

Why have the Jewish people suffered persecution?

As a Jewish man who believes Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah, I have suffered persecution, and have been called a traitor by my fellow Jews. They believe I have betrayed our people by siding with the Christians. I can understand their anger. For centuries, people who called themselves "Christians" persecuted the Jewish people in the name of Jesus. However, Yeshua (Jesus) never taught that his followers should harm those who did not believe in Him. Rather, he taught that we should "love our neighbors as ourselves." He was being a Torah observant Jew when he taught this, because he was quoting from Vayiqra /Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18.

Human prejudice and non-biblical teaching was the source of Christians persecuting Jewish people. Prejudice is a common disease among mankind.. According to the Jewish Scriptures, prejudice exists because all of us are by nature sinful. Who among us has perfectly kept the Ten Commandments let alone the 613 Laws that G-d gave the Jewish people?

We read in Psalm 14:3-4, "The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek G-d. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no-one who does good, not even one." Also the Jewish prophet Jeremiah wrote, "The heart of human beings is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

There have always been righteous Gentile Christians, who loved and helped the Jewish people. For example during the holocaust some Gentile Christians hid Jewish people from the Nazis and even paid with their lives for doing this (read "The Hiding Place" by Corrie Ten Boom). At the memorial for the Holocaust victims in Israel, Yad Vashem, the path that leads up to its building is lined with markers for the righteous Gentiles who helped the Jews during WW II.

Then, why have the Jewish people suffered? It didn't begin with the followers of Jesus. It began when many Jewish people chose not to believe G-d. Moses warned our forefathers in, Devarim/Deuteronomy chapters 28-30 about the consequences of disobeying Him. First, he promised to bless and protect Israel if they obeyed him; "If you

will only obey the LORD your G-d, by diligently observing all his commandments ... , the LORD your G-d will set you high above all the nations of the earth ... " Deuteronomy 28:1-2. He promised to protect Israel from their enemies. He would defend the people if they obeyed him, and Israel would be blessed and stay in the Promised Land and prosper.

Secondly, he promised to curse Israel if they disobeyed Him; "But if you will not obey the LORD your G-d ... then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field ... The LORD will send upon you disaster, panic, and frustration in everything you attempt to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, **because you have forsaken me.**" Deuteronomy 28:15-20.

The Almighty G-d of Israel keeps His Word. He is love, but He is also just. He must punish sin. Included in His curse was the promise to cast Israel out of the land and scatter them around the world. G-d, speaking through Moses, went on to say that He would cause us to experience suffering while we were in the Diaspora. Has not the history of our people fulfilled this prophecy? What have we done wrong? Why is G-d angry with us? We will see shortly, that there is also a promise of mercy and G-d Himself turning many of our hearts back to Him.

As you read through the following, keep in mind that G-d told Israel in the Torah that they could only practice the core of Judaism, the animal sacrifices, feasts, and fast days at the exact location he would chose. That location turned out to be the hill in Jerusalem where the Temple was built by King Solomon.

After Solomon, some of the kings of Israel followed the laws of Moses and destroyed idols, and forbid idol worship, while others promoted apostasy and even set up pagan idols in the Temple. Eventually, after the warnings of many prophets, in 586 BCE G-d allowed the Babylonians to destroy the Temple, kill many Israelites, and exile the survivors to Babylon. What the prophets had warned would happen if the people did not repent, occurred.

Later the Temple was rebuilt between 538 - 515 BCE This Second Temple was later removed by King Herod beginning in 19 BCE and a new expanded Temple built in its place. Herod's Temple was where biblical Judaism continued to be practiced until 70 C.E. when it was destroyed by Roman soldiers. Since that time it has not been rebuilt. Later Roman and Byzantine governors used the remains of the Temple to build palaces, and a Temple of Jupiter, a pagan god. It was not until the Islam's Dome of the Rock was built between 687 and 691 C.E. that the last remnants of the Temple were taken down.

Why has G-d not allowed the Temple, the center of religious practice of biblical Judaism to be rebuilt? Why has G-d allowed the Temple Mount, the central location of Mosaic Judaism, to be covered with the Dome of the Rock and a Muslim mosque?

The Temple was the only place where animal sacrifices could be conducted according to the Mosaic Law. It was by the blood of an animal, a substitutionary atonement, along with a repentant heart, that our sins were forgiven. The New Testament teaches that Jesus was sent by G-d to become the final sacrifice for our sins. The blood of bulls and goats could only temporarily bring forgiveness for sin. Whereas, the precious blood of G-d's son brings permanent forgiveness for the sins of those who repent and believe in Jesus. Is it a coincidence that approximately 40 years after the death of Jesus, Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans and the Temple destroyed? G-d allowed this to happen because Jesus had fulfilled the sacrifices the Temple, and it was no longer needed.

It may sound primitive that G-d would require the death of an animal as a payment for our sins, but G-d was showing us how harmful sinful behavior is to our relationship with Him. Blood was so important that G-d forbid Jewish people from eating it.

¹⁰ "If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. ¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." Vayiqra / Leviticus 17:10-11

In the next century after the destruction of the Temple, most of Israel was forced out of the country by the Romans, sold into slavery, and scattered around the world. Some Jewish people have developed a theology to explain this history of suffering. They believe that the Jews are destined to be a suffering people as a way of atoning for the sins of past generations of Jews, and in some sense for the world. The Jewish Scriptures never teach that G-d intended for Israel to be a suffering people, He promised prosperity and protection for obedience, and suffering and destruction for disobedience. Our suffering comes as a result of our rebellion against G-d, our rejection of His Word and his Son.

Rabbinical Judaism has replaced the animal sacrifices, which cannot be practiced because the Temple doesn't exist, with obedience to the Mosaic Law, charity, and other good works. The central symbol of forgiveness, the blood sacrifice, is missing from the synagogue. However, faith in Jesus applies his atoning blood once and for all to the soul of believers.

Religious and secular Jews say that Jews like me who believe in Jesus are traitors; but they offer no proof that their version of Judaism is true. They posture themselves as AUTHENTIC JEWS, based on rabbinic traditions which have changed over the centuries. Centuries of incorrect teaching does not make rabbinical Judaism true.

The longevity of our people doesn't mean we have been obedient to G-d. We have survived because G-d has ordained it, ". . . the LORD says: 'Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done ... '(Jeremiah 31 :37, also see Ezekiel 16). Then why has G-d brought chastisement upon our people? Where have we gone wrong?

If the teachings of Rabbinic Judaism is what G-d wants Israel to obey, then why has He continued the curses of Deuteronomy 28-30 (please read these chapters yourself)?

Instead of looking outside of Judaism for our enemies (i.e. Christians), maybe we need to examine our own relationship with G-d. While it is true that a great injustice was done against the Jewish people by "Christians" who themselves were being disobedient to Jesus' teachings, the root of our problem has been our national and individual rebellion against G-d.

Please don't misunderstand me. G-d never approves of anti-Semitism. He promised Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that He would curse those who curse the Jewish people. It is the sinful nature of the human race that is the root of prejudice. Without G-d's intervention people hate each other. We need to have our sinful hearts changed by spiritual surgery that only G-d can perform. "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. . ." Isaiah 1:18

There is biblical proof in the Tenach (Jewish Bible) that Jesus is the Messiah. He fulfilled over 300 prophecies which gave a picture of the Messiah and his mission. One example is the Passover. Yeshua died on the same day and at the same time that the Passover Lamb was to be killed, the 14th of Nisan. The blood of the Passover Lamb was to be applied to the top of the door and the two sides. Drawing a line from the top of the door down and connecting the two sides of the door with a line forms a cross. Yeshua died on a cross. The blood of the Passover lamb protected the first born of the Hebrews when G-d slew the first born of the Egyptians. This was a picture of G-d's grace. All the Jews had to do was believe G-d's instructions and apply the blood. Likewise, the blood of Jesus applies God's grace for those who believe in Jesus and protects them from the punishment of God.

G-d told Moses ". . . the soul that sins shall be punished." The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book" (Shemoth / Exodus 32:33). Why not pray to G-d and honestly ask Him to show you if there is any truth about the claims of Jesus. You've been taught to reject Him, why not openly seek the truth from G-d Himself. After all if G-d exists, He can surely answer an honest seeker. Proverbs 8:17; "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me."

For free books and information for those who are willing to seek for G-d, please call Ron Elkin at 215-843-1764. You can also write to AMMI, P.O. Box 481, Willow Grove, PA 19090.