

TEN KEY BOOKS
FOR YOUR LIBRARY

The topic assigned me is rather formidable. Arnold Fruchtenbaum asked if I would share with you my thoughts on "the ten books that are essential for Jewish evangelism," books that would be helpful to students at college and seminary levels. When first his invitation was received, I tended to draw back because of the prominence given to evangelism in his brief exposition of what would be expected of me. He was asking that my evaluations of the ten books I might suggest should focus on "whether they are more valuable in direct evangelism, indirect evangelism or geared for someone who is already a Jewish believer but new at it." I thought, Glasser, you are not qualified to come up with evaluations that focus on the "how to" of Jewish evangelism. Your experience is too limited and too out-of-date. Your whole approach to witnessing to Jews is to get them to read the Gospels and confront Jesus directly, then pray that the Holy Spirit will remove the veil that "lies over their minds" (2 Cor 3:12-16). So you can see, I am not really qualified to discuss either in breadth or depth the complexities of Jewish evangelism.

As a result, my reluctance persisted. Why was Arnold asking only me, a mere goy - and male at that - to accept such an assignment? Shouldn't a knowledgeable and experienced Jewish believer be also asked for his or her input before we all jump into the general discussion that all of us are looking forward to? When a closer reading of Arnold's letter revealed that his assignment wasn't as narrowly conceived as I had first imagined, I finally capitulated and agreed to prepare this paper.

Let me begin by stating that I am becoming increasingly aware of the complexity of the cluster of reactions, intellectual and emotional, that inevitably surface in the consciousness of a Jewish person being confronted by a Christian bearing witness to Jesus Christ. These friends are more than three thousand years old, and bits and pieces of their heritage, bitter and glorious, remain until today deep within their psyche. And the tragedy is that few Christians have taken the trouble to project themselves seriously and thoroughly into that heritage. As a result, when they seek to witness to Jews they often say things that are not only wanting in knowledge, but particularly in sensitivity. This makes me grateful for the opportunity to share with you my concerns as to those books which I feel are essential.

Furthermore, I am also becoming aware of the fact that the average Jewish person I meet has engaged in considerable religious reflection already. This has rarely involved formal study, and it may not at first be admitted. But they all have had sensations of "The Other," the hush, the longing, the awe, the hauntedness of this world. They know what it means to have had moments of restlessness over the mystery of life. They have wondered as to the Source of their sense of the ethical. They know they are somehow accountable before Him for their conduct. They have wondered who they are and whether they may possibly escape their mortality. When a Jewish person candidly speaks of these matters, we should not be surprised. I can still recall being jarred by the frank self-disclosure of Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein in his book My Brother Paul (1972). The opening chapters record his torment over and struggles with the Law.

It was these that gave him a sense of affinity with Saul of Tarsus, but tragically, not with the Apostle Paul.

In short, because of the possibility that religious feelings are not far below the surface consciousness of most Jewish people I want to underscore the importance of this particular session in our conference. All witnesses to Jews should acquire a comprehensive grasp of the Bible and the fundamentals of Judaica along with their studies in Jewish evangelism. Hence, when I realized that I might be able to make a contribution to our discussion by keeping the big picture in view, I accepted Arnold's invitation.

I have sought to arrange my ten books under specific categories even though I am aware that there is a measure of overlap in terms of the subject matter within them. The first is Theology (3 books). As everyone knows, the profound difference between the church and the synagogue is theological: it concerns Jesus Christ. The second category is Biblical (3 books). This is a natural sequence, Theology and Revelation should go hand in hand. The third category is History (2 books) and I am afraid this will be a disappointment to some of you. Christians know almost nothing of the development of Judaism and the vicissitudes of the Jewish people from the time of Christ until today. The fourth category concerns Jewish Culture (2 books).

THEOLOGY:

1. The Jewish People and Jesus Christ. Jacob Jocz. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, revised edition, 1949, 1979.

In my judgment Dr. Jocz can be described as the outstanding Hebrew Christian theologian of our century. He served in Poland as a missionary of CMJ, pastored a congregation of believing Jews in Warsaw and ranged widely throughout the country at a time of unprecedented Jewish receptivity to the gospel. How impoverished all Hebrew Christians and the Church at large would be today had God not arranged for him to make an emergency trip to London in August 1939, and thereby preserved him from Auschwitz and a premature death. His theological writings are without peer.

And this volume is his greatest work. Its strengths are many: the Jewishness of Jesus is affirmed; the relation and differences between Christianity and Judaism are spelled out historically and brought up to the present; the nature and vicissitudes of primitive Hebrew Christianity are carefully analyzed; and the validity of evangelizing Jews is vigorously upheld. When one realizes that over one quarter of the book is taken up with notes and references, one rejoices. This in itself is a judgment against all who would contend that the issues separating Jews and Christians are capable of simple resolution. I know no book which so convincingly reveals that a knowledge of the Bible alone will not prepare a person for Jewish evangelism today. Studies in Judaica are also essential.

It is significant that Dr. Jocz sees no future for Hebrew Christianity apart from it emerging "under conditions of independent

national life" (p. 239), which would mean in the State of Israel. And when this book was first written (1949), he could say: "It must be remembered that Jewish interest in Jesus has little spiritual and no religious significance. The whole emphasis is upon the historical Jesus . . . Every effort is made to keep separate the prophet of Nazareth from the Second Person of the Trinity" (p. 7). One would hardly say this today. In the latest issue of *MOMENT*, a Jewish monthly magazine (Vol. 14, No. 3, April 1989), there is an article by Rabbi Eugene B. Borowitz ("How is the Church to Confront Jesus' Jewishness?," pp. 40-47, 53). Included is a review by a Protestant theologian who states: "The brilliance of Borowitz's article lies in placing Jesus on the center stage of history. He cannot be ignored, and existentialist Christians and most Jews in this century have tended to disregard him. Now, for the first time since the first century, we are perceiving an interest in struggling with the issues raised by his time and his life. We indeed are confronted with a Jew of Palestine who was devoted to God, loved Judaism and revered the land" (p. 45).

I must close with the observation that I am not always sure I know what Dr. Jocz is saying, but of one thing I am certain: he is deeply committed to our historic, biblical faith and is outspokenly critical of the unwarranted judgments of liberal theologians. I admire a theologian who can say: "We now understand the reason why so many prominent Jewish Christians have championed the cause of orthodox Christianity. Positive Christianity can provide the only justification for the grave step a Jew takes when accepting baptism" (p. 259).

2. The Jewish People and Jesus Christ after Auschwitz. Jacob Jocz. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981.

This second book by Dr. Jocz was meant to serve as a sequel to his earlier work. And, in my judgment, it is a necessary sequel. In the interval between these two books Dr. Jocz felt himself sufficiently distant from Auschwitz to evaluate its urgent call to the world to forsake with absolute finality the liberal nonsense that "Man is the master of all things." Furthermore, massive new issues had surfaced because of the emergence of the State of Israel, and because of the new insights gained from the Dead Sea Scrolls as to variations in the Judaism of Jesus' day. In addition, the decisions of Vatican II regarding the Catholic Church and the Jews and the increasing number of Jewish scholarly attempts to reclaim Jesus for Jewry -- these brought Christians and Jews into dialogic encounter as never before. Last but not least, the number of Jewish Christians significantly increased. All these varied factors demanded this sequel. I recognize that there are those who do not feel this second volume approaches the first in quality. Actually, I have read this latter volume more frequently, and even more carefully than Dr. Jocz' major study.

The strengths of this book are many. Central is the absolute imperative that Christians face the many theological implications of Auschwitz: Where was God? Where was the church? How should Christians regard the Jewish people, now that much information is available as to their religious tenacity and sense of composure as they were driven into this valley of death? More than half of the book is devoted to these themes.

The second half is devoted to taking up the major themes of the first book and sharing the nuances of insight gained during the thirty years since it was first written. Questions are asked with new directness: Who is Jesus? What is Judaism? Who is a Jew? Why are Jewish Christians a puzzlement and an offence to Jews? Must Jews be converted to Christ? Is there validity to Christian missions to Jews? Should we look at dialogue critically? Are there truly non-negotiable issues between the church and synagogue? On and on.

I have read this book again and again. Some parts I do not understand, but every part is stimulating. Indeed, Dr. Jocz's other major books: Election (1958), The Spiritual History of Israel (1968), and Covenant (1969) are likewise stimulating and important, although I reluctantly have not included them in this list. Suffice it to say: Dr. Jocz is a superb, orthodox theologian whose writings should be on the desk of every Christian who desires to evangelize the Jewish people. It is significant that the distinguished Jewish scholar David Daube wrote in the preface of the first volume: "No fair-minded person, Christian or Jewish, will be able to read this book without being deeply moved by the sincerity, humanity and fervor of its author, and without profiting from his profound analysis of, and his balanced judgments about the problem he has set out to investigate" (p. ix). I cite this because the books we recommend to colleges and seminaries must uniformly reflect both an irenic spirit and top-level academic quality. The Jewish people deserve this sort of literature. All too often, evangelical writings are too polemic in style and too superficial in their treatment of massive issues.

3. Evangelicals and Jews in an Age of Pluralism. Marc H. Tanenbaum, Marvin R. Wilson, and A. James Rudin, editors. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

This volume should be included in our list because of what it signifies -- the growing pattern of structured, dialogic conferences between evangelicals and the Jewish community. Here is tangible evidence of the fact that evangelicals can engage in this type of interaction and discuss in an irenic fashion such matters as the relation between those two communities of faith, biblical interpretation, atonement and redemption, mission and proselytism, the past and the future. Since most of the 15 essays in this volume touch on theological issues I have included it in this first section.

These essays must be read carefully. They are revealing. We are not surprised that deep agreement exists among evangelicals on the person and work of Jesus Christ. But they disagree on other matters. For instance, I found myself wondering whether Professor Wilson of Gordon College really agrees with the outspokenly biblical essay by Dr. Vernon Grounds on Jewish evangelism. Wilson says things that I would hardly agree to. For instance, he rejoices ("happily," p. 23) that "a number of Evangelical leaders are now taking a clear stand against singling out Jews as Jews in evangelistic efforts." And he brings in Leighton Ford to support his position. But this is a strange thesis to advocate. Any missiologist will contend -- based on two thousand years of the worldwide Christian mission -- that to be effective one must communicate the gospel to any particular people in ways that make sense to them. Imagine preaching the gospel to Muslims in the same way that one addresses Hindus. The Jewish people have a right to

hear the gospel in terms of their own religious heritage. The Apostle Paul thought so. To the Jews, he "became as a Jew, in order to win Jews" (1 Cor 9:19-23).

Furthermore, I don't like Professor Wilson using the word "proselytism" instead of "evangelism." Doesn't that word convey something negative, even a denigration of the evangelistic task?

I want to endorse all evangelical efforts at dialogue with the Jewish people. That is what makes this book important. We want all Christians involved in Jewish evangelism to attend and participate in these gatherings. To participate in any serious discussion of the issues that dominate the current debate between Christians and Jews will do no one any harm. But the Christians who participate should keep asking themselves whether the Apostle Paul's concern for the salvation of the Jews (Rom 10:1) is being faithfully upheld. We do not want to see the gospel fade into insignificance. We must not forget that Jesus Christ and the cross marked the crucial difference between believing Jews and unbelieving Jews, long before there were any Gentiles in the Christian movement. We all need to keep before us the courageous example of the Apostle Paul. He was an effective, highly productive evangelist to the Jews because he made central to his witness: Jesus Christ and the cross (1 Cor 1:20-25).

This volume is the second in a series arising from gatherings of what are described as "National Conferences of Evangelicals and Jews." Other volumes published to date are Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation (1978) and A Time to Speak (1987). One thing that stands out in these records of dialogic encounter is that no Hebrew Christians appear to have been invited to present papers. Do I have a

right to ask why? Does not Hebrew Christianity have the right to be heard in discussions between Christianity and Judaism?

BIBLICAL:

4. The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus. Donald Hagner. Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, Zondervan, 1984.

We must include at least three books which grapple with the biblical text and at the same time build on the themes that Dr. Jocz has suggested. We begin with Dr. Hagner's significant analysis and critique of the modern Jewish study of Jesus. Once again we have a Jewish scholar's commendation of the sensitive and scholarly manner in which a thoroughly evangelical author has provided "a most useful resource for gleaning insight into this subject."

For centuries via the Talmud Jesus has been held up to ridicule before the Jewish people. The object was to so condition Jewish minds that they would be immune to any and all Christian influence. In this century, however, there has been growing resistance to this slander. The reason is obvious. Increasingly, educated Jews have been greatly mystified by the realization that despite the failure of many Christians to live up to their high ideals, studies in Western civilization have demonstrated that the teaching and example of Jesus has had a positive influence on the lives of millions of people. This has enabled them to face death with serenity. Inevitably, Jews are increasingly questioning the validity of the Talmud's slander. After all, Jesus was a Jew. Should they not reclaim him and give him a place in the history of their faith?

Dr. Hagner wants us to review their efforts to reclaim the Jesus of history: the Pharisaic Jew who loved God, the Law, his people and the land. Sadly, they stop short of reclaiming him as the Christ of faith. But Hagner -- the tough-minded New Testament scholar that he is -- will show how unconvincing their efforts are. One cannot sweepingly discount the New Testament perception of Jesus Christ and be fair to the biblical data.

This book will deepen the convictions of all Christians as to the utter trustworthiness of the four Gospels. It will expose them to contemporary Gospel criticism, to 1st century Pharisaism, and to the current Jewish charge that Jesus was lacking in originality. It will also reinforce their convictions as to 1) the authority of Jesus when confronting Jewish traditions; 2) the prophetic and ethical demands of the Kingdom he inaugurated; 3) the way to acceptance with God; and 4) the full significance of his person and work. To be exposed to the integrity of the biblical text cannot but deepen one's awareness of the indefectible character of biblical truth. Furthermore, in the process the sensitive Christian will feel the anguish of the Jewish community in its efforts to come to terms with the biblical Torah and the prophetic faith of the Gospels, but stop short of confessing Jesus as Lord. I know of no book that can so magnify the spiritual plight of the best Jewish minds today, and heighten our concern that they come to faith in Him.

5. Jesus in Two Perspectives: A Jewish-Christian Dialog. Pinchas Lapide and Ulrich Luz. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979.

It is important to study Hagner and his evaluation of Jewish writers. But we expose ourselves to something different when we enter into the thought of Rabbi Pinchas Lapide, the prominent Jewish scholar who gained worldwide attention with his book The Resurrection of Jesus (1984). Here is a man who believes in the historicity of the resurrection but denies Jesus' Messiahship and Deity, incredible though that is to Christians (Rom 1:3,4).

The strength of this book is that more than half of it represents one of the most comprehensive heaping up of arguments ever attempted by the synagogue in support of three Jewish contentions:

1) that Jesus did not declare himself to his people as Messiah; 2) that the people of Israel did not reject Jesus, and 3) that Jesus never repudiated his people. All Christians who share the gospel with the Jewish people should not only know how Jewish scholars handle the Gospel data, but should sense the emotional intensity with which they marshall their arguments against our evangelical faith. In this latter regard, Rabbi Lapide has performed for us a service we could never receive from a Gentile scholar.

Then follows the response of Professor Luz. His response is unexpectedly brief. And his many concessions to biblical criticism seem unwarranted. Again and again he questions whether Jesus actually said or did what we find in the Gospel records. But he reminds us in a gracious, unemotional, and lucid fashion that Jesus' self-awareness and his self-disclosure are profound and complex

realities. All too few Christians today study such a massive volume as The Self-Disclosure of Jesus (1954) by Gerhardus Vos, in which these issues are explored at length. And this is a tragedy. Why so? Because, when Christians bear witness to the Jewish people, they should realize that the Gospel texts they quote so readily with a "that should settle it!" aura of finality, are part of this profound complexity. Whereas I might wish that every witness to the Jewish people had specific answers to each and every difficult question Rabbi Lapide has raised, I feel it more important to have mastered the dominant elements of Professor Luz' response. So then, this little book has some significant things that are essential to our preparation for Jewish Evangelism.

6. The Messianic Hope. Arthur W. Kac. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975.

It is with a measure of hesitation that I include this book. Even so, I must because it deals with a theme of primary importance: the Messianic hope as it emerged and developed throughout the Old Testament. Dr. Kac was a Hebrew Christian whose vocation was the practice of medicine. Although not formally trained in biblical studies, over the years he gave himself to a wide range of informal studies that included Jewish non-canonical writings and the Talmud.

This book is well organized and there is an impressive flow to the sequence of his presentation. The first third is devoted to the unveiling of the Messianic hope in the Old Testament. Then follows a comprehensive discussion of the Messianic mission of Jesus of Nazareth. The final third deals with a series of themes that focus on life after death: predicted in the Old Testament, briefly discussed in

the Jewish Apocrypha, and made certain by the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. It is natural that Dr. Kac would devote so much attention to the resurrection because this was the only "sign" to which Jesus appealed when challenged by the Jews as to his Messianic authority (e.g., Matt 12:38-40; John 2:18-22).

This book could not be left out of our list because of its comprehensive review of those portions in the Old Testament that together define "the hope of Israel," a hope that comes to focus and fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. No other contemporary volume contains such an exploration of these Messianic texts. But this brings up a most disturbing matter. At the turn of the century books on Messianic prophecy were produced by competent scholars (e.g., Delitsch 1891; Briggs 1895; etc.). Not so today. Joachim Becker's Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament (1977) almost concludes with the confident judgment that there is nothing particularly messianic in the Old Testament. Furthermore, Protestant and Catholic scholars today seem so fearful of challenging their Jewish peers on matters pertaining to Jesus Christ that they studiously avoid this theme. Fortunately, Wilhelm Vischer's The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ (1949) and Sigmund Mowinckel's He That Cometh (1954) stand against this tide of unwarranted concession.

Frankly, my hope is that within the Hebrew Christian community there will arise a man or woman who will produce the book the Christian movement needs today. Something that will develop yet go beyond Markus Barth's thesis that the whole of Israel's history is Messianic (Theology Today, Vol. XI, No. 3, 1954. pp. 342-353). Something that will then discuss the Old Testament data that

Mowinckel, Vischer, and Kac and others regard as Messianic. But I must add a "P.S." to this suggestion. Whoever tackles this assignment must respect the hermeneutical dimensions of biblical exegesis. Dr. Kac quotes biblical texts and thereby assumes that complex problems have been fully resolved. But we can no longer treat Messianic passages this way. Furthermore, only this past week I heard a highly regarded evangelical scholar deplore the superficial way evangelicals use these texts in their discussions with Jews.

HISTORY:

7. The Anguish of the Jews. Edward H. Flannery. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1985.

Books on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust are legion. Most of them have been produced by Jewish scholars and reflect diligent research. We should be grateful to God for their unremitting efforts to keep alive the enormity of the endless crimes committed against their people. They are thereby confronting the world with irrefutable evidence of the inveterate depravity of the human heart - the sickness pervading the human heart which only Christ can heal.

In contrast, however, I have selected this book, written by a Roman Catholic scholar, feeling that only a representative of that ancient church is in a position to introduce us to this long and shameful history. This is a revised and updated edition of the 1964 edition, and it has been widely commended by Jewish as well as Christian scholars.

Father Flannery was "nurtured in conventional Catholic education and attitude" (p. 3). This is what gives the book its authenticity. He

had to go through the agonizing experience of discovering "the underside of the history of the church" and face the need for a significant transformation in the thinking of the Catholic community about the Jewish people. Furthermore he includes reflection on recent developments in the Middle East that provide us with the sort of perspective needed to face more biblically the implications of the present agony within the State of Israel.

All Christians need to confront the horror of anti-Semitism. They need to sense its irrationality, along with its anti-Christian and particularly its demonic character. The devil hates the Jews. Since he somehow senses that their survival is essential to the final triumph of God in history, he must thwart his great enemy by destroying them! Although Father Flannery does not develop this particular thesis, his excellent book will enable us to understand better this "conflict of the ages." Indeed, for us to fail to include a book on anti-Semitism in our list would be an oversight of first magnitude.

No one will enjoy reading this book. But all will be chastened and challenged by the observation of J. Darmesteter, whom Father Flannery quotes: "The hatred of people against the Jew is the work of the Church, and yet it is the church alone which protects them against the furies which she has unleashed" (p. 315). This is true! How grateful we are to God for those Christians down through the centuries who risked all to protect Jews.

8. This Year in Jerusalem. Kenneth Cragg. London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982.

This book confronts us with the issue of "the land" given by God to Abraham and his descendants via Isaac and Jacob (Gen 12:7; 26:34; 48:4). The emphasis on the land as a divine gift occurs in the Old Testament more than 150 times, and it is Israel's "everlasting possession" (e.g., Jer 32:40,41). Initially, I was tempted to suggest either Walter Brueggemann's The Land (1977) or William D. Davies' The Gospel and the Land (1974). I liked the wide range of topics discussed by Colin Chapman in his controversial volume Whose Promised Land? (1983), but one has only to review the extended debate in Mishkan (#1, #2, #5), to realize that its inclusion in our list would produce a Messianic Jewish howl that would drive me to early retirement from any involvement with Fuller Seminary's program on Judaic Studies and Jewish Evangelism! In the end I settled for Kenneth Cragg's gracious and brilliant work: This Year in Jerusalem (1982).

Why this book? It does not discuss the biblical data. It contains nothing on the political vicissitudes of the land down through the centuries, and virtually nothing of the international maneuvering that eventuated in the State of Israel. What then? Dr. Cragg is more concerned with our being able to see Zionism as "a supreme achievement of intent" (p. 1) from the First Aliyah (1881) to the Fifth Aliyah (1932-1944), from an idealistic movement characterized by agricultural reclamation to a tough national entity in which hard realities eroded earlier Zionist dreams. He would have us take the full measure of the Palestinian tragedy that Jewish nationalism has created, as well as the Lebanese tragedy - that "dark sequel to the exigencies of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict." Dr. Cragg's emphasis is

placed on the religious and spiritual aspects of modern Zion, drawn from firsthand knowledge. For years he served as the assistant Anglican bishop in Jerusalem, and he is widely known by his writings as a theologian and as an Islamicist.

No book has been so helpful to me in grasping the paradox that is Israel today, and so sobering when I seek biblical norms for evaluating this agonizing reality. Should we side with the Zionist sense of "divine right in Joshua terms or divine authorization in Davidic terms" (p. 103)? Should we defend the Arab Christians in Israel, so torn by "a distressing quarrel between their biblical loyalties and their personal history" (p. 103)? And what of Palestinian Muslims? Not only their sense of second class status but their growing uneasy awareness that the Aqsa Mosque on the Temple site is a daily affront to Israelis whose glorious past witnessed the inseparability of temple and state.

This book brings a hush to one's soul. It is so honest, so free from prejudice, so stark in its exploration of all aspects of Israel today. True, it is somewhat out of date. There is no mention of the steady emigration of Western (Askenazi) Jews to America (almost 900,000) or of the growing crisis precipitated by the Palestinian "uprising." Even so the book concludes with the very up-to-date question of questions: What of the future? We are confronted with the Nazi Holocaust and the Israeli claim that it provides "irrefutable, indubitable sanction for the utter legitimacy of the State of Israel" (p. 130). If the Jews are permitted such a claim on history, should we say the Palestinians with their cries for justice have a less valid claim on the land? I for one cannot but wish that all Christians today were able to adopt and promote Dr. Cragg's posture vis-a-vis the State of Israel.

Finally, our orientation contains a factor that he fails to mention. As the situation in Israel increasingly darkens, we are learning that growing numbers of people both Jews and Arabs, are coming to faith in our Lord Jesus. God is working today that He might finish His work tomorrow. And what is particularly happening among Israeli Jews adds reality to the promise: "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:3).

You will be disappointed that in this section I failed to include either Paul Johnson's A History of the Jews (1987, Harper & Row) or the tremendous compilation of essays edited by H. H. Ben-Sasson (A History of the Jewish People (1979, Harvard University Press). Both books are invaluable since the perspectives are distinctly different, being Christian and Jewish respectfully. Blame my omission on Arnold Fruchtenbaum. He is the one who limited me to only ten books!

JEWISH CULTURE:

9. The Complete Book of Jewish Observance. Leo Trepp. New York, NY: Behrman House/Summit Books, 1980.

The Jewish people have their own calendar, and over the centuries they have developed a pattern of holidays, festivals, and customs that have served to perpetuate their story and strengthen the bonds that have made them the unique people that they are. The beginnings of what we might call the "synagogue year" took place in ancient times and are traceable to the Sinaitic covenant (e.g., Ex 20:8; Lev 23; Num 28:29). Later, other holidays and ceremonies were added as the history of the Jewish people unfolded. It is widely

regarded that the observance of this body of law and tradition has not only confirmed to Jews their rich heritage: it has also kept faith and hope alive and fostered fellowship and community life. Indeed, without this pattern of celebration and the societal intercourse engendered thereby, the Jewish people would never have survived the vicissitudes arising from centuries of diasporal scattering and struggle among hostile populations.

Leo Trepp's book may not be the best book to include in our list but a book covering this material must be included. Actually, I debated whether his other book: Judaism: Development and Life (3rd edition, 1984) should be included instead. Indeed, upon exploration I found that all sorts of books have been written, largely by Jews, on the yearly cycle of Jewish observances. Let me repeat, I am utterly convinced that no one seeking to share the gospel with the Jewish people can afford not to be fully acquainted with this rich body of symbolic material. Even the least detail has meaning. What are the ideals and aspirations that Jews have cherished over the centuries? Who are the great personalities that have shaped Jewish life and thought? What do Jews regard as the core of their religious belief? You will find insightful answers to these questions as you ponder this particular body of faith and tradition.

Chronologically, Pesach comes first with its review of the Exodus. Shavnot follows with its recollection of the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Within the Decalogue we find the Sabbath, the 4th Commandment. The Sinaitic covenant comes to focus in Kashrut the dietary laws and in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Succot recalls the wilderness journey to the Promised Land. Purim

celebrates the victory over Haman the Persian and Hanukah the Maccabean revolt against Greek oppression. The list is long.

In addition to his classification of these holidays, Trepp provides us with an orderly sequence of holidays and events related to the celebration of life. These range from birth to death and stress the serious efforts of Judaism to transform Jews into a well-integrated people, mature and responsible, wholesome and outgoing.

This book is important for all who earnestly desire to understand and appreciate the Jewish people. I can testify that I have found it most illuminating. It has provided me with another frame of reference, another window through which I can gain insight into what Judaism is all about.

10. A Treasury of Jewish Folklore. Nathan Ausubel, ed. New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1948.

During the period when I sought to distribute copies of the Gospel of Matthew to Jewish people in Manhattan for the New York Bible Society, I became increasingly conscious of one painful fact. I did not understand Jews at all! When contacts on the street turned into conversations, I found myself all too quickly beyond my depth. There was an unpredictable quality about them. Their reactions to what I said were invariably surprising. At times I was almost transfixed by the sheer brilliance of their off-hand remarks. Needless to say, I used to wonder whether I would ever be able to get on their wave length and think the way they did. In the end I became quite convinced that only Jews could win Jews; this was not a ministry for Gentiles!

In China, some years later, a Swedish woman evangelist told me to study only two books: the Bible and the human heart. She explained: this meant studying everything about the Chinese, especially the plays they wrote and the stories they told one another. This principle applies in a special way to Jewish evangelism. When Gentiles recall that the Apostle Paul said: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews" (1 Cor 9:20), they invariably sigh: "But how does one enter into the thought world of the Jewish people?" If a Gentile is determined to become an effective witness to Jews, then he/she must tackle a book of this sort and virtually make it a companion to his/her Bible. Why so? Mainly, because there is no people in the world whose worldview has been so shaped and nurtured by an unbelievably large corpus of myths and parables, songs and wise sayings, stories and legends. To immerse oneself in this literature is to confront the composite portrait of this people. Over the centuries the Jewish historic experience has been dominated by certain unchangeable factors: Gentile hostility has produced a turbulent homelessness, an uncertainty, an emotional insecurity that only found relief in religion, a distinct type of humor, and in irony. This has given them a togetherness that has made them indifferent to public opinion. After all, for over three thousand years Jews have maintained an ethnic-cultural identity without parallel. As their folklore developed, it achieved a high level of intellectual sophistication. This was inevitable because this minority people was forced to use every stratagem at their command to outwit those who sought to destroy them. As Nathan Ausubel states in the introduction:

It was this general and sustained intellectual activity among Jews that in the process of refinement and sensitizing through many centuries, led to a razor-edged sharpening of wits, to a verbal ease of articulation, and to an unusual preoccupation with abstract ideas and philosophical speculation. In the plain Jew this is differed from that of the scholar only in extent and intensity (p. xix).

It is in Jewish folklore that we encounter the best of the Talmud and Midrash. The stories are endlessly pious and subtle, moralistic and sardonic. Life is always affirmed. Jewish laughter is affirmative, even defiant in the face of adversity. Grief never is allowed to overwhelm and sink to the tragic, although a deep sadness often pervades this literature. No despair or self-pity, however. There is always the buoyancy of knowing that in the end good will triumph over evil.

This book of 750 separate stories and 75 songs will introduce one to what makes the Jewish people what they are. Fortunately, these stories are organized under six major headings: Jewish Salt; Heroics; The Human Comedy; Tales and Legends; Proverbs and Riddles; Songs and Dances. The fifty-two sub-headings are fascinating, but I will not include them in this brief overview. Needless to say, they touch on all aspects of human existence.

Sadly, I've not yet read the more than 700 pages that make up this book. I wish I could say that I've thoroughly mined its gold. But I am convinced that thousands upon thousands of Jews living today have had this lore of their people poured into their lives from childhood onward. After all, in the first twenty years of this one publication there were twenty-nine separate printings. This is a best seller, par excellence! So then, if you would share the gospel with Jewish

people, the Jewish heart must be studied with a diligence that almost approximates the diligence with which you study the Word of God. And that heart is wonderfully revealed to us in the folklore of this ancient people.

P.S.

Since writing this essay I've checked on two other books that were recommended to me for inclusion:

A Book of Jewish Thoughts. Joseph H. Hertz. New York, NY: Bloch Publishing Co., 1926.

Should one include a book by the man who served for a time as "the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire." However, when I found that 53 of the "thoughts" were written by non-Jews. I did not feel pressed to let it push aside Ausubel's treasury.

The First Jewish Catalog. Richard Siegel, Michael and Sharon Strassfeld. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1983.

This is an amazing book. It is of the order of a do-it-yourself kit and gives precise instruction for carrying out all the holidays, ceremonies, and customs mentioned in the book by Leo Trepp. It ranges from matters pertaining to space, to time, to word, and to man and woman, although I must admit that I couldn't always understand why certain sub-themes seemed out-of-place (according to my goy way of thinking). I found myself wondering why they were under a heading I would not have chosen. Someone more qualified than I will know whether it belongs among the first ten. I've heard it said this book will particularly introduce one to the mysteries and complexities of

Jewish folk religion. If so, this would push it up on to any sensible person's list.

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