

# What is JET and Why it Matters;

## A Deeper Look at CMJ's Jewish Engagement Training



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AN OLIVE PRESS  
RESEARCH PAPER

No. 53

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CMJ UK is a working title of The Vincent Society, a charitable incorporated organisation, England & Wales Registered Charity Number 1153457

# **What is JET and Why it Matters; A Deeper Look at CMJ's Jewish Engagement Training**

**By Oliver Sims  
Engagement Manager,  
CMJ UK**

JET stands for Jewish Engagement Training. Produced in April 2023, it has come about as a response to the questions that people have had concerning how to reach Jewish people with the Gospel. As I travel to different churches to speak to people on this matter, people often have many questions:

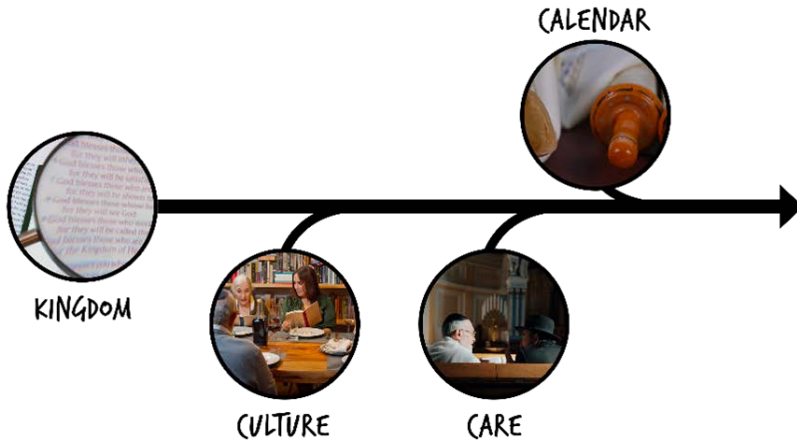
- How do we share the Good News with Jewish people?
- Are there certain things we could say to make our witness more effective?
- What are the bridges we can build to reach Jewish people in a culturally sensitive way?
- How can we improve our knowledge and what resources can help?

I believe that JET goes some of the way to answering these questions. In this paper, I will outline what JET is and the rationale behind each of its four sections in the hope that, in engaging with the materials, you too will be better equipped to pray for, serve and reach Jewish people with the Gospel.

***JET is more than  
a traditional  
course.***

Churches near Jewish communities who want to reach out often feel that they lack the knowledge, skills or tools to be effective. One of the most common responses to the theme of Jewish evangelism is 'we understand the need for it but *how* do we go about it?' The purpose of JET is to equip Christian believers in such things.

JET is a free online resource hub comprised of four modules entitled *Kingdom, Culture, Care and Calendar*. Each module contains a series of short teaching videos, related Bible studies, a host of practical ideas and resources and bibliographies for further reading. It can be accessed by contacting CMJ UK on [office@cmj.org.uk](mailto:office@cmj.org.uk) or by calling 01623 883960.



JET is more than a traditional course. In many courses, there are a set number of modules to be completed in a set way over a set number of weeks. However, the scope of the JET material is much more flexible and is designed so that it may be adapted to a variety of contexts. As the *JET User Guide* explains, JET materials can be used in small group settings or as part of larger church gatherings. Bible study reflection questions, theology touchpoints, prayer points and suggestions for pastors and leaders are also included. It is a broad resource hub that can be adapted to unique contexts. Most importantly, it will go a long way to answering the ‘how’ questions concerned with Jewish evangelism.

Although there is a letter ‘e’ in JET, it is to be noted that it stands for engagement rather than simply for ‘evangelism’. Engagement underpins and goes beyond evangelism. It is much wider, encompassing the Gospel, yet also the important themes of friendship, cultural interaction, a mandate of loving care, an understanding of the Bible, an appreciation of two-way religious dialogue, an ability to learn and of a burden to pray for the Jewish people. This task is by no means easily defined, but each person must take up the role of the ‘Gospel prophet’ living forth God’s truth in relationship with their Jewish neighbour.

As Richard Averbeck states:

*From a biblical point of view, evangelism is, by definition, a prophetic activity in its very essence. It stands in continuity with a long line of prophetic activities that began in the Torah and reach through the Old Testament into the New Testament ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus the Messiah, the Apostles, the church as a whole, and the individual Christian. Thus, our gospel message is a prophetic message delivered by prophetic messengers<sup>1</sup>.*

This is important as we consider current statistics. The 2021 UK census states that **271,327 people** in England and Wales identify as Jewish<sup>2</sup>. However, **less than 2%** of these Jewish people actually know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour<sup>3</sup>. The Jewish people, therefore, remain an unreached people group in desperate need of Gospel witness. This is a shocking statistic, but the timing of all things is in the Lord's hands. Consequently, as someone once said, may it no longer be that Jewish evangelism remains the *omission* in the *Great Commission* (Matthew 28:16-20). My prayer is that you will use and share the JET resources widely and that you would keep the Jewish people in your prayers.

*"If their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" Romans 15:11*

## Kingdom

When it comes to the Bible and the Gospel message, a starting point is to concede that God is King. All things were created by Him and all things will have their culmination according to His will. He is the Ruler throughout history and He is the Redeemer<sup>4</sup>. The premise that God is King underlines what He does and why His choices are important. This includes His choosing of Jewish and Gentile people and the purpose of why Yeshua (Jesus) came into the world. Therefore, the first module in the Jewish Engagement Training – JET – is called *Kingdom*. The videos and resources in this section lay the foundation for the rest of JET. They show how Yeshua’s teaching agrees perfectly with the principles of the Hebrew Bible<sup>5</sup>. Understanding this can help us when speaking with Jewish people.

In the book of Genesis, we see a realm where God’s Word is law, He has the authority and power and He dwells with and makes

***God, as a King, has always desired to dwell with His people.***

provision for His subjects, Adam and Eve. The same themes are returned to in the book of Revelation where we read “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people and God himself will be with them and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3 NIV). The Bible ends how it begins with God as King, a fact echoed in most Jewish blessings which usually begin with the words:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, Melech HaOlam,

Blessed are you Lord, our God, King of the universe<sup>6</sup>.

## The Message of the King

In Exodus 25:8 God says **וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנֹתַי בְּתוֹכָם** which literally translates as “make unto me a holy (place) that I may dwell amongst the middle of them.” The word for this ‘holy place’ or ‘tabernacle’ ( **מִשְׁכָּן** *mishkan* Exodus 25:9) comes from the root word meaning ‘dwelling.’ God, as a King, has always desired to *dwell* with His people.

When we arrive at the New Testament, we find no disconnect. What the Hebrew Bible prophesied<sup>7</sup> is fulfilled in Yeshua: “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). Interestingly, what is the theme of Yeshua’s teaching? In Matthew 4:17, the first thing He declares in His public ministry is: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near.” It is a call to turn to God's Kingdom; it is now near in the sense of proximity and intimacy. Yeshua walked beside the sea of Galilee and called the disciples and, now, He calls all people to be part of His Kingdom (Acts 3:18-19).

He did not come to abolish the Torah and the prophets (Matthew 5:17) but to ‘fill them full’ of their meaning (the Greek is πληρώ *plro*) so that they may be truly exemplified in the lives of those who trust in Him (Romans 15:4). In short, Messiah came as a Jewish man with the Jewish message to the Jewish people that they may turn to Him. Yet, amazingly, not only Jewish people but now all people may come and also find a living relationship with Him alongside His covenant Jewish people! (Ephesians 3:6).



## The Jewishness of the Gospel



Man is separated from God – **Isaiah 59:1-2**

Man is dead in his trespasses – **Ezekiel 18:20** so...

**The incarnation of  
Yeshua - Isaiah 9:6-7**

**His atoning death  
- Isaiah 53**

**His resurrection  
- Psalm 16**

**His ascension  
- Psalm 2**

Response = Faith as a conscious decision  
- **Acts 4:12, Romans 10:9-10.**

We need to present the divinity of Yeshua as the Messiah, not just Yeshua as a good moral role model. His life, death, burial, and resurrection are important - **1 Corinthians 15:1-5.**

## The Jewish Gospel

Theologian, NT Wright, outlines many messianic themes in the book of Isaiah, especially what he calls several 'return markers' in Isaiah chapters 40 – 55<sup>8</sup>. In those passages, there is the yearning expectation for all mankind to see the glory of YHWH (Isa 40:5), the good news of a 'new exodus' (Isaiah 40:9), a great homecoming (Isaiah 43:1 – 3) and there is the cry "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down." (Isa 64:1 ESV). This is answered by the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 who comes to bring the salvation of the One God (Isa 52:10) to the Jewish people (Isaiah 53:6 – Isaiah as a Jewish prophet speaking) yet also for the whole world (Isa 53:11-12 note the term 'many'). No doubt in the minds of the people in Jesus' day, these new exodus themes were very much alive when they were realised in Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection.

'Christianity has always been mission oriented' notes Earle Cairns in his *Christianity throughout the Centuries*<sup>9</sup> yet this is because God is a

**The God who veiled his face to Moses had appeared and revealed His glory in the face of Messiah (2 Corinthians 3 -4).**

missionary God, always reaching out to humanity: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17 NKJV).

The Jewish people of the early church reverentially recognised that God's glory had returned in Yeshua. It was a new exodus, a divine visitation, a Jewish Gospel. The God who veiled His face to Moses had appeared and revealed His glory in the face of Messiah (2 Corinthians 3 -4).

Therefore, the Gospel message of the New Testament, is not a Gentile invention conjured up by the popes of the past. It is not 'non-Jewish' or even 'anti-Jewish' as is often the accusation<sup>10</sup>. When we go back to the source; the whole Hebrew Bible, and, of course, the New Covenant Scriptures (Matthew to Revelation), we see that the message of Yeshua is a wholly Hebraic one.

Because the Gospel is Jewish, it should not surprise us that Paul, who was called the apostle to the Gentiles, always prioritised Jewish evangelism. Romans 1:16 declares: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." Interestingly, we find an important principle here. The same Greek word used for 'first' in Romans 1:16 is the same Greek word used in Mathew 6:33, πρῶτον *proton*, meaning 'priority.' Matthew 6:33 reads: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you." (NASB). God's ways are always to be sought first, as a constant priority, in the life of a believer.

Consequentially, when Romans 1:16 uses this word, it is stating that the Gospel is first for the Jewish people: it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: as an important priority to the Jew, and also to the Gentile. It does not mean 'first' in terms of chronological sequence. This would imply that they had their chance and are now no longer worthy of salvation. The fact that Romans 1:16 is written in the present tense (the Gospel is) with the usage of the Greek *πρῶτον*, *proton*, signifies that sharing the Good News with Jewish people remains very important today.

Michael Brown, Messianic Jew and author of the series of apologetic books entitled 'Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus' states movingly: 'I have fervent hope that in this generation more and more Jews will turn to God and put their faith in [Jesus] the Messiah. I pray that every seeking soul will find Him<sup>11</sup>.' The Gospel has always been a Jewish message; all throughout the Bible (Isaiah 52:7). When we handle the New Testament with this presupposition, we are in a stronger place to present Gospel claims to Jewish people who do not yet know him. This is what the 'Kingdom' section of JET sets out to establish.

## Culture

The second module of videos and articles in JET is called *Culture*. Knowing about the beliefs and culture of the Jewish people is important. It is especially helpful in the context of Gospel engagement. One of the deep themes in Jewish culture is the notion of *chosenness*, that of being a 'distinct people.' The Hebrew Scriptures demonstrate this as they show God's covenantal interaction with His people throughout history.

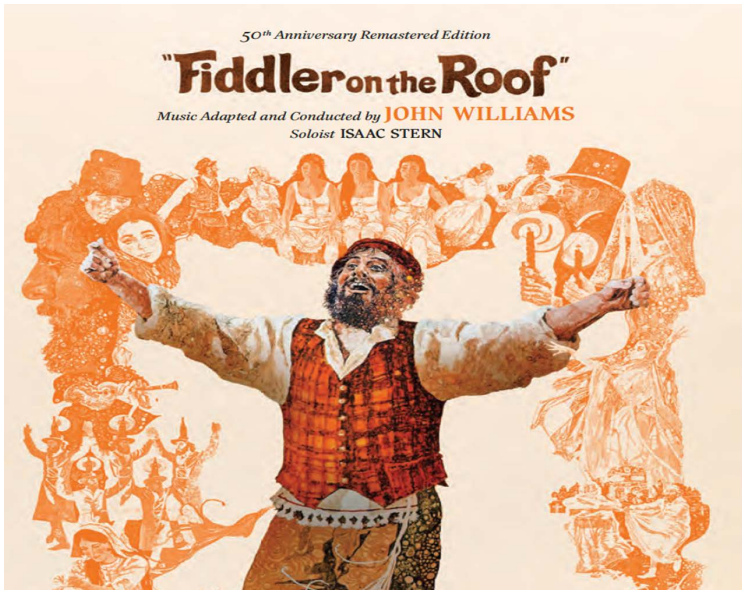
### Chosenness

In Genesis 12, we note that being chosen carries the value of being a blessing, as God says to Abraham: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:2-3). In Exodus, God adds another layer to being chosen as He introduces the Law, or in Hebrew תּוֹרָה God's 'instruction.'

***We can remind our  
Jewish friend of these  
verses from the  
Hebrew Scriptures.***

Being chosen now includes the responsibilities of possessing and living out God's Torah. In Exodus, we find God declaring: "if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure from among all people, for all the earth is Mine." (Exodus 19:5 TLV). Another marker of being chosen is being 'holy.' This runs like a thread especially throughout the book of Leviticus. Holiness, or קֹדֶשׁ, *kadosh* in Hebrew, is actually one of God's divine attributes for He is holy / other / separate (Leviticus 11:44). Numbers and Deuteronomy also add the concept of 'community' into the definition of chosenness (Numbers 20:11 and Deuteronomy 7:6). Furthermore, the prophetic Jewish writings of Isaiah contain four servant songs - chapters 42, 49, 50 and 53 - summing up the *purpose* and *responsibility* of the Jewish people of making God known. Consequentially, the expected burden of being chosen is great.

In all these things, we can see that God has chosen the Jewish people as His distinct people and we can remind our Jewish friend of these verses from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). However, as a counterpart to the divine side of Jewish chosenness, there is also the human side; a response that has resonated throughout the history of the Jewish people across the ages.



*"I know, I know. We are the Chosen People. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else?"*

Tevye,

## The 'Human Side' of Chosenness

As Jewish people try to outwork what 'being chosen' means in each generation, the result is a variety of different Jewish cultural expressions. Today for example, some Jewish people may be pro-Israel, whereas others may have their reservations. Some Jewish people may go to synagogue weekly, whereas others may be infrequent in their synagogue attendance. Some may dress in an outwardly Jewish manner whereas others may prefer dressing in a culturally assimilated way. Even within the more traditional settings of Judaism, where one might anticipate religious uniformity, there can be differences of opinion and nuances of emphasis as varying schools or philosophies hold sway<sup>12</sup>. The following Jewish joke illustrates this point:

Rabbi Bloom is conducting his very first service at one of London's oldest synagogues. All is going well until he gets to the *Shema* prayer - only half of his congregation stand up. Those still seated start yelling, "sit down" to those standing, and those standing start yelling, "stand up" to those sitting. Although Rabbi Bloom is knowledgeable about much of the Law, he doesn't know what to do. He thinks it must be something to do with the synagogue's tradition.

After the service, Rabbi Bloom consults Abe, the synagogue's oldest member.

"I need to know, Abe, what the synagogue's tradition is with regard to the *Shema* prayer. Is the tradition to stand during this prayer?"

Abe replies, "No, that is not the tradition."

"So, the tradition is to sit during *Shema*?" says Rabbi Bloom.

Abe replies, "No, that is not the tradition."

"But," says Rabbi Bloom, "the congregation argue all the time. They yell at each other about whether they should sit or stand and..."

Abe Interrupts, exclaiming, "Aha, THAT is the tradition!<sup>13</sup>"

The saying ‘two Jews, three opinions’ is humorous because it is insightful. One work highlighting these nuances has been penned by Rabbis Ammiel Hirsch and Yosef Reinman. The book is called *‘One People, Two Worlds; A Reform Rabbi and an Orthodox Rabbi Explore the Issues that Divide Them.’* The book’s back cover explains that after being introduced by a mutual friend, the authors:

Embarked on an unprecedented e-mail correspondence on the fundamental principles of Jewish faith and practice. What resulted is this book: an honest, intelligent, no-holds-barred discussion of virtually every “hot button” issue on which Reform and Orthodox Jews differ, among them the existence of a Supreme Being, the origins and authenticity of the Bible and the Oral Law, the role of women, assimilation, the value of secular culture, and Israel<sup>14</sup>.

Thus, within the very rich and beautiful fabric of Judaism that has blossomed over the centuries, a variety of worldviews are to be found<sup>15</sup>.

This becomes especially important when we are seeking to engage Jewish people on perhaps some of the themes we have just read from the book cover of *One people, Two Worlds*. Moreover, it becomes essential when we are especially seeking to have Gospel conversations with Jewish people. Importantly, we should not assume that Judaism is a ‘one size fits all’ religion. Nevertheless, Maimonides’ 13 principles of faith, enshrined in the *Yigdal* morning prayer in the *Siddur*, the Jewish prayer book, could be seen as a kind of credal common ground for most Jewish people<sup>16</sup>.

Modern surveys can also shed light on the values and practices of Judaism. In 2013, American Jews were surveyed and asked exactly what 'being Jewish' means to them. The results from this 'Pew Survey' are displayed on the next two pages and they are culturally very enlightening<sup>17</sup>. For most Jewish people their Jewish identity is tightly bound up in the three-stranded chord of Jewish history, religion and community celebration. For the most part, Jewish people will be impacted in one way or another by what Barry Rubin calls the three T's; Torah, Temple and Talmud<sup>18</sup>. Judaism's theological branches and its traditions will be interconnected with these in varying degrees of intensity. When speaking with Jewish people it is good to be informed about these influences.



## What's Essential to Being Jewish?

	NET JEWISH		Jews by religion		Jews of no religion	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>% saying _____ is an essential part of what being Jewish means to them</i>						
Remembering the Holocaust	73		76		60	
Leading an ethical and moral life	69		73		55	
Working for justice/equality	56		60		46	
Being intellectually curious	49		51		42	
Caring about Israel	43		49		23	
Having a good sense of humour	42		43		40	
Being part of a Jewish community	28		33		10	
Observing Jewish law	19		23		7	
Eating traditional Jewish foods	14		16		9	

Source: Pew Research Centre 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, Feb. 20-June 13, 2013.

## What is Compatible with Being Jewish?

	Yes		No		Don't Know	
	%		%		%	
<i>Can a person be Jewish if he/she...</i>						
...works on the Sabbath?	94		5		1=100	
...is strongly critical of Israel?	89		9		2=100	
...does not believe in God?	68		29		3=100	
...believes Jesus was messiah?	34		60		6=100	

Source: Pew Research Centre 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, Feb. 20-June 13, 2013.

## Gospel Approaches

In all of this, it is helpful to consider the advice of Randy Newman in his book, *Questioning Evangelism*<sup>19</sup>. A Jewish believer in Jesus himself, he notes that far too much of apologetics and evangelism has been about ‘making statements’ and not about ‘asking questions.’ If we want to know what Jewish people believe, we need to go to Jewish cultural sources. A greater effectiveness can be grasped if we develop the (very Jewish) art of asking questions! This can in turn then lead to the upskilling of our evangelistic competence as we adopt a more engaging and less confrontational approach. In adopting the stance of being really good ‘question-askers’ and ‘conversation partners’ we can grow in the relational dimension of evangelism. In fact, this dynamic method is the very one that Yeshua used in the Bible, is it not?

***being really good ‘question-askers’ and ‘conversation partners’ we can develop a more dynamic relational approach.***

Questions are helpful for a number of reasons. They help us;

- Establish genuine interest
- Gain insight into a person’s viewpoint
- Avoid presumption (to do our *own* research) and
- Provoke conversations rather than present statements.

In short, Holy Spirit-led questioning can help to dismantle spiritual strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:1) and challenge stubborn patterns of thinking (Matthew 16:13-15) in a person’s unbiblical worldview<sup>20</sup>.

In his A-Z encyclopedia entitled *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*, Norman Geisler defines worldview as ‘the framework through which or by which one makes sense of the data of life.’ One’s view of God, origins, evil, human nature, values and destiny are dictated by one’s worldview<sup>21</sup>.

### *How do we view or interpret reality?*

#### Worldviews

- Theism
- Deism
- Pantheism
- Polytheism
- Atheism



Under the wider umbrella of Judaism, crouch a range of worldviews such as theism, deism, pantheism, polytheism and even atheism. For example an Ultra-Orthodox Jewish person may believe in an infinite personal God existing beyond the universe who is intricately involved with it. This would be in line with theism. But he might also adhere to the mystic systems of Kabala which have their roots in esoteric mysticism and therefore indirectly support a pantheistic worldview. Similarly, secular Jewish people may claim to believe in God in a general sense, agreeing with the distanced God of deism, but in practice, they may uphold a lifestyle which assumes the absence of God and is more akin to atheism. This is why asking Holy-Spirit led questions first is essential in a true Gospel-centered conversation. (Colossians 4:5-6).

Because every Jewish person is unique, our response to each person should also be unique. The JET module *Culture* provides further reading and resources to help further your own study into Jewish culture. However, the most effective way of learning, whilst also creating relational bridges is actually to ask your Jewish neighbour what they believe and why. If this is done with sincerity and respect you may find that this kind of ‘two-way street’ interaction may actually be very culturally enlightening. And it may very well open up a host of unexpected Gospel opportunities too (Ephesians 3:20).

## Care

JET's third module entitled, *Care*, is fundamental to JET as a whole. In many ways, it could almost be placed before the first module, *Kingdom*. Christian-Jewish relations have always been fraught with difficulty. An insightful summary is found in the book *The Jews; Why Have Christians Hated Them?*, which traces the sad tale of Christian antisemitism<sup>22</sup>. The following small sample of quotes, of which many more can be found, illustrates the atrocities uttered by 'the church' over the centuries:

'The Jews are those who had been the sons of God, and are now transformed into sons of Satan.'  
*St Augustine 354-430 AD, Church Father*

'There could never be expiation for the Jews... God had always hated them.'  
*St Jerome 345 - 420AD, Translator of the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin*

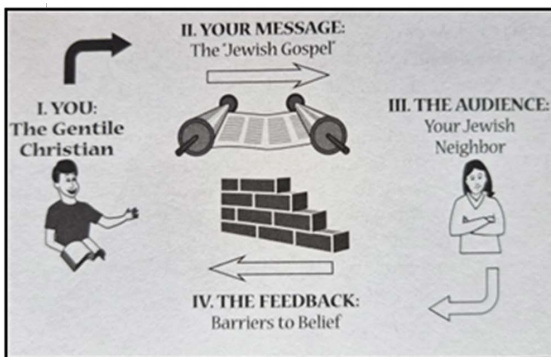
'Doubt not ... that after the Devil you have no more bitter, venomous, violent enemy, than the real Jew, the Jew in earnest in his belief.'  
*Martin Luther, 'On the Jews and their Lies' 1543*

The reason that these shocking quotations have been mentioned here is that when we are engaging with Jewish people, we must be aware that ***The approach of care cannot be over emphasised.*** Church history hasn't always been 'pretty'. This is underlined in the book *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood; The Tragic Story of the "Church" and The Jewish People*. The book implores 'Gentile believers...to understand the pain and suffering that countless pseudo-Christians have brought upon the Jewish people.'

Only then can we even begin to comprehend the depth of pain and sorrow they have endured at the hands of the so-called “Christians<sup>23</sup>.” In the early church, we actually find many Jewish believers (John 8:31-32, Acts 4:4, 6:7, Ephesians 2:11-22). Yet over subsequent years, it has been the misguided views of key Christian theologians that has done much damage - and the Jewish community has not forgotten<sup>24</sup>.

This is exactly why the approach of care cannot be over emphasised. What Jewish person would want to be part of an organisation embodying these kind of attitudes? Consequently, and sadly today, most Jewish people are suspicious of Christians who try to tell Jewish people about Yeshua. Christians are still seen to be those who prey on the weak and those who want to draw as many people as possible away from Judaism in order to convert them into Gentile Christians<sup>25</sup>.

The word ‘convert’ is actually neutral – it depends on the cultural norms of the context. However, it is not helpful to emphasise Jewish people ‘converting to Christianity’ when they become believers in Jesus.



They become completed Jews not converted Jews. They still remain Jewish. The emphasis on conversion in the Bible is frequently to turn away from sin and unto God as in Psalm 19:7. Psalm 51:13 (written by Jewish David) and Isaiah 6:10 (by Isaiah the Jewish prophet) illustrate this further. Even in Acts 3:19, when (Jewish) Peter uses this word, ἐπιστρέφω *epistrephó*, the context is to a Jewish audience, exhorting them to go to God for their salvation not to leave Judaism and ‘become Christians’<sup>26</sup>.

Therefore, the 'Olive Tree' scenario in Romans 11 and the message of love in 1 Corinthians 13 must be read and re-read and applied from all angles when we are engaging with Jewish people. We must always display the love and care of our Saviour (Matthew 22:36-40).

## Principals of Care

JET's Care module, including the free downloadable Bible studies and resources, outlines two key ways to show care: listening and language. As we interact with Jewish people it is wise to heed the words of James: "Let everyone be quick to hear [be a careful, thoughtful listener], slow to speak [a speaker of carefully chosen words and], slow to anger [patient, reflective, forgiving]." (James 1:19 Amp). When we show genuine interest, we are more likely to gain trust to be able to share sensitively and carefully the love of Messiah.

The language we use is important too. In many ways this simple approach can save a lot of damage and go a long way to

***Even well-meaning Christians still say 'the Jews.' Better is to use the phrase 'Jewish people.'***

building relational bridges. Words like 'Church, cross, Christ, convert and mission' must be avoided in connection with Jewish outreach. They smack of the medieval crusaders who went out to conquer for the sake of Christ. It was "kill or forcefully convert to the Christian religion<sup>27</sup>." Even today, the phrase 'evangelistic crusade' would not go down very well at the local synagogue. Moreover, even well-meaning Christians still say 'the Jews.' Better is to use the phrase 'Jewish people'. A simple adjustment in how we speak and what terms we use when contextualising the Gospel is tremendously powerful and JET has many resources to help us in this sensitive but important task.

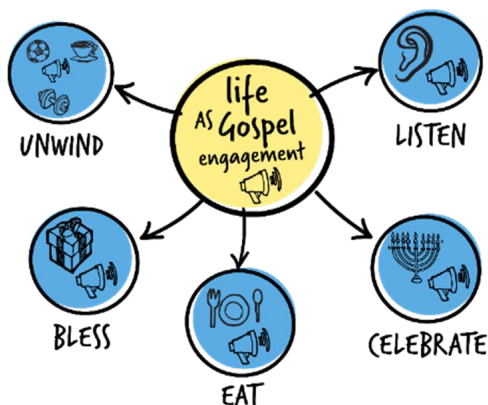
## Helpful Concepts

In the 1970's, James F. Engel developed the *Engel Scale* (see diagram on the next page) as a model to demonstrate the journey of a person from the place of no knowledge of God, through to the place of spiritual maturity as a believer in Jesus<sup>28</sup>.

The Evangelical Alliance notes that:

A strength of the Engel scale is that it helps us to realise that our approach to evangelism can be informed by and adapted to how much understanding or interest a person has in the Christian faith. Consequently, if we can try to gauge where a person is on the scale it becomes possible to contextualise our conversation or message in a way that will hopefully be more effective<sup>29</sup>.

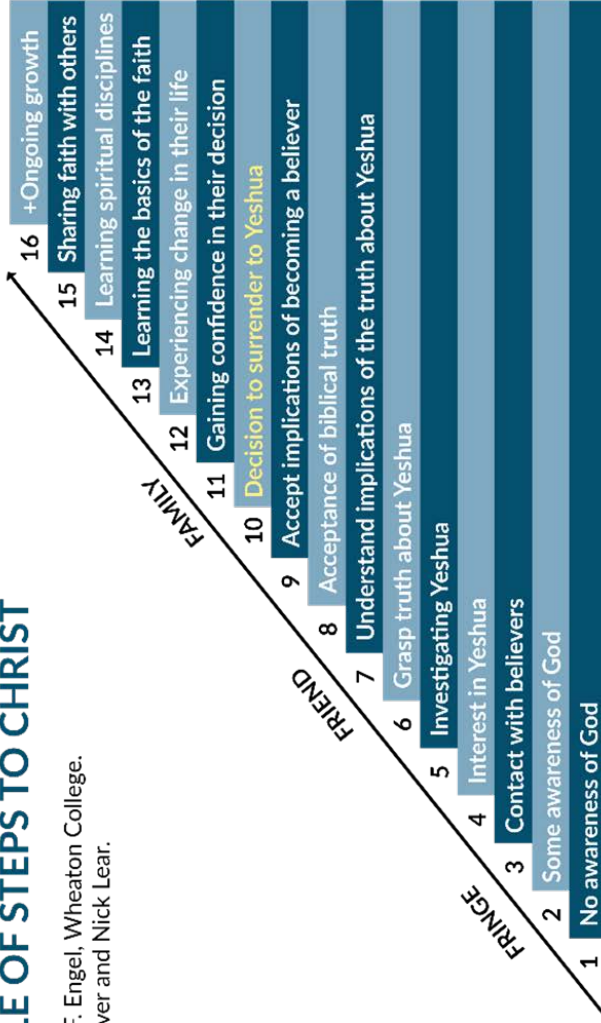
Another useful diagram has been produced by the verge network, which I have modified for a Jewish context and entitled *Life as Gospel Engagement*<sup>30</sup>. This helps to answer the *how* question that led to the creation of JET.





## ENGEL SCALE OF STEPS TO CHRIST

Originated by James F. Engel, Wheaton College.  
Modified by Clive Calver and Nick Lear.



Now seen from the perspective of the *discipler*, rather than that of the disciple, this diagram shows that there are many opportunities of interacting with unbelievers throughout the daily rhythms of our own lives. This is represented by the 'loudspeaker' icon drawn within the different 'life categories'. We need not see evangelism as an 'additional burden.' Importantly, as we go about our lives - in family, friendship or work contexts, we may actually have opportunities to share the Gospel as *welisten* in conversations, *celebrate* things in our lives, *eat* meals, whilst *blessing* others or even as we are *unwinding* in whatever form that leisure takes. If you attended the 2023 CMJ conference entitled *Every Day with Yeshua*, this was what the keynote speaker Mark Greene presented throughout his talks.

## The Simplicity of Love

We should never underestimate the power of God's love simply shining through us, in deeds and in words. We must love through our listening and demonstrate respect in the way we use our language. Importantly, we should all aim to strike a balance between knowing the Gospel, speaking the Gospel and living the Gospel. As we seek the Lord in this, He will help us to find natural cross-over points between our lives and the lives of our unsaved Jewish neighbours. Genuine care must be the medium to communicate the message of the Messiah (1 Corinthians 16:14).



Oliver Sims, CMJ UK Engagement Manager, presenter of JET - Jewish Engagement Training.

## Calendar

JET's final section is called *Calendar* and this module predominantly presents the when of Jewish engagement. The Gospel may be better received at some times more than others because of the rhythms that exist within Jewish communities. Additionally, there are certain times in a Jewish person's life when the prayers and involvement of a Gentile Christian may be more welcome. Let us briefly consider both of these in this last theme of *Calendar*.

### The Feasts of Israel – then and now

From a biblical perspective, there are three feasts occurring in the spring and four in the autumn time. These are all listed in Leviticus 23. However, today there are variations, especially as Judaism has developed over the centuries and some traditions may emphasise or outwork these festivals in slightly different ways. Also, in addition to the biblical holidays, other festivals have been added because of events in history such as Hanukkah for example. There are also many other smaller memorial days and celebrations throughout the year which may or may not be observed depending on a person's level of religious commitment<sup>31</sup>. Remember too that every Jewish family is unique.

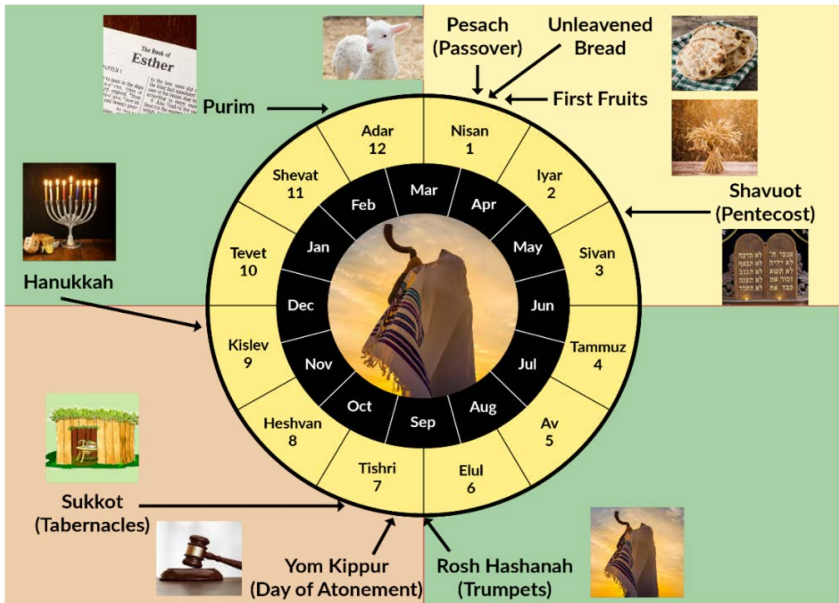
Many books have been written on the topic of the Festivals of Israel describing what they are and when they occur. Therefore, an overview of the Jewish year is provided in the graphic on the next page. There are more resources in the *Calendar* section of JET including links to books and articles which can help grow your understanding<sup>32</sup>.

## How Yeshua Interacted with the Jewish Feasts

It is interesting that Yeshua used the rhythms of the biblical feasts (which have inbuilt messianic meaning) to reveal Himself. He knew that the Jewish people around him would be celebrating and this proved a providential time to declare the messianic kingdom message. Below are three examples:

- The opportunity of Passover - Luke 22:19-20
- The opportunity of Tabernacles - John 7:37
- The opportunity of Hanukkah - John 10:22-25

As we grow in our understanding of these festivals, we can more confidently ask questions to our Jewish friends and have deeper *Gospel engagement* conversations.



## Rites of Passage in Judaism

Of equal importance are Judaism's main life-cycle events. The main rights of passage in a Jewish person's life are:

- Birth and the Bris (circumcision for males) or naming ceremony for the girls
- Bar Mitzvah (a coming of age religious ceremony for boys of 13) or Bat Mitzvah amongst reform Jews for a girl
- Marriage (hopefully with its own children following!) and
- Burial

Life is highly valuable in Judaism and whilst Christians may put the emphasis on the afterlife, Judaism places the emphasis on sanctifying the world here and now<sup>33</sup>. *Jewish people*

As such, these life cycle events are *love to celebrate*.  
intrinsically important to Jewish people.

As Rubin notes in his section on Jewish life, "Jewish food, humour, [and] music...[are] some of the things that make us "us". One thing is for certain, Jewish people love to celebrate<sup>34</sup>." These elements are always intertwined into the rich tapestry of Jewish life.

Understanding this distinction and engaging with these key life events can help you better understand and pray for the Jewish people you meet.

## A Word About Discouragement

We may find with Jewish people that the response to the Gospel is often small and slow. However, let us not be discouraged for we can be reassured by the parable that Yeshua provides us in Matthew 13:1-23. In this Parable of the Sower, there are four kinds of ground. Even as the sower is faithfully distributing the Word, only one out of the four kinds of ground produces the desired crop. For all of the effort, that's only a quarter of the return. Yet, this is what Yeshua says can happen. But the remedy is found in Galatians 6:9 says: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Therefore, let us continue on in our Gospel engagement and keep on announcing the Word in season (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 2 Timothy 4:2). May the resources of JET help us in this.

## 20 Practical Pointers

Here are twenty practical ideas from JET's *Calendar* section to get you started in sharing your faith with Jewish people. These are 'how to' tips and suggestions. They have been divided up into three simple sections to help you find the right kind of idea. These ideas should be followed in a spirit of genuine enquiry, demonstrating love and compassion for the individual and the Jewish community because every Jewish person is different. It may be the case that your Jewish friend is quite secular and, as such, does not really understand what the Feasts of the Lord are. Therefore, you must ask questions to gain clarity – seek to understand rather than to 'tell' and then you can find the right way of sharing the Gospel.

### Suggestions for Practical One-to-One Engagements

- Partake in the Jewish Festivals in food, in activity, in taking days of rest off work to be with family. If you have Jewish neighbours, know that they are watching your life.
- If your Jewish friend attends synagogue, ask if you can go with them, maybe on Shabbat. Afterwards, discuss the similarities and differences between Christianity. Use this as a learning experience to help your private prayers.
- At Yom Kippur, perhaps discuss heavier topics – judgement / eternity / names written in or blotted out of the book of life / atonement. Maybe this would be a good time to read Isaiah 53 – perhaps your Jewish friend could read this out to you from the Bible? Ask them who they think it is speaking about!
- If appropriate, can you invite your Jewish friend to a Christmas carol concert at your church? Maybe there is a special speaker that they would enjoy coming to see? Be prayerful about opportunities.
- Join together with other believers. Visit messianic fellowships. Start conversation exchanges. Talk about the ways that the Jewish and Christian calendars differ. What hope in Yeshua could you express?

## Suggestions for Practical Group Engagements

- Share your interest with other Christian friends. Perhaps you could watch an online synagogue service of a Jewish Festival together? This will improve your cultural understanding and help you pray for the Rabbi or the congregants by name afterwards.
- What books are you currently reading? Are they titles that could provoke conversations about faith? If appropriate, share the books with Jewish people you know. Could you start a small book group at your church or perhaps in a neutral venue like a coffee shop?
- On Shabbat, what patterns could you adopt to help your Jewish friend see that Yeshua is the true fulfilment of sabbath rest?
- At Rosh Hashannah – eat apples dipped in honey - wish one another a good and sweet new year – send out Rosh Hashannah (Jewish New Year) cards.
- At Sukkot, build a sukkah (temporary shelter) in the garden, read Bible stories, host a meal in the sukkah. Pray. Sing. Rejoice!
- At Shavuot, (Pentecost) decorate your home with green plants and flowers. Give such gifts to your Jewish friend. Read Bible verses about the giving of the Torah. Research on how to celebrate Shavuot together.
- At Purim, present your Jewish neighbours with gifts or food parcels. Engage in appropriate joyful activities – God is to be celebrated as the Great Deliverer. See JET's further resources section for ideas of how to celebrate Purim!
- Pray strategically as you reach out. Maybe pray / learn some prayers from the Siddur (Jewish prayer book) – some can be quite messianic!

## Suggestions for Pastors/Leaders

- Combat antisemitic stereotypes in online forums. Write to your local paper if something comes up in the news. Actively do this in Christian circles too.
- Commit to reading through the weekly Torah portion – make notes on them and be ready to discuss your thoughts. A calendar is found in the Calendar resources of JET. Can you segue from these into conversations about Yeshua?
- At Passover, have a Seder (Passover meal), send greetings, share recipes (without yeast of course). Read through the story of the Exodus with your family. Invite your Jewish friend to come and hear the Bible being read. Maybe read out some New Testament passages too.
- Give appropriate gifts along with cards / emails / letters / calls. Perhaps include a quote from a psalm or Bible prophecy that links with the festival.
- Share how Yeshua is in each of the Feasts – our Passover Lamb, our True Deliverer, the One who will come again at the shofar blast, the One who will dwell on earth forever as the Holy King. See the 'Further Resources' document for more details on the prophetic meaning of the Biblical Feasts.
- Host a Hanukkah party – spin the dreidel and eat latkes (fried potato pancakes commemorating the miracle of the oil. JET has a link to recipes in the 20 Practical pointers document). Put on a Purim Speil (the story of Esther in a play) at your church. Invite Jewish friends / show them the photos. Share relevant passages of the Bible.
- Watch the JET videos with other pastors. Perhaps form prayer / outreach groups.

There are many more ideas too. As we are prayerful and creative, we can ask the Lord to show us appropriate ways to reach out. As we build our approach on kingdom values, further understand Jewish culture, embrace a deeper narrative of care and give more thought to the Jewish calendar in our outreach, more Jewish people will experience the joy of encountering their Messiah. The purpose of the *Jewish Engagement Training* is to give the Gospel 'handles' as it were, so it can be correctly handled and passed on to Jewish people in a Jewish way.



## A Final Word on Jewish Engagement

The Bible says that “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him.” (Acts 17:30 NLT). Even Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, always went to Jewish people first (Acts 13:42, 14:1, 17:1 and 19:8). Today, let this still be our approach. Wherever we find ourselves, let us begin by telling Jewish people about Yeshua. As was said earlier, Jewish evangelism must not be the *omission* of the *Great Commission*.

The task of Jewish evangelism is to draw Jewish people back to the ancient moorings of their Holy Torah, to the Holy God who wrote them and to the Messiah whom He sent to give the certainty of eternal life. In the words of the Apostle Paul, the Gospel is still “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew especially, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16.)

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and  
knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past  
finding out!  
“For who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has become His counsellor?”  
“Or who has first given to Him  
And it shall be repaid to him?”  
For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to  
whom be glory forever.  
Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

## Endnotes

- 1 Averbeck, R. (2008) 'The Message of the Prophets and Jewish Evangelism', in Bock, D.L., Glaser, M. (ed.) *To the Jew First; the Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture in History*, Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications, p. 80.
- 2 The total number of people self-identifying as Jews in England and Wales in 2021 was 271,327. This compares with 265,073 in 2011 and 259,927 in 2001, the first occasion the religion question was asked. Data taken from Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Jews in Britain in 2021: First results from the Census of England and Wales <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jews-britain-2021-first-results-census-england-and-wales>, accessed 08/08/23.
- 3 People Groups, English Speaking Jews in the United Kingdom, [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/12347/UK](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12347/UK), accessed 08/08/23.
- 4 Some Bible passages to illustrate this are Psalm 29:10, 47:7-8, 103:19, Isaiah 6:1-7, Daniel 7:1-28, Zechariah 9:9, Malachi 1:14, Colossians 1:15-20.
- 5 See especially video 1.2, *The Message of the King* (13 minutes).
- 6 Many examples can be found in any Siddur, for example: Scherman, N, Zlotowitz, M. (1985) סדור עץ חיים: חול st ed. Brooklyn N.Y: Mesorah Publications in cooperation with Eitz Chaim Foundation.
- 7 For example, Exodus 29:46, Leviticus 26:11, Numbers 35:34, 1 Kings 6:13 or Ezekiel 37:27.
- 8 Wright, N.T. (2013) *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, pps. 678–679.
- 9 Cairns, E. (2009) *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 62.
- 10 For 10 arguments to this effect see the very succinct article entitled '10 Biggest Lies about Yeshua, His Jewishness, and What Some Call 'Jewish Christianity'' at <https://www.jewishvoice.org/read/blog/10-biggest-lies-about-yeshua-his-jewishness-and-what-some-call-jewish-christianity> accessed 6/08/23. Insightfully, the article notes: "It is important to state that I believe Jewish people have not rejected Jesus. They simply haven't heard a Gospel message they can identify with or a biblically authentic representation of their Messiah. Most have many misconceptions obscuring the true identity of Jesus—many of them derived from a 2,000-year legacy of misunderstanding about the Jewishness of Jesus."
- 11 Brown, M. (2006) *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*. Vol. 3, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, p. XIV
- 12 See for example chapter 14, Jewish beliefs, in Jessup, G. (1992) *No Strange God; An Outline of Jewish Life and Faith*. 2nd ed. St Albans: Olive Press, pps 101-107.
- 13 Minkoff, D. (2008) *The Great Jewish Joke Book*. London: JR Books, p308.
- 14 Hirsch, A. Reinman, Y. (2002) *One People, Two Worlds; A Reform Rabbi and an Orthodox Rabbi Explore the Issues that Divide them*. New York: Schocken Books.
- 15 For an easy to read overview of Jewish denominations see <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jewish-denominations/> accessed 25/07/23.
- 16 Rabbi Maimonides wrote his Thirteen Principles of Faith in his introduction to the tenth chapter of Talmud Sanhedrin. To read about these visit <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-thirteen-principles-of-faith/> based on Shapiro, M. (1993) 'Maimonides' *Thirteen Principles: The Last Word in Jewish Theology?*, *The Torah U-Madda Journal*, Vol 4.

- 17 The Pew Research Center published a survey called *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*. Many of the principals hold sway amongst the Jewish people in the UK also: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/> accessed 08/08/23.
- 18 Rubin, B. (1989) *You Bring the Bagels, I'll Bring the Gospel; Sharing the Messiah With Your Jewish Neighbour*. Baltimore: Le Derer Books, pps123-131.
- 19 Newman, R. (2004) *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing.
- 20 Pritchard John. 2022. Pritchard, J. (2022) *Twenty Questions Jesus Asked and How They Speak to Us Today*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- 21 Geisler, N. (2012) *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, pp.599-600.
- 22 Pettie, G. (2010) *The Jews; Why Have Christians Hated Them?* Walsall: Everlasting Books. The book's down-to-earth easy-to-read style contains such chapters as; Why Do Christians Hate the Jews?, Replacement What?, Who Cares About Jerusalem?, Surely Not Martin Luther Too?, The Enlightened Centuries, Christian Support for Hitler, So What Can We Do?
- 23 Brown, M. (1990) *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood; The Tragic Story of the "Church" and The Jewish People*, Shippenberg: Destiny Image Publishers, p ix.
- 24 Maltz, S. (2009) *How The Church Lost the Way; And How it Can Find it Again*. Ilford: Saffron Planet Publishers.
- 25 Many of the Jewish 'ant-missionary' websites perpetuate such ideas eg Jews for Judaism: <https://jewsforjudaism.org/> accessed 08/08/23.
- 26 This is the essence of James 5:19-20 where the word 'convert' is used in the KJV but it has the sense of 'turning back' to God.
- 27 Cairns, E. (2009) *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, pps 212-218.
- 28 Engel, J. (1979) *Contemporary Christian Communications: Its Theory and Practice*. New York: Thomas.
- 29 <https://www.eauk.org/great-commission/what-is-the-engel-scale>, viewed 27/07/23.
- 30 Kalinowski, C. Life With Mission VS Life As Mission at: <https://vergenetwork.org/2013/04/25/what-makes-discipleship-intentional-caesar-kalinowski/> accessed 02/08/23.
- 31 Chabad's website gives a very good overview of the smaller Jewish festivals and holy days: [https://www.chabad.org/holidays/default\\_cdo/jewish/holidays.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/default_cdo/jewish/holidays.htm)
- 32 A few titles might include: Nadler S. (2010) *Messiah in the Feasts of Israel* Charlotte: Word of Messiah Ministries, Kasdan B. (1993) *God's Appointed Times: A Practical Guide for Understanding and Celebrating the Biblical Holy Days*. Baltimore: Lederer Publications or Booker R. (2016) *Celebrating Jesus in the Biblical Feasts: Discovering Their Significance to You As a Christian*. Columbia: Destiny Image.
- 33 For example see the article entitled *The Goal of Life* by Rabbi Lewis Eron at: <https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/dvar-torah/goal-life/> accessed 08/08/23.
- 34 Rubin, B. (1989) *You Bring the Bagels, I'll Bring the Gospel; Sharing the Messiah With Your Jewish Neighbour*. Baltimore: Le Derer Books, p.136.



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