I. Introduction

If a predominately Gentile church neglects the Jewish people when it comes to sharing the Gospel, then when that Gentile church is faced with Jewish people and are in a position to share, the majority of the Gentile Christians will be unprepared.

Knowing Jewish History is foundational to understanding and relating to the Jewish people. As a direct result of how the Jewish people were treated for the last 2000 years, Gentile members of the Church carry baggage wherever they go. Outreach to Jewish people cannot be done apart from that very baggage attached to the Church. Stereotypes and misconceptions about the Jewish people have pervasively invaded the body of Messiah. These false ideas about Israel and the Jewish people need to be demystified. Additionally, there are also some misconceptions that Jews have about Gentiles, and we will address these as well.

II. Gentile Misconceptions about the Jewish People

A. All Jewish People Know Their Bible

The Bible to Jewish people means the Old Testament in a different order than what we are familiar with. They made an acronym based on the first letter of the 3 main sections of the Jewish Bible (TeNaK).

\textbf{Torah} = The Pentateuch (5 books of Moses) it also means instruction and can refer to all Old Testament or simply word of wisdom from a Rabbi.
Nevi'im = The Prophets (Minor and Major together)
Ketuvim = The Writings (our wisdom literature)

According to Conservative and Orthodox Rabbis, all the books of the Tenach are inspired by God, even though the most inspired are the 5 books of the Torah. Less inspired are the Prophets and even less inspired are the Writings.

Orthodox Jewish people have, for the most part, a good knowledge of the Old Testament and some may even have a limited knowledge of the New Testament, however, the majority of the Jewish people (80%) know very little to nothing about their own Bible.

We must also keep in mind that the majority of the Jewish people who are interested in reading spiritual matters, will most likely read a passage of Talmud or a commentary on the Talmud before they study a passage of the Tenach.

The Jewish people hold the Masoretic Text (MT) as the authoritative Hebrew text of the Tenach. The MT was basically copied, edited and distributed by a group of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries AD. It is the Masoretes who added vowel pointing to the Hebrew language that before them had no vowels.

Another important translation known as the Septuagint (LXX), which was made by 72 rabbis in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC needs to be mentioned. It was a Greek translation of the Old Testament commissioned by King Ptolemy for the great library of Alexandria.

According to the Talmud, King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: "Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your
teacher.” God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did.1

It is interesting to look at the differences between the MT and the LXX translations, especially when it comes to some variations applied to the text of some of the key messianic prophecies.

About 10 centuries apart, the two translations show some differences that are without a doubt at least partially based on an anti-Christian bias. For example the exact meaning of the Hebrew word almah is debated among scholars, especially between Jews and Christians.

Evangelicals believe that the word simply means “virgin” and that in Isaiah 7:14, it paints the picture of the prophecy of the virgin conception of Yeshua.

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Jewish people will usually say that almah mean young woman but not always “virgin”. Yet in the LXX, the word used to translate almah was parthenos only meaning “virgin”. The LXX was translated centuries before the coming of Yeshua on the scene, thus it is fair to say, without the possible anti-Christian agenda.

In other places such as Psalm 22:16, some Masoretic vowel pointing have been applied to original Hebrew words, thus completely changing the meaning of the text. The following examples will show how one translation remains within the context of the passage and how the other one makes absolutely no sense at all.

1. Tractate Megillah 9 (tenth tractate of the Mishnah).
Psalm 22:16  For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet. (LXX)

Psalm 22:16  For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
Like a lion my hands and my feet. (MT)

B. All Jewish People are very religious

This could not be further from the truth. Again, 80% of all Jewish people go to Synagogue anywhere from a couple of times per year to none at all. Even so, going to Synagogue does not mean you are religious. They might instead express their Jewishness socially or intellectually.

Only 10% to 15% of worldwide Jews are considered Orthodox and very religious (numbers vary from country to country).

It is always wise when engaging in conversation with a Jewish person to find out where they are on their spiritual journey. Some haven’t even left, some just started; some are well on their way and every step in between.

Many Jewish people do not believe in God or any kind of Messiah, so it is crucial to be able to position your friend on the spiritual spectrum from atheist to religious.

C. All Jewish People are Stingy

During the middle Ages, it was strictly forbidden for Christians to lend money and or to charge interest. The job was thus given to the Jewish community. Jewish people were themselves forbidden to own land and practice many of the trades of the Gentiles. Jewish people started to become moneylenders, and charged interest as their only way to make a profit. Pretty soon, European leaders and monarchs who did not like the fact that the Jewish people had found a way to generate an income, started to tax them on their revenue. Taxes kept increasing, which forced the Jewish lenders to
increase their tax rates to make any profit and earn a living. Thus the myth of the “stingy Jew” was born. This is also how the expression he/she “Jewed me down” was born. This being said, and not necessarily by choice, Jewish people have developed a keen sense of business and investment over the centuries.

D. Jewish People are Patiently Awaiting the Coming of their Messiah

The fact is that most Jewish people are not waiting for a Messiah, but are expecting the possible coming of a messianic age brought by the propagation of the ethics of the Bible.

For the most part, Jewish people lost all their hope after the Holocaust. As a matter of fact, for many Jewish people, God died in the Holocaust.

You may have the answer to questions your Jewish friend does not care to ask. We must remember that in all our endeavors to share the Messiah with our Jewish friends, we must always earn the right to speak.

E. Jewish People Get Hostile Talking About Yeshua

The fact is that many Jewish people will talk about Yeshua; they will not however accept His claims. Jewish people will expect any Gentile to believe in Yeshua almost by default. Their relationship with Jewish believers might not be as good. Jewish believers are usually regarded as minim or “heretic”.

Hearing about Yeshua from a Gentile is a lot less threatening for a Jewish person, but that doesn’t mean that they will agree with His teaching and accept Him for who He is.

F. All Jewish People Understand but Reject the Gospel

The fact is that most Jewish people have NEVER had the Gospel presented to them properly. The most that Jewish people might tell you is that “Jesus is not for the Jews”. If hard pressed, most Jewish people wouldn’t
be able to tell you why they don’t believe in Him as Messiah, let alone give you their understanding of the simple message of the Gospel. Jewish people are most likely very confused about all the different kind of “Christianity” that are offered to the world. Additionally, most have never heard the Gospel in terms that they can understand and relate to.

It is critical to understand that while Jewish people have been exposed to the negative side of Christianity over the centuries (forced conversions, Crusades, Inquisitions), they have seldom been exposed to the Gospel and the real love of Yeshua for them. The ball is in our court!

III. Miscellaneous Facts about the Jewish People

A. Most Jewish People are Indoctrinated Against Christianity

The Jewish people are a Gospel-Resistant people. Their indoctrination is cultural, social and religious. While it could be argued that the animosity is as old as Christianity is, it really goes back centuries to the 11th century and the teaching of Rashi during the Crusades. Rashi was very instrumental in re-interpreting Messianic prophecies to eliminate the link to Yeshua’s fulfillment in the New Covenant.

B. Many Jewish People do not have too many non-Jewish friends

Jewish people today still live in socio-cultural ghettos. These ghettos are not to be confused with those of the early 20th century in Eastern Europe. The Jewish socio-cultural ghettos of today are self-imposed and aside from the tight community and sometimes proximity, have nothing in common with those of yesterday.

Additionally, this communal life is less true for agnostic, reformed & assimilated Jewish people. The “ghetto-by-choice” is pretty much the lifestyle of the Orthodox Jews who cannot survive outside of a tight community because of their strict adherence to the Mosaic Law.
Religious Jews may have acquaintances and co-workers in the non-Jewish community but they will seldom put their trust in a relationship with a non-Jew.

C. Most Jewish People Tolerate Christianity

Tolerance is different from acceptance. Jewish people might be kind to non-Jewish people, but do not mistake this for openness to the Gospel. We must earn the right to speak.

Throughout History, Jewish people have learned their limits as to what to expect in a predominately Christian country. Being a minority except in Israel, Jewish people know when to speak and when to be silent.

D. Evangelism is Regarded As a Threat to Jewish Existence

Jewish people see it as a duty to oppose evangelism. This is true from all branches of Judaism from secular/agnostic to ultra-orthodox. As a matter of fact, while it is a known fact that Jewish people will disagree on much within the broad spectrum of Judaism, the one concept that all Jewish people agree with is the fact that “Jesus is not for the Jewish people”.

Aside from years of indoctrination and erroneous teaching by the rabbis and in spite of all the abuse and harm done in the name of “Christianity”, one of the main reasons why Jewish people are so Gospel-resistant might because they so easily confuse Jewishness and Judaism.

When asked who is a Christian, a Jewish person will most likely respond “anybody who’s not Jewish”. This misconception is very common in Jewish circles. Using this logic, Billy Graham, the pope AND Hitler would all three be Christians, hardly a fact!

For this reason, it is very difficult for a Jewish person to accept the fact that a Jew can become a Christian without loosing any if his Jewish identity. We must not forget that for Jewish people identity is survival.

Jewishness is an ethnic condition

A Jew cannot loose his Jewishness and a Gentile cannot gain it.
Judaism is a chosen religion

A Jew can chose to practice it or not without loosing his Jewishness, so can a Gentile (that would make the Gentile a proselyte to Judaism NOT a Jew)

A true believer is not simply a church member, but according to Yeshua in John 14:23-24, the believer follows His commands.

\[23\text{ Yeshua answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”}\]

\[24\text{ “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.”}\]

Most of the time Jewish people do not distinguish between Evangelicals, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons. They also think that Born Again Christians are Right-wing bigots and political lunatics.

G. All Gentiles are anti-Semites

In light of all the persecution performed against the Jewish people over in the name of “Christ” over the last 2000 years, Jewish people have come to assume that most Christians are anti-Semites. It is our duty to prove them wrong by properly teaching them the love of Yeshua the Messiah. Beyond properly sharing God’s Word and His plan for ethnic Israel and the Jewish people, we also must display that very love in our deeds to our Jewish friends. This is THE ONLY thing that will really earn us the right to speak.