

MUTUAL BLESSING BETWEEN JEWISH AND
JAPANESE BELIEVERS IN JESUS PRIOR TO
WORLD WAR II

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This essay is in honor of Mitch Glaser, a pioneer in the area of Jewish missions and Messianic Jewish studies, and “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Prov 18:24). May the Lord bless you, Mitch, on your seventieth birthday, and may you live until 120! (Biz hundred un tsvantsig!) As Chosen People Ministries is in the initial stages of developing a ministry to Jewish people in Japan, I thought this essay would be particularly meaningful to you.¹



My own interest in the converging destinies of Japanese and Jews was sparked by my first encounter with Japanese Christians in 1985–1987. During these years, while I was a student at Sophia University (Tokyo) and Logos Theological Seminary (Kyoto), various Japanese Christian leaders became spiritual fathers and mothers to me. Most were from a denomination (historically related to the Japan Holiness Church) whose 10,000 members prayed three times a day for the Jewish people. Their extraordinary love, which I witnessed firsthand from Father Takeji Otsuki (the founder of the denomination) and others, prompted me to ask how much I loved my own

¹ This essay is a revised and updated version of a section in David Rudolph, epilogue to *Messianic Judaism: Kiso-to Shiten*, by Daniel C. Juster, trans. Kazuhito Yukizawa (Tochigi: Malkoush, 2004), 437–60.

people (*ahavat Yisrael*) and what it meant to be a Messianic Jew. This led to the Lord awakening within me a calling to Messianic Jewish ministry. Even more importantly, in this praying community—known as Japan Christian Friends of Israel—I found my *bashert* (“soulmate”), Harumi, whom I have been madly in love with for thirty-five years now. Over the decades, I have collected books and articles about Jesus-believing Jews and Japanese who have traveled a similar journey as Harumi and me in bringing together our two peoples for mutual blessing in the body of Messiah. This essay represents a compilation of this research. Extensive references are included since this history is largely unknown in Japan and the Jewish world.

Early History

The relationship between Jewish followers of Jesus and Japan goes back more than 470 years.² One of the first of these intersections took place in 1552 when Luís de Almeida, a *converso*,³ arrived in the Land of the Rising Sun.⁴ Born in Lisbon in 1525, Almeida was from a Jewish family that in 1497 was forced to convert to Christianity, along with more than 100,000 other pious Jews in Portugal.⁵ Consequently, Almeida grew up in a sizeable community

² See Lúcio de Sousa, “The Jewish Presence in China and Japan in the Early Modern Period: A Social Representation,” in Manuel Perez Garcia and Lúcio De Sousa, ed., *Global History and New Polycentric Approaches: Europe, Asia and the Americas in a World Network System* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 183–218.

³ A *converso* is a Jew who converted to Christianity in Spain or Portugal during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, or one of their descendants. For a discussion of Almeida’s Jewish background, see Robert A. Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews: Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry and Purity-of-Blood Laws in the Early Society of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 74; De Sousa, “The Jewish Presence in China and Japan in the Early Modern Period,” 197–200.

⁴ José Vaz de Carvalho, “Luís de Almeida, médico, mercador e missionário no Japão, 1525–1583,” in *O Século Cristão do Japão. Actas do Colóquio Comemorativo dos 450 anos de Anizade Portugal-Japão*, ed. Roberto Carneiro e Artur Teodoro de Matos (Lisboa: CEPCEP-IHAM, 1994), 105–22; Fernando A. R. Nogueira, “Luís de Almeida and the Introduction of European Medicine in Japan,” in *The Great Maritime Discoveries and World Health*, ed. Mário Gomes Marques and John Cule (Lisbon: Escola Nacional de Saude Publica Ordem dos Medicos Instituto de Sintra, 1991), 227–36; Diego Yuuki, *Luís de Almeida, 1525–1583. Médico, Caminhante, Apóstolo* (Macau: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1989); Diego Pacheco, “Luís de Almeida, 1525–1583: Medico, Caminante, Apostol,” *Studia* 26 (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1969).

⁵ See Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez, *Secret Jews: The Complex Identity of Crypto-Jews and Crypto-Judaism* (Grand Prairie: Yaron, 2021), 58; Juan Marcos

of baptized Jews/Jewish Catholics who had a deep appreciation of their Sephardic Jewish heritage. Most were crypto-Jews.⁶

Almeida studied at *Hospital Real de Todos os Santos* (All Saints Royal Hospital) where he received his license to practice medicine in 1546. Because Portugal was no longer a safe place for Jewish Catholics due to the Inquisition, “Almeida left Lisbon in 1548 to escape the mounting heat of the persecution of ‘Judaizers’ and to work for his living as a merchant in Portuguese Asia.”⁷ During his first trip to Japan in 1552, he developed a relationship with Cosme de Torres, who succeeded Francis Xavier as the

Bejarano Gutierrez, *The Converso Dilemma: Halakbic Respona and the Status of Forced Converts* (Grand Prairie: Yaron, 2020), 16–17.

⁶ “Most Portuguese conversions were directly coerced; most Spanish conversions were ‘voluntary,’ even though they came about in a repressive environment that blurred the meaning of that term. Unlike the Spaniards, the Portuguese *crístãos novos* [conversos] were much more likely to be crypto-Jewish than assimilationist. Prior to the 1497 mass conversion decreed by King Manuel I, for the most part Portuguese Jews had not been put through the crucible of riots, disputations, and successive waves of conversion. The Portuguese had not known a period in which large numbers of converts lived in close proximity with unconverted Jews. Moreover, after 1492 Portuguese Judaism had been swelled by Jewish refugees from Spain, refugees who were precisely that segment of Spanish Jewry most committed to their ancestral religion. In addition, the Portuguese Inquisition did not begin until 1536, a full generation after the forced conversions. Due to this combination of factors, the *crístãos novos* community in Portugal had time to establish itself and create a crypto-Jewish lifestyle of some depth and complexity, a lifestyle that proved to have a much greater resilience than that of the remnant community in Spain. In the words of Yerushalmi, the difference was the fact that in Portugal ‘the community itself was converted, in toto, whereas in Spain the [Jewish] community remained throughout, even though eroded and diminished in number, outside the pale of conversion’ [Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 5–6]. Portugal never experienced debilitating tensions between Jews and converts. Jewish families were not divided but were converted intact to Catholicism. Portuguese *crístãos novos* had no Jewish neighbors to be different from; thus their concept of themselves as Jews was not eroded by any sense of ‘otherness’ but rather strengthened by their solidarity as a corporate group” (David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy of Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996], 50–51). Cf. Gutierrez, *Secret Jews*, 123; Jerome Friedman, “Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18:1 (1987): 3–30.

⁷ Ines G. Zupanov, *The Catholic Frontier in India (16th–17th Centuries)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005), 208.

Superior of the mission,⁸ and Almeida was drawn to ministry. During his second trip to Japan in 1555, when he was thirty years old, Almeida spent time with Baltasar Gago (also a converso from Lisbon) and this led to hearing God's call on his life.⁹ Almeida subsequently joined the Society of Jesus' mission and founded an orphanage in Funai (Oita) in Kyushu.

The following year, with the permission of Otomo Sorin, a Japanese feudal lord (*daimyo*) who had converted to Christianity, Almeida used his personal funds to build in Funai a hospital that was "largely designed by, directed by, and staffed by the local Japanese Christians."¹⁰ It had two medical wards, one for injuries and the other for infectious diseases, including leprosy. Almeida was the chief of surgery.¹¹ Today there is a hospital in Oita named in honor of this Jesuit Jew, Almeida Memorial Hospital.

In 1561, Almeida turned his focus to sharing his faith with people in Hakata (now part of Fukuoka), Hirado, and Kagoshima. He went on to plant churches in Shimabara and Kuchinotsu. Almeida also informally took on the role of Procurator, faithfully addressing areas related to the mission's financial management, diplomacy, and negotiations.¹² He was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1580 and then appointed Superior of Amakusa where he led many people to the Lord.¹³ Almeida died in 1583 in Kawachinoura (now called Kawaura), in Amakusa.

⁸ Xavier, co-founder of the Society of Jesus, ministered in Japan from 1549–1551.

⁹ Almeida wrote in 1555, "And my main desire in staying was to render some small service to our Lord and to see that as I approached my thirty years, an age at which the Church requires each one of us to decide which life we shall lead so that, by continuing or adopting the state which our Lord indicates, we do not live in mortal sin, I should do likewise. And so that I could choose that state I requested help from He who could give it to me, Christ our Saviour and I decided to stay here in the company of Father Baltasar Gago so that I could determine the path our Lord was showing me which was his holy service and my salvation" (September 16, 1555, Hirado; trans. Léon Bourdon, "*Carta inédita de Luís de Almeida ao Padre Belchior Nunes Barreto*," *Brotéria* 51 [Lisbon, 1950]).

¹⁰ James Fujitani, "The Jesuit Hospital in the Religious Context of Sixteenth-Century Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 46:1 (2019): 79.

¹¹ "The primary goal of the Jesuit hospital was not to introduce exotic medical techniques, but rather to offer appropriate social and spiritual support to the community" (Ibid.).

¹² Francisco Figueira de Faria, "The Functions of Procurator in the Society of Jesus. Luís de Almeida, Procurator?" *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies* 15 (2007): 29–46.

¹³ "Most *Judeo-conversos* were received as Brothers and only at the end of their lives could they achieve priesthood, as a reward. A paradigmatic example of this policy happened with Luís de Almeida and Aires Sanches in Japan" (Lúcio de Sousa, *The Jewish Diaspora and the Perez Family Case in China, Japan, the Philippines, and*

At least five other Jewish Catholics served in Japan as Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth century. This is partly because the Society of Jesus at this time was the only religious order in the Catholic Church that allowed conversos to become priests,¹⁴ and they intentionally sent conversos far away from the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁵ All five of these men were regarded as having the "stain" of Jewishness on them.¹⁶ In addition to Almeida, this cadre included:

Baltasar Gago – born into a converso family in Lisbon in 1518 and ordained a Jesuit priest in 1546. Xavier sent Gago to Japan in 1552 where in

the Americas [16th Century], trans. Joseph Abraham Levi [Lisbon: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2015], 97).

¹⁴ "In fact, the Society of Jesus was the only religious congregation where the *Judeo-conversos* could enter and the *Limpieza de sangre* (Spanish for 'purity of blood') statutes were not followed (Maryks 2010: 29–31, 76–90)... The final blow arrived in 1593, when the Fifth General Congregation of the Jesuits issued an official decree banning all *Judeo-conversos* from entering the Society of Jesus" (De Sousa, "The Jewish Presence in China and Japan in the Early Modern Period," 196–97).

¹⁵ "Due to the deeply rooted prejudice against Portuguese and Spanish *Judeo-conversos*, the Jesuits of Jewish descent were forced to work outside the Iberian Peninsula, in places like Italy and Germany, or outside Europe, in the Americas, India, China, or Japan" (De Sousa, *The Jewish Diaspora and the Perez Family Case in China, Japan, the Philippines, and the Americas [16th Century]*, 97–98).

¹⁶ "At the same time, it is possible that this somewhat 'degraded' priestly rank enabled the Society to assimilate with relative ease those candidates whose credentials were 'stained,' like Henrique Henriques, Luís de Almeida, and many others who were New Christians [*conversos*] by birth. Both Henriques, who established hospitals in Punnaikayal and elsewhere on the Fishery Coast in South India, and Almeida, who started a hospital and a medical school in Funai, Japan, became famous missionaries, but the highest they could rise in the Jesuit hierarchy was to become spiritual coadjutors. Until 1593, Jesuit policy toward the recruitment of New Christians was open. But in India, where the Inquisition, brought to Goa in 1560, wrought havoc among the New Christian families of merchants and physicians, and where the presence of Jewish merchants, especially in Kerala, was considered just as menacing for religion and good customs, Jesuits of New Christian blood were metaphorically condemned to permanent geographical marginality... In Asia, under the Portuguese *padroado*, even the Jesuits considered accepting and promoting New Christians politically unwise. Many of the letters by Francis Xavier, Alessandro Valignano, and Alberto Laerzio refer to this situation" (Županov, *The Catholic Frontier in India [16th–17th Centuries]*, 198–99, 313 n. 19). See Pierre-Antoine Fabre, "La conversion infinie des conversos: Des 'nouveaux-chrétiens' dans la *Compagnie de Jesus auie siècle*," *Annales* 54:4 (July–August 1999), 851–74; Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews*, 117–217; John Donnelly, "Antonio Possevino and Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 55 (1986): 3–31.

Funai he founded the country's second church,¹⁷ under the patronage of Sorin, and made seminal contributions to catechetical work in Japanese.¹⁸ He was also known as a priest who cast out demons in the "name of Jesus and Saint Michael."¹⁹

Antonio Francisco de Critana – born into a converso family in Almodóvar del Campo, Spain, in 1548, and ordained a Jesuit priest in 1573. Critana worked at Todos los Santos, a college in Nagasaki, from 1598–1614. He was expelled from Japan in the persecution of Christians under Tokugawa Ieyasu and died at sea.²⁰

Pedro Ramón – born into a converso family in Saragossa, Spain, in 1549, and ordained a Jesuit priest in 1573. Ramón served as a master of novices (1578–1588), translated the works of Luis de Granada (another converso) into Japanese,²¹ and died in Nagasaki in 1611.²²

Aires Sanches – born into a converso family in Lisbon in c. 1527. After Sanches studied medicine,²³ he joined the Society of Jesus and taught liturgical music in Funai, aided by his fluency in Japanese. Sanches was ordained a Jesuit priest in c. 1580 and died in Omura in 1590.²⁴

Pedro Gómez – born into a converso family in Antequera, Spain, in 1535, and ordained a Jesuit priest in 1553. Gómez arrived in Nagasaki in 1583 and became the Superior of the Society of Jesus for the region of Bungo (Oita). He went on to serve as the Vice-Provincial of Japan until his death (1590–1600). In *Compendium Catholicae Veritatis, Pars I. Chap 68* (1593),²⁵ Gómez

¹⁷ In 1551, Xavier founded Japan's first permanent church in Yamaguchi.

¹⁸ Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews*, 73; Hubert Cieslik, "Balthasar Gago and Japanese Christian Terminology," *Early Jesuit Missionaries in Japan* 2 (1954), 1–9; Fujitani, "The Jesuit Hospital in the Religious Context of Sixteenth-Century Japan," 81.

¹⁹ Fujitani, "The Jesuit Hospital in the Religious Context of Sixteenth-Century Japan," 83.

²⁰ Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews*, 74.

²¹ *El Compendio de la Guía de la Fe* (Amakusa, 1592); *Introducción al Símbolo de la Fe* (Nagasaki, 1611).

²² Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews*, 75, 179–80.

²³ It is not known if he received a licentia practicandi. See De Sousa, *The Jewish Diaspora and the Perez Family Case in China, Japan, the Philippines, and the Americas* (16th Century), 47.

²⁴ De Sousa, "The Jewish Presence in China and Japan in the Early Modern Period," 200.

²⁵ Pedro Gómez, *Compendium Catholicae Veritatis* (Jesuit College of Japan, 1593; repr., Kirishitan Bunko Library of Sophia University, Tokyo: Ozorasha, 1997).

describes his opposition to Catholic forced conversion, a view that was likely informed by his Jewish identity.²⁶

Bernard Bettelheim

From 1639–1854, the Tokugawa shogunate adopted a policy of "locked country" (*sakoku*) and largely closed Japan's doors to the outside world. Exceptions were made, but they were difficult to obtain and carefully regulated. Faced with this lack of welcome, a 34-year-old Jewish Anglican named Bernard Bettelheim finagled his way into the country with his family in 1846,²⁷ making him the first Protestant missionary to Japan.²⁸ His life and ministry in Ryukyu (Loo Choo), known today as Okinawa, is best characterized by the Yiddish word *chutzpah*.

The son of Moses and Tereya Bettelheim, Bernard grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home in Pozsony (Pressburg), Hungary.²⁹ He completed

²⁶ De Sousa, "The Jewish Presence in China and Japan in the Early Modern Period," 198–99; De Sousa, *The Jewish Diaspora and the Perez Family Case in China, Japan, the Philippines, and the Americas* (16th Century), 99.

²⁷ "[Bettelheim] was bluntly denied permission by the Okinawan authorities to debark when the *Starling* dropped anchor at Okinawa. The ship's captain was reluctant to let Bettelheim go ashore in the face of that denial. Bettelheim, however, exercising the serpent-like half of his charge, bribed the ship's crew to ply with liquor the Okinawan boatmen bringing supplies to the ship while he and his family put their belongings in the Okinawan boats. The tipsy Okinawan boatmen returned ashore with the Bettelheims' luggage, giving reason for the Bettelheims to follow them ashore in the ship's boats, which they did. The first Anglican and Protestant mission in Japan would thus likely never have happened without a creative and generous (if questionable) use of alcoholic spirits" (Alexander Whitaker, "The Problem of Bernard Jean Bettelheim, First Anglican Missionary to Japan," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 88: 4 [2019]: 352); Yoshihiko Teruya, "Bernard J. Bettelheim and Okinawa: A Study of the First Protestant Missionary to the Island Kingdom, 1846–1854" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1969), 25–34.

²⁸ Loo Choo was under the jurisdiction of the Satsuma Domain on behalf of the Tokugawa shogunate.

²⁹ According to A. J. Grossman, Bettelheim's nephew, "Bernard's father was a very strict Jew named Moses Bettelheim, living at Pressburg, then capital of Hungary. He was a merchant and his wife Tereya, a native of Moravia. The brothers of Dr. B.J.B. were Herman, Joseph, Alexander, and Phillip. His sisters were Julia Marie and Hannah. Pressburg was at that time among the Jewish community a great Rabbinic school; numbers of young Jewish students used to come from all parts of the Austrian Empire to study Talmud, Cabbala and Jewish teachings. I am the son of Julia Grossman who was as above a sister of Dr. B.J.B. I was born in 1833, and left an orphan when about 3 years old and consequently was

his medical degree in Padua, Italy, in 1836 and then served as a surgeon in the Egyptian navy.³⁰ In 1840, Bettelheim traveled to Smyrna where he worked as a doctor in a Turkish regiment. There he met members of the Church Missionary Society who introduced him to the New Testament and led him to faith in Jesus the Messiah.³¹ Bettelheim subsequently moved to England and worked for the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews. His vision to preach the gospel in Japan was directly related to his postulation that the Loo Choo people were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.³²

There have been numerous studies of Bettelheim's ministry in Japan (1846–1854) that describe his creative attempts at sharing the gospel.³³ They also document the near-death beatings, stonings, starvation, isolation, and surveillance that Bettelheim faced from the resident magistrates (*zaiban bugyo*)

brought up by my grandparents, the Bettelheims. I was sent to school at the Rabbinic parts of the Jewish school and heard a lot about Bernard B., my uncle, and how clever he was in Talmudic literature... I have seen some of his Hebrew writings in a book at my grandfather's house" (A. J. Grossman, personal correspondence, London, October 3, 1927).

³⁰ Teruya, "Bernard J. Bettelheim and Okinawa," 15.

³¹ Bettelheim's embrace of Christianity led to a negative critique of traditional Judaism. See Bernard J. Bettelheim, "La Ruin du Talmud," *L'Echo de l'Orient* (Smyrna), 84 (1840): 1, 20.

³² Bernard Bettelheim, "The Inhabitants of Loo Choo, Supposed to be Descended from the Ten Tribes," *Jewish Intelligence* (April 1848), 92–97, 121–24; Elizabeth M. Bettelheim, "Narrative of Mrs. Bernard J. Bettelheim Written for Her Sisters in England," copied by Earl R. Bull (1925), 52–53. For a historical-critical discussion of this theory and related issues, see David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 58–75; Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1991), 134–42; Marvin Tokayer, *Shinsoban Yudaya-to Nihon Nazo-no Kodaishi*, trans. Soichi Hakozaiki (Isehara: Sangyo Noritsu Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2013); Marvin Tokayer, *Seisho-ni Kakusareta Nihon/Yudaya Fuin-no Kodaishi: Ushinawareta Jubuzoku-no Nazo*, trans. Arimasu Kubo (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1999).

³³ Teruya, "Bernard J. Bettelheim and Okinawa," 58, 72, 89, 94, 99–100, 105–106, 137–86, 213–55, 263–64, 298–99, 320, 334; Whitaker, "The Problem of Bernard Jean Bettelheim, First Anglican Missionary to Japan," 355–58; Kanjun Higashiona, "Dr. Bettelheim's Study of the Loochoo Language," *The Japan Magazine* 26:3 (1925): 78–81; Kanjun Higashiona, "The Bible in the Loochoo Dialect," *The Japan Magazine* 26:2 (1925): 50–52; Earl R. Bull, "The Trials of a Trail Blazer: Bettelheim," *Japan Evangelist* 32:2 (1925): 51–59 and 32:3 (1925): 87–93; Earl R. Bull, "Bettelheim as Physician, Jew, Layman, and Translator," *Japan Evangelist* 31:5 (1925): 153–59; George Smith, *Lew Chew and the Lew Chewans: Being a Narrative of a Visit to Lew Chew, or Loo Choo in October, 1850* (London: T. Hatchard, 1853).

during his eight years on the island to pressure him to leave. When these tactics failed, they attempted to kill Bettelheim with poisoned food, venomous snakes, and a Buddhist rite of exorcism.³⁴ Bettelheim's disciples suffered torture and martyrdom.³⁵

In reading Bettelheim's journal and official correspondence,³⁶ one is left with the impression that his self-identification as a Diaspora Jew and his intimate knowledge of Jewish suffering, was a factor in his ability to endure the challenges he experienced.³⁷ Bettelheim did not see revival in Loo Choo but he did leave behind a number of disciples,³⁸ many seeds planted, Japanese/Ryukyuan translations of Luke-Acts, John and Romans,³⁹ and the first grammar of the Ryukyuan language.⁴⁰

³⁴ Teruya, "Bernard J. Bettelheim and Okinawa," 232–33; 312.

³⁵ Teruya, op. cit., 269–73, 276, 280–81, 299–300, 311, 316, 368.

³⁶ A. P. Jenkins, ed., *The Journal and Official Correspondence of Bernard Jean Bettelheim 1845–54, Part II: 1852–54* (Okinawa: Okinawa, Okinawa Prefectural Government Board of Education, 2012); A. P. Jenkins, ed., *The Journal and Official Correspondence of Bernard Jean Bettelheim 1845–54, Part I: 1845–51* (Okinawa: Okinawa Prefectural Government Board of Education, 2005). Takako Armstrong made available to me copies of the handwritten journal and letters of Bettelheim, now accessible online through the University of the Ryukyus Repository: <http://ir.lib.u-ryukyu.ac.jp/handle/20.500.12000/2487>.

³⁷ Teruya, "Bernard J. Bettelheim and Okinawa," 281.

³⁸ Teruya, op. cit., 161–63, 318–33.

³⁹ The University of Pennsylvania's Evans Bible Collection includes digital versions of Bettelheim's New Testament translations. See Michael P. Williams, "A 'Loochooan' New Testament," *Unique at Penn* 20 (2014), <http://uniqueatpenn.wordpress.com/2014/07/25/a-loochooan-new-testament/>; Teruya, "Bernard J. Bettelheim and Okinawa," 334. Bettelheim also translated portions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (Whitaker, "The Problem of Bernard Jean Bettelheim, First Anglican Missionary to Japan," 343, 357).

⁴⁰ "Serious systematic study of the grammar and sound system of Ryukyuan only commenced in the 19th century, at the hands of the missionary Bernard Jean Bettelheim (1811–1870)... [H]is Elements or Contributions towards a Loochooan & Japanese Grammar (1849) enables a quite detailed look at Shuri Ryukyuan as it was spoken at the time... Bettelheim donated the original manuscripts of his dictionary and grammar to the British Museum in 1867; they are now kept in the British Library, originally a department of the museum... [T]he grammar remained unpublished until the 1980s, when a team of four Japanese scholars took up the task and presented a translation with commentary (Kina 1980–1984), typesetting and publishing the English manuscript at the same time (Iha 1981–1985). IHA Kazumasa later went on to write a considerable number of papers on various details of Bettelheim's works over the course of the following two decades. The dictionary still remains unpublished" (Christopher Griesenhofer, "B. J. Bettelheim 1849: The First Grammar of Ryukyuan," in *Handbook of the*

Theologically, Bettelheim prioritized the Hebrew Bible in his ministry. He taught that the “Old Testament is the foundation of the Gospel; it is the rock on which the religion of Israel must be erected; it is the treasury, the store-house of all emergencies, and the best armory for all kinds of war arising under the Gospel dispensation, and, should, therefore, be oftener, yes, always resorted to.”⁴¹ Love for Israel was also central to Bettelheim’s reading of Scripture, “There is not a single book, not to say a chapter in the whole Bible, whence you might not clearly infer that it is your duty, nay, privilege to encourage, defend, esteem, and love the Jews.”⁴²

In the spiritual realm, Bettelheim left a Jewish Christian mark on Japanese history. His boldness broke through spiritual strongholds that paved the way for future gospel ministry in Japan.⁴³ He also helped open the door to future missionary work in Japan by serving as Commodore Perry’s interpreter. Earl Bull noted in 1925 that if “Bettelheim had not aided when things were at loggerheads, the prized July, 1854, treaty might not be in

Ryukyuan Languages: History, Structure, and Use, ed. Patrick Heinrich, Shinsho Miyara, and Michinori Shimoji [Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015], 81).

⁴¹ Bull, “Bettelheim as Physician, Jew, Layman, and Translator,” 154–55. Quoted from Bettelheim’s sermon entitled “David, a Type of Christ” (1843).

⁴² Bull, *op. cit.*, 155–56. Quoted from Bettelheim’s sermon entitled “Manna” (London, n.d.).

⁴³ This is not to say that Bettelheim’s missionary methods were always beyond reproach. For example, he broke into Japanese houses to share the gospel, “His first intrusion into a native house was recorded on June 4, 1848... Bettelheim explained his situation undauntingly: ‘Though I am not a thief, every door has been closed while I was going along a street. Since I am the teacher [in Christianity] of this country, it is my duty to teach the doctrines of Christianity. To the intentionally closed doors, [I am] obliged to teach them, even though [I] forcibly intrude into the house.’... The stranger’s sudden entrance into native houses usually caused the cries of women and the screams of children. Bettelheim explained how to enter native houses: ‘You [the reader of the Chinese Repository] perhaps ask in surprise, at the outset, how I could gain access into houses, whose doors a well trained body of spies would certainly take the precaution to have shut? The answer is simple. I did not enter by the door, at least in most cases, for I could not, but found my way in through the deep gaps in a dilapidated back wall.’ After his sudden appearance in houses, Bettelheim explained to them his intention to visit there quietly. Then, these gentle people listened to his sermons and sometimes welcomed him with other families” (Teruya, “Bernard J. Bettelheim and Okinawa,” 148–51). Bettelheim defended his approach by saying that he always knocked first (*Ibid.*, 299). See Whitaker, “The Problem of Bernard Jean Bettelheim, First Anglican Missionary to Japan,” 341–66.

Perry’s log book.”⁴⁴ In 1854, Bettelheim left the island with Commodore Perry’s squadron after the signing of the historic treaty with Japan and went on to serve as a surgeon in the 106th Regiment in the American Civil War. The life of this Jewish believer in Jesus, the first Protestant missionary to Japan, is largely unknown among Japanese Christians today, but he played a key role in pioneering gospel ministry in Japan.

Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky

Forty years after Bettelheim’s departure from Okinawa, another Jewish believer traveled to Japan by the name of Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky. Born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Taurage, Lithuania, Schereschewsky read a Hebrew New Testament in 1852 when he was in Rabbinical School in Zhitomir,⁴⁵ and “became convinced, by his study of the book, that in Jesus the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and the age-long hopes of his people had been fulfilled.”⁴⁶ At the University of Breslau, he grew in his faith under the tutelage of Henricus Neumann, Lecturer in Hebrew and Rabbinic Languages. Neumann was a Christian Jew and a member of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews.⁴⁷ Through Neumann, Schereschewsky met other Jewish Christians, including John Jacobi, Julius Strauss, John Neander, and Gideon Lederer.⁴⁸

In 1875, Schereschewsky became the Anglican Missionary Bishop of Shanghai, and in 1879 he founded St. John’s University (Shanghai), known today as East China University of Political Science and Law.⁴⁹ From 1897–1906, the Jewish bishop resided in Tokyo where he drew on his Hebrew and rabbinical training to complete a revised vernacular translation of the Old Testament and a completely new translation of the Christian Bible in literary Chinese (*Easy Wenli*).⁵⁰ A Japanese scribe named Bun aided him in his work.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Bull, “Bettelheim as Physician, Jew, Layman, and Translator,” 159. Cf. Whitaker, “The Problem of Bernard Jean Bettelheim, First Anglican Missionary to Japan,” 360, 364–65.

⁴⁵ Irene Eber, *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible: S.I.J. Schereschewsky (1831–1906)* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 5, 19, 24–30, 39.

⁴⁶ James A. Muller, *Apostle of China: Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky* (New York: Morehouse, 1937), 30.

⁴⁷ Eber, *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible*, 33, 35–36.

⁴⁸ Eber, *op. cit.*, 41–50; Muller, *Apostle of China*, 31–33.

⁴⁹ Eber, *op. cit.*, 125, 131–37.

⁵⁰ Eber, *op. cit.*, 159.

⁵¹ Eber, *op. cit.*, 161.

While living in Asia, Schereschewsky involved himself in Jewish missions, even as he always identified as a Jew.⁵² He ministered to Jews in China,⁵³ and a letter expressing Schereschewsky's passion for the "gathering-in of Israel" is quoted in the *Minutes of the First Hebrew-Christian Conference of the United States Held at Mountain Lake Park, Md. July 29–30, 1903*. He was considered the conference's representative in Japan. Schereschewsky died in Japan in 1906 and is buried in Aoyama Cemetery in Tokyo.⁵⁴

Japanese Support for Jewish Gospel Ministry

The year after Schereschewsky's death marked an important development in the history of the relationship between Japanese and Jewish believers in Jesus. This is when Japanese support for Jewish gospel ministry began. Out of the blessings received, blessings were now being returned, and significantly from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Japan, the group that inherited all of the records pertaining to Bettelheim's work in Loo Choo. The Rev. H. R. Wansey, a CMS representative, wrote from Japan on July 7, 1907:

The Prayer Union for Israel in Japan has now 36 Japanese members, and I have just received two shillings and nine pence from nine of the Japanese members at Fukuoka, a CMS station. Those Christians send it "with their prayers to help the work amongst the Jews." I think it must be the first money given by Japanese Christians for work amongst God's ancient people. May it be the means of helping some of the descendants of our elder brethren in God's family to receive our Lord as their Messiah.⁵⁵

A decade later, in 1916, Herman Newmark became a follower of Jesus in Japan.⁵⁶ Newmark was an English Jew who came to Yokohama in 1912, at the age of twenty-one, to work for the Asiatic Petroleum Company,⁵⁷ and

⁵² Eber, op. cit., 243–44.

⁵³ Eber, op. cit., 97–102.

⁵⁴ Eber, op. cit., 160–63; Muller, *Apostle of China*, 256.

⁵⁵ H. R. Wansey, *Jewish Missionary Intelligence* 23 (September 1907): 144.

⁵⁶ See Herman Newmark, *Pleasures For Ever More: How an English Jew Found Joy in the Far East* (Chicago: Prayer Union for Israel, n.d.); Herman Newmark, "From Infidelity to Christianity thro' Reading the Word: A Jew's Conversion and Call to Ministry," *The Latter Rain Evangel* (May 1919): 2–6; *The Jewish Era* 28:3 (July 1919), 99.

⁵⁷ Harold A. Sevener, *A Rabbi's Vision: A Century of Proclaiming Messiah* (Charlotte: Chosen People Ministries, 1994), 276.

lived in Kobe from 1914–1919. As a new Jewish believer, discipled in Japan, he passionately shared his faith and encouraged Japanese Christians to pray for the Jewish people. The April 1919 edition of *The Jewish Era* reported:

PRAYER CIRCLES IN THE FAR EAST ON BEHALF OF ISRAEL

Five hundred Japanese Christians of the various denominations gathered in Tokyo February 5th [1919] to hear the testimony of Mr. Newmark (English Jew converted in Japan) and this meeting was the occasion for organizing a Prayer Union for Jews among the Japanese. They gave an offering of about \$50.00 for Jewish Evangelization, and meetings are now held in Tokyo on the first Thursday of each month for Bible study concerning Israel and prayer for the salvation of the Jews. Prayer is asked from the Lord's remembrancers that the movement may spread throughout Japan, so that prayer circles for Israel may be formed wherever there is a small Christian community.⁵⁸

In July 1919, Newmark returned to England and went on to lead two very influential Jewish Christian ministries—the Prayer Union for Israel in London⁵⁹ and The Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, founded by David Baron.⁶⁰

A decade later, Bishop Juji Nakada founded the Japan Holiness Church. Nakada believed that Japan had a calling as a nation to bless the Jewish people and that it was by God's design that the first Protestant missionary to Japan was a Jew. From Nakada's perspective, Bettelheim's Jewish identity had ecclesial significance for Japanese Christians since it was part of God's plan from the beginning to build a relationship of mutual blessing between Japanese and Jews. In May, 1926, Nakada traveled by ship to Gokokuji for the purpose of co-leading the eightieth anniversary of Bettelheim's landing in

⁵⁸ *The Jewish Era* 28:2 (April 1919): 53.

⁵⁹ "Mr. Herman Newmark, an English Jew who was converted in Japan about four years ago and who labored with the Chicago Hebrew Mission last summer, is now deputation secretary for the Prayer Union for Israel, which has its headquarters at Bucks, Eng., near London. This Prayer Union was founded in 1880 and is a link for Friends of Israel everywhere" (*The Jewish Era* 29:2 [April 1920], 71). The early history of the Prayer Union for Israel is described in Michael R. Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 190–95.

⁶⁰ In 1948–1949, the American Board of Missions to the Jews tried to recruit Newmark to succeed Joseph Cohn in leading the organization. See Sevener, *A Rabbi's Vision*, 275–78, 290.

Okinawa. There a monument was erected in Bettelheim's honor on May 18. Two weeks later, Nakada wrote about the event to Newmark, expressing Japan's indebtedness to the Jewish people. Accompanying the letter was a photo of the dedication and a generous gift from Japanese Christians for the spread of the gospel among the Jewish people:

Tokyo, Japan
June 4, 1926

Dear Brother Newmark,

I have come back from Loo Choo a few days ago. I have written you before that Bernard Jean Bettelheim, M.D., reached that island with the Gospel of our Lord. *He was the first Protestant missionary to Japan.* He landed there on the 2nd of May, 1846. It was eighty years ago. Therefore we held a memorial service for him. A monument has been built there as you see in the picture. All those white spots are going to be filled with stones from the different countries where he stayed—Hungary, Austria, Italy, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, England, China, Loo Choo and America. Our people held tent meetings this time. Many souls were converted. We thought it the best way to remember him. He was a Jew himself. He found the Lord at Smyrna. While he was preparing to come to the Far East he was staying in the same house with the famous Livingstone. He came to this country with the idea that he could find some of the lost tribes of Israelites. He stayed ten years, suffering many persecutions. Then he went to the U.S.A. and died in Brookfield, Missouri, February 9th, 1870. He has translated the four Gospels and Acts into Loo Chooan language. It was the first Bible translated into a Japanese dialect. In this way the first light of the Gospel has been brought to our people by your people. Therefore we owe to you much.⁶¹

Nakada continued to raise funds for Jewish gospel ministry. By September 30, 1933, he had raised \$14,000 from members of the Japan Holiness Church.⁶² The significance of the Holiness Church's offering for the Jewish people is summed up by David Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa:

⁶¹ "A Hebrew Christian the First to Bring the Gospel to Japan," *The Scattered Nation* 128 (October 1926): 230.

⁶² Herman Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers in the Far East: A Century of Jewish Life in China and Japan* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), 161.

Nakada believed the Holiness Church had a unique role to play in the realization of Japan's divine mission. "If we love our nation and fellow-countrymen," he preached, "we should pray ever more earnestly for the Jews." The Holiness Church had been praying fervently for the salvation of the Jews and had been making monthly contributions on their behalf, and Nakada was convinced God would take notice of these devotions. He was also convinced that the Holiness Church had been able to undertake these acts of charity only because of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He wrote with great pride that his church had devoted itself to the welfare of the Jews since its foundation. "We have only about 20,000 Holiness people in Japan," he wrote, "but how solemn it is when we see these people representing the whole nation in interceding for the Jews."⁶³

The Japan Holiness Church embraced A. B. Simpson's Fourfold Gospel, with an emphasis on Jesus as savior, sanctifier, healer, and coming king. In 1933, Nakada sought to add a fifth core emphasis to the teaching of the Holiness Church—Jesus' vision for the restoration of Israel:

Apparently Nakada had received a new revelation from God during a special visitation of the Holy Spirit. Tetsunao Yamamori summarizes the change in doctrine as follows: "The doctrinal emphases had always been placed on justification, sanctification, divine healing, and the Second Coming of Christ. To this list, Nakada now wished to add a fifth point, that Christ's Second Coming would be possible only through the restoration of Israel. Therefore, he admonished the members to pray for this to take place."...As Bishop of the Holiness Church, Nakada expected all seminary teachers and pastors to accept his new vision, but many leaders rejected his authority, which in turn led to schism within the ranks.⁶⁴

The Holiness Church spawned a number of Christian groups that viewed intercession for Israel, and practical ministry to Jewish people, as an important aspect of their Christian mission. Moreover, they walked this out

⁶³ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 55–56; quotes are from Juji Nakada, *Japan in the Bible* (Tokyo: Oriental Missionary Society, Japan Holiness Church, 1933), 80–83.

⁶⁴ Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 105.

in concrete ways, such as when they provided food and hospitality to thousands of Jewish refugees who arrived in Kobe in 1940–1941 seeking safe haven from Nazi persecution.⁶⁵

Japanese Christian love for Israel did not go unnoticed in circles outside of Japan. Mark Levy, who was involved in organizing the First Hebrew Christian Conference of the United States, an early pioneer of the modern Messianic Jewish movement, had a deep appreciation for his Japanese Christian brethren. In his poem entitled *Hagiwara, Gentleman* (1898), Levy praises a Japanese Christian friend who is kind and hospitable to Jewish people.⁶⁶ Philip Cohen, another key Messianic Jewish leader in the early twentieth century, and editor of *The Messianic Jew* (1910–), viewed the Japanese Christian commitment to national identity as an inspiring example for the Messianic Jewish movement. He writes:

We reiterate, who can tell how far reaching the effect will be upon our people if once we convince them, not only of our undying attachment to them, but also of the fact that the acceptance of Christianity does not involve denationalization? It was our privilege to be present at some of the gatherings of the Evangelical Alliance held in July, 1907, at King's Hall, London. We listened with much interest and appreciation to the various speakers, but a statement made by the Japanese delegate appealed to us as most significant in its bearing on our subject...Japanese Christians have given a practical illustration to their people

⁶⁵ "...one must include Bishop Juji Nakada, the members of whose church were to welcome the refugees in Kobe with baskets of food and fruit" (David Kranzler, *Japanese, Jews & Nazis: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938–1945* [New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976], 175). Cf. Marvin Tokayer and Ellen Rodman, *Pepper, Silk & Ivory: Amazing Stories about Jews and the Far East* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2014), 191; Pamela R. Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 41.

⁶⁶ Levy's poem reads, "Hagiwara, gentleman, from the Island of Japan, host to-night, and friend alway, hearken to a simple lay...Homeless, oft in direct need, victims of oppression's greed, *aiding still* the stranger lone, whose distress transcends their own. In the ring of Israel's shame, gleams the gem of ancient fame, fairest Jewish rovers see, gentle hospitality. Hagiwara, gentleman, from the Island of Japan, host to-night, and friend alway, understandest thou this lay?...Jewelled in thy heart we see, kindly hospitality...Here to-night would honour you, friends respond, 'Bravo! Bravo!' In honour of the Mikado, and our host from far Japan, Hagiwara, gentleman" (Mark Levy, *An Englishman, Jew and Christian* [London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1898], 35–36).

that loyalty to national cause and love to Christ are not incompatible.⁶⁷

Conclusion

This brief historical study suggests that for centuries the Lord has been building a relationship of mutual blessing between Jewish and Japanese followers of Jesus. From Luís de Almeida (1552) to Bernard Bettelheim (1846) to Juji Nakada (1926), and the many others in between, a vision for the salvation of each other's people has been taking root and bearing fruit. Since World War II, this trajectory has been encouraged by an increasing number of Jewish believers who are closely connecting with churches in Japan,⁶⁸ a growing number of Japanese believers involved in initiatives like Toward Jerusalem Council II and LCJE Japan, and the presence of a Messianic Jewish congregation in Tokyo.⁶⁹ May we continue in this direction of mutual blessing with God's help (*b'ezrat Hashem*), for in the wisdom of God it seems that Messianic Jews and Japanese Christians need one another to see the spiritual transformation (*reiteki henkaku*) of Israel and Japan.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Philip Cohen, *The Hebrew Christian and His National Continuity* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1909), 142–43.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Bernis, President of Jewish Voice Ministries International (JVMI), put it beautifully after his first ministry trip to Japan, "I met with close to 250 Japanese pastors and Christian leaders for a series of meetings throughout Japan. Traveling by train from city to city throughout the Land of the Rising Sun, I proclaimed God's plan for Israel and the Jewish people, and the part He was calling Gentile believers to play in their restoration. Such warmth, enthusiasm and zeal greeted me in every one of the five key cities that I visited. It was simply overwhelming. It seemed they couldn't get enough of the revelation of what God was doing among Jewish people in our day. They listened for hours...What began during my sweeping brief seven days of teaching among Japanese pastors and church leaders, I believe, has powerful implications for the restoration of the Jewish people. God is knitting the hearts of Japanese believers with the people of Jacob as He never has before...I believe that as Japan reaches out to bless the Jewish people, they will be planting a seed that will result in the salvation of Japan. Please remember this nation in your prayers" (Jonathan Bernis, "From the Rising of the Sun...: Declaring His Glory from East to West," *International Update* [January/February 1999], 4).

⁶⁹ See <https://tol-japan.org>.

⁷⁰ See <https://tjcu.org>; <https://lcjehome.com>.

Upholding God's Word

Reaching God's Chosen

A FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF
DR. MITCHELL L. GLASER

*Dear Dav:0,
What a surprise. Thank you
so much for your contribution!
Blessings. Alts*

Jim Melnick, Zhava Glaser, Gregory Hagg,
Alan Shore, and Robert Walter, editors

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Dr. Mitchell L. Glaser
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Well done, good and faithful servant!
—Matthew 25:23