

The Use of Media and Modern Technology in Reaching out to the People of Israel

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Netivyah has operated our Kol haYeshuah radio station for more than 10 years in Hebrew. After we started, some groups of Ultra-Orthodox extremists tried to stop our broadcasts three times by challenging the Minister of Information. They were not successful, however, because the radio waves are broadcast from outside of Israel's borders. Kol haYeshuah reaches a very broad area. People can hear us even from the island of Santorini and from parts of Russia. We have some regular listeners who are Israeli Arab Christians living in Jordan who know Hebrew because they used to live in Israel. Now they live in a Muslim environment and have no fellowship except for our radio broadcasts. We have listeners in Nahariya who are encouraged by our broadcasts and one blind professor who became a believer through Kol haYeshuah.

Theology of Using Media

When Yeshua walked in the Land of Israel, He used to go sit on top of a mountain and speak to thousands of people. They sat all around Him, on the sand, on the rocks, and on the ground, in order to hear His voice, and it touched people's lives. Not everyone who heard Yeshua immediately became His disciples, but the thousands that followed Him in the Galilean hills were touched by Him and His teaching.

Today we have access to reach millions of people with the Gospel through modern media, and the issue is no longer technological limitations. The question with which we have to deal is the theological issue of whether we as a body of believers are ready to expose our ideas, beliefs, and lives out in the modern marketplace.

When I became a believer in the 1960s, nobody was willing to expose themselves in Israel. When we started Netivyah and openly wrote that we taught the New Testament, most of the believing leadership in Israel thought we were crazy to be so open about our faith in Yeshua.

Getting onto the modern media system is exposing oneself to anyone at anytime and in almost any place, especially on the internet. Radio waves can reach a long way, but the internet is almost everywhere. Anyone can see you and know what you believe and evaluate and encourage and bless you, (or curse you) if they want. This kind of accessibility is one of the huge advantages of modern media.

During the beginning of Yeshua's ministry, according to the Gospels, He used to tell people, "Don't tell anyone" when He would heal people or do other miracles. He commanded them to keep what He had done a secret. Therefore, there is a stage in which as a Body, we could say that we are not yet ready to expose ourselves to the media. During the last ten years, however, I have started to believe that it is time for the Body of Messiah in Israel to expose itself. When we expose ourselves, the public can see both our good and our bad points. At the moment we present ourselves in the media, we give the right to the general public to evaluate, criticize, or praise us based on our content. When we preach the Gospel, we do not try to convince people by using the threat of hell because we think it is counter-productive. It is also

more honest because only G-d has the right to judge and decide who goes to heaven and who goes to hell, not us.

The Uniqueness of Radio

When we make ourselves accessible on the radio, we make ourselves very vulnerable. If someone is not willing to be vulnerable, he should not get into the business of media. From the very beginning, we used our real names on our radio programs because we had already seen other people's failures when trying to use false names in the media. The world is too small now for false names to help hide anything for very long. They will discover everyone's real names anyway at some point, so we decided to use our real names from the beginning.

One huge advantage to radio is that it is voluntary. It is not like standing in the street and pushing tracts into people's faces or yelling Bible verses on a street corner. If people want to listen, they can turn their radio on, and if they do not want to listen, they can turn their radio off. In my opinion, it is only voluntary access that will open people's hearts to the Gospel.

A second advantage is that it is very private. There once was an Ultra-Orthodox woman who was a secret believer who lived in an Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood and had all Orthodox children. She started listening to our radio programs every night at 10 pm using her walkman and headphones. One night she was listening in her kitchen, and her husband came in, grabbed the earphones, and put them on just at the time when I was teaching and reading from the writings of the Rabbi Jacob Emden, the chief Rabbi of Germany from 300 years ago. This great Rabbi wrote a lot of positive things about Yeshua. This woman's husband just listened while I was reading Rabbi Emden's writings, gave the earphones back to his wife, and said, "Woman, that is the kind of stuff I want you to listen to instead of all the nonsense you usually listen to!" Ever since then her husband has been blessing her for listening to Kol haYeshuah radio. I know several Orthodox people who would never want to expose themselves in public by coming to our congregation who regularly hear Yeshua's teaching on our radio. This aspect of privacy is of great value, and we must not look down on it. The fact that people believe but are not yet ready to expose themselves is not a negative thing. When the right time comes, they will expose themselves as believers and stand up.

A third advantage is that radio is unlimited. We never know how many people are listening to us at any given time and how many people we are affecting. We have to believe that the Holy Spirit is working on our behalf even if we cannot make a headcount ourselves. G-d is at work in this nation and in the rest of the world, and we do not need to have the harvest listed in statistics in our notebooks in order to believe it. We need to live by faith as far as our witness is concerned and let Gd work. When we sow the seeds out there, G-d will use them.

A fourth advantage is that people can listen to the radio or look at our webpage for free. They do not have to be harassed for donations. Although the radio is a very expensive undertaking, the L-rd has provided for us. We have two full time staff members for the radio and a number of program producers whom we pay by the program, so it is very expensive for us. Nevertheless, G-d provides the money for us so it can be free for the listeners.

Another important thing that happens when we preach the Gospel on the radio is that we create

a cyber spiritual community of people. Even though we cannot see their faces through the radio, the Holy Spirit uses our voices to create a community of listeners. We have no idea how many there are, but eventually on the great Judgment Day we will hear testimonies that say, "I heard Kol haYeshuah radio which prompted me to study the New Testament and believe in Yeshua, who changed my life."

Radio, internet, and all the other modern media options we have available to us today are only preludes for greater things to come. Our world and technology are developing so quickly that the old people alive today could not even have imagined the reality we live in now. When I was a child, we thought it was amazing that Dick Tracy had a telephone inside his watch, but now we all walk around with cell phones that can reach anywhere in the world. Men have already landed on the moon, and what happens tomorrow will be even greater.

I pray that eventually G-d will open the opportunity for us to not just have a radio station but also a television channel. Eventually, Yeshua will have a television station, and we will have a Messianic Jewish show that will allow us to approach the Israeli public with short dramas, Biblical stories, personal witnesses, and so on.

Unfortunately, many ministries in Israel have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars over the last ten years to build radio and television studios that have never been used. The Christian Pentecostal way is to raise money "by faith" and act as if it already exists even without anything or any concrete plans in the hand yet. They think that they can speak things into existence, but so far this method has failed in media ministry in Israel. I know people who have spoken into existence studios that have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars complete with cameras, equipment and everything, but they did not broadcast even one program using these studios. Not even one DVD or cassette has come out of some of these places.

I think we should not spend money until we are ready to use these facilities and equipment. First of all, we need to get the blessing of G-d, the vision, and the people in line, and then we should start praying for the money to come. As I said before, using the media is a very serious situation because we expose ourselves to the evaluation and criticism of the world. Media makes us vulnerable to the world, so if we are not ready for that we should not throw away the L-rd's money on projects that never amount to anything. First, we need to get ready to expose ourselves, and only then should we speak these things into existence.

The good news is that many ministries in Israel are now getting into the media. The internet is a relatively easy and inexpensive way to start, and I believe that there will also be an explosion of TV, radio, magazines, etc in Israel in the next ten years. Other Messianic groups will follow Netivyah into the media because that is the way of the future.