

Intimidation Can't Stop Believers from Spreading Jesus' Good News

I have lived in Israel for 10 years and I gladly report that no one has given me the slightest trouble about my faith—*until now*.

I have shared the good news with Orthodox Jewish hitchhikers, seeking to get from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, with secular Israelis curious as to why I would leave the other promised land to come to a land filled with terror and \$8 a gallon gas, and with many friends with whom God has given me favor who are curious as to what led to my belief in Yeshua—but none of them have ever reacted negatively towards me.

However, last week I engaged an Orthodox Jewish woman who blogs on one of the more famous English websites in Israel. I was intrigued by an article she wrote whereby she shared how deeply touched she was when she had dinner with two American pastors who visited her West Bank settlement. She seemed genuinely jealous of these men and their walk with God and grieved that traditional Judaism has not done enough to attract young people.

“And so, as I floated home I couldn't help but feel that those people made me want to sit around a Christmas tree with them and drink eggnog.

“And then it hit me—why many of our youth go “off the derech,” off the religious path, some even embracing other religions, and yes, some even joining the ranks of “Jews for Jesus.”

“Perhaps we can learn something from our Christian Evangelical Zionist friends.”

Oh, she made it clear that she would never convert and despite her love for these pastors she lamented she did understand that “Christianity is a missionary religion.” But still, it was clear to me that she felt the presence of God on these men.

I sought to engage her in the comments area of her blog. She again, firmly, made it clear she was not open and expressed disdain for Messianic Jews. Part of me wanted to just let it go, being happy that these wonderful pastors had made such an impact on a Jewish woman.

On the other hand, I wanted to see if she was interested in intellectual honesty ... in other words, how can you say that evangelical Christians are swell, but Messianic Jews are deceitful criminals? Theologically, we believe the same thing—as Messianic Jews, we live as the Jewish disciples did—as Jews. Of course, this is the crux of the issue in her mind; you can’t mix *Jesus and Jewishness*.

I was gentle, but sought further dialogue. I also posted her article on my personal Facebook page, encouraging people that these pastors had made Romans 11:11 come to life: “Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious” (Rom. 11:11b).

I hadn’t really thought about it for a week or so, when suddenly I get a private message from her on Facebook.

Ron Cantor: This is copy write infringement. You are using my article to further your illegal missionary work in Israel. TAKE IT DOWN from your page, before I take legal action (emphasis mine).

At first, I felt a cold wave of fear. She was going to sue me! Of course, it didn’t matter that she had no case; intimidation doesn’t play by the rules. Intimidation is a spirit. We can see it when King Saul seeks to kill David, and when Jezebel threatened Elijah.

Just one day prior, the prophet was overseeing what was supposed to be a national awakening. Now, as he was given her message—that she was going to kill him (1 Kings 19)—the Bible says he ran for his life and even asked God to kill him.

Once I recognized this was a spirit of intimidation, I began to pray and with my words I rebuked the intimidation and then responded to the fear-laced message.

Dear (Name Withheld), I am in a quandary. I would be happy to take the link down. But you see, you have threatened legal action, falsely accused me, called my work Illegal, seem to misunderstand the laws of Israel (there is freedom of speech... I think?) and also seem to not understand that when you blog and said blog has links to repost, that you cannot monitor who reposts and then take legal action against the re-poster. Furthermore, my facebook page is not a part of my 'illegal' work, but Ron Cantor's personal page. I post all kinds of stuff there. I am not profiting from your blog, but expressing an opinion...

If you would simply rewrite me and kindly request for me to remove it I will do so speedily. I would feel like a 'fryer' (In Hebrew a 'fryer' is someone who lets others take advantage of him) to cower to intimidation...

As an American, I am sure you value freedom of speech. I would never seek to silence you, please don't seek to silence me. Disagree? No problem. But calling my actions illegal in the only democratic country in the Middle East is very unsettling...

I do understand that you are upset and it is not my intention to upset you. So please, just send me a friendlier note and I will take it down.

This did not lead to a gentle request for me to take down the link, but rather to further threats..., and then public threats on Facebook.

After I told you that I consider proselytizing to be a form of war against the Jews, you just declared war... You Just p***ed off the wrong gal. You have no clue who you're dealing with here.

But the moment [Messianic Jews] attempt to infiltrate our people with their theological poison, they will rue the day their Messianic words ever crossed my path.

Once again, I could feel the spirit of intimidation seeking to silence me. Knowing she was backed by a famous rabbi and his community had me wondering how many people hostile to Yeshua were reading this? Again, I rebuked the intimidation again.

You might think, *"What's the big deal? What is a little ole blogger going to do to you?"* But you must understand, I know of Messianic Jews who have been kidnapped or beaten or sued or attacked or harassed in many other ways, and I really had no idea what connections she had or what she was actually threatening. And in Israel, you can't blend into the gentile world—there is no gentile world! Friends of mine have had their pictures plastered over neighborhoods, telling people to "beware of the missionaries." Who knew how difficult she could make my life?

I wrote her back publicly, once again explaining that threats and intimidation will not work. Indeed that is what the Sanhedrin tried to use against the apostles, when they warned them not to teach in the name of Yeshua.

Then they called [the disciples] in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Yeshua. But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to Him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:18-19)

Furthermore, I explained that she had now slandered me by claiming that I was involved in illegal activity and that if anyone had a legal case, it was me against her. I explained to

her that many Messianic Jews have been violently attacked over the years (Ami Ortiz had a bomb blow up in his face), and in that light, she might not want to threaten me in a public forum.

I went on to say that Freedom of Speech is not just for some people, and my daughters serve in the military just as her son, risking their lives for this country (while 60,000 Orthodox Men boycott army service) and there wasn't anyway I was going to let someone tell me I have less rights in this country than they do.

Having said that, while I can debate all day long, it is not always the most Godly attribute. Even though part of me really wanted her to take me to court (what a platform to share the gospel), I did feel that it was insensitive to her to post something on my page that she wrote, knowing now that it was against her expressed will. I wrote her one last time.

Shalom [Name Withheld], after praying about this I have decided to take it down. Not because of your threats (at this point I could bring legal case against you for slander) but because it was insensitive to you and I have no desire to cause you pain. But for your over the top response, I would have taken it down immediately.

She responded quickly, thanking me. And that was that.

What have I learned from this experience?

1. We can never give in to intimidation. Peter and John did not, and the Lord used them for many years afterwards. Intimidation is primarily a spirit of fear rarely backed up by any true action.

- 2) These people truly see us (Messianic Jews) as evil people. Rabbis go around the world teaching that we have horns and are liars and deceivers. The Chief rabbi of Ashdod said we are worse than Nazis. That probably hurts more than anything.

Fellow Jews look at me like I am some prowler seeking to kidnap their children. In the same way that Arab children are taught from an early age that Jews are evil (without having an real connection with Jews) Jewish children are taught that the goal of Messianic Judaism is to destroy Judaism and it is merely a marketing tool to “get Jews in the Church.” This woman revealed a deep seated hatred for Messianic Jews, that appears to be based solely on what she has heard—not actual dialogue with Messianic Jewish. This is why I seek interaction. I admit that I am naïve and I think if I just explain the Jewish Roots of the New Testament, they will understand. While it is not illegal to share the Gospel here in Israel, she and many like her truly believe it is.

3) While we are seeing fruit in secular Tel Aviv, it is going to take a worldwide prayer effort for the orthodox Jews to embrace Him. They will (Zech. 12:10, Matt. 23:39) but it is going to take prayer.

How would you have handled this?

Footnote: I want to be clear. I understand why most Orthodox Jews are antagonistic towards the message of Yeshua. Two thousand years of anti-Semitism, often to the point of murder, by the hands of so-called Christians has done its damage to the authentic message of love and forgiveness. Had it not been for a visitation from God, I may feel just as this blogger does!

Ron Cantor is the director of Messiah's Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic Ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Ron also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book, Identity Theft, will be released on April 16th. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.