

Notes: March 5 2016

Start: 10 AM

**Order of service:**

1. Meet and Greet
2. Introduction (if new people)
3. Ma Tovv
4. Open in Prayer for service
5. Liturgy – Sh'ma +
6. Announcements
7. Praise and Worship Songs
8. Message
9. Aaronic Blessing
10. Kiddush
11. Oneg

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: Unfortunately, We Are at the Post

This week I was challenged by a number of things I heard.

From the Republican debate to comments from David Green, founder of Hobby Lobby. There is no lack of experience to draw material for a message.

I marveled at David Greens comments where he unequivocally stated that he would not support a certain Republican candidate should he secure the party's nomination.

His reason...because he is not Christ-like.

The image of Messiah as conveyed by many believers is one of meekness and civility. Yet in a similar way, where one candidate is taking on the establishment, Yeshua likewise took on the establishment and was anything but politically correct.

I am not saying that this candidate is anywhere close to Yeshua. However, the image that is presented by others of Yeshua is far from what Scripture records.

Matthew 21:12-13:

**Mat 21:10** When he entered Yerushalayim, the whole city was stirred. "Who is this?" they asked.

**Mat 21:11** And the crowds answered, "This is Yeshua, the prophet from Natzeret in the Galil."

**Mat 21:12** Yeshua entered the Temple grounds and drove out those who were doing business there, both the merchants and their customers. He upset the desks of the money-changers and knocked over the benches of those who were selling pigeons.

**Mat 21:13** He said to them, "It has been written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer.' But you are making it into a den of robbers!"

**Mat 21:14** Blind and lame people came up to him in the Temple, and he healed them.

**Mat 21:15** But when the head cohanim and Torah-teachers saw the wonderful things he was doing, and the children crying out in the Temple, "Please deliver us!" to the Son of David, they were furious.

Matthew 23:

**Mat 23:15** "Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! Conveyed 7 times

Blind fools, blind men, blind guides...all conveyed by Yeshua in Matthew 23:

The repeated slashing litany, **Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim!** angers Jews, mystifies Gentiles and embarrasses Christians, who find Yeshua's remarks intemperate, antisemitic, even "un-Christlike."

But Yeshua, like all the prophets before him, spoke the words of God without fear or favor. He comforted those who were open to him and made repeated invitation to those who opposed him; but when it had become evident that these particular *Torah-teachers* and *P'rushim* were hardhearted, closed-minded and interested only in trapping him, he seized the initiative, revealing his accusers for what they were.

Was he "unloving" toward them?

Love must sometimes be tough.

Even less was he antisemitic: his within-the-family correction was aimed at making these Jewish brothers of his live up to their high calling.

If Yeshua was unloving or antisemitic, one must say the same of all the Jewish prophets from Moses to Malachi.

And remember, not all of the establishment was corrupt, meaning, not all P'rush are bad as is typically taught.

There was a boldness that Yeshua conveyed because His passion for the Kingdom and the people who would reside in it was His primary focus. His boldness in confronting the people who were corrupting it would come to speak volumes to the people. So much so, that the establishment considered Yeshua to be an enormous threat.

Expectations placed upon believers by other believers who don't fully understand Yeshua are in essence placing an unrealistic burden upon people. There is a time and a place for everything, yet we are to convey the love of Messiah and not compromise.

Yet, this isn't what I am going to be talking about today.

Today, there is another real movement happening and it isn't a positive one.

Some Conservative Jewish leaders spoke of the challenges faced by a centrist movement at a time when the middle ground appears to be disappearing from many facets in American life, including religion and politics. At the same time, some observers said, the Jewish Reform movement has become more traditional and therefore more appealing to would-be Conservative Jewish defectors.

[http://www.interfaithfamily.com/news\\_and\\_opinion/synagogues\\_and\\_the\\_jewish\\_community/Survey\\_Shows\\_Conservative\\_Judaisms\\_Numbers\\_Dropping.shtml](http://www.interfaithfamily.com/news_and_opinion/synagogues_and_the_jewish_community/Survey_Shows_Conservative_Judaisms_Numbers_Dropping.shtml)

The middle ground...what is this?

Is this not the grey that Jonathan Cahn had conveyed in his sermon you heard a few weeks ago?

The grey is also disappearing everywhere, including Judaism and more specifically Conservative Judaism, which is considered the middle ground of Judaism. You have some going to the Orthodox side while others are going to the Reform side. But there is a major trend developing...

"I don't see this as a decline," said Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, a union of 800 synagogues. "We're just getting a smaller percentage of the pie. When the unaffiliated are choosing a place, if they're intermarried, they may choose a Reform congregation."

There are many ways to interpret numbers and justify their meaning, however, when a trend crosses borders, it is more an epidemic than the common cold.

I had mentioned a few weeks ago that Jews for Judaism had closed their Northeast office due to what was identified as "lack of interest". People either didn't care about the message being conveyed or it was not of concern to them.

- Nearly one-in-four U.S. Jewish adults say they attend Jewish religious services at a synagogue or other place of worship at least once a week (11%) or once or twice a month (12%).
- Roughly one-third of Jews (35%) say they attend religious services a few times a year, such as for the High Holidays (including Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur).
- And four-in-ten say they seldom (19%) or never (22%) attend Jewish religious services.

Attendance at Jewish religious services is much more common among Jews by religion than among Jews of no religion, half of whom say they never attend religious services (52%). (Pew Research Poll - 2013)

Jews report attending religious services at much lower rates than do other religious groups.

- Six-in-ten Christians (62%) say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month (compared with 29% of Jews by religion).
- Orthodox Jews, however, say they attend religious services at least as often as the most religiously committed Christian groups.
- Roughly three-quarters of Orthodox Jews (74%) say they attend religious services at least monthly, on par with white evangelical Protestants (75%).

<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/chapter-4-religious-beliefs-and-practices/>

2015 Sees Sharp Rise in Post-Christian Population

Is America, home to the largest Christian population in the world, actually becoming a "post-Christian" nation?

"Post" when used as a prefix to a word, indicates that it is after in time or order, meaning it has passed or in this case passing away...

In a recent study, Barna Group analyzed 60,808 interviews conducted over a seven-year period to measure irreligion in American cities.

Currently, 78% of Americans describe themselves as "Christian," but in order to dig deeper than just self-affiliation, Barna Group looked at a variety of key faith indicators for both belief and practice.

To measure a person's level of irreligion, Barna Group tracks 15 metrics related to faith (you can find the full list of

15 at the end of the article). These factors speak to the lack of Christian identity, belief and practice.

To qualify as “post-Christian,” individuals had to meet 60% or more of the factors (nine or more out of 15 criteria). “Highly post-Christian” individuals meet 80% or more of the factors (12 or more of these 15 criteria)

Whether one believes this decline of “Christian America” calls for a time of lament, or presents great opportunity (or both) for the church, one cannot help but accept the changing landscape.

In just two years, the percentage of Americans who qualify as “post-Christian” rose by 7 percentage points, from 37% in 2013 to 44% in 2015.

Across the United States, cities in every state are becoming more post-Christian—some at a faster rate than others

### **Post-Christian Metrics**

*To qualify as “post-Christian,” individuals had to meet 60% or more of the following factors (nine or more). “Highly post-Christian” individuals meet 80% or more of the factors (12 or more of these 15 criteria).*

1. Do not believe in God
2. Identify as atheist or agnostic
3. Disagree that faith is important in their lives
4. Have not prayed to God (in the last year)
5. Have never made a commitment to Jesus
6. Disagree the Bible is accurate
7. Have not donated money to a church (in the last year)
8. Have not attended a Christian church (in the last year)
9. Agree that Jesus committed sins
10. Do not feel a responsibility to “share their faith”
11. Have not read the Bible (in the last week)
12. Have not volunteered at church (in the last week)
13. Have not attended Sunday school (in the last week)
14. Have not attended religious small group (in the last week)
15. Do not participate in a house church (in the last year)

Now let's look at closer at the impact by city.

8 of the top 10 cities by percentage as being identified as post-Christian are in the Northeast.

### **From Post Christian to Churchless: Churchless Residents**

April 24, 2015—The U.S. has a reputation for being exceptionally religious—and it is true that, historically speaking, churchgoing has played an outsized role in American identity. Still, millions of Americans have little to no connection to local congregations.

Currently, about four in 10 U.S. adults qualify as “unchurched” under Barna’s definition (38%). Unchurched adults have not attended a church service, except for a holiday or special occasion, at any time within the past six months.

Churched and unchurched adults are not evenly distributed across the country. Church attendance varies widely from city to city and region to region. Many cities outpace the overall U.S. population when it comes to church avoidance.

We witnessed this recently in past primary votes, where there was a stark contrast in the South, otherwise identified as the Bible-belt and the Northeast. This is actually supported by the numbers.

In just two years, the percentage of Americans who qualify as “post-Christian” rose by 7 percentage points, from 37% in 2013 to 44% in 2015. Across the United States, cities in every state are becoming more post-Christian—some at a faster rate than others.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>1</b>	Albany, NY - 63%	San Francisco, CA - 66%
<b>2</b>	Burlington, VT - 60%	Albany, NY - 66%
<b>3</b>	Portland, ME - 59%	Boston, MA - 65%
<b>4</b>	Providence, RI - 56%	Burlington, VT - 64%
<b>5</b>	Hartford, CT - 54%	Providence, RI - 60%
<b>6</b>	San Francisco, CA - 53%	Portland, ME - 60%
<b>7</b>	Boston, MA - 53%	New York, NY - 59%
<b>8</b>	Buffalo, NY - 52%	Las Vegas, NV - 59%
<b>9</b>	New York, NY - 51%	Hartford, CT - 57%
<b>10</b>	San Diego, CA - 51%	Buffalo, NY - 57%
<b>National Rating</b>	37.00%	44.00%

Meaning, 60% of Portland have identified at least 9 of the 15 criteria

National average of those identified as being post-Christian increased 19%

Then you have a more polarizing extreme – “churchless”

Barna tracks not only overall churchlessness, but also what proportion of unchurched adults are “dechurched”—that is, who used to attend regularly but have not attended at all in the past six months—and what proportion are “never churched”—meaning they have never in their lives regularly attended a church.

Among the general U.S. population, 29% are considered dechurched and 9% are never churched, for a combined total of 38% unchurched.

For example, the San Francisco metro area tops the list of America’s most churchless cities: Six in 10 Bay Area residents meet the Barna definition of unchurched (61%).

(For a deeper dive into the substantial differences between these two groups, read [Churchless](#) by George Barna and David Kinnaman.)

However, the California Bay Area takes the top spot when it comes to dechurched adults (48%), ahead of:

2. Seattle-Tacoma, WA (44%)
3. Portland-Auburn, ME (43%)
4. Boston-Manchester, MA (42%)
5. Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY (41%)

Portland-Auburn ranks 4<sup>th</sup> overall at 52% as churchless, behind San Francisco - 61%, Burlington, VT - 55% and Boston - 53%

<http://cities.barna.org/barna-cities-the-top-churchless-metro-areas/>

This is the stark reality of where you live.

In looking at the criteria of what Barma defines as components of a nation moving away from God, what should we as believers be focused on?

- Do not believe in God

This has to be our starting point. I would consider this the starting point for anyone.

Do you believe in God.

- Identify as atheist or agnostic

If you don't believe in God then you are either an atheist, who believes there is no God or agnostic who needs more information.

- Disagree that faith is important in their lives

If it is not important in your life, why bother? In essence your Bible on the bookshelf.

- Have not prayed to God (in the last year)

Prayer, I would consider to be a litmus test with regards to the health of your relationship with God. Are you communicating with Him or not. This further leads into an important dynamic in any relationship – trust. If you are not praying, do you really trust God?

- Have never made a commitment to Jesus

He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father

**Joh 14:6** Yeshua said, "I AM the Way – and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me.

- Disagree the Bible is accurate

This too is a foundational issue as with believing in God. If you are not accepting of the accuracy and validity of God's Word, how can you trust Him. If you can't trust Him, why would you pray? If you don't pray, what would prevent you from accepting the lies of the adversary, etc...

- Have not donated money to a church (in the last year)

I talk about tithing rather infrequently, but look at it this way. Adonai instructs us to work for six days, and to refrain from our work on Shabbat. A total and reliant act of worship is when we bring the fruits of our labor from that six days and surrender it to Adonai, ultimately saying we trust in Him.

- Have not attended a Christian church (in the last year)

One can say this about the Messianic Synagogue as well. Attendance is important for the health of the community. How can you truly be part of something if you are MIA?

- Agree that Jesus committed sins

A Jewish concept expressed in non-Jewish terms – T'shuvah.

- Do not feel a responsibility to “share their faith”

We are instructed to do so. So, if you aren't willing to share, do you really believe?

- Have not read the Bible (in the last week)

This is another foundation aspect of this path you are on and have committed to. How can you truly know the will of Adonai if you are not reading His Word?

- Have not volunteered at church (in the last week)

This is another dynamic of tithing, but with your time and talents.

The last three I would consider to be dependent upon the congregation

- Have not attended Sunday school (in the last week)
- Have not attended religious small group (in the last week)
- Do not participate in a house church (in the last year)

In many ways, the house of Adonai is being divided. We are seeing the secularization of God's people occur before our eyes.

The grey is disappearing and I believe the black to be much larger in mass than the white.

Yet Adonai, has always maintained a faithful remnant.

**Rom 11:5** It's the same way in the present age: there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

**1Ki 19:18** Still, I will spare seven thousand in Isra'el, every knee that hasn't bent down before Ba`al and every mouth that has not kissed him."

We are seeing with our own eyes and the numbers are confirming this great falling away.

It is not an epic moment in time that is believed will occur, but a slow and progressive recession of believers who are walking away from Adonai.

They have gone from Hot to Warm to Cold.

**2Th 2:1** But in connection with the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and our gathering together to meet him, we ask you, brothers,

**2Th 2:2** not to be easily shaken in your thinking or anxious because of a spirit or a spoken message or a letter supposedly from us claiming that the Day of the Lord has already come.

**2Th 2:3** Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For the Day will not come until after the Apostasy has come and the man who separates himself from Torah has been revealed, the one destined for doom.

Be aware of what is happening and yet don't be deceived.

**2Th 2:15** Therefore, brothers, stand firm; and hold to the traditions you were taught by us, whether we spoke them or wrote them in a letter.

**2Th 2:16** And may our Lord Yeshua the Messiah himself and God our Father, who has loved us and by his grace given us eternal comfort and a good hope,

**2Th 2:17** comfort your hearts and strengthen you in every good word and deed.