

Are We on the Cusp of a Bigger Harvest in Israel Than We've Ever Seen Before?

There have been three men in my life who lived Jewish evangelism: the late Manny Brotman, Sid Roth and Josh Fischbein (a pseudonym). Each of them functioned out of their calling as a gifted ministry evangelist (Eph. 4:11,12). Ironically, I found every one of these dedicated men of God to be quite frustrated. Why? They strongly believed God's people could be much more effective in winning Jewish people to faith in Yeshua.

Manny was one of the original fathers of the post-1960s modern Messianic Jewish movement. Though a proponent of Messianic Jewish congregations, it disturbed Manny that our congregational services were so focused on the already-won, and scarcely at all on "inquirers". He thought our concentration on the members was self-centered. Today we could use some of Manny's obsession with evangelism to bring balance where we have become "fixated" on meeting the needs of the flock. During Manny's time as a Messianic Jewish congregation leader, he gave constant evangelistic invitations, and many Jewish people came to real faith in Yeshua.

Then there are Sid and Josh. Both are very similar in that they are always sharing their faith. There is a real anointing on these men. They can easily start up conversations and people respond to them positively; some even pray to receive Yeshua. Whether in a restaurant, on a street corner or at a railway station, there is a drive in them to be led by the Spirit to begin conversations about life, its meaning, God and Yeshua. I was recently with Josh and watched him dialogue with a restaurant waiter with amazing effectiveness. He knew the questions to ask. The waiter opened up and was happy to share

contact information. People like Josh see the fields as white for harvest. They see an openness to the gospel where others do not.

This leads me to some comments about the Messianic Jewish movement in America. It began as an evangelistic movement with many coming to faith. We invited all who wanted to be part of this new move of God to join us, both Jew and Gentile. We created a Jewish context so that Jewish people would remain Jewish and would continue to reach our own people, and we trained the Gentiles who joined with us. We did not teach Gentiles that they were required to live a Jewish life. We did not worry much about what Gentiles could or could not do in a Messianic Jewish Congregation. The culture was Jewish. The Gentiles were thrilled to see Jewish people coming to Yeshua and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

I wonder if some of what I see as imbalance in the Messianic Jewish movement is due to our need for an outpouring of the spirit of evangelism. There is a concern about authenticity. Some think excluding Gentiles will make our congregations more authentically Jewish and that more Jewish people will join us. I greatly doubt this. Some think we just need to have more rigid standards of what Gentiles can and cannot do in our midst so that Jewish people are clearly distinguished. Some Gentiles are in a great quest to practice what they see as the true form of New Covenant faith in which they keep the Mosaic Law. These are all imbalances.

The real issue is that without a passion for reaching Jewish people, and then being occupied with their discipleship, the other questions become unfruitful, self-focused preoccupations. It's true that biblically, Gentiles are not responsible for living a Jewish life in the same way as Jews. There are legitimate distinctions of calling and promise to Jews and Gentiles. But when we are passionate and successful in evangelism, our time and energy are given in ways that help things more naturally fall into place. Gentiles will not have

to worry about the lie that they are second-class. And Jewish believers will not be anxious about being swallowed up by a non-Jewish majority. They will both be too busy reaching and discipling new believers.

Josh believes members of Messianic Jewish congregations can be trained and enter into an effectiveness in a Spirit of revival that they have not yet begun to envision, to see a harvest of many in each congregation and not just one here and one there from time to time. He is expecting this to happen. The intent is not for the congregational service to become an evangelistic service, but rather that it be a time of worship and teaching that empowers those already following Yeshua to share their faith with boldness and effectiveness.

I pray regularly for the equipping gift of the evangelist to be much more significant in our congregations in Israel and the Diaspora—so that they will be able to equip others to be effective as well. I pray for God's people to be empowered and effective far beyond what we now think possible. {eoa}

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