of God, and the establishment of the state of Israel as a catastrophe for their people. They see the Palestinian refugee problem, the lack of equality within Israel, the ongoing occupation, and the expansion of settlements on Palestinian land, as illegal and unjust. They perceive their survival and duty to involve resistance to these injustices by peaceful, legal and non-violent means.

In spite of our different views, we commit ourselves to listen to one another, to learn from and respectfully challenge the narrative of the other, to critically evaluate our own narrative and to work towards an inclusive, bridging narrative.

3.2 Recognizing our social identities

In the context of social and political conflict, we face the challenge of accepting and respecting each other's identities. Our self-definition as Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians should not prevent us from accepting the legitimacy of the other. We must recognize our mutual belonging within the body of the Messiah as we live in our divided societies.

3.3 Enlarging our theologies

3.3.1 We recognize that there are deeply held theological convictions on both sides, which, in the minds and hearts of those who hold them, are justified on the grounds of biblical exegesis and interpretation. All of us affirm that we submit to the authority of Scripture in both Testaments as a necessary dimension of our submission to Jesus as Messiah and Lord. All of us seek to understand and interpret Scripture as faithfully as we are able and to apply it to our context and the issues it raises. Yet we disagree at some fundamental points.

3.3.2 We intend to listen more carefully to one another, so as to understand deeply even when we disagree. We will refrain from dismissive labeling of views that differ from our own as an excuse to avoid engaging with them on the foundation of careful, respectful, and mutually

critical biblical exegesis. We will recognize that what for either community is a theological axiom can become the cause of pain for the other community, in the denial of identity or rights.

3.3.3 Even though we are convinced of our own positions and wish to continue to dialogue with and challenge one another, we will not require others to change their position and accept ours as a pre-condition of our fellowship. Rather we call for a generous theological stance, which makes room for and respects the conscientious convictions of others that they sincerely derive from their reading of Scripture. We commit ourselves to clarify our positions in situations where they might be interpreted in a way that harms or excludes others. We are also entitled to require the same from others.

3.3.4 For example:

Some of us believe that the uncanceled covenant of God with Israel continues to include the promise of the land to the Jewish people as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that the return of Jews to the land and the establishment of the state of Israel constitute the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. We reject, however, the interpretation of this theological conviction that denies the identity, history and peoplehood of the Palestinians and their right to remain in the land of their ancestors. And we acknowledge and lament along with them the suffering, death and injustice caused by that denial.

Some of us believe that all God's covenant promises, including the land, are fulfilled in the Messiah Jesus as the One who embodies the true sonship and inheritance of Israel, embracing the whole earth and all nations. All those from any nation who are united to Christ by faith share in the inheritance that is His and are the seed of Abraham and heirs according to God's promise. We reject, however, the interpretation of this theological conviction that denies the right of Jews to a secure homeland and rejects the reality and legitimacy of the state of Israel. And we acknowledge and lament along with them the suffering and death caused by the hatred and violence of those who seek to destroy it.

Other theological issues need to be addressed and worked on in a comparable spirit.

4. As believers in Jesus, we renew our biblically-grounded hope for the future, we affirm our belief that the gospel can change people and situations, and we accept that we have a role to play in this process.

We commit ourselves to the following intentions and actions:

4.1 To be advocates for each other in our communities, especially during times of increased violence;

4.2 To create a safe and private platform to maintain communication between us.

4.3 To make our best efforts to meet in friendship;

4.4 To seek and receive information about the conflict from each other rather than relying only on our media;

4.5 To be aware of the major role that social media play in our conflict, and therefore to be sensitive, honest and open in our use of social media and to maintain communication with one another;

4.6 To remember and acknowledge the limitations and potential dangers of non-direct communication;

4.7 To consult with one another during our process of making decisions that could directly affect our brothers and sisters on the other side;

4.8 To discuss our role in reconciliation within our own communities, especially those of us who are emerging leaders of the present generation;

4.9 To invite and challenge our peers and leaders to engage in healthy dialogue and reconciliation;

4.10 To pray for ourselves, for our authorities and for each other the following prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

Prayer of Peace – Francis of Assisi

Conclusion

We invite both our communities in the land and outside it, along with the worldwide family of God, to join us in prayer, both that we may be faithful to the affirmations and commitments expressed here, and that the ongoing work of this initiative may bear fruit for the kingdom of God and His glory.

All of us who participated in the consultation agreed with and endorsed this *Larnaca Statement*. Some of us, due to the sensitivity of the context or for personal reasons, have preferred to withhold our names.

Alex Fishman wrote in *Ynet* about the arson attack by Jewish extremists on a Palestinian home in the village of Duma which took three lives. Fishman stated that this type of violence is not just about property, like the “price tag” attacks. He wrote, “We are talking about a group of young Jews which has adopted an ideological, anti-Zionist, fanatic and anarchistic common denominator, seeking to destroy the ‘state of the Zionists’ (that’s their terminology) and establish a holy kingdom instead of it.” Fishman said they seek to ignite a conflict at the Temple Mount,

banish gentiles (by torching Arab homes), eliminate idol worship (by burning churches and mosques), coerce people to their religion, and undermine the government system.

An article in *The Jerusalem Post* focused on Rabbi Bentzi Gopstein and his extremist Lehava organization. In a panel debate, when asked if he supported the burning of churches, Gopstein replied, “For sure.” Later in the discussion he cited Maimonides to support his view. Later, Gopstein said he was not calling on individuals to destroy churches, but that it was incumbent on the government to do so. Labor chairman Isaac Herzog called for Rabbi Gopstein to be arrested and for Lehava to be outlawed. However, the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) issued a legal opinion to the Defense Ministry stating that it did not have sufficient evidence to ban Lehava. Reform Rabbi Uri Regev, the head of the Hiddush religious pluralism organization, stated, “The time has come to assert that words of incitement to violence which are hidden within works of Jewish law, be it Jewish, Islamic or otherwise, will not constitute a defense in every circumstance.”

Noah Feldman wrote for the *Bloomberg View* about the “hilltop youth,” who perform “price tag” attacks—violent acts to send the message that any attempt to remove Jewish settlers from their land will carry a “price.” Feldman noted that they “aspire to create a Jewish monarchy, governed by religious law, which would relegate non-Jews to subordinate status.” They also use a book called *The Law of the King* to justify killing of non-Jews, including children. The hilltop youth come from settlements that are considered illegal by the Israeli government. They are looking for a “king messiah.” A leading candidate is Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, who grew up in the United States and moved to Israel in 1965. Ginsburgh wrote a short book justifying the actions of Baruch Goldstein, the American-born settler who killed 29 Palestinian men and boys in prayer and injured 125 more at a mosque in Hebron in 1994. The hilltop youth see the murders they commit, which they call “revenge,” as a means to making the king messiah live and hastening the coming of his kingdom. The philosophy spun by Ginsburgh and his followers views the soul of a non-Jew as of less value than the Jewish soul. Feldman called for “arresting the terrorists and dismantling their networks and their physical infrastructure—the same treatment appropriate for terrorists of any ideology or background.”

In an article for *Charisma News*, Sandra Teplinsky wrote, “In 2015 the international community is feverishly pushing to create a Palestinian state from biblical land, including Jerusalem, that fell to Israel in the Six Day War. For that reason, certain aspects of the war are worth remembering at this time.” She then documented six military events of the Six-Day War that she said are considered by many as miraculous.

The *Baptist Press* wrote about the rising Palestinian-Israeli tensions that flared in October when Israel police dismantled surveillance cameras installed on the Temple Mount by Muslim authorities a day earlier. At the time of this article (November 2015), more than 90 people had been killed since that incident. Hosam Naon, dean of St. George the Martyr Cathedral in Jerusalem said that the conflict is not about religion. “The issue is much bigger than that,” he said, describing it as a political conflict that “cannot be resolved along religious parameters or framed as a religious one.” The article noted that there are Arab Christians, such as those in Bethlehem, who feel alienated from both Muslim Arabs and Israelis. On the other hand, Ben Martin [name changed], a Southern Baptist representative in Israel noted that “there are many in

Israel among the Jewish and Arab believers who would refuse to allow extremists to divide them.” This October, at an annual meeting of Messianic Jews and Arab Christians in the Galilee region, it was suggested that each Messianic congregation adopt an Arab church, and vice versa.

The *Christian Examiner* reported that Nazareth—the home town of Jesus—is Israel’s largest city with a majority Arab population. Muslims comprise about 70 percent of the population. A number of residents who reportedly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS) were arrested for plotting attacks in Israel. The article said that, according to the *Jerusalem Post*, as many as 40 residents had fled Israel to fight for ISIS in Syria.

The Jerusalem Post reported on a photography project of Doug Hershey, a Messianic Jew, comparing 100-year-old photos of the Holy Land to modern ones. Hershey wants to show how dramatic the change in the Land has been since the birth of Israel in 1948. He cited Ezekiel 36, where God tells Ezekiel to speak “to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to valleys; that it will put forth fruit, man and beast would be multiplied on it, and the waste cities will be rebuilt when His people Israel returns to the land.” Noting Israel’s blooming flowers, fruit and vegetables industry, Hershey says that what Israel has done with the land in the past 67 years is a “stunning transformation.”

Jewish Evangelism

The Way, a U.K. website, reported on the video testimony of Mottel Baleston, produced by Eitan Bar, director of One for Israel, in cooperation with Chosen People Ministries. The video went viral, with over five million views.

Charisma News briefly reported on I Met Messiah, the website produced by Eitan Bar that features the video testimonies of Jewish believers in Jesus.

Christiannews.net also reported on I Met Messiah, and included brief testimonies of Grant Berry, Mottel Baleston and Michael Goldstone.

Jim Denison wrote an article for *Crosswalk.com* about an ISIS fighter who had a dream of a man in white telling him, “You are killing my people.” The ISIS man now wants to become a Christian. Denison learned from missionaries that more Jews have come to believe in Jesus in the last twenty years than in the previous twenty centuries. He then recounted some testimonies from the “I Met Messiah” website of Jews coming to faith in Yeshua.

Charisma News published a feature story on Sid Roth, highlighting his television show, *It’s Supernatural!*; his syndicated radio show, *Messianic Vision*; his book of testimonies of Jewish believers, *They Thought for Themselves*; his testimony; and other facets of his more than 40 years of ministry, emphasizing his evangelistic work. Several Messianic and other Christian leaders, including Mitch Glaser, Jonathan Bernis and Dr. Michael Brown, spoke highly of Roth’s character and heart for Jewish evangelism.

Troy Anderson of *Charisma News* wrote about an evangelistic meeting in which Sid Roth participated in Odessa, Ukraine. Roth reported that “more than 99 percent of roughly 1,000

unsaved Jews made professions of faith.” Roth said this followed similar results in a meeting in Jerusalem earlier in the year, where Roth said nearly all the unsaved Jewish people in attendance received Yeshua as Savior. Roth said, “I see an explosion of the Holy Spirit among Jews in the land of Israel and throughout the world.”

Charisma News’s Troy Anderson also interviewed Susan Perlman of Jews for Jesus about some of JFJ’s new creative methods of evangelism, including “Multitudes,” twenty paintings by Steffi Rubin from the Gospel of Matthew which formed a traveling art show. Perlman said a lot of unsaved Jewish people are attending the shows. Perlman also discussed Massah, an opportunity for Jewish believers ages 19–26 to travel throughout the world to share their faith with Israeli soldiers and others on backpacking trips. Among the ministries of JFJ’s Moishe Rosen Center in Israel is a Bible study for soldiers. Perlman said she believes that less than one percent of the world’s 15 million Jews know Jesus, so “there is an immense amount of work to do.” She added, “We need to have a mobilized prayer force out there praying for Jewish people to have their hearts ready and prepared for God, and then we need Christians . . . faithfully proclaiming who God is to the Jewish people.”

Anderson did a follow-up piece about Multitudes for *Charisma News* in which he interviewed artist Steffi Rubin, Marc Sternberg (director of the Jews for Jesus Store), who had the idea for the project, and Susan Perlman. Rubin said, “*Multitudes* is Jesus’ perspective of the gospel. (It’s) what inspired Him when He delivered the Sermon on the Mount. The whole background, the whole history of Jews for Jesus, is one of disruption—changing what people think when they hear ‘Jesus,’ changing what people think when they hear ‘Jews.’ These paintings are all so disruptive.”

Eli Birnbaum of the Israel branch of Jews for Jesus wrote a piece for *IsraelArtMarket.com* about the art gallery that JFJ opened in its Florentin offices. The article features several photos of the gallery and its exhibits. The gallery is called “Florentin: Our Neighborhood.” The most recent exhibit, the third as of the date of this article, featured 22 local artists, with so many submissions that some had to be refused. Birnbaum wrote, “As a follower of Jesus, I believe in a God that creates, that created us human beings, and did not stand from afar watching, but chose to become one of his own creation to bring us more beauty, direction and love.” He added, “Often, you walk into an art gallery not knowing what to do or how to interact. It is important for us to facilitate and enable this interaction in our space where there is always someone to connect with, and it might just be the artist himself!”

World magazine wrote about Jews for Jesus missionary Micha Cohen, who is dying of Huntington’s disease. Cohen had to give up his missionary duties this past year because of the illness. The article paid tribute to Micha’s mom, Jan, who succumbed to Huntington’s but held onto her vibrant faith. Micha as well has continued his steadfast witness. “I’m dying, but I know 100 percent that I’m going to heaven,” he tells people, letting them know that they too can have that hope.

Benjamin Hawkins wrote an article for the *Baptist Press* about Southern Baptist support for Jewish evangelism. Hawkins quoted from two of Jim Sibley’s papers. Sibley stated that the “rejection” that Romans 11:5 refers to is not God’s rejection of Israel, but Israel’s rejection of the

gospel. Sibly stated, “In verse 15, Paul argues that if their rejection of salvation has brought such blessing to so many, how much greater the blessing when they accept that salvation.” Hawkins wrote that “despite some disagreement on issues related to Israel, Southern Baptists agree Jewish evangelism is urgent.” Hawkins also interviewed Rick Worshill, president of the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship (SBMF). Worshill said, “Jews also need to hear the Gospel. All people need to hear the Gospel. We need to plant seeds in abundance, so that many people will come to the Lord.”

Gary Rotto of *San Diego Jewish World* wrote about Morris Cerullo’s proposed theme park in San Diego, the Morris Cirilo Legacy Center, which will include a Jewish World Outreach Pavilion, a Wailing Wall and plaza, and attractions named Wings over Israel and March of Prophecy. Rotto is clearly against the proposed theme park, saying that Cerullo has produced “deceptively entitled” evangelistic films and that he “duped” Jewish publications into accepting advertisements for one of those movies. He noted that part of Cerullo’s mission statement is to “present the witness that Jesus is the Messiah to every Jew.” Rotto concluded, “The presentation on behalf of establishing Morris Cerullo Legacy Center does not overtly discuss a plan for proselytizing to the Jewish community. But both his past actions as well as the wording on his ministries’ website are clear. The international center would be [a] hub of activity targeting the Jewish community.”

Vatican Statement on Jewish Evangelism

Many news outlets covered the Vatican announcement regarding Jewish evangelism.

In a blog entitled “Religious Co-existence,” the author quoted columnist J.J. Goldberg, former editor of the *Forward*. Goldberg called the Vatican statement “an even bigger deal for missionary groups like Jews for Jesus. Converting Jews is what they do. If this thing spreads, it could put them out of business.”

In *World* magazine, Marvin Olasky wrote, “Earlier this month the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews issued a document that stated Jews do not need to believe in Jesus to be saved. As a Jewish Christian, I beg to differ. So does the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.” Olasky quoted Jim Melnick, who said the Vatican “has turned the Scripture of Romans 11 on its head . . . When Paul wrote that ‘the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable,’ he was saying that the Jewish people remain beloved in His sight—not that they can find salvation without faith in Yeshua (Jesus).”

Arutz Sheva reported that Yad L’Achim was not very excited about the Vatican Statement. Chairman Rabbi Shmuel Lifschitz said, “The thing is that the Catholics are one large movement in Christianity. But there’s the Protestant movement, which isn’t any less large, and they do not accept the authority of the pope and work to missionize intensively, mostly against Jews.” He also stated, “The movement of Messianic Jews was also created from Protestant Christianity as a great fraud.” He called the declaration “an important matter, but not as big as the noise it’s made.”

In a blog for *Get Religion*, Terry Mattingly focused on *The New York Times* headline in its article on the Vatican statement. Mattingly said that the headline, “Vatican Says Catholics Should Not Try to Convert Jews,” is inaccurate, noting that the Vatican declaration states that “the Catholic Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed toward Jews.” Mattingly added that the document states, “Christians are nonetheless called to bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ also to Jews, although they should do so in a humble and sensitive manner.”

BBC News reported that Pope Francis would visit Rome’s synagogue, the Grand Temple, the third visit there by a reigning pope. The visit, said BBC, “aroused expectations of further rapprochement between Catholics and Jews,” referring to the Vatican statement in December. The article detailed some of the Catholic Church’s history of anti-Semitism, beginning in 1215 when a Pope decreed that all Jewish men must wear a special hat with a cone in the middle and Jewish women a scarf with blue stripes. Later, the Popes established the world’s first Jewish ghetto in Venice. The Second Vatican Council in 1966 began reconciliation with the Jewish people, issuing the “*Nostrae Aetate*” (In Our Times) document, which unconditionally repudiated anti-Semitism and stated that the Jews should not be blamed for Christ’s death.

Many publications also covered Jews for Jesus’ response to the Vatican statement. Most used JFJ’s press release on the declaration, so the reports were similar. They quoted David Brickner as saying that JFJ finds the Vatican’s position “egregious, especially coming from an institution which seeks to represent a significant numbers of Christians in the world.” The press also picked up on this statement by Brickner: “How can the Vatican ignore the fact that the Great Commission of Jesus Christ mandates that his followers are to bring the gospel to all people? Are they merely pandering to some leaders in the Jewish community who applaud being off the radar for evangelization by Catholics? If so, they need to be reminded that they first received the gospel message from the lips of Jews who were for Jesus.” Publications included in this packet that covered Brickner’s response are *Virtual Jerusalem*, *Breitbart*, the *Jewish Journal*, *Charisma News* and *The Christian Post*.

Sarah Eehoff Zylstra wrote for *Christianity Today* about two responses to honor the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*—the Vatican statement and a statement a week earlier by a group of Orthodox Jewish rabbis which acknowledged that “Christianity is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations.” Zylstra noted that the back-to-back announcements were no coincidence, as Rabbi David Rosen, the American Jewish Committee’s international director of interreligious affairs, signed the first document and spoke at the Vatican presentation of the second. North Park Theological Seminary professor Jay Phelan said that the Orthodox Jewish statement was notable in that it called Christianity “the will of God.” Phelan said, “Few Orthodox rabbis would put it that strongly. Maybe they would see [Christianity] as something that God could work with, but not necessarily his intention.” As to whether evangelicals should abstain from evangelizing Jews, Joel Hunter, senior pastor of Northland Church in Florida, said, “[Jews] do not need to change in order form them to be God’s gift to us, and for us to cooperate fully with them and love them fully. Yet because my identity is Christ [Galatians 2:20], my desire to be personally close to them will involve my sharing Christ by word or deed.”

On the lighter side, this YouTube talk show host analyzes the situation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSg1p-Lg9mI>

Jews and Evangelicals

The *Baptist Press* reported on the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship (SBMF) meeting to be held June 14, 2015 in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention. SBFM President Rick Worshill said that the group helps connect those who want to support Jewish evangelism with individual Messianic congregations that need financial backing. The SBFM partners with Messianic groups involved with the LCJE.

Writing in *Charisma News*, Mitch Glaser noted that at the same time that Jewish attitudes towards Christians and the gospel are changing for the better, Christian support for Israel and the Jewish people is wavering. He reminded Christians of the role of Jewish people in the plan of God and in the return of Christ and establishment of the kingdom. He emphasized the importance of evangelizing the Jewish people, stating that the “end-time repentance and turning of the Jewish people to the Messiah is fundamental to their once again being blessed by God and being used by Him to fulfill the purposes for which Israel was created and chosen.”

Grant Berry wrote an article for *Charisma News* about his participation in the first formal conference of the Toward Jerusalem 2 Council in Dallas, Texas. Berry cited the vision of TCJ2: “TCJII is a reconciliation initiative that addresses the original schism between Jews and Gentiles in the Body of Messiah. We anticipate healing, restoration and unity for Christians and Messianic Jews through a second Jerusalem council that reflects the first council in Acts 15. By addressing the desired plan of God to break down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, we hope to see shalom restored in anticipation of Messiah's return.” The 1 ½ - day conference brought together hundreds of church and Messianic leaders from throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Michael Coren wrote an article for the *Canadian Jewish News* entitled “What Do Christians Really Think about Jews and Israel?” Coren had three Jewish grandparents, a cultural, non-religious Jewish background, became a Roman Catholic, and is now an Anglican! He wrote, “I’m not going to argue extensively about the difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, but it seems to me there are two errors into which we can fall: the first is to say they are never linked and the second is to say they always are.” He seemed quite confused about the relationship of evangelicals to the Jewish people. See if you can sort out this statement: “Quite clearly some of the evangelical support for Israel is based on a fundamentalist eschatology, a notion that the end times and second coming of Jesus Christ require the return of the Jewish people to Israel. This is one of the reasons these groups oppose organizations like Jews for Jesus—because they [the evangelicals] wish to restore rather than convert.” Huh?

Christian Today reported that the Ted Cruz campaign accepted and defended an endorsement from Mike Bickle, founder and director of the International House of Prayer (IHOP) of Kansas City. In a 2011 sermon, Bickle said that God would give the Jewish people a chance to receive Jesus as their Messiah but would “raise up the hunters” against those who refused. He cited

Adolf Hitler as “the most famous recent hunter in history.” Nick Muzin, speaking for the Cruz campaign, said, “My understanding is that he [Bickle] was paraphrasing the words of the prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah. I know that he has made support for Israel and the Jewish people a central part of his mission.”

Several Jewish publications picked up on the story, including JTA, *The Jerusalem Post* (which reprinted the JTA story), and the *Forward*. JTA noted that in 2005 Bickle said in a sermon that before Jesus’ second coming, “a significant number of Jews will be in work camps, prison camps or death camps.” The JTA article also said that the Anti-Defamation League and the National Jewish Democratic Council had called on Cruz to clarify his opinions of Bickle’s views.

Cruz did just that, according to unitedwithisrael.org, who reported that Cruz’s campaign told the *Times of Israel* that he disagreed with Bickle’s views. While commending the work of IHOP, the Cruz campaign added, “Nevertheless, the statements from Pastor Bickle concerning Adolf Hitler are not statements with which Senator Cruz agrees. It is indisputable that Adolf Hitler was the embodiment of evil; he was a grotesque murderer who committed one of the gravest acts of depravity in the history of mankind. God did not intend anything in Hitler’s evil, and it is wrong to suggest otherwise.”

Jewish Opposition to the Gospel

Jewish News (UK) reported on the opening of Jews for Jesus’ new shop in Hendon. The article cited the concerns of several London rabbis about the shop, with adjectives like “disturbing” and “upsetting.” Rabbi Yossi David said, “Most people will be very upset that Jews should be for Jesus, after all we’ve suffered.” Rabbi Dovid Tugendhaft stated, “I’ve debated them many times. Their so-called proof is ridiculous. Most thinking people know it’s false and will ignore them.”



Anti-Missionaries

The Jewish Press reported that religiously observant mailmen in Ashkelon asked Yad L'Achim to intercede with the Israel Post to be excused from delivering missionary material to homes. Yad L'Achim appealed to the Israel Post on the basis that children arriving home from school will be the first to see the mail and that it is against the law to evangelize minors. The Israel Post said the complaint was "under investigation."

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, the founder of Jews for Judaism International, wrote an article for the *Jewish Journal* bemoaning the presence of groups representing Yeshua at the Celebrate Israel Festival in Los Angeles, including Jews for Jesus and Beth Emunah Messianic Synagogue.

Barba Miner of Beth Emunah Messianic Synagogue responded to Rabbi Kravitz in the *Jewish Journal*. She stated that she personally submitted the application for their booth at the festival and filled out all required information, including the name of their synagogue. She wrote, "There were no questions about our beliefs on the application. Why did he [Kravitz] feel that we should have been required to provide that information when it was not asked of anyone else?" She said that her congregation's members did nothing at the festival "other than have friendly conversations with people who stopped by our booth." She said that during the festival, Rabbi Kravitz harassed her and called her an idolater. She stated that Kravitz and others from Jews for Judaism (who did not always identify themselves as being with the organization) came by her congregation's booth several times to challenge their beliefs and give them literature. Miner wrote, "So we were not the ones who were being deceptive, distributing literature and trying to convince others to change their beliefs. . . . We were just there to be in solidarity with other Jewish organizations in support of Israel, to enjoy the festival, and to have a peaceful visible presence."

Rabbi Kravitz also wrote a lengthy article for *Aish* explaining how to answer Christian missionaries. Kravitz said there are 20,000 Messianic Jews in Israel, and attributed their rapid growth to several factors, including: "In addition to Jews for Jesus, large numbers of Evangelical Christians have adopted the ploy of presenting Christianity in the guise of Judaism" and "Assimilation and intermarriage are at their highest level. Messianic Judaism can provide an easy 'solution' to their conflicting heritage and faith." Kravitz claimed that Scripture teaches that sin is not "an insurmountable condition that no one can overcome" and that sin can be atoned for without the shedding of blood. He wrote, "The Torah teaches that through repentance, prayer, fasting and doing what is right, everyone can return to God directly."

The Jerusalem Post reported that ten activists from the extremist Lehava organization broke into the Elav Conference, a Messianic Jewish gathering, in Jerusalem and started shouting. Two of the activists were arrested for "attacking and disturbing public order." Three Lehava activists were indicted in December 2014 for setting fire to a Jewish-Arab school in Jerusalem.

The Jewish Community Voice of Southern New Jersey covered a lecture by Rabbi Mordechai Becher about refuting Christian missionaries. Becher, in addition to stressing Jewish education as the antidote to missionaries, "also explained the importance of showing one's Jewish identity

through external means. People who study Judaism and observe traditional customs, like wearing *tzitzit* or *kippah* and having a *mezuzah* in their home, are less likely to be confronted by Christian missionaries or advocates trying to convert them to another religion.” He added, “You don’t have to read the New Testament. . . . If you study our Torah well enough, you know the real dollar bill, you’re well to spot a fake from a mile off.”

Emily Ahadef wrote an article for *Religion and Politics* about the growing number of Gentile evangelical Christians who are turning to Judaism. Although Ahadef admitted that statistics are hard to come by, she interviewed Rabbi Michael Skobac of Jews for Judaism in Toronto and Rabbi Tovia Singer, director of Outreach Judaism, both of whom say they see a definite trend in this direction. Ahadef said that as more and more Jews have come to know Jesus since the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Gentile Christians have become fascinated with the Jewish roots of their Christian faith. She wrote that they began to attend Messianic congregations. Hillary Kaell, a professor religion at Concordia University, estimates that 70 percent of attendees at Messianic congregations are Gentile Christians. Concurrently, wrote Ahadef, these Christians began to read the anti-missionary materials of groups like Jews for Judaism. She stated that in “a doubly ironic twist . . . the very materials meant to be a bulwark against groups like Jews for Jesus have become one of the conduits for Christians to convert to Judaism.” Skobac speculates that in twenty years there may be full-time Jewish professionals devoted to incoming Christians.

An Israeli Haredi website, old.bhol.co.il reported on the Jews for Jesus Behold Your God campaign in southern Israel. The article stated that “missionaries are disseminating propaganda material in abundance to passers-by, standing on intersections and bridges, on main roads and centers which are packed with people and spread ostentatious signs with messages of clearly Christian missionaries and do whatever they wish to dupe unsuspecting Jews and convert them.” The article added that Yad L’Achim activists “await the missionaries wherever they appear” and that Yad L’Achim “has also begun publishing a warning broadcast on local radio stations in the south of the country, warning the public against the danger of Missionary rampant in the streets.”

The Jerusalem Post reported that Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Aryeh Stern received assurances from the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) that there would be no missionary activity at the organization’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration. Yad L’Achim had complained that at the 2014 festival a translator translated a comment by preacher Robert Stearns as “We follow the Jewish messiah, Yeshua.” ICEJ spokesman David Parsons said that although there will be no evangelistic efforts at the event, Messianic Jews have been present at this festival for over thirty years and will not be excluded. Parsons added, “We’re not hiding who we are, we are Christians who believe Jesus is the messiah.”

In a related article on Al-Monitor.com, Mordechai Goldman wrote about Yad L’Achim’s objection to the ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles event. The leader of Yad L’Achim, Rabbi Samuel Lifschitz, wants a 1977 law about missionary activity to be amended. The current law bans missionary activity that involves any “material benefit” or among minors. Lifschitz claimed the law is not enforced and wants it to be amended to totally prohibit any missionary activity. All past efforts to this end by the ultra-Orthodox have failed. The article also quoted Moti Vaknin, a Messianic Jew who runs an Internet radio station called Radio Agape: “We live in a democratic

country. I am not giving anything in return, and I am not breaking the law. In the event our activities are banned under the law, then Jewish missionary activities should likewise be banned.”

Christian Zionism

Christian Today reported that the Jewish Agency accused its former partner, The International Fellowship for Christians and Jews, of sabotage by creating competitive arrangements for *aliyah*. The IFCJ had wanted to become a full partner with the agency. When that request was denied, the IFCJ presented a list of conditions in order for it to keep contributing monetarily to the Jewish Agency. One of IFCJ Founder Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein’s conditions was that his 1.4 million Christian donors be acknowledged for their contributions. When Eckstein’s conditions were not met, the IFCJ set up its own aliyah operation.

Jacob Kamaris wrote an article for the *Jewish News Service* (JNS) asserting that “Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein cracked the code on relations between Jews and evangelical Christians.” In 1979 Eckstein realized that the crux of the relational dilemma is that Christians believe they have to evangelize and Jews believe they must reject other religions. So Eckstein decided to make a distinction between “witnessing” and “proselytizing.” Eckstein used Genesis 12:3 to try to convince Christians that the proper way to witness is through doing good to the Jewish people. “Christians are called to bless Israel and the Jewish people, and that is their form of witness,” said Eckstein. “What I’ve been able to convince them to do is to not do missionary activity. . . . When I came up with this fundraising concept of blessing Israel and the Jewish people . . . that became their form of witness to the Jewish people.”

In an opinion piece for *World Net Daily* (WND), Michael Brown contrasted biblical Zionism with what he termed “sentimental Zionism.” He noted that when “sincere Christians tell us [Jewish believers in Jesus] with starry-eyed naiveté about their love for the Jews, we want to ask them, ‘Have you ever lived in Brooklyn or Tel Aviv?’” After noting the flaws in both Israeli secular and religious society, as well as the positives, he concluded, “We do well to ground our support for Israel first and foremost in what the Scriptures teach, not being oblivious to the nation’s shortcomings, but saying instead, ‘We’re not standing with you because of your perfect performance but because of our unconditional love for you and our recognition of the work of God on your behalf.’”

Anti-Zionism

CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) wrote about *Sojourners* magazine’s reporting on Israel. CAMERA focused on the cover article by Ryan Rodrick Beiler in *Sojourners* March 2015 edition, claiming that the article “promotes a propagandistic view of the Arab-Israeli conflict that ultimately legitimizes Palestinian violence.” However, in trying to make its case, CAMERA wrote the following:

In the article, Beiler also gives a positive mention to Impact Holy Land, a 2013 conference sponsored by Evangelicals for Social Action. This conference provided a platform for Aaron Aronson, a member of Jews for Jesus, to speak in

anti-Judaic terms about Israel. In the course of his talk, Aronson described Israel as a dissolute, Godless nation that has rejected Jesus. He said: "I don't want to burst anybody's bubble, but when it comes to the Israeli people, they are not predominantly a people that model holiness in general. They are not a particularly God-fearing culture. Approximately 0.2% of the Jewish population know their messiah. When you're talking Israeli, for the most part, you're talking about unbelievers who really have a very secular worldview. And the orthodox don't necessarily ... they don't even always read the Bible. They're often reading the Talmud and other extra-biblical writings. Even though they are taught in school doesn't necessarily mean that there's a heart being shaped by the spirit of the Torah of God's word." The use of language like this at a so-called peacemaking conference is outrageous because it promotes contempt for Israeli Jews. *Sojourners* has no business promoting an organization that broadcasts such an agenda.

First of all, CAMERA got Aaron's name wrong: it's Aaron Abramson. Secondly, here is Aaron's take on CAMERA's opinion that Aaron's language "promotes contempt for Israeli Jews": "They took something out of context, as I was speaking to Christians related to how they view Jewish morality in the land. I was making the case to a group of Christians that Jewish people in Israel are not necessarily adhering to the same moral standards [as Christians just] because they are Jews. Many are secular and work from a different rule book, so to speak. The Orthodox often defer to the Talmudic writings and are not all as engaged with issues Christians care about relating to the Land, such as eschatology or justice."

Anti-Semitism

Diana Scimone wrote an article for *Charisma News* entitled "How Do Believers Complete the Reformation?" The article focuses on Derek Frank, who, along with his wife, Françoise, and their filmmaker daughter, Vanessa, have produced a docudrama entitled *Let the Lion Roar*. Scimone writes that the film "exposes anti-Semitism of the early church reformers, shows how it still affects the church today and urges believers to 'complete the Reformation' by reversing the anti-Semitism and replacement theology that still exist in the church." Mr. Frank traces the roots of that problem to the anti-Semitism of Luther and Calvin and quotes some of their anti-Semitic statements. Vanessa Frank said, "Most historians recognize that what went on in World War II would not have happened if people had not been indoctrinated that one of the most influential people of their nation—Luther—taught the persecution of Jews. That's the culture in which World War II was able to take place."

In a similar vein, Sam Nadler wrote an article for *Charisma News* in which he states that "the historical leaders of anti-Semitism were not peripheral Christians: they were leaders in the church!" Nadler cited as examples Justin Martyr, Augustine, John Chrysostom, and Martin Luther. He noted that Luther called for synagogues to be burned, Jewish homes to be destroyed, Jewish workers to be given menial tasks, Jewish money to be confiscated, and Jewish people to be forced out of their communities. Nadler wrote, "These words set the stage for the events which would occur 400 years later as Hitler determined to turn Lutheran Germany against the Jewish people."

The New York Times reported that French Jews fear a “new strain of ISIS-inspired anti-Semitism.” The report focused on a machete attack by a teenage fanatic, who police say was inspired by ISIS. The teen attacked Benjamin Amsellam, a teacher at a Jewish school in Marseilles. Amsellam used his heavy leather-bound Torah to deflect the blow and save his life. After the attack, a top community official asked Jews to not wear skullcaps in public, which caused a huge backlash from other community leaders. One major concern is that the teenage attacker does not match the profile of a radical Islamist. He is a good student from a financially stable family and has no known connection to radical groups. It appears he was self-radicalized by reading jihadist websites. As a prominent local doctor put it, “This boy, he’s the opposite of any image one might have of the terrorist. He’s not marginalized. And that tells us any boy could do this.”

The Messianic Movement

An article on David Hocking’s website reported on the increasing number of Jews in Israel coming to faith in Yeshua. Simon Stout of Jews for Jesus estimated that there are 20,000 Messianic Jews in Israel today, compared to 3,000 in the 1990s. Another source estimated that there are 150 Messianic congregations in the Land.

The Times of Pryor Creek, Oklahoma, reported on two Messianic congregations in Mayes County, and stated of Messianic Judaism that “the growing movement is said to have more than 1.2 million followers.” The article also stated that “according to Messianic beliefs, the [Jewish] customs practiced are not the way to salvation, but instead contribute to sanctification.”

Newsmax wrote an article entitled “10 Facts About Messianic Movement and Jewish Christians.” The author estimated that there are 20,000 Messianic Jews in Israel and one million in the United States. She also stated that there are more than 200 Messianic congregations in the United States and about 500 worldwide.

Messianic Jews and U.S. Politics

An article in *Charisma News* about *Politico*’s allegations against Ben Carson noted that *Politico* had previously claimed that Jews for Jesus had paid former Senator Rick Santorum to speak at an event. In fact, Santorum had accepted a speaking fee from the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America. But the “Jews for Jesus” allegation remained in the Internet address of the *Politico* story.

WND reported on remarks that Jonathan Cahn made at the Messiah Conference at Messiah College on July 4 and at the annual conference of the Messianic Jewish Association of America (MJAA). Cahn said the June 26 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized gay marriage in all 50 states was the definitive marker of a post-Christian America. Cahn said he told leaders and members of Congress that if a nation’s high court “should pass judgment on the Almighty, should you then be surprised if the Almighty should pass judgment on that court and that nation? . . . And what happened was not just about marriage but a symptom of civilization rejecting this Judeo-Christian faith that we brought to the world.”

The Christian Post (CP) reported on Donald Trump’s meeting at Trump Tower with evangelical and other religious leaders, one of whom was identified as “Jews for Jesus Rabbi Kirt Schneider.” JFJ quickly informed CP that it doesn’t have rabbis nor does it know Kirt Schneider, but the toothpaste was already out of the tube. The story about the “Jews for Jesus rabbi” spread all across the Internet (see articles from *Free Republic* and the *Black Christian News Network*). Some (see *Times of Israel* article) got it right, calling Schneider a Messianic Jewish rabbi.

The Trump story also ended up on CNN’s “Anderson Cooper 360,” which showed Trump being prayed for as people laid hands on him, one of whom was Kirt Schneider, who was very vocal and wearing a *kippah*. Cooper called Schneider “a Jews for Jesus rabbi.” Then a Christian commentator on the show said that the people praying in the clip were prosperity preachers. Oy vey!

San Bernardino Terrorist Attack

Several news outlets reported that one of the victims in the mass shooting by Muslim terrorists in San Bernardino, California, was Nicholas Thalasinis, who identified with Messianic Jews, but was not Jewish. Several, like the JTA and *Haaretz* are Jewish publications. The *Forward*, the *Intermountain Jewish News* and other Jewish publications ran the JTA article. Thalasinis had said online, “As a gentile who loves HaShem, I know my place is to support Israel and the Jewish people.” When asked why he didn’t convert to Judaism, Thalasinis replied, “I believe in Yeshua. I will not lie to a Rabbi and let him believe otherwise to do this—no matter how much I want to.” In writing about the incident and Messianic Jews, JTA said, “One of the best-known messianic missionary groups, Jews for Jesus, actually is comprised in large part by Christians.” Several publications reported that Thalasinis had gotten into a heated argument about the nature of Islam with Syed Farook, one of the shooters, at their workplace two weeks before the shooting.

Steve Strang of *Charisma* interviewed Bruce Dowell, the rabbi of Shiloh Messianic Congregation where Thalasinis attended. Dowell said that in the argument two weeks before the shooting, Farook had threatened Thalasinis, saying, “You will never go to Israel.” Dowell also said that most of the carnage by Farook and his wife was at the table where Thalasinis was seated. Dowell stated that Thalasinis was a loving person and that the things he posted online were no different than what many write when debating religion on the web.

Also in *Charisma*, Dale Hurd wrote about the reaction from the political left to the shooting. He highlighted a column by Linda Stasi in the *New York Daily News* implying that Thalasinis caused the shooting because he expressed his beliefs in the workplace. Stasi called Thalasinis a “radical Born Again Christian/Messianic Jew” who was a “hate-filled bigot.”

Books of Jewish/Christian Interest

A blogger named James Bradford Pate reviewed Rich Robinson’s book, *Christ in the Sabbath*, published in 2014 by Moody Press. Pate was mostly complimentary of the book. He noted, for example, that “whereas many Christian authors are negative in their depiction of Judaism,

Robinson tells readers what Jewish leaders' rationale was in coming up with certain rules regarding the Sabbath, and he does so with empathy." Pate summarized that "Robinson does not believe that Christians are required by God to observe the Sabbath . . . but he does maintain that the Sabbath teaches important principles." He added, "While I did not always agree with Robinson, I did find even the arguments that did not convince me to be judicious, balanced, and informative." Pate concluded by giving the book five stars, "for I enjoyed it more than I enjoy many books that I have awarded with five stars."

The Jewish Journal reviewed a biography by Zev Chafets entitled *The Bridge Builder: The Life and Continuing Legacy of Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein*. Chafets writes at the beginning of the book that the biography is sponsored by Eckstein's International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ) and admits that therefore the book cannot be entirely objective. Eckstein's goal has always been recruitment of new donors to Jewish causes, and early on he reached out to evangelical Christians. For that, Eckstein's work has drawn criticism both from observant Jewish clergy and former ADL chief Abe Foxman. Eckstein said that among his Christian supporters he defused the issue of evangelizing the Jewish people. "The novelty of what I did," said Eckstein, "was to give Christians a tangible, meaningful, and orthodox way to deal with Jews without trying to convert them. Christian missionary groups who target Jews hated me for that. I hurt their business."

Jewish Thought Pieces

Writing for Public Radio International (PRI), Tamar Charney, a Jew originally from the South, recalls how her Sunday School classes when she was a young girl focused on the Holocaust and the danger of cults, which her teachers told her included Jews for Jesus. She wrote that for years she wondered if any of her Jewish friends ever got swept up into a cult. It seemed so unlikely to her. However, when she hears of teenage girls getting drawn into ISIS and becoming "Jihadi brides," her fascination with these stories is that "deep down, I worry it could have been me."

In an article for *Haaretz*, Micah Goodman wrote about how Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hachohen Kook. Rav Kook explained the paradox that a secular movement (Zionism) brought the Jewish people back to the Land God had promised them. Goodman said Rav Kook attributed three logical inversions to secular Zionism: Its patriotism does not replace religion, but elevates it; its anarchism does not undermine the religious experience, but expresses its passion; and heresy is just part of the evolution of faith. Goodman wrote, "According to Rav Kook, secularization is an unconscious demand for changes in religion, and therefore paves the way to a more complete Judaism."

Rabbi Richard Hirsh wrote in the *New Jersey Jewish News* about the "boundaries of belief." He noted that the last 150 years have seen the rise of Reform, then Conservative, then Reconstructionist interpretations of Judaism, followed by the Jewish Renewal movement. At what point, he asks, is a belief heretical and out of bounds. Rabbi Hirsh wrote, "Some beliefs of other traditions, such as confessing Jesus as the Messiah, would still seem to provoke a consensus among many Jews that adopting such a belief creates conflict with a claim to 'still be Jewish.' Hence the 'Jews for Jesus' remain by and large outside of the Jewish communal

conversation.” But the rabbi admitted that it’s not exactly clear why Jews who practice Buddhism are not necessarily seen as heretical, while ‘Jews for Jesus’ are.

Jewish Holidays

Writing in *Charisma News*, Ron Cantor explained how the Passover seder points to Yeshua. Cantor stated that no one knows for sure how such an overt picture of Yeshua ended up in the seder. He concluded:

. . . but we do know that the Messianic Jews and non-Messianic Jews were somewhat intermingled for some time after the Messiah’s resurrection—possibly until the destruction of Jerusalem in 135. It is plausible that Messianic Jews introduced this tradition and as their numbers dwindled because of persecution and assimilation the larger non-Messianic Jewish population adopted the tradition.

Also in *Charisma News*, Sam Nadler summarized the seven Jewish biblical feasts and their significance in terms of God’s redemptive plan through Yeshua. He encouraged readers to use their knowledge of the feasts to share the gospel with Jewish (and non-Jewish) people who don’t yet know Yeshua.

Sam Nadler wrote another piece for *Charisma News* about Tu B’Shevat, the minor Jewish holiday whose name comes from the date of the holiday, the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. This year it fell on January 25. Known as the “New Year for Trees” and “Jewish Arbor Day,” it is customary to eat fruits associated with the Land of Israel on this holiday. Nadler said that as believers, we should also have spiritual fruit associated with Israel. He wrote, “Maturity for both Jewish and Gentile believers will further reflect the concern that the apostle to the Gentiles taught regarding the ministry of prayer: ‘My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved’ (Rom. 10:1).”

Potpourri

Haaretz reported on the general election battle for mayor of Chicago between Jesus Garcia and Rahm Emanuel, characterized by some as Jews for Jesus versus Jews for “Mayor 1 Percent.” Many progressive Jewish voters in Chicago supported Garcia, while “establishment” Jews sided with Emmanuel. At their final debate on March 31, 2015, Emanuel “pulled out the Jewish card by characterizing Garcia as ‘Hanukkah Harry’ for offering a list of expensive proposals without explaining how he would find the necessary revenue.”

The *Huffington Post* published a piece by Akbar Ganji, whose byline terms him a “dissident Iranian journalist” about the surprising number of Jewish cultural influences allowed into Iran, including movies about the Holocaust, despite state censorship. Ganji wrote, “The official propaganda claims, on the one hand, that Hollywood is controlled by the Zionists, but show, on the other hand, many well-known movies made by, for example, Steve Spielberg.” Holocaust-related movies that have appeared on Iranian national, state-controlled television network include *Defiance* and *Marathon Man*. The Holocaust film, *Life is Beautiful*, has been screened in Iran’s

movie theaters. Haroon Yeshayae, an Iranian Jew active in all aspects of Jewish culture in his country, was selected in 2009 as the best film producer of the 30 years since the Revolution.

Sandra Teplinsky, writing in *Charisma News*, says a lot of people ask her if Christians should celebrate Christmas—and these questions usually come from Gentile rather than Jewish believers! Although she understands their concerns about materialism and possible pagan origins of some of the folk rites, she lists, “in the spirit of Romans 14:5,” ten reasons she believes Christians should still celebrate Christmas. Her final reason: “Quite possibly God likes it when global attention is directed to His Son one day a year.”

As part of its celebration of its 40th anniversary, *Charisma* honored “40 People Who Radically Changed Our World.” One of those is Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice and a professor at Regent University’s Law school. The article mentioned his successful Supreme Court case 30 years ago upholding the First Amendment rights of Jews for Jesus to pass out tracts at the Los Angeles Airport. Danny Ayalon, former ambassador from Israel to the United States, said, “Jay Sekulow is a true friend of Israel who has fought with us hand-in-hand in some of Israel’s most strategic, international battles.”

The Algemeiner reprinted a *Jewish News Service* (JNS) article about the Hebrew Roots movement. The article stated, “Hebrew Roots adherents—not to be confused with Jews for Jesus, whose followers consider themselves Jewish and are known for intense proselytizing—are Torah-observant believers in Jesus, who they identify by his Hebrew name, Yeshua.” It said there are 200,000–300,000 Hebrew Roots movement followers worldwide, most of whom joined in the past fifteen years. However, it also stated that “Its followers are rejected by Jews and Hebrew Christians (also known as Messianic Jews), and people don’t seem to stay in the movement very long. They end up rejecting Christianity while they learn Torah, moving instead toward Noahidism or converting to some stream of Judaism.”

The Canadian Jewish News wrote about an irreverent web series, “YidLife Crisis,” which focuses on the struggles of living an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle in contemporary society. Among the targets of the show’s humor are conversion, circumcision and Jews for Jesus.

BBC World Service did a feature story about the stigma of suicide in the Orthodox Jewish community. The article discussed a new documentary film, *Against Your Will*, about the suicides of two brothers, one in 1995 and the other in 2008, the sons of Esther and Gil Alexander, in Israel. The film seeks to break the silence about suicide, against which Judaism has placed strict prohibitions. By tradition, those who kill themselves are buried separately and not commemorated by the family sitting *shiva*. An organization named Elijah’s Journey, after the prophet who fell into depression, also seeks to educate the Jewish community regarding suicide awareness and reduce the taboo around it. Rabbi Shimon Grady said that 80 percent of Jewish people who commit suicide have left religious communities. He stated, “The Jewish people think like a tribe. And when you go outside you don’t have the tools to deal with the outside world.” But the expectations of the Orthodox community can be hard to some to meet. Grady added, “When someone has that much depression, it’s almost like he didn’t have a choice and we give him the respect he deserves.” Rella Kaplowitz, whose younger brother killed himself at age 23,

said that if you examine the stigma surrounding suicide in Orthodox communities, you generally find an ignorance about mental health.

Elon University published an article highlighting a new course entitled “Jewish-Christian Dialogue.” Professors Geoffrey Claussen and Jeffrey C. Pugh will explore questions such as what led the earliest followers of Jesus to separate from the Jewish community, and how the Holocaust changed both faith traditions. Pugh said, “Most people are simply unaware of the deep and abiding responsibility that Christianity has [in the Holocaust]. The historical record is important, and it’s a record that has been glossed over.”

Ilana E. Strauss wrote a feature story for *Tablet* about the Righteous Noahides: non-Jews who believe in the Orthodox Jewish teaching that Gentiles should obey the seven laws for the children of Noah: do not deny God; do not blaspheme; do not murder; do not engage in incest, adultery, pederasty or bestiality; do not steal; do not eat of a live animal; and establish courts. Maimonides urged their observance, and about 40 years ago, Chabad Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson launched a global Noahide campaign. Strauss noted that today, almost all Noahides start out as Christians who begin to doubt what they have been taught. Many first gravitate to Messianic Judaism, then to more traditional Judaism, eventually giving up Christianity altogether. Once they become Noahides, many are not content to observe just the seven laws and want to keep more of the 613 *mitzvot*. Many would like to convert to Judaism, but are not geographically near any Orthodox Jews. Many Noahides, for example, live in Texas, where less than one percent of the population is Jewish.

The Oregonian reported on the armed standoff in Harney County, Oregon, between an anti-government militia group and U.S. local and federal law enforcement agencies. The last to surrender was David Fry, on the 41st day. He surrendered on the condition that the entire SWAT team say “Hallelujah.” Fry told negotiators that he is a Messianic Jew and referred to “My brother, Christ, Yeshua.” *The Oregonian* defined Messianic Judaism as “essentially Christianity for people who identify as Jewish or appreciate a distinctly Jewish worship style. Followers believe Jesus, who they call Yeshua, was the messiah Jews awaited.”

In a column for *The Algemeiner* entitled “All Jews Should Have Full Access to the Western Wall,” Nathan Lopes Cardozo wrote that he agrees with Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein that adding another separate section for prayer for women has compounded the problem by erecting a psychological *mechitza* (barrier). Cardozo stated, “No denomination should have control over it, and it should have no barriers separating people. It must be designated as a place where people can touch Heaven and experience a feeling of true holiness.” He added, “Next in line will be the Jews for Jesus. They will also claim their separate place at the Kotel, and who knows what they will bring?”