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From: insights@cjuc.com
To:
Subject: CJCUC INSIGHTS JULY NEWSLETTER
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Dear All,

Below, please find the Ohr Torah Stone: The Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding & Cooperation's (CJCUC) monthly newsletter - INSIGHTS. If you have any comments or questions, please e-mail them to info@cjuc.com.

Shalom,

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EVANGELIZING THE JEW

Without a shadow of a doubt, Christians are commanded to evangelize, as stated in Matthew 28:19-20. The Great Commission is nonnegotiable. This mission represents the spiritual identity of a Christian. However, the proselytizing of Jews often becomes an issue in Jewish-Christian relations, especially when this evangelization takes place in Israel. There are some who come in "support for Israel" ostensibly to set up a soup kitchen, only to lure members of the Jewish faith to Christianity. One can make the argument that there is a difference between witnessing (emulating the life of Jesus) and proselytizing. A discussion of the matter is warranted, for there seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the theological significance of Jews.

When people hear the phrase "the chosen people" in reference to the Jews, they should ask: "Chosen for what?" The Jewish nation has a three-fold mission rooted in Scripture; covenant, witness and humanity. When God entered a relationship with Abraham (Genesis 17), the covenant was described as everlasting. This covenant has two physical embodiments; the Promised Land and circumcision. It also requires that we walk *humbly in His ways*, carrying out the Sinatic revelation.

We are required to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This relationship offers rewards for observance and punishes for its abandonment. Practically speaking, we are to ensure the continuing existence of the Jewish people as part of our mission of covenant. Our emphasis is on Jewish education, community ties and avoiding intermarriage.

The Jewish people are not concerned only with members of their own faith, but are required to testify about the power of repentance and love as manifested in the redemption of Israel (Isaiah 49:6). It is through the narrative of the Jews that people see God's hand in history. This is part and parcel of our witness mission to the world.

The message of the Bible is for all people, as stated in Micah 4:2. The Jewish people have a mission to extend God's love to all. We are called by God to set up society in a way that maximizes the practice of justice and mercy; we are to engage in an unending quest to heal a broken world. A central prayer in Judaism sums it up: *to transform the world into the Kingdom of the Almighty, where all flesh will call upon Your name, where all the wicked of the earth will be turned to You.*

Doesn't Christian evangelizing of Jews come in direct conflict with the Jews three-fold mission? Christians see Jews as either people of very special salvific significance, or as people included in the one mission to all those who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior. There is a minority within Christianity that believe missionizing the Jews is not part of an authentic Christian witness, since the Jewish people has its own fulfillment in faithfulness to the divine covenant mentioned in Genesis.

When the Church concluded that all one needs to attain salvation is Jesus, without adherence to Torah, it should not

be surprising that the Jewish people simply could not go along with that. The Jewish understanding of "salvation" is simply different from that of Christianity.

If Jews and Christians worship the same God, should Christians then try to convince Jews to worship Him in the Christian way? It seems that many within the Church have forgotten the essential Jewishness of their own faith; they tend to place the attempt to evangelize Jews in the same category as missionary efforts among people of other religions or of no religion. To such people, Jews are simply people who cannot be saved unless they come to know Jesus.

As an orthodox Jew who does not believe in the divinity of Jesus, I wish Christians could understand what it means to be obedient members of God's chosen people. This should not detract from the notion that Jesus' life and death is central to the salvation of the Church and their mission to the world. It is my hope that Christians would recognize that their mission of preparing for the coming of the Kingdom of God is shared with the Jewish people, even if Jews do not conceive of this task as the Church does.