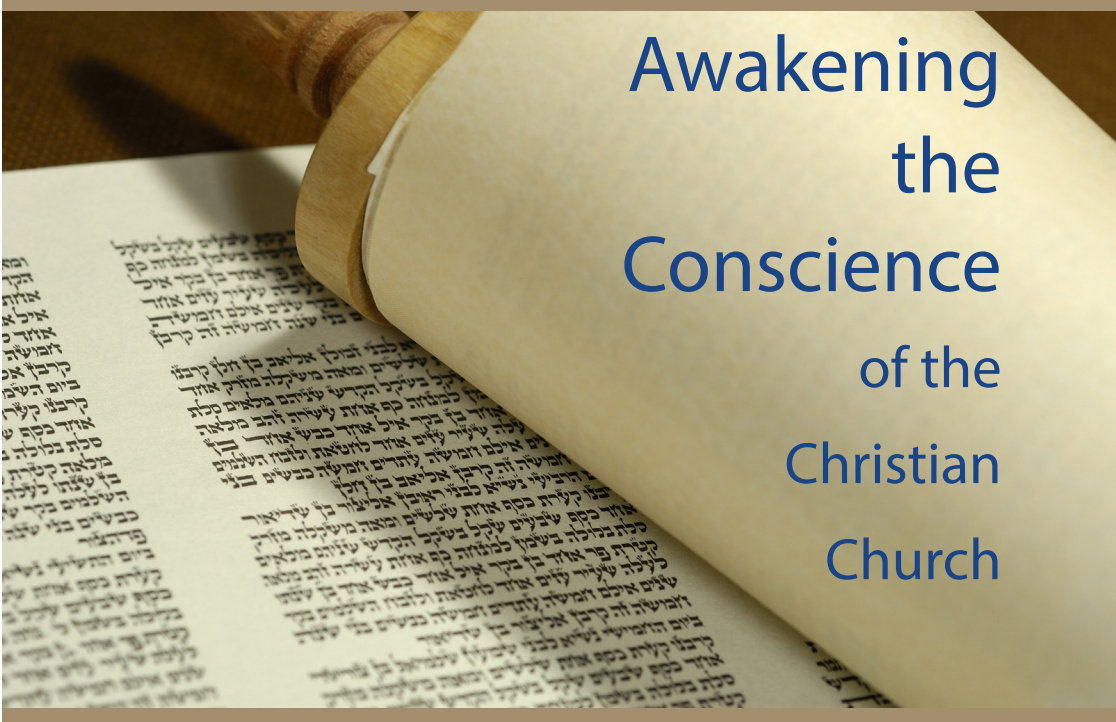


A resource of Christian Witness to Israel (N. America)  
to challenge, assist and equip in local Jewish evangelism.

# THE AC COURSE



Awakening  
the  
Conscience  
of the  
Christian  
Church

**CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS**  
**3A RABBINIC REINTERPRETATIONS**  
**Jewish Objections**

# COMPLETE COURSE OUTLINE

## The Biblical Burden for Jewish Mission The Hope throughout History for Jewish Redemption Contemporary Connections for Jewish Salvation

### THE BIBLICAL BURDEN

<i>The MOTIVE</i>	<i>Psalm 67</i>	<i>The Praying patriarchs</i>
	<i>Romans 9-11</i>	<i>The Praying apostle</i>
<i>The METHODOLOGY</i>	<i>Isaiah 63</i>	<i>The Longing of the prophet</i>
	<i>Luke 4</i>	<i>The Liberation of The Prophet</i>
<i>The MISSIONOLOGY</i>	<i>2Cor 3&amp;4</i>	<i>The Ministry that is glorious</i>
	<i>Acts 20-22</i>	<i>The Ministry that is blessed</i>
<i>The MANDATE</i>	<i>Psalm 150</i>	<i>The Holy hallelujahs</i>
	<i>Rev 4&amp;5</i>	<i>The Cosmic chorus</i>

### THE HOPE OF HISTORY

<i>PROTECTIVE PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Past, Present, Future</i>
<i>PIRATES OF PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Expulsion and Expansion</i>
<i>REPLACEMENT AND DEFACEMENT</i>	- <i>Forgotten and Forsaken</i>
<i>REFORMATION AND RE-EMBRACEMENT</i>	- <i>The Puritan Hope</i>
<i>The LIE OF THE LAND</i>	- <i>Too much love will kill you</i>
<i>REWRITING THE RAPTURE</i>	- <i>Confusion and correction</i>

### CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

<i>The CHALLENGES TO CONNECTING</i>	<i>The separated and the assimilated</i>
	<i>The atheist and the evangelical</i>
<i>The FRAGRANCE OF FRIENDSHIP</i>	<i>The aroma of Christ</i>
<i>The WISDOM OF WORDS</i>	<i>(Un)common language</i>
<i>RABBINIC REINTERPRETATIONS</i>	<i>Jewish objections</i>
	<i>Peter and Pentecost</i>

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

1. As you begin each study, pray for the Lord's grace and wisdom.
2. Discipline yourself to set aside one hour for each paper.
3. Keep a personal 'physical' notebook.
4. Begin with the questions and in your own notebook, answer each question in one sentence, prior to engaging in the study.
5. Read through the paper in one sitting, with note-taking.
6. Answer the questions again; this time, a paragraph each.

Feel free to send your answers to me, ask further questions, or simply make appropriate comments.

Stephen Atkinson: Director of Ministry, CWI (N America)  
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## **CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS**

### **3A: Rabbinic Reinterpretations Jewish Objections**

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Consider and reflect upon the development of synagogue Judaism and its importance in the spread of the New Covenant proclamation of the gospel; the spread of Christianity.
2. Consider and reflect upon the challenges facing the 1st century Jewish leaders and the Jewish people desiring a continuation of their religious life without a Temple, and without a Land.
3. How crushing is a Code of Jewish Law that never will enable sufficient righteousness. Can a Jewish person ever do 'enough'?
4. *Yimakh Sh'mo Ve-zikhro* - what does this mean and why is it important?

## 3A Jewish Objections

### INTRODUCTION

In our 'Contemporary Connections' part of this course, we have looked at some basic challenges to connecting and considered some general principles of how we should engage with our Jewish neighbors; namely, with tender logic, with empathetic understanding, and with careful conversational clarification! That is, let our conversations be sensitively wise and the specific points of our argument or discussion, be clearly stated without confusion.

Furthermore, we have brought before you some of the mistaken views of piety and the fears and mistrust some Jewish people have of Gentile intrusions into their 'separatist' life. Thus, we considered some effects of assimilation, and conversely the attempts at isolation. The point we make in all of this is that our Jewish neighbors are living and growing up in 21st century America, with 30 million (plus) evangelical Christians living side by side with 42% of the world's Jewish population. There will of necessity be interaction. Some of it will be good, some not so.

Therefore as this 'applicatory' part of the AC Course continued we gave attention to how we might interact with the Observant and the Orthodox. For example: What is the telos of the Talmud; the end purpose of the Torah? (Study #5) We further considered: How might we interact with the atheist and the agnostic? And we answered, that there are 'questions' that must be asked. Do not be afraid to bring up the God question, the Sin question, the Sacrifice question, and the Salvation / Savior / Messiah question. (Study #6)

In all the 'Connections' part of the Course we have shown the importance of friendship evangelism with the 'aroma of

Christ' (AC #11), and the importance of careful and sensitive 'words' (AC #12).

Now in our final two Contemporary Connections studies I want to briefly examine the development of rabbinic re-interpretations which have brought about standard Jewish objections and hostility to Jesus (AC #17). Then I want to set this in comparison with the clear and unambiguous declarations of the Jewish fisherman called Peter as he spoke with his Jewish friends on the Day of Pentecost (AC # 18).

## **THE END OF THE TEMPLE AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DIASPORA**

*(I give credit to my colleague Paul Morris for some of the content of this section. He greatly helped me understand much of this when he spoke at a CWI 'Connecting with the Cohens' conference in Arkansas in 2013.)*

It is often far too easy, and also rather arrogant, for the Gentile church to criticize the ever-present disobedience of Israel, while easily excusing the heresies, abominations, and desecrations of institutional Church history. So while we here will readily point out the aberrations of developing rabbinic Judaism, we certainly are not doing so out of a 'holier than thou' attitude. (*'God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all.'* Romans 11:32)

The history of the people of Israel contains a regular and oft-repeated story of idolatry and disobedience resulting in divine displeasure and exile. But it is also true that regular failing and disobedience was accompanied by the mercy of God and divinely graced restoration. Salvation was always 'of the Lord', and so also was the reviving of true religion.

One example of this mercy and revival is what happened after the Babylonian Exile. They returned to their land and

rebuilt the Temple. They re-instituted the priesthood and became a Temple-centered people. Indeed subsequent to this the dispersed Israelites who remained 'among the nations' became a synagogue-centered people. This indeed would be for the divine purpose of the spreading of the gospel of the New Covenant with the House of Israel as it is taken into the goyim nations in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

But let's rewind a little back to the period of Ezra and narrow the focus a little. Through the proclamation of the Book and by the grace of God there was a wonderful revival that got the people of the Book to be focused on what they should be. This would be a preparatory stage, what is termed the inter-testamental period, for the 500 or so years before the coming of the Messiah. At this point they were Law-focused and Temple-focused but we need to affirm and to recognize that this was out of right motives and principles. However we also need to note that at this time Pharisaism began to develop. As we have previously mentioned, the separatist piety movement of the 'parush', developed into separatist legalists. Thus when the LORD came to His Temple, His righteous indignation came forth in the cleansing of the Temple, and pouring out his blood in the Greater Temple not made by hands, and the rest... as they say, is history.

The rejection of Messiah by the Jewish leaders and the fulfillment of the 'shadows' by the Messiah and his death, led to the tearing in two of the curtain of the Holy of Holies. The way of access to the LORD, always through blood, was ultimately and finally only possible through the death and resurrection of Messiah. And this was further prophesied and fulfilled in the destruction of the Temple occurred in AD70 bringing about a decisive end to Jewish sacrifices. At the same time following the fall of Jerusalem many Jewish people went into exile increasing the numbers of Jewish people in the Diaspora (Dispersion) who were now living

among the Gentile nations.

The question then arose. How would they continue their Jewish practices? What would be the nature of Judaism without a Temple or Land? Judaism at the end of the 1st century now must progress as a Law-centered religion bereft of Temple and sacrifice. Furthermore the distinct Jewish communities living in the Gentile world needed to reinvent themselves and their religion in new largely Gentile surroundings. This cataclysmic loss of Temple and Land demanded interpretation and re-interpretation century upon century. Enter the rabbis...

'How shall we keep these commands in the new context and country?' On top of all the teaching that had been going on in the synagogues before the Temple was destroyed there needed to be added a re-interpretation and an adaptation for new world situations. Add into this mix the different schools of thought by differing rabbis of dispersed Judaism. The charting and understanding of all these developments becomes more complex than at first sight. Furthermore much of this was unwritten verbal tradition developing later into what we might call Rabbinic Judaism – which is certainly not uniform and singular in belief and practice.

For our purposes it is enough at this point to recognise things were necessarily developing outside of Scripture and with 57 varieties! Biblical Judaism needed to be rewritten. Sacrificial systems needed to be reinterpreted. Theocratic laws were adjusted to community rules within Gentile (and often Christian Gentile) countries.

## **THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK BECAME PEOPLE OF THE BOOKS**

It was a title of honor, to be called the People of the Book. To be one nation under God with divinely given Law, Prophets

and Writings, they lived effectively under One Book; though more accurately many books in one binding (or several scrolls!) But now the demands of the Book centered upon a Land and Temple needed clarifying. Rabbinic interpretations to the new situation and country, or more truthfully, rabbinic re-interpretations by a variety of esteemed religious leaders, produced books in abundance. The people of the Book thus became people of books; rabbinical books, that is.

Fast forward to around 200AD and a certain rabbi took on the immense task of collecting all the verbal traditions from different schools of dispersed Judaism and formed them into one book called The Mishnah. Ah, we're back to being people of the book; only the book is now of human origin. Yes, it is based on that heavenly Book but it soon begins to get 'lost in translation', literally.

So we take our Mishnah and compound the intricacies of the detail with further discussions through the centuries. 'Was that Rabbi correct when he made that specific ruling? How would that work for Jewish people living in Christian Europe?' For the next 300 years rabbinical interpretations developed into mountains of books as more discussions were taking place as to how the original ruling applied in their local and contemporary situation, 500 years removed, 1,000 years removed, 1,000 miles removed?

Fast forward again and around 500AD another diligent rabbinical scholar put together all this extra commentary into The Gemara. Condensing the history of this (and the immensity of the work) if you put together the Mishnah and the Gemara and it generally equates to The Talmud.

Talmud has thus become 'the Book', though more accurately, it is 'books'. Thus the people of the Book have over time, become the people of the books. I want to stress that we



cannot overestimate the importance of Talmud on the life of every Jew through the centuries and still today (however observant or not). Talmud was, and Talmud is, the bedrock of Judaism. So have we got a final rule-book in Talmud? Well, yes and no.

Situations through hundreds and even thousands of years, into the modern era require continue to require further rabbinic elucidation. So 'a Code' of Jewish Law needed to be produced. What happens on the Sabbath in 21st century Jewish life? What happens with regard to kosher food laws? What about the issue of washing on the Sabbath? How much is deemed work? Is it work to heat up the water and when can you do that? Is it work to wash too much of you on Sabbath? For answers to these and many more questions, you need a 'code' of interpretation. One example of this is sufficient:

*'One is forbidden to wash his whole body, or even the greater part of his body in warm water, even if the water was warmed before the Sabbath. It is however permissible to wash one's face, and bathe one's feet, with water warmed before the Sabbath.'*  
(Code of Jewish Law, Ganzfried 86:1, p114,115)

That is obviously just a tiny (yet immensely important) example. Multiply this exponentially to apply to all other areas of life and you can see that observant Jewish life gets a little complex!

## **LOST IN TRANSLATION AND LIVING IN MYSTIC LIBERTY**

We haven't time to deal in depth with the development of Targums, but it is also an essential part of the development of rabbinic re-interpretations and so we must mention it here albeit in brief.

The Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was

translated around the time of Jesus. It is a loose translation, similar to paraphrase translations of the Scriptures, like, *'The Living Bible'*. At the time of Jesus, Hebrew was not commonly understood among the people so in the synagogue of Jesus' day most people spoke Aramaic. From this necessity arose the Aramaic Targum and it is interesting to study as it gives a paraphrased interpretation and useful insight into how the Hebrew Scriptures were understood at that time by the rabbis. (And, we might add, how they have been re-interpreted by subsequent rabbis with the real original message being 'lost in translation'.)

For example, Micah 5:1, in a certain Targum reads like this – *'And you Bethlehem, Ephrata, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet from you shall the Messiah come forth from the forming.'*

Of course the original Hebrew doesn't say 'Messiah' but the Targum interpretation suggests that this passage was understood to refer to the Messiah. This may not be of any interest whatsoever to the average Jewish person, yet as you make your 'Contemporary Connections' you might come across someone who knows his 'Targums' - and such issues soon become important.

A similar study worthy of more time we can give here is to consider the development of Midrash and Mysticism. The Midrash is a set of volumes that pre-date Talmud. However despite the name meaning *'Enquiry'* it more often than not was a reading into, rather than enquiring into, the original text. Putting it technically, the Midrash has more eisegesis than exegesis.

We have regularly made the point (agreed by all Jewish people I have met!) that if you get two Jewish people together you get three opinions. The 'lost in translation' part

of Rabbinic Judaism is the immense development of a variety of rabbinic rules; which range from the heavy to the liberal.

Liberal Judaism has not simply developed into libertine Judaism but there are 57 varieties also according to your own pick n mix personal choice. One such 'cool' and increasingly popular choice for some Jewish people today is a return to a form of Judaism that has a beautiful archaic air to it: Kabbalah, or Mystic Judaism.

The crushing weight of legalism, of living by the books, of contemporing, of contextualizing, led some rabbis to say: 'This is too harsh. Let us find 'joy' in every area of life. God meant it so'. So now you can find this in rabbinic mysticism, and kabbalistic syncretism.

We do need to make one point of clarification though. Jewish mysticism is somewhat different from eastern mysticism, where you 'lose yourself' in the greater orb of Oneness with the world. Jewish mysticism is a blending of such with a (mistaken) attempt to draw near to Israel's God.

Let me give an example from the 'Zohar', (a 13th century document). Speaking of the High Priest going into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement we read the following:

*'He took a further three steps, closed his eyes, and attached himself to the world on high'. (Notice the phrase – 'attached himself to the world on high'.) 'He then entered the Holy of Holies. He heard the sound of the cherubim's wings as they sang. As he burned incense they only whispered. If the priest was worthy there would be rejoicing on high. He was accepted. A fragrant odor entered his nostrils and he was tranquil. He prayed. The cherubim sang. He went out backwards.'* (The Jewish Mystics, p83 compiled by Rabbi Louis Jacobs)

We find here that the High Priest's acceptance is based on his

zealous intensity, rather than on something objective that was done. and received by God in grace. This is a mystical rabbinic re-interpretation far removed from the original Scriptural record. We find then that the works-religion, which had been crushing, now continues to crush with ever increasing need for mystical intensity.

However, for many Jewish people (particularly in the celebrity world), interest in the Kabbalah is simply something 'cool' rather than crushing and is certainly tamed to your own level of Jewish intensity. (For a contemporary story of this, google how Madonna bought a multi-million-dollar town house in London and made it into a Kabbalah center.)

Well, we have looked at rabbinical re-interpretations of Scripture, with books being set atop The Book, (akin to my simply studying my 22 volumes of Calvin and never opening the Bible). Crushing legalism and cool and mythical liberties continue to divert Jewish life away from the One thing needful. What if we can direct the conversation to that One thing; or more accurately, the One Person? Well, the rabbis have their views on that rogue rabbi from Nazareth.

## **RABBINICAL REINTERPRETATIONS CONCERNING JESUS**

With books rather than Book, targums and translations, midrash and mysticism, what has happened to Jesus in all of these distractions? The Son of God said to his Pharisaical detractors: Search the Scriptures, they speak of me! But the rabbinic search will yield no such thing because quite simply:

(i) He is not needed

(ii) He is not heeded

Modern rabbinical Judaism has no need of a savior, no need of blood sacrifice; no need of a biblical Messiah who presents

the New Covenant (of Jeremiah) in His blood. This is why we previously emphasized the importance of bringing up the Sin question and the Sacrifice and Salvation question.

There is no need of such in rabbinical Judaism; yet there was such a need for thousands for years! This too must be a pressing question we bring before our Jewish friends. Did God change his mind? Did he go soft? Did he make things hard for all your Jewish ancestors, but has decided to give us all a pass now? What kind of unfair God is that?

In our connecting conversations, deep as they may get into rabbinicism, we must continue to drive the point – rabbinicism is a re-interpretation; open up 'The Book' with me and let us talk some.

But within rabbinical Judaism He, Yeshua, is not needed. And further, they will not heed Him!

We do need to remember that the Jesus we know from Gentile church life, is not the Jesus known by people within the Jewish community. The rabbis have a reinterpreted image! Of course we will agree with someone who once said, 'Jesus wasn't a Christian, Mary wasn't a Catholic and John wasn't a Baptist!' But what was He then? HE... needs to be part of our clarifying conversations. They not only don't know Him; they don't know about Him.

We have already explained that for a Jewish person to come to Jesus, it is tantamount to a betrayal; a betrayal of identity, of family, of heritage, of religion. Far from seeing Him as the fulfillment, as we would want Him to be seen, they see Him as the arch enemy. And to some degree He is. Just as Jesus was the arch enemy of legalistic Pharisaism, so his grace-filled gospel is foreign and indeed crushing to all of rabbinical Judaism.

Judaism teaches that enemies of Israel should be cursed with the phrase 'May his name be erased'. For example a Jewish history book will record, *'At that time, Adolf Hitler, (may his name be erased) had risen to power in Germany.'* The phrase 'may his name be erased' is 'Yemakh Sh'mo'.

You will also be well aware by now that the Hebrew term for Jesus is Yeshua. What you may not know is that rabbinical Judaism uses the term Yeshu for Jesus. This is not simply a shortened form of Yeshua, but a cursed acronym: Y-SH-U – and what does that mean? Yimakh Sh'mo Ve-zikhro – may his name and memory be erased.

Jesus, for modern rabbis, is unneeded, and to be unheeded; no worse, erased. Cancel culture has been around for some time.

As we seek to interact with Jewish people to a greater or lesser degree infected by rabbinic Judaism, we need to show the beauty of the Messiah Jesus; the gracious, merciful, saving beauty of the Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah of Israel. We who know him savingly will instead desire the prayer of Psalm 72:17:

*'May His Name endure forever, his fame continue as the sun!  
May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed.'*

One wonders if Einstein ever had a run in with the rabbis? (I have a book on Einstein's life among my 'to read' list. Perhaps I will find the answer to that in the book!) But here is an interesting quote from that Jewish genius:

*'I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene. No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.'* (Albert Einstein)

Wow! Take that to the bank and take it into your connecting conversations!

**Conclusion:**

I remember hearing the response of a Jewish man to a Christian presenting Jesus as the Son of God. The Jewish man's answer was in line with the standard rabbinical and Jewish objections to Jesus: *'If I have to believe in a son of God, I'll take Thor!'*

Obviously this is both sad and strange, from a people, community, and religion, that brought forth the Savior of the world - Salvation is of the Jews.

Our next and final study in our 'Contemporary Connections' section will take us back to basics... that is, back to the right proclamation of Jesus by a Jewish fisherman named Peter, as he hijacked a Jewish festival called Shavuot and 3,000 came to saving faith in Jesus.

In our conscience-awakened conversations with Jewish neighbors, may we also bring things back to basics, without rabbinical dross, but with clear proclamations:

... of need,

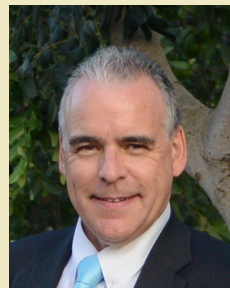
leading to heed,

and bringing to heaven.

# WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE DO?

## DIRECTOR: STEPHEN ATKINSON

As **Director of Ministry** and 35 years of preaching experience, Stephen has been engaging with churches on behalf of CWI since 2004. With a Biblical mandate, historical reasoning, and present day missionary urgency, Stephen makes the case that every Church must have Jewish mission on its agenda!



## MISSIONARY: MITCH TEPPER

As a **Jewish believer** Mitch has the apostle's burden for his own 'kindred after the flesh'. A graduate of Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, his Scriptural knowledge and personal passion drive him in his street evangelism, one on one relationships, and household bible studies, with the singular purpose of 'Telling Jewish people about Jesus'.



## International Mission to Jewish People

Internationally we have been sharing Jesus with Jewish people for almost 180 years. Today we have missionaries in the USA, UK, Israel, France, Holland, Hungary, Australia, all faithfully witnessing to Jewish communities across the world.



**CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL (N America)**

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