HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM AND RABBINIC REVISIONISM: THE BLIND ATTACKING THE BLIND!

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Historical Revisionism is certainly not a new kid on the ideological block. It has been around probably as long as there has been history to record and re-record. So-called revisionist historians are not really interested in history as a valid *objective* inquiry, with certain methods, goals, and lessons. Rather they are committed to a subjective use of history to propagate a particular fixed ideology, prejudice, bias, etc. Their unspoken motto is: Please don t confuse us with *the facts*!

The purpose of this paper is to bring two radically different historical revisionist views into comparison and contrast, not as an end in itself, but rather as a means of helping us to further God s universal call to Jewish missions. If this paper moves us to a greater commitment to this end, then we will be further built up in God s sacred cause to Israel and He will be glorified through our efforts.

The paper will follow three different lines of thought. First, we will briefly survey the growing cancer of Holocaust Revisionism. Second, we will briefly review the long-standing defection of Rabbinic Revisionism. And finally, third, we will bring the two together for comparison and contrast in order to see what lessons and challenges we can learn about our growing commitment to worldwide Jewish missions.

HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM

The Nature of Holocaust Revisionism

One of the most insidious and agonizing onslaughts against contemporary Judaism is the so-called work of modern Holocaust revisionists. With a growing number of anti-Semitic followers, these non-historical historical revisionists insist, without any substantial historical evidence, that the Nazi annihilation of six million Jews never occurred, including the million and a half children who died in Hitler s gas chambers. According to these historical revisionists, the *only* Holocaust that the Nazis perpetrated was their legitimate efforts to quarantine several thousand Jews who were suffering from some kind of infectious disease, such as typhus or tuberculosis, etc. They are even willing to admit that several thousand other Jews died outside of the concentration camps, from diseases in the ghettos, in occasional pogroms, and in other commonplace and uncommonplace ways. [Although] the number is not known. [1] Many of them
assert, of course, that this whole Holocaust *thing* is merely another expression of the so-called worldwide Zionist conspiracy. It is not surprising, of course, that a vigorous and scholarly response has arisen against such a historical travesty. This response has come forth from both Jewish, Protestant, Catholic historians, as well as non-religious historians[2]

If these so-called Holocaust Revisionists are given any credence at all (and their number seems to be growing), then perhaps Napoleon was right after all, when he is supposedly quoted as saying, History is a set of lies agreed upon. But how did this Holocaust Revisionism begin? And what has been its growth and influence?

The History of Holocaust Revisionism

One of the earliest efforts to foist a revisionist view of the Holocaust upon the American public was put forth by an organization headquartered in Torrance, California, calling itself The Institute for

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[1] Arthur R. Butz, The International *Holocaust* Controversy, *The Journal of Historical Review*, 1 (Spring 1980), 22.

[2] See select bibliography at the end of this paper.

Historical Review.[3] Their first journal appeared in the Spring of 1980.[4] The lead article was entitled: The International *Holocaust* Controversy, written by Arthur R. Butz, one of the leading American contributors of Holocaust Revisionism.[5] Butz also authored a book entitled, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, his major contribution to the field of Holocaust denials.[6] In this tale of Holocaust denial, Butz advances his racist agenda on several fallacious grounds, all of which have been adequately refuted by reputable historians and authorities:[7] (1) a distortion of Red Cross reports; (2) a falsification of statistics; (3) a spurious attack on the authenticity of *The Diary of Anne Frank*; (4) a falsification of the conditions in the concentration and extermination camps; (5) a distortion of Colin Cross's biography of Adolph Hitler; (6) alleged fake atrocity films and photographs; and (7) the use of spurious authorities. And his bottom-line argument for this Holocaust legend, contrary to *all* historical documentation, is that the supposedly exterminated Jews of Eastern Europe were as much alive and well after World War II as they were before the war.[8]

As one might expect, it is not surprising that Dr. Butz himself, like many other Holocaust revisionists, is not a professional historian at all. In point of fact, he was a professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.[9] In fact, most of the Holocaust revisionists are associated with various ultra right-wing political and economic organizations. Among the many responses to Butz's book, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, coming from respected and recognized historians, are the words of Dr. Hugh Trevor-Roper, Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford (England):

> . . . behind a simulated objectivity of expression, it is in fact an irresponsible and tendentious publication which avoids material evidence and presents selected half-truths and distortions for the sole purpose of serving anti-Semitic propaganda. . . . This book makes a great parade of scholarship, but in my opinion its method is fundamentally defective. The author seeks to demonstrate that there was no plan to exterminate the Jews; but he ignores the direct documentary German evidence of such a plan, or arbitrarily declares it to be invalid, and merely offers speculative re-interpretations of secondary matter. Most of the book is irrelevant, and the central issue is evaded. As history, I regard it as worthless.[10]

However, it must be noted that Butz and his colleagues at The Institute for Historical Review have based most of their so-called historical findings on three other earlier works. The first was published in Paris in 1948 by Maurice Bardeche, a committed and prominent French fascist to the day of his death; it was entitled, *Nuremberg or the Promised Land?*[11] The second book was also published in France in 1948 by Paul Rassinier, a former Communist and a Socialist who had been interned in the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dora; it was entitled, *Crossing the Line.* Other books followed over the ensuing years. Finally in 1977 Rassinier's major books concerning the Holocaust were reissued in one volume, *Debunking*

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[3]P.O. Box 1306, Torrance, California 90505.

[4]*The Journal of Historical Review*, 1 (Spring 1980).

[5]Arthur R. Butz, The International *Holocaust* Controversy, *The Journal of Historical Review* 1 (Spring 1980): 5-22.

[6]Arthur R. Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (Torrance, CA: Historical Review Press, 1976). Another author and book closely associated with Butz is, Austin J. App [another *non-historian* professor of English], *The Six Million Swindle: Blackmailing the German People for Hard Marks with Fabricated Corpses* (Torrance, CA: Historical Review Press, 1973).

[7]For a detailed explanation and refutation of Butz's arguments, see Arthur Suzman and Denis Diamond, *Six Million Did Die: The Truth Shall Prevail*, 2nd ed. (Johannesburg: The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 1978).

[8]Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, 10; *The Journal of Historical Review* 1 (Spring 1980): 6.

[9]For a full description of A.R. Butz and his work, see Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: A Plume Book, Penguin Books, 1993), 123-56.

[10]Cited by Suzman and Diamond, 7, 23.

[11]Cited by Lipstadt, 50-52, 64, 93.

the Genocide Myth: A Study of the Nazi Concentration Camps and the Alleged Extermination of European Jewry, published by Noontide Press, which publishes neo-Nazi material and is connected with the The Institute for Historical Review.[12] The third book which forms the so-called historical basis for Holocaust revisionist Butz and his cohorts was originally published in London in 1974, under the name of Richard Harwood, entitled, *Did Six Million Really Die? -- The Truth at Last*.[13]

The most recent assault on the veracity of the Holocaust has come from British author David Irving, who has written numerous books on the Third Reich. He has brought a libel suit against Penguin Books Ltd. and Deborah Lipstadt, the publishers and author of a book entitled, *Denying the Holocaust*.[14] Holocaust revisionist Irving has called the Holocaust an ill-fitting legend. He is suing Lipstadt and her publishers on libelous grounds, based on her statements concerning him, among others that Irving is one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial. The case will be decided in the Royal Courts of Justice, in London. As *Atlantic Monthly* author D.D. Guttenplan correctly maintains, Irving is seeking to put not just Lipstadt but the Holocaust itself on trial--an effort in which he will receive considerable help from British libel law. [15] This is certainly not the first, nor probably the last, court case to be brought against legitimate Holocaust historians.[16]

A Summary of Holocaust Revisionism

It is not the purpose of this paper to refute these Holocaust Revisionists. This has already been done by qualified historians and scholars.[17] But before moving on to Rabbinic Revisionism, it seems appropriate to close this section of the paper by referring to two modern quotes that more than adequately place any kind of Holocaust Revisionism in its proper perspective. The first is by Christian apologists Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, who describe the modern philosophical shift to historical relativism, a historiography that forms the basis for every form of historical revisionist thinking, most especially Holocaust Revisionism:

> One area of thought in which relativism has made especially significant inroads is the field of historical knowledge. History used to be defined as the study of the past--the search for knowledge of what actually took place. The assumption was that certain events occurred at certain times for certain reasons, and to the extent that effects of those events have survived or can be found, we can acquire knowledge of those events and understanding of how and why they happened. It was also assumed that the more accurate our understanding of the past, the more likely we were to be able to act effectively in the present and plan for the future.
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> This philosophy of history is now regarded as out of fashion. We are now told that history is constructed according to the perspectives (i.e., biases) of the historian, and that there is no objective way to judge which perspectives must be used and no way to be sure that our constructions correspond to the way things really were.
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> No one doubts that historians are guided by their own assumptions, experiences, training, and values, and that these factors play a part in shaping their conclusions. But what is controversial is that such subjective factors make impossible comparisons of historical constructions in light of objective facts. But the reason for adopting this philosophy of history is not a secret. Many

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[12]Now published by The Historical Review Press, 1978. Again, see Lipstadt, 51-65, 74, 79-80, 90, 93, 96, 100, 106, 124, 132, 159, 210, 214.

[13]Now published by The Historical Review Press, n.d. It is now recognized that Richard Harwood is a pseudonym for Richard Verrall, the former editor of *Spearhead*, the publication of the British right-wing neofascist organization of the National Front. For more on Verrall and his anti-Semitic Holocaust revisionism, see Lipstadt, 104-07, 110-21, 124, 133, 138, 152, 157, 210, 233.

[14]For a complete accounting of the details of this current suit, along with its potential implications, see D.D. Guttenplan, The Holocaust on Trial, *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 2000, 45-66.

[15]Ibid., 47.

[16]For more on the legal challenges and court cases involving Holocaust revisionists and genuine Holocaust historians and scholars, see Lipstadt, 157-82; Suzman and Diamond, 25-131; Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4-21, 88-141; Legal Review, *Patterns of Prejudice* (January 1980), 32-37; etc.

[17]See above in note 15, as well as accompanying bibliography.

> postmodern historians are quite open about the fact that in their view history serves ideological purposes. That is, the purpose of history is not to learn what actually happened in the past (which is supposedly an unrealizable goal), but to further a social or political agenda. For virtually all such postmodernists, that agenda is one of liberation of oppressed peoples, providing a voice for those whose perspective has been ignored or suppressed by the powerful.
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> This ideological philosophy of history is self-defeating, as its relativistic assumptions would suggest. After all, one can only commend revisioning history in the interests of the oppressed peoples if it is possible to identify the oppressed peoples. Every citation of slavery, genocide, persecution, or marginalization of a people assumes that we can examine the facts and agree that *in truth* the people in question did receive such treatment.[18]

The second quote is by Mary Lefkowitz, who has written an intensive critique of a kind of Afro-centric revisionism that claims that Socrates (for example) was Black and that the Greeks stole their philosophy and other intellectual legacies from African culture. It is not surprising that Lefkowitz, a Jewish historian, should see the parallel between this particular kind of modern historical revisionism and that of the growing number of modern Holocaust Revisionists. Her comparisons are to the point:

> Academics ought to have seen right from the start that this new historicism has some serious shortcomings. But in fact most of us are just beginning to emerge from the fog far enough to see where history-without-facts can lead us, which is right back to fictive history of the kind developed to serve the Third Reich. It is not coincidental that ours is the era not just of Holocaust denial but of denial that the ancient Greeks were ancient Greeks and creators of their own intellectual heritage. . . . There are of course many possible interpretations of the truth, but some things are simply not true. It is not true that there was no Holocaust. There was a Holocaust, although we may disagree about the numbers of people killed. Likewise, it is not true that the Greeks stole their philosophy from Egypt. . . .[19]

RABBINIC REVISIONISM

The Nature of Rabbinic Revisionism

Having briefly surveyed Holocaust Revisionism, it is now our task to briefly review Rabbinic Revisionism. Like Holocaust Revisionism, Rabbinic Revisionism is about the nature and function of authority. In other words, as Holocaust Revisionists have redefined their own authority structure to serve their own agendas, so also have Rabbinic Revisionists. Rabbinic or modern Judaism defines itself, whatever its varied expression, through a historical construct that has been imposed upon the biblical revelation, that in turn defines its reason for existence as well as its practice.

In terms of all truth-claims, this issue of authority cannot be overemphasized. Theologian J.I. Packer rightly emphasizes the true nature of authority in the biblical tradition:

> The Christian principle of biblical authority means, on the one hand, that God purposes to direct the belief and behavior of His people through the revealed truth set forth in Holy Scripture; on the other hand, it means that all our ideas about God should be measured, tested, and where necessary, corrected and enlarged, by reference to biblical teaching. Authority as such is the right, claim, fitness, and by extension, power to control. Authority in Christianity belongs to God the Creator, who made us to know, love, and serve Him, and His way of exercising His authority over us is by means of the truth and wisdom of His written Word.[20]

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[18]Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *An Unchanging Faith in a Changing World: Understanding and Responding to Critical Issues That Christians Face Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 58-59.

[19]Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (New York: HarperCollins--BasicBooks, 1996), 51, 161.

[20]J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993), 16.

In like manner, Church historian Jaroslav Pelican has also rightly stressed the importance of the issue of authority in resolving all matters of doctrinal controversy:

> Lurking behind every theological issue is the problem of authority. As it is possible to stop any argument in its tracks by raising the epistemological question:
> How do you know that, and how is that related to the way you know other things? so the appeal to authority carries the specious appearance of promising to resolve all other matters of theological inquiry by making them its corollaries.
> Then the correlative of authority, which is obedience to Bible or Church, assumes the position of the principle virtue from which all others can be derived.
> As a result, authority has repeatedly become the *a priori* consideration in Christian doctrinal controversy. . . . Yet it was above all by clarifying its schema of authority that orthodoxy [i.e., apostolic doctrine] triumphed.[21]

The nature of Rabbinic Revisionism, however, does not follow such a biblically revealed and eternal revelation, which is both Spirit-inspired and therefore eternally fixed in heaven and on earth.[22] Rather, Rabbinic Revisionism is committed to a so-called *living* schema of divine authority. Jewish historian Robert M. Seltzer reflects this kind of Jewish revisionist thinking when he maintains that the earlier vast body of orally transmitted statements came to be surrounded by an elaborate apparatus of commentary and cross-reference, which in itself, exemplified the belief that Torah was *an unending process* [italics added] of interpretation continually bringing forth new implications. .[23]

Later in the same work, Seltzer makes it quite clear that he is not simply talking about rightly interpreting the biblical revelation and then looking for ever-new implications and applications for one s life. Rather, the Jewish commitment to religious authority is *equally* to both the written revelation and the oral revelation . Seltzer asserts:

> The Bible is intensely interested in the meaning of historical events; the sages Torah [i.e., the oral tradition] is a timeless, eternal blueprint of ideal truth. . . The result was a form of religious rationality unique to Judaism, combining verbal revelation through the written text (the *Torah she-biktav*) and the indirect inspiration through the oral discussions of the sages (the *Torah she-be al peh*), which together formed the Torah in the full rabbinic meaning. . . . The Mishnah was, therefore, more than a law code: It was a holy book containing a finely honed selection of paradigmatic instances of Jewish action. . . . Not only was Mishnah Oral Torah in the sense that some of its traditions were thought to have been delivered to Moses at Sinai, then passed on by word of mouth and not written down in the Bible, but the Mishnah presupposed that Oral Torah was *an ongoing, revelatory process* [italics added] in which each successive generation could participate by reasoning and reflection.[24]

Leon D. Stitskin, writing from within the Orthodox Jewish tradition, emphasizes the difference in this same regard between Christianity and Judaism: To the Christians, the Bible is a self-contained book expounded in accordance with its own sources. To the Jew, however, the Written and Oral Law are one. [25] Another Jewish scholar, Ernst
Simon, describes the relationship between the Written and Oral Laws, with its ensuing implications:

> . . . Jewish law is based on the still ongoing procedure of finding the truth in each and every debatable problem by means of free discussion which tries to arrive at a consensus of interpreting

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[21]Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 1988), 18.

[22]See Deut. 4:1-2; 12:32; 29:29; Prov. 30:5-6; John 10:35b; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Rev. 22:18-19; etc.

[23]Robert M. Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), 260.

[24]Ibid., 262-64.

[25]Leon D. Stitskin, A Rejoinder, *Tradition* 17 (Spring 1978): 91.

> the Holy Writ and the Oral Tradition. Everyone who has acquired the necessary knowledge is not only permitted but obliged to take part in these discussions, whatever his occupation or social status.[26]

The History of Rabbinic Revisionism

The question that must be addressed then is: How did rabbinic Judaism arrive at this historical construct imposed upon the biblical view of divine authority? There certainly is no biblical justification to warrant such a so-called divinely-equaled status between the Written Law and the Oral Law. So how does rabbinic or religious Judaism, irregardless of its belief systems or pious practices, justify such a Rabbinic Revisionism?

Rabbinic Revisionism anchors itself to two historical buoys, one without any basis in history itself (i.e., an after-the-fact construct) and the other as a response to a historic Jewish national crisis. As stated above, Rabbinic Revisionism has imposed a historic and theological construct upon the biblical record. Jewish leaders maintain that rabbinic or religious Judaism is built upon a *living* and, therefore, *growing* tradition. This overarching construct allows Judaism to express itself in a multitudinous number of ways, many of which are in direct conflict with each other. These often conflicting traditions would include Ultra Orthodox Judaism, Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, Reconstruction Judaism, Reformed Judaism, Agnostic Judaism, Black Judaism, Gay Judaism, etc. As an illustration of the unleashed lunacy of modern Judaism, E.L. Doctorow in his most recent novel, *City of God*, sets his story in the city of New York where the plot twists and turns between St. Timothy s Episcopal Church in New York s East Village and a local synagogue across town called the Synagogue for Evolutionary Judaism. Only in the city of New York and at the beginning of the twenty-first century could a so-called brand of Judaism called Evolutionary Judaism be acceptable to the modern Jewish mindset. Perhaps a better title for modern Judaism would be De-evolutionary Judaism, which more accurately describes the direction of our people at this time in history.

At any rate, in point of fact, this historic and theological construct allows any particular expression of rabbinic or religious Judaism to define itself in any given manner that it chooses, including what kind of Jews will be included and what kind will be excluded, most especially Messianic Jews. Rabbinic Revisionism is more articulate in defining who is not a Jew rather than who is a Jew. In light of this, it would probably be more accurate to call modern Rabbinic Revisionism, Judaisms rather than Judaism. It certainly is not a monolithic religion in any sense of the word, but rather an evermore accommodating religion, depending on the creativity, energy, finances, etc. of any particular brand of Rabbinic Revisionists themselves.

Herbert Danby explains the Mishnah s own account of this historic revision of the Oral Law, which in turn was imposed upon the divinely-revealed authority of the biblical revelation:

> The Mishnah s own account of the origin and history of the Oral Law is given in the tractate Aboth, 1[1ff]. At the same time that the Written Law was given from Sinai, the Oral Law, too, was delivered to Moses, and handed down (orally) in turn to the leaders of successive generations--to Joshua, to the Elders (Josh. 24[31]), to the prophets, to the Men of the Great Synagogue (the body of teachers who administered and taught the Law after the time of Ezra), to Simeon the Just (*c*. 280 or 200 B.C., one of the remnants of the men of the Great Synagogue), to Antigonus of Soko; then, in turn, to the five Pairs of leaders--Jose ben Joezer and Jose ben Johanan (*c*. 165 B.C.), Joshua ben Perahyah and Nittai the Arbelite, Judah ben Tabbai and Simeon ben Shetach, Shemaiah and Abtalion, and Hillel and Shammai. Thus the chain of tradition was brought to the threshold of the Christian era.
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> The Mishnah, in other words, maintains that the authority of those rules, customs, and interpretations which had accumulated around the Jewish system of life and religion was equal to the authority of the Written Law itself, even though they found no place in the Written law. *This, again, is but an assertion* [italics added]
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> . . . that side by side with a written code there exists a living tradition with power to interpret the written code, to add to it, and even at times to modify or ignore it as might be needful in changed

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[26]Ernst Simon, The Jews as God s Witness to the World, *Judaism* 15 (Summer 1966): 312.

> circumstances, and to this authoritatively (see Ps. 119[126]). *Inevitably the inference follows that the living tradition (Oral Law) is more important than the Written Law* [italics added] (see Sanh. 11[3]: Greater stringency applies to the observance of the words of the Scribes [namely, the authorized exponents of the law] than to the observance of the [Written] Law. Cf. Hor. 1[3]), *since the tradition of the elders, besides claiming an authority and continuity equal to that of the Written Law, claims also to be its authentic and living interpretation and its essential complement* [italics added].[27]

Danby also maintains that is virtually impossible to trace the historical origin and growth of this oral body of tradition with any kind of objective certainty. In regard to this he says that we are in the region of guesswork. [28] However, most scholars, like Danby, believe that the first intimations of an oral approach to the Law originated around the time of the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.[29] It was certainly in full development by the Second Temple period, as is evident in the many controversies between Yeshua and the Jewish religious leaders of His day (see Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; etc.).

So then, the first historical buoy of Rabbinic Revisionism supposedly goes back to the great Lawgiver Moses himself. And without any documented historical mandate or precedent whatsoever, rabbinic Judaism devoutly maintains that the written and oral traditions are bound together as one, ongoing, and living authority. Further, the oral tradition is supposedly derived from God Himself, handed down to Moses at Sinai as *the oral fence* around the written Law, designed to hedge or bind every generation of Jews into the written Law in all of its various interpretations and applications.

The second historical buoy of Rabbinic Revisionism was developed as a response to perhaps the greatest crisis of Judaism itself--the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by Titus and the Roman legions. This second historical buoy, of course,
brought about several new rabbinic stipulations, built directly on the first historical buoy. In fact, it is doubtful that the second historical development could have ever originated and developed at all without the first already being anchored in place.

With the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 came some of Judaism's most difficult days, a crisis almost unparalleled in Jewish history. How could Judaism survive as a divinely-ordained religion without its capital city, the Temple and its services, along with the Sanhedrin and its ruling courts, the priesthood and its sacrificial system, etc.? Many of the Jewish leaders who survived the first Jewish revolt against Rome gathered at Yavneh [Jabneh] to map out the Jewish survival for the foreseeable future. Jewish historian Robert Seltzer accurately describes the foundational rabbinic thinking that took place at that time, especially concerning the postwar religious reconstruction period:

> The Roman reconquest of Judea between 66 and 70 CE resulted in great physical and human destruction, the enslavement of many thousands and widespread confiscation of property, but economic reconstruction began immediately and Jews continued to constitute the largest proportion of the population of the
> area. . . . The outstanding figure of the postwar period was Johanan ben Zaccai, who escaped from Jerusalem during the siege and assembled, with Roman permission, those Pharisaic sages and scribes who had survived the fighting. In the town of Yavneh, near the Judean seacoast, a rabbinic blueprint for Jewish sur-

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[27]Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1933), xvii.

[28]Ibid. For Danby's full assessment of the origin and growth of the oral tradition, see xvii-xxiii. For other discussions on the origin and growth of the oral tradition, see Morris Adler, *The World of Talmud*, A Hillel Book, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1958, 1963), 19-31; A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, A Commentary Classic (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1949), xv-xxi; Moses Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 4th ed. (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1894, 1902, 1924, 1968), 3-16; Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, trans. Chaya Galai (New York: HarperCollins--BasicBooks, 1976), 3-85; and Hermann L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, A Temple Book (New York: Atheneum, 1931, 1978), 8-25. For a complete discussion of the Talmud itself, see the books above, of course, as well as *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev ed., gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), *s.v.* Talmud, by J. Neusner, 717-24.

[29]Ibid., xviii.

> vival was articulated. Indicative of Johanan ben Zaccai s stance and characteristic of the new age is the statement attributed to him, as he and another sage con-
> templated the ruins of the Temple: R. Joshua mourned that the place where Israel s sins found atonement was now laid waste; R. Johanan consoled him (and his generation) with Hosea 6:6, I desire love and not sacrifice, *his proof text for the principle that loving deeds were atonement equal to that offered by the Temple* [italics added]. Although rabbinic Judaism took as its central task the development of the legal component of Torah, *it was also the fulfillment of an essential implication of classical prophecy: that the religious life does not depend on a functioning sacrificial cult but on ethical and penitent action in the mundane world* [italics added].[30]

A Summary of Rabbinic Revisionism

What specific kinds of rabbinic revisions did these Jewish leaders make, based on their own self-assumed rabbinic authority to adjust and adapt the divine mandates of Holy Scripture, so that religious Judaism (as they defined it) might survive, at least until the Temple and all of its services could be reestablished? At least three rabbinic revisions were instituted: (1) the local synagogues would replace the functions of the Temple; (2) the local rabbis would replace the functions of the priesthood and the Sanhedrin; and (3) the most significant and far reaching revision, meritorious good works [Heb., *mitzvot*] would replace the divinely-instituted Levitical sacrificial system. Judaism had now *officially* become a sacrifice-free religion, that is, a people without an atonement for its sins.[31] In other words, the so-called *mitzvot* now earned merit in the eyes of a God who no longer demanded an absolute righteousness based on His absolutely holy character, but rather on a humanly-revised God who accepted a relative righteousness from all sincere and religiously-practicing Jews, at least as the rabbis defined it. Now God began to grade on the curve!

These revisionist *mitzvot* were cleverly divided and anchored to the metaphor of a three-legged stool: (1) *teshuvah* or works of repentance; (2) *tefillah* or works of prayer; and (3) *tzedakah* or works of righteous deeds and charity. It is not surprising, of course, to see that this whole legal, rabbinic revisionist system continued to multiply into the absurd and ultimately placed sincere people in bondage. What was true in days of Yeshua and His Apostles, as well as in the days of the first messianic believers, is still true today wherever this kind of revisionist thinking is practiced. The words of Yeshua Himself still bear repeating today, They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger (Matt. 23:4). And even further, He pronounced:

> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! (Matt. 23:23-24).

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[30]Seltzer, 245. The emphasized part of the quote, indicated by italics, demonstrates that the second rabbinic revision was dependent upon the first rabbinic revision, the ever-living and changing oral tradition. Other rabbinic proof texts like Hosea 6:6, used to justify a valid sacrificeless Judaism, would include: 1 Sam. 15:22-23; Pss. 40:6-8; 50:7-15ff; 51:16-17, 18-19; 69:30-31; Prov. 15:8; 21:3; Eccles. 5:1; 9:2; Isa. 1:11-17ff.; Jer. 7:21-23ff; Mic. 6:6-8; etc. Of course, none of these passages warrant nor justify such a rabbinic revisionistic abandonment of the divinely-instituted Levitical sacrificial system. For in point of fact, none of these passages are indicating God s displeasure with the very sacrifices that He Himself mandated. But rather they are clearly demonstrating His displeasure with bringing any kind of a sacrifice with either the wrong motive, a matter of the heart, or with hidden agenda, a matter of the hand (e.g., abusing the covenant community, bringing an unworthy animal; etc.). God s displeasure always rests upon Cain s offering (cf. Gen. 4:1-5ff.; Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:10-12; Jude 11)!

[31]From a biblically prophetic perspective, it is probably safe to say that the seeds that were sown for this rabbinic revisionist defection in A.D. 70 were first sown in the time of Moses (cf. *acharith hayamim*/ latter days in Deut. 4:30; 31:29; etc.), were then watered throughout Jewish history, and finally bore the bitter fruit during the Second Temple period and into the post A.D. 70 period, continuing down to this very day. On *acharith hayamim*/ latter days as a prophetic technical term for the days of the Messiah, see also Isa. 2:2 // Mic. 4:1; Jer. 23:20; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek. 38:8, 16; Dan. 2:28; 10:14; Hos. 3:5; etc.

Likewise, the Apostle Peter s ringing words at the first Jerusalem council still reverberate down to us today, Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? (Acts 15:10).

It is this kind of rabbinic revisionist externalism that leads men and women away from seeking God s true *internal* righteousness. Again, the words of the LORD Himself have a familiar ring, So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matt. 23:28; cf. Rom. 2:1-3, 17-24). For a true Judaism is always inward, a matter of the heart, For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.[32] But he is a [messianic] Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise [i.e., his Judaism] is not from men, but from God (Rom. 2:28-29).

IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS FOR JEWISH MISSIONS

Having surveyed Holocaust Revisionism as well as reviewing Rabbinic Revisionism, we must now bring the two into direct comparison and contrast to see what implications and lessons we can learn for our continued commitment to international Jewish missions.

But before pursuing this line of thinking, two things must be emphasized. First, whatever comparisons and contrasts one makes must be grounded in a commitment to our Jewish people, a commitment that reflects God s own commitment as communicated through the Apostle Paul s own commitment, I am telling the truth in the Messiah, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from the Messiah for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3). It is this kind of commitment alone which will move us to speak the truth in love. And second, as we delineate specific comparisons and contrasts, we must ground ourselves in both individual and corporate intercession for their salvation, again as reflected in the heart of the Apostle Paul:

> Brethren, my heart s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with full knowledge. For not knowing about God s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For the Messiah is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:1-4).

Without these two matters firmly in place, we might be tempted to go beyond the biblical revelation and become abusive in our understanding of and our outreach to our Jewish people. Going beyond the biblical revelation always leads to abuse and division (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6; 8:1-3; etc.). Therefore, we must not become guilty of committing the same kind of historical revisionism that the sages and rabbis of Israel have committed. In other words, rabbinic embellishment must never become evangelical embellishment!

Comparisons and Contrasts between Holocaust Revisionism and Rabbinic Revisionism

In terms of Rabbinic Revisionism and its own world, it is still the same today as it was in Yeshua s day, [the Jewish leaders] are blind guides of the blind [people] (Matt. 15:14).[33] But in terms of Rabbinic Revisionism and Holocaust Revisionism, the blindness is even worse. Irony of ironies, both the Holocaust Revisionists and the Rabbinic Revisionists are the blind attacking the blind ! Although the blindness on both sides is not necessarily on a one-to-one correspondence, nevertheless both sides speak from a self-determining, revisionist authority base.

The Holocaust Revisionists, apart from any valid historical basis, have revised history so as to further their own political agenda. Likewise, the Rabbinic Revisionists, again apart from any valid

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[32]Cf. Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Gal. 6:15; Phil. 3:1-3; Col. 2:11; etc.

[33]For other New Testament passages on the theme of Israel s judicial blindness, see Matt. 13:10-17; 23:13-34; John 9:39-41; Acts 13:4-12; 28:17-31; Rom. 2:17-24; 10:16-21; 11:7-10; 2 Cor. 3:1-18; 4:1-6; 1 Thess. 2:13-16; 2 Thess. 2:5-12; etc.

historical basis, have revised history to further their own religious agenda. While it is true, of course, that the motives of each group do differ on a major scale, the methodology, at least from a historiographical perspective, is basically the same. And even further, what is true for the one is equally true for the other: Any so-called living, *humanly-derived* authority construct whose roots do not go deep down into solid historical ground will continually be blown and ravaged by the changing winds of ideology, prejudice, and bigotry.

Added to all of this, there is even a more serious issue at hand. While it must be admitted that the Holocaust Revisionists have influenced many, especially those with a prior anti-Semitic bent, it is still only a temporal matter. Their historical lunacy really does not have any *direct* influence on one's eternal destiny. On the other hand, the Rabbinic Revisionists of the past, as well as the present, continue to have, a direct influence on the eternal destiny of thousands [millions?] of our Jewish people. From the first century to the present, Yeshua's words of judgment ring true, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matt. 23: 13).

If we are to rightly understand and respond to this kind of Rabbinic Revisionism, it is vitally important that we get our moorings on this matter from the Scriptures alone. For our basis of authority is grounded solely in the *written* Word of God. Rabbinic Revisionism has no historical mandate nor scriptural precedent whatsoever. Quite the contrary, in the Tanach itself every word from God was either *written* in stone and placed inside of the ark of the covenant,[34] or in a book [Heb., *sepher*, 183x in O.T., a missive, document, writing, scroll, book] and placed beside the ark,[35] or delivered in some kind of verbal utterance and then *written* as a prophetic oracle,[36] sometimes with the aid of a secretary, recorder, or amenuensis.[37] Of course, God did not reveal everything to Israel concerning His person or will, as Moses reminded his own contemporaries, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). The things revealed were so vital for each generation of Israelites, as well as the nation as a whole, they were *recorded in a book* (cf. Deut. 29:27; 30:10; etc.). The God of Israel would never leave His temporal and eternal covenant stipulations up to the capricious and self-justifying amendments of anyone. When He commanded the Jewish people, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44f.; 19:2; 20:7), it was His written revelation *alone* that laid out and defined what His holiness was, as well as what His holiness demanded.

In view of this rabbinic revisionist tendency, it is not surprising that some of Yeshua's harshest words were directed against the Rabbinic Revisionists of His own day, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your traditions?" (Matt. 15:3). "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men [i.e., the traditions of the elders]. . . You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. . . ; thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that" (Mark 7:8-9, 13). These stinging accusations seem painfully applicable for our own day as well.

Lessons and Challenges for International Jewish Missions

In light of the nature, history, comparisons, and contrasts of Holocaust Revisionism and Rabbinic Revisionism, what lessons and challenges are there for us who will be confronting both kinds of revisionism in our ongoing commitment to Jewish missions? It would appear that there are at least three specific lessons and challenges that God has placed before us.

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[34]See Exod. 24:12; 31:18; 32:15; 34:1, 4; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 9:9-11; 10:1-5; etc.

[35]See Exod. 24:1-8; 32:32-33; Num. 33:2; Deut. 17:18-20; 28:58, 61; 29:20-21, 27; 30:10; 31:9-11, 24-26; cf. Josh. 1:8; 8:30-35; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3-4; 2 Kings 14:6; 22:8-16ff.; 23:1-3, 21-24; 1 Chron. 4:41; 16:39-40; 24:6; 2 Chron. 23:16-18; 25:1-4; 31:1-3; 34:14-33; 35:10-27; Ezra 3:1-6; 6:16-18ff.; Neh. 8:1-18; 9:1-3ff.; 10:28-39; 13: 1ff.; Jer. 36:1-4; etc.

[36]See Ps. 40:7; Prov. 30:1ff.; Isa. 13:1; 34:16; Jer. 17:1, 23:33-38; 25:12-13; 36:1-32; 51:59-64; Dan. 9:1-2ff.; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Mal. 1:1; etc.

[37]See 2 Sam. 8:16-17; 20:24; 1 Kings 4:3; 2 Kings 18:18, 37; 1 Chron. 18:15-16; 2 Chron. 34:8; Ezra 4:9; Isa. 36:3, 22; Jer. 32:12-16; 36:1-32; 43:3-6; 45:1-2; etc.

The first lesson and challenge is that we must be committed to denying the Holocaust deniers whenever we are confronted with their Holocaust Revisionism. This is not only a valid means to the end of building bridges to our Jewish people, it is a valid end in-and-of itself: God calls us to confront lies and evil whenever and wherever we encounter it (cf. Eph. 5:1-17ff.; etc.). For those of us who are messianic believers, we must stand up as the believing remnant of Israel, and, like Daniel and his three friends, etc., proclaim the truth to all those who would seek to destroy the Jewish people and thus violate the anti-Semitic clause of Genesis 12:3.[38] And let us not forget, the best way to confront any Historical Revisionist is to confront him with the loving and saving good news of the Gospel of our Lord Yeshua. How else can we convert an enemy into a friend?

A second lesson and challenge is that we must educate and train those within the Church to also confront the Holocaust Revisionists. If Gentile Christians are called to provoke the Jews to jealousy, as the Word of God mandates (Rom. 11:11-14ff.), then they must be informed of the lies of the Holocaust Revisionists and trained to not only refute their sophistry, but also to stand with the Jewish people against this ideological travesty. What better way is there for Gentile Christians to move the Jews to jealousy for the God who has provided eternal life for *all* men.[39]

A third lesson and challenge, perhaps the most important, is that those of us who are committed to Jewish missions must continue to stand in the gap as God's watchmen on the walls of the nation Israel. This will, as it always has, require perseverance and patience. God requires those of us committed to the task of Jewish missions to be tender-hearted, tough-minded, and, especially, thick-skinned! The words of Yeshua are still applicable in this matter: A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained [i.e., equipped], will be like his teacher (Luke 6:40). And our Teacher was hated for who He was and for what He proclaimed:

> If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now, they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, They hated Me without cause [Pss. 35:19; 69:4] (John 15:18-25).

In fact, the Lord Yeshua not only predicted that as His disciples the world would hate us and that we would suffer for His name's sake,[40] but that this would also be the evidence of God's blessing upon us and our ministries.[41] And, thanks be to God, it is the same Lord Yeshua who, as our High Priest, is praying for us and our ministries on a daily basis.[42]

We must always remember that as long as our Jewish people continue to pursue a rabbinic revisionist form of works-righteousness rather than the divinely-revealed faith-righteousness, our calling

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[38]For a detailed study of the remnant of Israel motif as it relates to the Holocaust, see my doctoral dissertation, Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982), 199-212.

[39]One of the major purposes of this paper is to provide some basic information on Holocaust Revisionism so that we can pass it on to our fellow-disciples committed to Jewish evangelism. The paper gives the basic information and the accompanying bibliography provides the literature for a more detailed analysis.

[40]See Matt. 10:22; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17; John 16:33; Acts 9:15-16; 1 Thess. 3:1-4ff.; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 10:32-39; 1 Pet. 2:21-25; etc.

[41]See Matt. 5:10-16; Mark 10:28-30; Luke 6:22-23ff.; cf. Acts 14:21-23; Phil. 1:27-30; 2 Thess. 1:3-12; 1 Pet. 1:3-9; 3:13-17ff.; 4:1-19; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:1-11; etc.

[42]See John 17:1-26; Heb. 7:23-25ff.; 9:23-25; cf. Luke 22:31-32ff.; Rom 8:18-39; 1 John 1:5--2:2; etc.

and task will require endurance and courage.[43] The Apostle Paul s Spirit-inspired words clearly describe such a rabbinic revisionist pursuit of a humanly-devised self-righteousness:

> What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed [Isa. 8:14; 28:16].
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> Brethren, my heart s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with full knowledge. For not knowing about God s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they do not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For the Messiah [Yeshua] is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 9:30--10:4).

There are only two options for our Jewish people, options that we must loving and yet boldly proclaim to them: (1) repentance and faith in Yeshua the Messiah which brings with it the gift of God s saving righteousness (cf. Rom. 3:1-31); or (2) revisionism and faith in rabbinic Judaism which brings with it the eternal wrath of an absolutely righteous and holy God (cf. Rom. 2: 1-11 ff.). Rabbinic Revisionism is headed down a *deadend* street, and even more tragic, down a *deathend* street!

The day that the Lord Yeshua died, each and every Levitical sacrifice became redundant at best and blasphemous at worst. To return to such an old covenant system as it was before A.D. 70 or as it has now been revised is a willful sinning, for which

> there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but [only] a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. [For a]nyone who . . . set aside the Law of Moses [died] without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severer punishment do think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant . . . and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:26-29).

It was Israel s willful refusal[44] to embrace the inauguration of the New Covenant as well as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36), that brought the Temple of God down on her head, the destruction of the beloved city, as well as the nation s captivity into the nations of the world.[45]

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[43]Notice the *evangelistic* vocabulary in the Book of Acts [NKJV]: the apostolic missionaries testified (2:40; 8:25; 18:5; 20:21, 24; 23:11), exhorted (2:40; 13:15), responded (3:12), answered (4:19; 5:29; 24:10; 25:8; 26:1-2), spoke boldly (4:29, 31; 9:29; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8), taught (5:25, 42; 13:12; 18: 11, 25), preached (5:42; 8:4-5, 25, 35; 9:20, 27; 11:19-20; 13:5, 42; 14:7, 15, 21, 25; 16:6, 10; 17:3, 13, 18; 20:25), questioned (8:30), confounded (9:22), disputed against (9:29), commanded (10:48), declared (13:32; 26:20), persuaded (13:43; 17:4[-5], 18:4; 19:8; 26: 28-29), bore witness (14:3; 23:11; 26:22), spoke loudly (14:10), cried out (14:14), reasoned from the Scriptures in the synagogue (17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8), explained (17:3; 28:23), demonstrated (17:3), proclaimed (17:23; 20:20), vigorously refuted the Jews publicly from the Scriptures (18:28), reasoned daily (19:9), conversed (24: 26), begged [them] to listen patiently (26:3), solemnly testified (28:23), persuading [the Jews] concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the prophets, from morning till evening (28:23-24), and preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding [Paul] (28:31).

[44]On Israel s willful rejection of her own Messiah, see Matt. 22:1-3ff.; 23:37-39; Luke 13:33-35; 19:41-44; John 5:39-47; Acts 7:20-39ff.; etc.

[45]Cf. Matt. 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6, 20-24; etc. It must be remembered that from the divine perspective the Old Covenant in its entirety was terminated with the death of Yeshua the Messiah [and of course, validated by His bodily resurrection from the dead] (cf. Matt. 27:50-53; Mark 7:19; John 19:30; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:1-18; Gal. 2:11-21; 3:1--4:11, 21-31; Heb. 7:11-28; 8:1-13; 9:1--10:18ff.; etc.). But from the human perspective God graciously allowed the Temple to remain standing and functioning until A.D. 70. In His mercy and grace God gave Israel a generation to repent of its national

> Again, the Apostle Paul crystallizes the issues at hand in his day as well as in our own: And Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those who did not seek Me [i.e., the Gentiles], I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me [Isa. 65:1]. But as for Israel He says, All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people [Isa. 65:2].

It may be that a painful part of our evangelistic task is to lovingly nudge our Jewish people into the realization of the foolishness of attempting to refute the Holocaust Revisionists from the same kind of philosophical basis, an ever-relative Rabbinic Revisionism. Even further, and more to the point, perhaps the LORD would help us to nudge them out of Rabbinic Revisionism and into Divine Revelation, especially the revelation of the Gospel of our Messianic King.

May God in His mercy and grace grant us the loving and holy boldness to continue to be His outstretched hands to His disobedient and obstinate people, especially in the midst of both Holocaust Revisionism and Rabbinic Revisionism.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things! (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15). Stand firm therefore . . , having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace! (Eph. 6:15).

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rejection of His Messiah before the divine wrath fell on the city and inhabitants of Jerusalem. For the theme of God s gracious reoffer of forgiveness and restoration to the nation within one generation, see Matt. 11:2-19; 12:14-45; 16:1-12; 17:14-21; 23:1-39; 24: 1-28; Mark 8:11-13; 9:14-29; 13:1-2, Luke 7:18-35; 9:37-44; 11:29-54; 13:31-35; 17:20- 37; 21:5-6, 20-24; 23:26-31; Acts 2:36-47; 3:11-26; 7:1-60; Heb. 3:7-19; 4:1-10ff.; 10:19- 39; 12:18-29; 13:7-21; etc.

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