

## SHARING THE GOOD NEWS WITH JEWISH PEOPLE

### Reasons For Bringing The Good News To Jewish People

☆ Gentile Christians (“Gentiles” are those who are from any people or nation other than Israel) are exhorted to bring the Good News to the Jewish people as their first evangelistic priority. Even though Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, he instructed the Christians in the heart of the Roman Empire to reach the Jewish people first! *“I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1:16). The Apostle to the Gentiles practiced what he preached. Whenever he went to a new city, he would go to the Jewish community first with the Message about the Messiah.

☆ Jewish evangelism admittedly is challenging, but it is also possible. God promised that there would be a faithful remnant of Jewish people in every generation who would turn to the Messiah, especially as we enter the Last Days, when eventually “all Israel will be saved” (see Romans 11:5, 26). In fact, the Messianic Jewish movement is growing. There are currently more than 200 Messianic congregation in the United States and 100 in Israel!

☆ Christians owe a debt to the Jewish people (see Romans 15:27). Through Israel the promises and covenants were given. Through the Jewish people came the Bible (both Old and New Testaments). Through the Jewish people came the Messiah, who is the Savior of the world. It was through Jewish apostles that the Good News first went to the Gentiles (see Romans 9:4-5). This debt can best be repaid by loving us enough to bring us the Good News!

☆ God promises to bless those who share the Good News with the Jewish people. Those who bless the Jewish people will be blessed, and those who curse Israel will be cursed (see Genesis 12:1-3). Bringing us the Good News is the greatest blessing you can give us!

### How To Bring The Good News To Jewish People

☆ One of the biggest barriers preventing Jewish people from believing in Yeshua is the mistaken assumption that if they believe in Yeshua, they will no longer be Jewish. The truth is that Messianic Jews are more Jewish than ever! In order to help overcome this barrier, emphasize the Jewishness of the Messiah. Yeshua is the

most Jewish of Jews! He is a descendant of King David. He was circumcised on the eighth day, spoke our language, lived in our Land, attended synagogue regularly, observed our customs, celebrated our holidays and kept all the laws of our Torah. He is Israel's Chief Rabbi, the Messiah, our ultimate Prophet, Priest, King and Savior!

☆ Tell your friend that Christianity is Jewish! Yeshua's disciples were Jewish men who continued to live very Jewish lives. In fact, history tells us that there was a Messianic Jewish movement in Israel for some 600 years after Yeshua came! Emphasize the Jewishness of the New Testament, which was written by Jewish people about the greatest Jew of all! Let your friend know about the possibility of joining a Messianic congregation, which can be found in most major Jewish population centers, where he can join others in living and raising his family as Jewish people. Let your Jewish friend know that he not only doesn't have to give up his God-given Jewish identity by following Yeshua, but he will enhance it! We need to emphasize again and again that Jesus is Jewish, the Apostles are Jewish, the New Testament is Jewish, and that believing in the Messiah is the most Jewish thing to do!

☆ Try to correct the common misunderstanding that Christianity is hostile to the Jewish people. True Christians are to love all people, especially the Jewish people. If possible, be a true friend and show your friend some genuine love. You might want to communicate that Christians owe a debt to the Jewish people - for the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, for the Messiah, for the Apostles, and for the Church. Whenever possible, stand with Israel and be as supportive of Jewish causes as possible.

☆ Share your story - how God has answered your prayers, how He has made a difference in your life and how He is real to you. By doing so, you will fulfill the Scripture, "*Salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous*" (Romans 11:11). Most Jewish people don't believe in Heaven or Hell, or have a close personal relationship with God. Christians can make the Jewish people jealous of their intimacy with God, their peace and joy and their confident trust that they will live forever.

☆ When he is ready, recommend that your Jewish friend contact a good Messianic congregation like Congregation Shema Yisrael.

### **Common Misconceptions That Christians Have About Jewish People**

☆ **Jewish people must know the Old Testament a lot better than I do.** The reality: The vast majority of Jewish people seldom, if ever, read the Bible. Ironically, while having the reputation of being “the People of the Book”, most Jewish people today are unfamiliar with all but the most generally known Bible stories (for example: Adam, Eve and a snake; a vague idea about Noah and the Flood; Sodom and Gomorrah, Joseph and his fancy coat; David and Goliath - and not much more than that). Even the most religious of Jewish people are largely unacquainted with the Scriptures that are not part of the Torah (the Five Books of Moses), giving more of their time to the study of rabbinic teachings and traditions contained in the Talmud.

☆ **With Jewish people, you should only use the Old Testament.** The reality: If your Jewish friend is receptive, go directly to the first four books of the New Testament. If your friend is open, it is because the Spirit of God is at work in him, and he will read what you suggest.

☆ **Most Jewish people are religious.** The reality: Many Jewish people today are secular-humanistic, agnostic, even atheistic. It is sadly ironic that the very people to whom God gave the revelation of His Word not only are unfamiliar with it, but also are proportionally less likely even to be certain of God’s existence! In reality, few Jewish people today give much thought to the supernatural - to existence of God, the reality of sin and judgment, miracles, Heaven and Hell, even the coming of the Messiah.

☆ **Orthodox Jewish people are harder to reach than more secular Jews.** The reality: A survey of Messianic Jews revealed that about the same percent of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Secular-Humanistic Jewish people became believers as they were represented in the overall Jewish community. In fact, less religious Jews can sometimes be even more defensive about faith issues than those who are religious.

☆ **Gentiles are at a disadvantage trying to reach Jewish people.** The reality: Gentile Christians have an enormous advantage in talking to Jewish people about Yeshua! This is due to many centuries of Jewish leaders cultivating contempt for Messianic Jews. At the same time, Jewish people, sensitive to our history of tense relations with non-Jews, are generally careful to maintain congenial relationships with their Gentile friends and neighbors. That means Jewish people are far more willing to entertain discussions about spiritual matters with Gentile Christian friends than with those they have been conditioned to regard as “traitors”. And

there is statistical support for the effectiveness of Gentile Christians reaching Jewish people. A survey of Messianic Jews taken by Jews for Jesus revealed that a majority came to faith through the witness of a Gentile Christian friend, co-worker or neighbor, rather than through a Jewish believer, Jewish ministry or Messianic congregation.

✧ **Before I tell him about Messiah, I need to gain the friendship of the Jewish person I want to evangelize.** The reality: Be the kind of person who is candid and forthright. Tell him who you are and what you believe. If the other person still wants to be your friend, then you'll have a real friendship! The longer you hesitate to talk about Messiah, the less likely it is you ever will.

### **Use Messianic Jewish Terminology**

*“The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable”* (Proverbs 15:2). When we bring the Good News to the Jewish people, the terms, expressions, titles and labels we use can make a difference. Choose words best suited to communicate the Jewishness of the Gospel, like:

**Yeshua:** Yeshua never heard the name "Jesus" in His lifetime! Yeshua is His given Hebrew name. "Jesus" is the hellenized-anglicized form of "Yeshua," which means "salvation" (see Matthew 1:21). It's fine to use "Jesus" along with "Yeshua" since most Jewish people only know Yeshua as Jesus.

**Messiah:** Some people mistakenly believe that "Christ" is Yeshua's last name, in the same way that we have a last name. Rather, "Christ" is a title, and is used much the same way we use "President" or "King". "Messiah" means the "Anointed One" - the special Jewish leader sent by God to rule over us and help us. "Messiah" was later translated into the Greek "Christos" and ultimately anglicized to "Christ".

**Messianic Jew:** The term "Christian" originally meant "follower of the Christ" or "follower of the Messiah". In and of itself, "Christian" is a good term. Unfortunately, over time the term "Christian" came to mean more than simply a "follower of the Messiah". For many Jewish people the term "Christian" has become synonymous with "non-Jew" or "Gentile". Consequently, when a Jew "becomes a Christian," he is perceived as becoming a "Gentile" - which of course is not true! We believe that when a Jew commits himself to the King of the Jews, he becomes even more Jewish! So, rather than "Christian," use the term "Messianic Jew," which identifies us as Jewish people who follow Messiah Yeshua.

**Messianic Judaism:** In one sense, Messianic Judaism and Christianity are the same thing. There is only one Faith. Messianic Jews and Christians share the same core beliefs. Let's define Christianity as faith in the God of Israel and the Messiah whom He sent to save Jews and Gentiles. It is made up of peoples from different cultures who have organized themselves into different denominations. Christianity is made up of Jewish Believers and Gentile Believers. Messianic Judaism is the same Faith but it is expressed within the Jewish heritage. Messianic Judaism is the faith of Messianic Jews. Messianic Judaism communicates that we have not "converted" to a foreign belief system, but rather that we have embraced true, Biblical Judaism through Messiah Yeshua.

**Messianic Synagogue or Congregation:** A Messianic synagogue or congregation is a community where we can collectively express our faith in Yeshua, live a Jewish lifestyle, raise our children to be Jewish, and worship the God of Israel in a Jewish manner. Interestingly enough, just as Messianic Judaism is not new, neither are Messianic synagogues a new phenomenon. From Biblical and historical records we know that there were Messianic synagogues throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, as early as 50 AD (see James 2:2, where the word "synagogue" is used of the Believers' Assembly).

**Messianic Rabbi:** The term "rabbi" is defined for us in John 1:38 as "teacher". According to the New Testament, the office of teacher is specifically part of the leadership of the New Covenant Community (see Ephesians 4:11). Ya'akov (James) also acknowledges the office of teacher (James 3:1).

### **Since Most Jewish People Are Unfamiliar With Messianic Prophecies, Know Some Of The Basic Ones And How They Point To Messiah Yeshua**

✧ Point out that there was to be a New Covenant, unlike the one made at Sinai. In fact, "New Testament" means "New Covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31-33). See Hebrews 8:6-13, 9:12-22, 10:4-24; Luke 22:15-20.

✧ Messiah was to be God born into humanity (Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Psalm 110:1, Proverbs 30:4). See John 1:1, 20:28; Hebrews 1:8.

✧ Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem and yet originate from the days of eternity (Micah 5:1-2). See Matthew 2:1-6, Luke 2:1-20.

✧ Messiah was to come before 70 A.D. (Daniel 9:24-27). See Luke 1:5, 2:1-7.

✧ Messiah was to enter Jerusalem triumphantly, yet humbly, on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). See Matthew 21:1-9, John 12:12-16.

✧ Messiah was to be rejected by the majority of Israel, especially the leaders (Isaiah 53:1-3, Psalm 118:22). See John 1:11, 12:37-43; Acts 4:1-12.

✧ Messiah was to be tried and condemned even though He was innocent (Isaiah 53:8). See Matthew 27:1-2, Luke 23:1-25.

✧ Messiah was to be silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7). See Matthew 27:12-14, Mark 15:3-4, Luke 23:8-10.

✧ Messiah was to be beaten and spit on (Micah 5:1-2, Isaiah 50:6). See Matthew 26:67, Mark 27:30, Mark 14:65.

✧ Messiah was to be mocked and taunted (Psalm 22:7-8). See Matthew 27:39-43; Luke 23:11, 35-36.

✧ Messiah was to be pierced (Zechariah 12:10). See John 19:18, 34-37.

✧ Lots would be cast for Messiah's garments (Psalm 22:18). See Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24.

✧ Messiah was to die by crucifixion (Psalm 22:14-17). See Matthew 27:31; Mark 15:20, 25.

✧ Messiah was to wrongly suffer with transgressors yet pray for his enemies (Isaiah 53:12). See Matthew 27:38, Mark 15:27.

✧ Messiah was to die as an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:5-6, 8, 10-12; Daniel 9:24-27; Zechariah 9:9, 12:10; Psalm 16:10, 22). See John 1:29, 11:49-52; 1 Corinthians 15:53.

✧ Messiah was to be raised from the dead (Isaiah 53:12, Psalm 16:10). See Matthew 28:1-10, Acts 2:22-32.

✧ If the opportunity arises, read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 with your Jewish friend, verse

by verse, and discuss how the events have been amazingly fulfilled in the life of Yeshua.

### **Emphasize Yeshua's Resurrection**

Yeshua's resurrection validates His message and ministry. It is God's seal of approval on everything that Yeshua did and taught. This makes Him absolutely unique in the history of the world and puts him on a level far higher than any of the prophets of Israel, or any other religion. It gives Him more authority than any other thinker, philosopher or scientist. It also gives Him the power to help us live a victorious life and overcome man's greatest enemy - death. Consider ...

**The broken Roman seal:** The feared power of Rome was ignored by whoever broke open the official seal on the tomb.

**The stone was moved:** A very heavy stone was moved away from the mouth of the tomb while under Roman guard.

**The Roman guard went AWOL:** A disciplined Roman guard fled their watch and had to be bribed by the Jewish authorities to lie about what happened - a lie so flimsy that they wouldn't have concocted it themselves. They would have been killed for sleeping on duty and allowing the disciples to steal the body.

**The graveclothes:** They were undisturbed but no longer contained a body.

**The empty tomb:** Both Jews and Romans admitted that the tomb was empty (Matthew 27:11-15). All that the hostile authorities would have had to do to crush the Messianic movement would have been to produce Yeshua's body, yet they never did.

**The nature of His post-resurrection appearances:** Yeshua appeared to a wide variety of witnesses, under widely varying conditions, in varying numbers, under circumstances that belie the accusation of mass hallucination. He appeared first to Mary (John 20:11-18), then to the other women (Matthew 28:8-10), to Peter (Luke 24:34), to the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), to the Ten (Luke 24:36-43), to all Eleven eight days later (John 20:24-29), to seven by the Kinneret - the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-23), to 500 at once (1 Corinthians 15:6), to His brother Ya'akov - James (1 Corinthians 15:7), and finally to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-16).

**Yeshua's disciples were in no frame of mind to fabricate His resurrection:** In fact, they refused to believe it themselves at first! An immediate resurrection wasn't part of the thinking of first century Judaism. Only Yeshua's resurrection could have transformed them from a frightened, dispirited group into a fearless band that gave up their lives and transformed the world!

### **Practical Suggestions**

- ✧ Pray that the Lord would give you more boldness, courage and wisdom.
  
- ✧ Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to share Messiah Yeshua with Jewish people.
  
- ✧ Challenge your Jewish friend to read the Bible, especially the New Testament, with an open mind. Encourage him or her to pray to God, using their own words, that God would show them the truth! God's Word is so powerful and self-authenticating that if someone simply starts reading it with an open heart and mind, and prays to God to reveal the truth, they're 90 percent of the way there! Consider giving your friend the *Jewish New Testament* or *Complete Jewish Bible*.
  
- ✧ Draw your friend into a spiritually oriented conversation by asking questions about Judaism, Israel, Jewish holidays and customs. Be sure to listen and learn from your friend, too!
  
- ✧ Send Jewish greeting cards at appropriate times in the year, such as Chanukkah, Passover and Rosh HaShana.
  
- ✧ Be as supportive of Israel and Jewish causes as possible.
  
- ✧ Invite your friend to visit a Messianic congregation with you.
  
- ✧ Know about *What Is Messianic Judaism?* It gives an overview of the relevant issues. It can be found at [http://shema.com/messianic\\_judaism.php](http://shema.com/messianic_judaism.php).
  
- ✧ Know about *Five Principles You Need To Know To Experience A Genuinely Meaningful Life*. Similar to the *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet, it presents the message of salvation in an easy-to-understand way. It can be found at <http://shema.com/marticles/marticles-017.php>.

☆ Know about *Jesus In The Jewish Holidays*. It shows how the Jewish holidays give the message of salvation through the Messiah. It can be found at [http://shema.com/commentaries/Leviticus/Leviticus\\_23.php](http://shema.com/commentaries/Leviticus/Leviticus_23.php).

### **Final Advice**

☆ Be fair and warn your friend that there is often a cost to becoming a Messianic Jew, including possible rejection by family, friends and community leaders, but that it is a cost well worth paying.

☆ Finally, be patient! The seeds that are sown often take years to come to fruition. Have the attitude that you are planting seeds, and that it may take time and different circumstances before the harvest arrives.