

The Significance of the Complete Jewish Study Bible
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Before I launch into my paper, I should offer a few disclaimers.

First, because of its nature, this is not an academic-type paper. Yet, I think I'm offering some information that could directly impact practical aspects of your work among our people.

Second, because I'm going to explain about the Complete Jewish Study Bible (CJSB), a book I publish, my talk might sound like an infomercial. I might exaggerate a little since I'll be in my marketing mode.

Third, I call the CJSB the magnum opus of all the work I've done, as a missionary, executive in several Jewish missions, and as a publisher since 1988. It's all come together in this wonderful work.

Fourth, you may have heard some of this material before since I've given talks at the LCJE before, one focused on the history of The Lederer Foundation.

Anyway, enough with the disclaimers.

All of us who have been involved in reaching out to our people, the Jews, have encountered statements such as, "Jesus is NOT for the Jews," or "Don't you know how Christians have persecuted our people for nearly 2,000 years." Although we know the errors in these sorts of statements, it's been challenging to persuade our people that Jesus is OK to even think about, as relevant to Jews.

Most of us need prayer and financial support from Christians—churches and individuals—to fund our works in Jewish evangelism. No doubt, we've all heard comments like, "Do Jews really need the Gospel since they're the chosen people," and, more recently, "Since God expanded his work to the Nations, it doesn't matter anymore that Jews should remain Jews." With the BDS movement gaining much momentum in churches, denominations and the Church at large, it's becoming even more challenging to explain to our supporters the need for their support. Yes, the truly committed or theologically conservative Christians will probably continue to stand with us, but even they are being challenged by some of the false theology going around today.

Thus, the significance of the Complete Jewish Study Bible is even greater. Before explaining more about this new bible, some background is appropriate.

In 1382, the Wycliffe bible came to be. Wycliffe believed that scripture was the only authoritative reliable guide to the truth about God, so he became involved in efforts to translate the Bible into English. Nearly single-handedly, he took on the authorities of his day and published his great work. He was a pioneer.

In 1520, practically no one had access to an English Bible so William Tyndale determined to translate the Scriptures into English. His work was illegal since no one was permitted to sell, buy or possess a copy of the Bible in English then. He was executed for his efforts. He had been a pioneer.

When it was first published in the mid-1500s, the Geneva Bible was the most reader-friendly version of the Bible ever translated. Numerous innovations made it ideal for the common reader, including commentary notes alongside the Bible text. It was the first English Bible published for the common man—the first "study Bible." The "common man" needed a greater understanding of the Bible than he did in the past. There were streams of theology that threatened to undermine the Word of God. This bible broke new ground.

These men, and others, because of their love for God and his Word sacrificed greatly to get his word into print. In a way, we are in similar times.

When it comes to our work among our people, the Jews, who read about the Messiah in standard Christian translations, like the KJV, NASB, NIV, TEV and more, we find they don't get a sense that they're actually reading a Jewish book. It clearly sounds *goyishe*. Thus, it's easy for them to believe what some of our rabbis have said, "Jesus is not for us Jews." So, when they read about his mother, the virgin Mary, his friends St. Paul, St. James, St. John, etc. and how the church carried out their perceived teaching of persecuting Jews, what the rabbis say sounds true to them. It takes extra effort to help our people meet the real Jewish Jesus, Yeshua. We have some clump-clearing to do before the gospel seed can take root. Something has been needed for a long time.

When Christians read these same bibles, they barely know they are reading about Jews. They too don't "get" that they're reading about the relatives of Bibi Netanyahu, Paul Simon, Jerry Seinfeld and all Jews through history. Thus, they can't help but miss the context, perhaps the essence, of what the writers wrote. Christians, too often, don't give much importance to the Jewish land of Israel, other than an occasional tour where they usually see Christian sites often covering Jewish places. The Israel of the bible often doesn't equate in their minds to the Israel of today, leading to all sorts of problems in

Jewish evangelism. Let's face it, what our Christian brothers and sisters think and say about Jewish things can enhance their credibility to proclaim the good news, or reduce it.

Most Christians study what are often called "the General Epistles," since they address issues more relevant to them. For the most part, these letters were written to the non-Jews that became part of the early body of believers. The "Jewish Letters" (Hebrews/Messianic Jews, James/Yaacov, Jude/Judah, etc. address issues that were more important to the Jews of that day and are still relevant, such as the Temple and sacrificial system, the Land of Israel, our holy days and more.

Clearly, there was a need for a new translation of the Bible that reflected the bible's essential Jewishness.

In 1977, Dr. David H. Stern set out to write a Messianic Jewish commentary on the New Testament. His goal was to deal with all the "Jewish issues" in the text to help Christians learn about the Jewish roots of their own faith and Messianic Jews about their own identities. But, as Stern worked on his commentary, he realized that he was spending much of his time explaining Jewish words and concepts so that his readers would have a more accurate understanding of the Bible and what his commentary was saying. Over time, he realized that he was doing so much of that sort of work, he decided to write his own translation of the New Testament, even before finishing the commentary material. This became the Jewish New Testament (JNT).

A good, modern translation from an historical, Jewish perspective did not exist. Even though there had been attempts in the past, these versions were out of print. So Stern determined to remedy this situation and did so alone, though he had sought the participation of others. He had gone to leading Messianic Jewish organizations and missions but none were interested at that time. He talked to major Christian publishers but they too couldn't see the need for such a book. He could have given up the task, but he pressed on, if only for himself.

Meanwhile, Barry Rubin had taken over The Lederer Foundation (now, Messianic Jewish Publishers/MJP), the work of Dr. Henry and Marie Einspruch, in 1988. The Einspruchs had published the Yiddish New Testament in the 1940s and many other books for inquiring Jews. Unaware of what Stern was doing, although they had been friends when they served together with Jews for Jesus in the 1970s, Rubin, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, had begun contacting Messianic scholars, such as Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Dr. Daniel Juster, and others to organize the translation of a bible that was more sensitive to Jewish people. Having been involved in outreach for many years, Rubin knew that his people needed a Jewishly sensitive bible, particularly the New Testament.

David then talked with some Messianic Jewish leaders, to find someone to help him market his JNT. He contacted Barry Rubin and asked him to take over publishing and marketing the Jewish New Testament. So, Rubin dropped his idea of publishing such a bible since the JNT was an excellent work, just as it was. In the early days, David's translation had been vetted by Dr. Paul Ellingsworth, translation consultant to the United Bible Societies in the United Kingdom, and other bible scholars. People had ignored David's work, not seeing its importance, but the JNT found its niche in both the Messianic and Christian worlds, especially after teaming up with Lederer. Rubin and Stern first introduced the JNT in the summer of 1989 at Messianic conferences and the Christian Booksellers Association annual trade show in Atlanta.

Once the JNT was published, Stern returned to his commentary work and the Jewish New Testament Commentary (JNTC) was published in partnership with Lederer in 1992. Working with a publisher who understood Jewish evangelism and marketing, as well, relieved David of having to do things outside of his strengths. Thus, he could return to writing. MJP published the JNT and JNTC in a boxed set, making it easier for people to explore the Jewish background and context of the New Testament. But, still more was needed.

Primarily responding to the need of Messianic Jewish congregations, who were using the JNT along with other bibles, Rubin proposed to Stern, or perhaps it was the other way around (who can remember now?) that an entire bible be published that captured the whole "Jewish" counsel of God in a way that could be used in synagogues and congregations.

David attempted to modify the 1917 JPS version, which was now in the public domain, to merge with the JNT. But, the archaic language of the JPS did not lend itself to being used in this bible. So, David set out to do his own version, which, like the JNT uses the dynamic equivalent approach to the text. Using his knowledge of Hebrew, along with examining other Jewish and Christian bibles, David came up with an excellent version that reads beautifully and is accurate.

Once the text was completed, the weekly *parshiot* were set out in the text, along with readings from the Haftarat and B'rit Hadashah. Congregations could then use the CJB in their services for readings, so that, literally, everyone "could be on the same page." Now, these congregations were able to use only one bible in their services. The Complete Jewish Bible was published in 1998 and is found in every congregation in the world, used in most.

But, the CJB went beyond just Messianic Judaism. Hundreds of thousands of them have been distributed all over the world through all the major U.S. and foreign distributors. As

a result, thousands of letters and emails are sent from people who have been helped in their search to understand the bible as the Jewish book it really is. And this has been on the increase over the years.

Additionally, because there is a messianic movement in prisons, two or three letters arrive every day from Jewish and Gentile prisoners asking for copies of the CJB (along with other of books). Someone is working to establish a national ministry to Jews in prison and are providing many bibles and other books to incarcerated Messianic Jewish and Christian brothers and sisters.

Thankfully, these books are now available in multiple languages: French, German, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and more. And they've gotten much acclaim:

“...a remarkable achievement!” —Dr. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

“...culturally sensitive to technical requirements of interpretation...a most worthwhile work!”—Dr. Jack Hayford

And, of course, there are letters of appreciation sent in regularly.

These books have been licensed to many bible software organizations:

BibleSoft
BibleWorks
eStudy
Hosanna
Important
Laridian
Logos Bible
MagnetX
OakTree
Olive Tree
Salem Web
Study Light
White Harvest
Word Search
GMP Soft
YouVersion

So, as in the days of the publication of the Geneva bible, a new bible, a Messianic Jewish study bible, was called for. That is why we have published the Complete Jewish Study Bible (CJSB)!

This new bible, using the CJB for its text, not only presents Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel, as well as the savior of the world, and his *shlikim* as Jews charged with taking the *besorah* to the Nations (Matthew 28:19ff), and uses Jewishly sensitive language and terminology, it goes a giant step further. It offers notes, articles and explanations of the text, not only in the New Testament, but in the Tanakh as well.

This, the first messianic Jewish study bible in history, is doing for both the Jewish and Christian communities something similar to what the Geneva Bible did for the “common man” centuries ago. It is really making the bible more understandable as a 100% Jewish book. This is not important just for historical accuracy, it shows Christians their connection and debt to the Jews. Moreover, it shows Jews that it’s really safe to read and talk about the New Testament. But, how does the CJSB accomplish this?

The Complete Jewish Study Bible was jointly published by Messianic Jewish Publishers, one of the leading Messianic publishers and Hendrickson Bible Publishers, one of the largest Christian publishers in the world. Hendrickson has always had an interest in Jewish texts and, as such, published Jacob Neusner’s Mishnah, Edersheim’s Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, and other Jewish texts. Why is this so significant? It shows that an important Christian organization is willing to partner with a decidedly Messianic Jewish one. Although this is happening in many places in the Body in other ways, Hendrickson is putting its reputation on the line and devoting a lot of resources to this project.

MJP has been positioned to publish books and bibles for both education and evangelism, going back to the early days of the Lederer Foundation with books such as A Way in the Wilderness, Would I? Would You? and others, including the well-respected Yiddish New Testament. Over 100 books have been published for use by missions, congregations and individuals for education and evangelism.

Other organizations have published effective literature for evangelism, like for CPM’s Isaiah 53 campaign, and education, like Ariel’s Footsteps of the Messiah, Israelology. Moreover, there have been effective outreaches by CJF, Life of Messiah, Rock of Israel, Jews for Jesus and others in this room. Much good literature has been developed and also even other modes of outreach, like video, TV, and social media.

But, never before in history has there been a highly respected and well-vetted Messianic Jewish translation of the bible that combines its textual strength with notes and

commentary from some of the leading Messianic Jewish scholars in the world. As publishers of many other writers in our field, MJP has had access to their material and incorporated information from many in the CJSB.

And not only has the CJSB used notes from our own Messianic community, we have added the writing of many non-Messianic Jewish scholars, as well as the eminent sages in Jewish history. This is truly a first and it is significant. As far as we know, this has never been done before to this extent.

Now, both Christians and Jews finally have access to an entire bible, along with explanatory notes, that present God's word in a way that enables them to really see the bible through Jewish eyes. Both Jews and Christians learn about the Messiah, as they encounter him in his Jewish world with explanations of idioms, ideas, and insights that come out of the background of all the Jewish writers of the bible, particularly the New Testament. This, too, is a first.

As a publisher, Lederer has interaction with other publishers, as well. We were really the first Messianic publisher to introduce our books to the Christian marketplace at trade shows and in Christian periodicals. At first, they didn't know what to make of us, but, over time, with the influence of many of you in this room in other ways, they have begun to see that something was happening in the Jewish part of the vineyard. As a publisher, our books were starting to find their way into Christian bookstores, bible colleges and seminaries, libraries and many other places. And questions were coming to us as to what's it all about.

As it turns out, Christian Book Distributors (CBD), perhaps the largest distributor of things Christian, the sister company of Hendrickson Bibles, has been purchasing our books and bibles for decades. In his position with CBD, he was noticing the significant sales of our and other "messianic books" and Israeli products. At an SBL/ETS meeting in Baltimore some years ago, I sat down with this man, who was now also publisher of Hendrickson Bibles. We had had some preliminary discussions about publishing a study bible several years before. Now was time.

So, we began our collaboration. For the most part, MJP provided all the content and Hendrickson provided their vast publishing experience to the project, handling the page design, layout, graphics and printing. Since Lederer/MJP publishes books by authors beside David Stern, I was able to tap into those books and provide study notes to go with the text.

In addition to notes from the JNTC, we culled small amounts of material from some of our own writers—Drs. David Friedman, John Fischer, Ron Moseley, as well as Joshua

Brumbach, Barney Kasdan and others. Additionally, we borrowed from other scholars— Drs. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Walter Kaiser, Craig Keener and more. These are all Messianic people, but we wanted to include material from non-Messianic scholars, as well. We quoted content from Drs. Amy-Jill Levine, Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Sacks are included, in addition to material from our sages—Rashi, Shammai, Maimonides and others. We were looking to bring material from Jewish people for the entire bible, whether they were Messianic or not. Most people, both Jews and Christians, don't have access to the thinking of these thinkers.

The significance of this is that nearly ALL the content for the CJSB was supplied by Jews and the Christians who contributed were in tune with Jews because of their vast understanding of and appreciation for the Jewishness of the Bible. Here is a list of those whose content we used.

CONTRIBUTORS AND SCHOLARS

Rabbi Dr. Glenn Blank
Dr. Michael Brown
Rabbi Steven Bernstein
Rabbi Joshua Brumbach
Rabbi Ron Corbett
Pastor Ralph Finley
Rabbi Dr. John Fischer
Dr. Patrice Fischer
Malkah Forbes
Rabbi Dr. David Friedman
Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum
Dr. John Garr
Pastor David Harris
Benjamin Juster
Rabbi Dr. Daniel Juster
Dr. Walter C. Kaiser
Rabbi Barney Kasdan
Dr. Craig S. Keener
Rabbi Elliot Klayman
Jordan Gayle Levy
Dr. Ronald Moseley
Rabbi Dr. Rich Nichol
Rabbi Mark J. Rantz
Rabbi Russ Resnik
Dr. Richard Robinson
Rabbi Dr. Jacob Rosenberg

Rabbi Isaac Roussel
Dr. Michael Rydelnik
Dr. Jeffrey Seif
Rabbi Tzahi Shapira
Dr. David H. Stern
Dr. Bruce Stokes
Dr. Thomas Tribblehorn
Dr. Forrest Weiland
Dr. Marvin Wilson

QUOTES BY CURRENT JEWISH SCHOLARS AND ANCIENT JEWISH SAGES

Dr. Daniel Boyarin
Dr. Amy-Jill Levine
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
Gamaliel
Hillel
Shame
Akiva
Maimonides

We also wanted to include other content to make the bible more understandable from a Jewish perspective. In order to do this, we added some new features.

Each book of the bible has a NEW INTRODUCTION, written from a Jewish perspective. A number of scholars, seminary and bible school professors contributed to these. Dr. John Fischer oversaw the writing and editing of these introductions, as well as reviewing the entire CJSB. His academic knowledge was invaluable in making certain that all the content was accurate.

TOPICAL ARTICLES

Unique to the Complete Jewish Study Bible are articles and notes that aid the reader in understanding the historical background and cultural context of the Scriptures, both the Tanakh and B'rit Hadashah. As people read the CJSB, they will come across extensive discussions of topics that increase their understanding of the Bible.

BOTTOM-OF-THE-PAGE NOTES

As with a traditional chumash, found in most synagogues, the CJSB includes extensive bottom-of-the-page notes to help readers understand the deeper meanings behind the Jewish text. These are shorter, elucidating comments, that are easy to access while reading the text. Some of these comments are from the Jewish Sages, some providing a different way of understanding these texts.

To organize many of the articles included in the CJSB, we identified twelve THEMES that were particularly relevant to Jews, both Messianic and non-Messianic. Additionally, Christians want to learn about each of these themes. 117 articles organized into twelve themes:

- Covenants
- Torah
- Jewish Customs
- Messianic Prophecy
- The Names of God
- Anti-Jewish Scriptural Interpretations
- The Shabbat
- Salvation and Atonement
- The Holy Days of Israel
- Jewish-Gentile Relations
- The Land of Israel
- The Tabernacle (Mishkan)

BIOGRAPHIES OF RABBIS AND SAGES

We wanted to introduce our Christian readers to *chazal*, our Sages. Because of the Nicene Council in 325 C.E., and other decisions by the “church fathers,” not to mention the hundreds of years of separation between the Church and the Jewish people, Christians have cut themselves off from the rich Jewish sources that are available to Jews, as well as them. We wanted the CJSB to continue the work of healing the schism that has existed for 2,000 years that the CJB started. And, of course, showing our appreciation for our Jewish spiritual leaders and people, shows us as part of the Jewish community, which we all are.

BIOGRAPHIES OF CONTRIBUTORS

We present a short biography of all the people who have contributed to the CJSB so readers will get to know those who are making an impact through writing.

FULL COLOR MAPS

These vivid and accurate maps have been modified slightly to present the cities of the Middle East in biblically Jewish terms, rather than typical Christian terms, like most bible maps do.

INDEXES

We’ve included a number of helpful indexes to make it easier to understand the nearly 2,000 pages in the CJSB.

RESPONSES

Of course, we have had thousands of commendations on the CJSB, but these few are good examples:

Study bible that supports Yeshua-centered Judaism

“I love the CJB bible, so as soon as I saw this was available with commentary, I ordered it. This is filled with wonderful commentary and resources. . . . It is refreshing to read a commentary that has so many resources for Yeshua centered Judaism. . . . If you are wanting a bible to really experience the son of God, Yeshua the Messiah, this is a great resource!”

5.0 out of 5 stars

If you could only own ONE Bible THIS is the One!

“What a privilege to hold God's Word to man in our hands! This is not the first Complete Jewish Bible I have ever read, as I purchased cases of the Complete Jewish Bible a couple years ago to give to my congregation. Everyone loves their Complete Jewish Bible! Now, with the Complete Jewish Study Bible, I am absolutely ecstatic to own and use this great work! I splurged and purchased the genuine calfskin edition and I am so happy I did! It is exquisite in construction and quality. I envision years of daily use because no expense was spared in the design and construction of this Bible. Further, the layout is highly logical and useable. This Bible opens up the Jewishness of our history, especially in a Scriptural and Hebrew worldview perspective. This is so terribly important because without accurate knowledge of the Hebrew worldview, culture, language, and lands one cannot really understand what is being said or taught. As a pastor, it is my responsibility to accurately present not only the Word, but what the Word really means! This study bible truly provides an extraordinary resource for not only pastors, but for every person who reveres and wants to better understand God's Word.”

From a Messianic Jewish leader

Truly there is no lack of study Bibles available to the general public – but not a Messianic Jewish one that attempts to meet the needs of today’s Messianic Jewish and Christian communities. Until now! Into the crowded field of study Bibles steps a newcomer, The Complete Jewish Study Bible (TCJSB).

Many endorsements and reviews can be found for its predecessor The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) and thus, I don't want to re-plow ground that has already been covered. During the past two months since my purchase of TCJSB (black Genuine Calfskin leather edition) in its debut, I have been utilizing it daily for devotional time with the LORD and aiding with sermon preparation. Some of my pre-purchase 'non-negotiables' were a strong sewn binding, large-enough print (9 pt) to reduce eye strain, a single-column format, Jewish order of the Tanakh's books, two or more integrated bookmarks, full-color, thin enough so as to still be carried to all of the venues I require to preach and teach - all of which TCJSB met quite well. Although I typically would not endorse a book until I have read every word, I am pleased to make an exception here, as reading every word of this product (I would venture it approaches 1 million words) would be a task that would take many more months for me to complete.

At this point I have read through the 50+ pages of introductory matter, each of the book introductions and outlines written from a Jewish perspective, several complete books of the text both from the Tanakh and B'rit Chadasha in my Messianic reading plan for 5776 (2015-2016), including the bottom-of-page study notes that enhance the cultural and historical context, several of the over 150 articles (categorized thematically and topically) that have been interspersed in appropriate sections of the biblical text, along with the various appendices (glossaries, indices, readings for Shabbat, Feasts & Fasts, etc.). I am confident that as I progress through TCJSB over this next Jewish civil year of 5777, I will continue to be as enthused with this product as I am today.

Near the beginning of my bema (pulpit) ministry in San Diego over twenty years ago, I was thrilled to preach and teach from the CJB weekly for so many years to our Messianic Jewish congregation. The newly updated text in TCJSB "makes the text more credible in the academic world" (xvii) and I now continue to preach and teach from the updated text alongside other Messianic Jewish translations/versions that have arisen over the past decade. The articles and study notes in TCJSB are derived from over thirty contributors (Messianic Jewish and Christian theologians) which the reader will appreciate the varying perspectives that they all bring to the table.

The CJSB is a necessity for any new or seasoned student of the Word of G-d that desires furthering of his/her understanding concerning the Jewishness of Scripture (Tanakh/'Old Testament' and B'rit Chadasha/New Covenant). It has been a welcomed tool on my tool belt interacting in both the Jewish and Christian community in the city in which I serve.

Messianic Rabbi Joel Liberman
Director of Operations & Development

Int'l Alliance of Messianic Cong's & Synagogues

So, why the *Complete Jewish Study Bible*? It fills a huge gap in bible content, not unlike The Geneva Bible. From initial responses, the CJSB is finding a place in academia, both Christian and Jewish. Moreover, it is meeting the needs of the “common man,” who wants to really understand the Jewish background of the bible and doesn't have a concise source to obtain this information. Although scholars and professionals may know most or all of the information in this bible, we published it for those who want to know more about the bible through Jewish eyes and don't have access to seminary libraries or time to do large amounts of research. And as one of the leading publishers of Messianic Jewish authors, we were able to pull together material that increases understanding of the CJB, the best Messianic text available today.

There are 3 different covers, hard cover, Italian leather, and Flexisoft. These were printed by one of the most reputable Christian printers and are beautifully bound, lasting a lifetime.

What does the future hold? The JNTC has just been published in Hebrew in Israel by Maoz, Inc. and is about to be released. We plan to add a small concordance to the CJSB soon. We're looking at creating an audio version of the CJB, as well as a children's bible using the text. We're also talking with companies that will help use technology in ways we haven't even thought of, I'm sure. And we expect to license the CJB and CJSB into many more foreign languages.

It's exciting working to expand the impact of this first-of-its-kind bible in history, the *Complete Jewish Study Bible*.

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