



# A Bible Chain to Present the Gospel in the Old Testament

By Steve Cohen

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## **A Biblical Chain to Witness to Jewish People from the Old Testament**

In witnessing to someone who is not Jewish you can easily present the Gospel from the New Testament, laying out the claims of Jesus as Messiah, showing how man is sinful and separated from God, and discussing reconciliation and redemption. But you should not do this when talking to Jewish people about Jesus. The New Testament is not acknowledged or recognized as authoritative in their life today. So the Gospel is best presented from the Old Testament.

Listed below is a chain of Old Testament passages, which, when linked together, help to clearly present the Gospel. You may wish to write these down in your Bible. Write the first verse in this Bible chain in the front of your Bible. When you have turned to the first verse, write down the second Bible verse at the bottom of that page. When you turn to the second Bible reference, write the third Biblical reference at the bottom of that page, etc. Your Bible will contain intact an entire chain of thought, without needing to memorize all the verses.

This can be applied not only to Jewish evangelism or witnessing, but to any spiritual principle or theme found throughout the Scriptures. There are other parallel verses beyond the ones I list here, and you may wish to add to these.

(As I cautioned earlier, however, your presentation may be more meaningful to a Jewish person if he or she sees these words in their own copy of the Scriptures. So you may wish to memorize the following references. Or, use your Bible and encourage your Jewish friend to use a copy of his or her Scriptures. Point out that your books are the same, but in a different order.)

Once I have asked questions and listened carefully to what a particular Jewish person believes, I ask that person's permission to look with them at the Scriptures. I explain I want to look together at what God says about man, sin and reconciliation.

### **Isaiah 59:1-2**

First, I turn to Isaiah 59:1-2: "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

In this important portion of Scripture we demonstrate the nature of God and man, and the consequences of sin between God and man. Some Jewish people consider sin as actions or misdeeds done against man or the Lord, rather than man's chronic spiritual condition.

One Hebrew word used to denote sin is a word that translates to mean, "We fall short," or "we miss the mark." Use the example of an archer at an archery range, who aims an arrow at a target and most often misses the bulls-eye or is slightly off course. That is how our sinful nature infects our lives. We may strive to do good, but it is impossible for us, and we fall short of doing it.

### **Leviticus 19:2**



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Next, follow your Biblical references to Leviticus 19:2: “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’” Here we see what God’s real expectation and demand is for our life. His standard is perfection – measured against his revealed Law. We might try to live without sinning, but of course we find that no one is capable of living up to that standard. We all fall short.

Recognizing that we fall short of God’s standard on this earth, we also must help our Jewish brothers and sisters understand that there are consequences of this shortfall. Our sins cause us to be separated from God, so that He hides His face from us and does not hear. Man and his Creator are separated when we sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). But there is a much greater consequence.

### **Ezekiel 18:1-4**

Next, turn to Ezekiel 18:1-4:

*The word of the LORD came to me: ‘What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: “The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?” As surely as I live’, declares the Sovereign LORD, ‘you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.’*

When God established His covenant with Moses and the people of Israel on Mt. Sinai, they cried with one voice and heart, “We hear and we will obey the laws of our God.” But the Lord knew that their hearts and minds would eventually rebel against Him. He announced to them that some individual’s sins would cause consequences to fall not only on the individual who committed the sin, but would fall onto the second, third and perhaps fourth generation of that individual’s descendants.

In this verse, the Lord announces, through the prophet Ezekiel, that each individual will be held accountable for his own sin. All souls belong to God — the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son. And each individual is held accountable: the one who sins will die.

The Scriptures talk about two different kinds of death:

- 1) Physical death, cessation of life as we know it, where the spirit or soul is separated from the body, and
- 2) Spiritual death, or, eternal separation from God. The Lord is speaking about both physical and spiritual death as a consequence of sin. Physical death is the result of the separation of mankind and God through sin. That separation is not healed at death. That separation is only healed through redemption in Messiah.

Even though physical death is everywhere around us, many Jewish people do not consider life after this life such an important issue. But, the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and can speak to those who doubt the truthfulness of Scripture and the afterlife.

### **Daniel 12:2**



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The next portion of Scripture to turn to is Daniel 12:2 (v.1 in the Hebrew text): “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” Reform Judaism today focuses very little on life after this life. Conservative and Orthodox Judaism do speak of life after this life, but Rabbis have disagreements as to whether there is a degree of punishment – short-term, long-term or eternal – for those who have committed sins against God.

The Scriptures testify that there is life after this life. Some find eternal life with God, while others experience suffering, shame and eternal contempt. I was challenged by this portion of Scripture when I considered Jesus’ claims for the first time. Ask this question of your unsaved friend: “What is going to make the difference between those who spend eternity with God and those who do not? Where is the dividing line?” Then simply listen to his or her response.

Many Jewish people today will respond in a traditional way, saying “the things that we do on earth determine what our future is going to be. So we must seek to offset our evil by doing good.” How is man capable of achieving his own right relationship with God? That may be a traditional thought, but it is not Biblical.

### **Isaiah 64:6**

Isaiah 64:6 says: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”

I shared this verse in a class I was teaching in Ft. Lauderdale a number of years ago. One of the Christians present had invited her unsaved Orthodox Jewish friend to come and listen to the discussion. When I indicated to the class that the verse implies that our sins are like filthy rags she came up to me afterwards and proceeded to bore in on my comments. “How dare you imply that my good deeds done with a loving heart would be seen by God in such a disgusting manner?” My response was that those were not MY words, but God’s. She then told me she was going to speak with her son who was a rabbi in Israel. I told her that would be a good idea and I took her phone number.

Two weeks later I called and asked what her son the rabbi said. She told me that he confirmed what I had said and that the Scriptures clearly indicate our good deeds are like filthy rags. That brought her to a point of a dramatic shift in her world view. She had lived many years thinking that her place in eternity was secured through her deeds, but discovered that it is not. While I have yet to hear that she has responded in faith to Y’shua – I pray that she and many others will realize God’s gift of love for us in the Messiah.

Because we are sinful by nature, even the good deeds we do cannot, in God’s eyes, avail enough to overcome our sinful nature. In fact, nothing we do of ourselves will avail anything for our relationship with God.

But our Lord does not leave us in a condition of hopelessness, condemned to eternal separation from Himself. From the beginning, the Lord desired a close personal relationship with His creation. In His covenant with Moses and the rest of the Hebrew people, He established a means of restoring the



severed relationship because of sin. That means was a sacrificial system in which atonement, or covering, could be made for the sins of the people.

### **Leviticus 16**

Leviticus 16 covers in great depth and detail the extent to which the Lord sought to make atonement for the Hebrew people's sins. Rather than review this entire chapter, I urge you to personally outline that chapter, so that, in a few minutes, you can present its basic principles.

The High Priest is permitted, once a year, to enter into the Holy of Holies, and to sprinkle blood of a sacrificed animal upon the mercy seat. He does it twice, once for himself and once for the people of Israel. The picture here demonstrates substitutionary atonement. The Hebrew word for atonement, Kippur, literally means to "cover over." The blood of the animal sacrificed in our place covers over the sin which keeps us from God. God sees the blood of the sacrificed animal, atonement is effected, and a relationship with Him is restored.

### **Leviticus 17:10-11**

Next comes Leviticus 17:10-11. Verse 11 tells us that without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sin. As I see it, the central problem to traditional Judaism as it is practiced today is this: The Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 of this era. Since the destruction of the Temple in Israel and its altar inside, there have been no animal sacrifices, no shedding of blood and no Yom Kippur sacrifices. So, in light of what the Scriptures command, no atonement can be made.

Yet, Yom Kippur remains central during the High Holy Days as a time of prayer, giving to charity and repentance. But these three were never sufficient to fulfill the Biblical injunction to shed blood for the forgiveness of sin. A key question you might ask your Jewish friend: "How do you find atonement, or forgiveness for your sin today, since no sacrifices are made?"

Having established the problem, God answers the need in the promise of a New Covenant found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Here the Lord announces the new covenant He is going to make between the house of Israel and Judah and Himself. This New Covenant would be different from the law He established with Moses on Mt. Sinai, which was written upon tablets of stone. Instead, this New Covenant would be written upon men's minds and hearts, that they might know and be able to do the law of God. How would this New Covenant come about?

### **Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12**

Now, turn to Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. You can focus on all or a portion of these Scriptures, but look mainly to verses 4-6, where we see that One was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and as it says in verse 6, "the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.."

Many times I have had the opportunity to read the entire 53rd chapter of Isaiah to a Jewish individual. As I have read, I have asked them where they feel that portion of Scripture comes from. Frequently they respond, "Why, you are reading right out of the Christian New Testament, because it is talking about Jesus." Most do not realize or recognize that Isaiah's prophecy was written some 700 years before the



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birth of Jesus. These words speak very clearly to the life, death and rejection of Messiah who would make final atonement for our sins once and for all.

Now, the question of the hour is: “How can we identify and recognize the true Messiah of Israel?” There are many specific Messianic prophecies that focus on the coming of Messiah, His death, His resurrection and His return.



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## For More Information

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