**NEW VISION OF AN OLD MISSION:**

**A RAPID AND RADICAL OBED-EDOMIZATION OF JEWISH EVANGELISM TILL TIPPING POINT**

**By**

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**INTRO**

*“All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing…”* (Colossians 1:6), whether it is in the hundreds of thousands of international students in Canada or in the fact since last year Africa became the most Christian continent in the world! Who would’ve thought so 100 years ago? “Surprise” is the word. And I pray the same God will surprise as even a decade from now in the world of Jewish Evangelism for his glory!

**New vision of an old mission: Rapid and Radical Obed-Edomization of Jewish Evangelism Till Tipping Point.** For four years (2012-12016) I had the privilege of being the pastor of a Chinese church in Montreal. Who would've imagined an African pastoring an English-speaking Chinese church in a French city in North America? And in my experience there and then as an African pastor, I saw effective witness to and among not only the Chinese but even the re-churching of the demographic described as “the least reached people group in the entire Western hemisphere’: the Quebecois, by Chinese. Typically Quebecois men attracted to Chinese women.

One would argue that such is the globalization and internationalization of our world today thus the inevitability of cross-cultural ministry and mission yet as pragmatic as that is, thus should be characteristic of Jewish evangelism as well, my call tonight stems not so much from modern reality but from an old mission in King David’s time under the Old Covenant, prophesied about by Amos and rehashed by the apostles in the first century which begs a revisiting and renewing.

Even the definition of who is a Jew is becoming more and more complicated and nuanced. It bothers me to no end that of the 14 million+ Jews in the world only 1.04% have fully taken advantage of their birthright to be children of God by placing their trust in Messiah, Yeshua. Knowing full well that *“it is not [me] who supports the root, but the root supports [me]”* (Romans 11:17-18)— as a wild olive grafted in—may I humbly submit the renewing of an old bold mission and revisit the rebuilding of David’s fallen tent (Amos’ prophecy reiterated by Apostle James in Acts 15) and its significant implications for the deep and wide fulfillment of Jewish evangelism today. What is the old mission is the rebuilding of David’s fallen tent; what is a new vision is too see this radically and rapidly executed.

“Making all things new” is the theme of this 11th Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism. Yes, we serve a God who never changes—“I the Lord I changeth not”—yet is always doing something new: new day, new moon, new life, new wine, new wineskins… In consonance with the theme of this quadrennial consultation on Jewish Evangelism in 2019, tonight I have a humble claim to make towards ‘making all things new’ in Jewish evangelism in our time: **While admitting the valid notion that in many cases a “distinctly Jewish testimony is needed” (Barron 2016, 5) it is my assertion that in the grander scheme of things the fulfillment of the worth and work of global Jewish evangelism is directly proportional to its alignment with God's vision of Gentile co-worker inclusion as exemplified by the Jewish king David, even under the Old Covenant. This radical and rapid gentile inclusion I’m calling for is not only historically, biblically and missiologically well-aligned but is also pragmatically urgently called for as until the messianic Jewish population reaches the 2% mark it will require vigorous and intentional cross-cultural mission involvement of non-Jewish believers in Yeshua. This new vision of an old mission is what I have termed “the rapid and radical Obed-Edomization of Jewish evangelization till tipping point.”**

My **AIM** is to instill a fervent enthusiasm, beyond a cursory mental assent and mere tolerance, of Gentile co-worker inclusion in messianic Jewish efforts at evangelism as well as a passionate prioritization of Jewish Evangelism in Gentile efforts in global mission. I shall build up my case for this audacious new vision of radical and rapid Obed-Edomization as follows:

1. Father God’s Mission | The state of Jewish evangelism globally and the need for Obed-Edomization
2. Ralph Winter’s Missiology | Pragmatic Obed-Edomization
3. King David’s Missiology | Historical and Biblical Obed-Edomization
4. Our New Mind and Method | Creative & Innovative Obed-Edomization

**I. FATHER GOD’S MISSION**

“This is our father’s world” and He is on a mission to (1) bring himself glory from the worship of all peoples of earth—*first from the Jews*, (2) to be a blessing to all peoples—*first to and through the Jewish people* and (3) to vanquish evil and to establish his kingdom on earth forever—*first among and through the Jews.* This mission of God, *missio Dei*, is our mandate.

My main occupation in the last six years has been international student ministries, which together with Jewish evangelism come under the broad area of diaspora missiology, as most Jews are in the diaspora. In Canada the organization I lead has barely 100 missionary staff and 500 volunteers to reach the nearly 600,000 international students in the country (of course we’re not the only ones doing this; but we’re the biggest ministry solely focusing on international students). “The harvest is plentiful; the labourers are few.” This distresses me deeply.

Imagine then, my even deeper distress to be serving on the board of a wonderful organization like Jews for Jesus for the last five years and to find ourselves in a position where we have only two missionary staff for the 400,000 Jews in Canada! Oh not just that, the latest (2018) research on Canadian Jewry shows that “Canada, it adds, is on the verge of overtaking France as having the second-largest Jewish population in the Diaspora, after the United States.[[1]](#footnote-1) Again, of course, we are not the only organization reaching out to Jews. But the reality is that there is a paucity of Jewish evangelists for the Jewish population, and the small pool to fish from makes our chances of hiring many more even slimmer.

“This is our Father’s world,” and what is the state of Jewish evangelism today? **The Jewish people are an Unreached People Group** (this is the most heartbreaking statement you will ever hear this week). By consensus in March 1982 mission leaders meeting in Chicago under the auspices of the Lausanne Strategy Working Group finally agreed that an Unreached People Group is *“a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group.*”[[2]](#footnote-2) That ‘magic number’ is 2%, as social scientists like Robert Bella discovered decades ago and has recently been popularized as ‘the tipping point’ by Jamaican-Canadian Malcolm Gladwell in his book bearing the same title. If of the14 million Jews in the world only 1.04% are Messianic then not only are Jews an unreached people group but by definition **messianic** **Jews are unable to evangelize the rest of their people**. Let me explain.

**II. RALPH WINTER’S MISSIOLOGY | Pragmatic Obed-Edomization**

**Ralph Winter illuminated us on the Three Spheres of Missionary Work: E1, E2, E3, ‘E’ standing for Evangelism**[[3]](#footnote-3)**.** The E-Scale helps compare the cultural distances that Christians need to move in order to communicate the gospel with others . **Allow me to modify it as ‘JE’ since we are specifically talking about Jewish Evangelism here.**

**JE1: “Jerusalem Missions” – Acts 1:12-8:3:** Same culture. E1 Missions means there is only one (1) barrier, basically ‘church culture’. E1 Missions corresponds to communicating the message of Christ to Jews by Jews—people of one’s own CULTURE and LANGUAGE. This is not just with Jews, but with every ethnicity/culture, **E1 is the most rapid way evangelism takes place** because there is only 1 barrier: “church culture.”

JE2: “Judea and Samaria Missions” – Acts 8:4-11:18: Different culture. Corresponds to missions that relates to the SAME (or similar) LANGUAGE, yet DIFFERENT CULTURES.

JE3: “The Uttermost Parts of the Earth Missions” Very different culture. This type of ministry reaches out in far and removed places, in DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT CULTURES, to people of DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

According to Dr. Winter, until the Messianic Jewish population hits 2% and can thus carry out a powerful JE1 mission, we are obligated to push for a JE2/JE3 effort to make Jewish evangelism happen. Hear him: ““In summary, the master pattern of expansion of the Christian movement is first for special E-2 and E-3 efforts to cross cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, ongoing, vigorously evangelizing denominations, and then for that **national church to carry the work forward on the really high-powered E-1 level**. We are thus forced to believe that **until every tribe and tongue has a strong, powerfully evangelizing church in it, and thus, an E-1 witness within it, E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from outside are still essential and highly urgent**.””

It beats my mind that if the Gospel is first for the Jew then for the Gentile, how come we have been employing this strategy for decades for the Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and other peoples to the neglect of Jews! I agree with Piper that *“just as God chose Israel and revealed himself to Israel and sent the Messiah and Savior to Israel so that salvation is from Israel, it is fitting that in the spread of the gospel to new places, the Jews hear first of their Messiah and the good news of his salvation. So Jews have a priority in the order of frontier missions when the gospel comes to a new place.”[[4]](#footnote-4)*

It is this JE2/JE3 type of evangelism I refer to as the Obed-Edomization of Jewish Evangelism, which I’m calling for a radical and rapid implementation of. In the book of Colossians, which we’re studying at this conference, it is interesting to note that the paucity of Jewish workers isn’t new. Paul only had a handful with him whose greetings he sent to the church of Colossae: Onesimus, Aristarchus (Jew from Thessalonica, fellow prison inmate), Mark (cousin of Barnabas; recycled), Justus… *“these are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me”* (Colossians 4:11). Certainly, he had a mixed/diverse workforce including gentiles like Tychicus (who was Asiatic and delivered the letter to the Colossians | 4:7), Luke and Demas (4:14), and Onesimus (4:9) & Epaphras (4:12) who were originally from Colossae himself. **The author of the book of Colossians had a radically Obed-Edomized mission force**.

**III. KING DAVID'S MISSIOLOGY | Historical & Biblical Obed- Edomization**

Unlike many of God's chosen people who elevated their electedness to the exclusion of salvation and worship of other nations, tribes and tongues, David seemed to have no doubt about it from his youth and throughout his very eventful life. Even as a young lad facing Goliath he made it clear that his anticipated victory against the uncircumcised Philistine champion was not just one for Israel's revelling but that *“This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and* ***the whole world will know*** *that there is a God in Israel.”*

In Psalm 67, not only is there a clear outlining of the *missio Dei* in God bringing glory to Himself through the praise of all nations and the vanquishing of evil to establish His divine rule on earth as it is in heaven forever but also a clear continuation of the Abrahamic call and mandate to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12). **So David knew about gentile inclusion regarding soteriology alright, but what surprises me is his understanding of gentile inclusion regarding missiology**.

**King David’s Man**

After David's failed first attempt to transport the ark of the covenant from the “house of Abinadab” where it had been for two decades (1 Samuel 7:1-2) to his new stronghold in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:1-2) the literal fear of the LORD after Uzzah was struck dead (2 Samuel 6:7) led him to abandon the ark in the home of a man by the name Obed-Edom. *“He was not willing to take the ark of the Lord to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the* ***Gittite****. The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the* ***Gittite*** *for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household”* (2 Samuel 6:10-11) *“and all that he had”* (1 Chronicles 13:12-14 adds). Obed-Edom was a Gittite, **twice-repeated**, an inhabitant of Gath, one of the chief cities of the Philistines in ancient Palestine. Even for those who want to challenge the fact that Obed-Edom was a Gentile; they cannot deny the fact that even if he was a Jew living among the Philistines in Gath, that would still make him an ‘outsider.’

On one hand Obed-Edom was a convenience for David's faux pas but on the other hand a conduit for God's blessings to the Gentile household. The Lord blessed the socks off this man for the 90 days he hosted the ark of God! Later, when the ark was successfully moved on the second attempt with great caution and good music and heeding Levitical custom, *somehow* Obed-Edom travelled along to the place where David pitched a tent as its home (1 Chronicles 15:1-2), he and his household became ministers of Yahweh in doorkeeping (vs. 17-18, 22-25) and music (19-21). ***37****David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister there regularly, according to each day’s requirements.****38****He also left Obed-Edom and his sixty-eight associates to minister with them. Obed-Edom son of Jeduthun, and also Hosah, were gatekeepers.* (1 Chronicles 16:37-38).

Oh no, it was not just a singular man as an oddity. Even his sons and grandsons were included in the worship and missional work of David’s tabernacle! Later, in 1 Chronicles 26, a genealogical passage references the name Obed-Edom. Verse 1 introduces a list of doorkeepers, beginning with [Korahites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korahites), specifically a man named Meshelemiah and his sons (verses 1-3). After the mention of Meshelemiah's sons, Chronicles reads, *"****4****Obed-Edom also had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sakar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth,* ***5****Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh and Peullethai the eighth. (For God had blessed Obed-Edom.)* ***6****Obed-Edom’s son Shemaiah also had sons, who were leaders in their father’s family because they were very capable men.****7****The sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed and Elzabad; his relatives Elihu and Semakiah were also able men.****8All these were descendants of Obed-Edom; they and their sons and their relatives were capable men with the strength to do the work—descendants of Obed-Edom, 62 in all.***The chapter relates further in verse 15, that lots were cast to assign positions to the doorkeepers, and that *“the lot for the South Gate fell to Obed-Edom, and the lot for the storehouse fell to his sons.”*

I can only imagine how this must've been very confusing for many a Jew for this man and his household were gentiles! Somehow God blessed him; somehow David incorporated him as a *bona fide* co-worker in the mission of God.

As first pointed out to me by a mentor Prof. Opoku Onyinah, then global chairman of the Church of Pentecost, a denomination from Ghana and now in over 100 countries of the world (including Israel), a key but seldom talked about characteristic of **David's tent was work/worship by Gentiles alongside their Jewish counterparts.** While the restoration of David's tent has been (mis)interpreted in all sorts of ways the new call to Jewish ministers and ministry to Jews at this year's quadrennial consultation from this old mission is to have a paradigm-shifting, uber enthusiasm and accelerated action to creatively, innovatively and even aggressively include and partner Gentiles in the ministry in key roles, ***including as missionaries***, for the fulfillment of God's vision and mission. Not only is not doing this backward (for even under the old covenant this was done), **there is no other way of moving forward** (as already shown you from Winter’s pragmatic point of view).

**From Soteriology to Missiology**

In the first Messianic Jewish consultation in Jerusalem in the first century presided over by apostles Peter and James the brother of Yeshua (Acts 15), while reference to rebuilding David’s fallen tent meant a call **to include Gentiles in soteriology (salvation)**, **at this 2019 Jewish Consultation in Toronto may the same appeal for the rebuilding of David’s fallen tent be a call to include Gentiles in missiology.**

May the 2019 Jewish Consultation in Toronto be as paradigm-shifting and pivotal as the Jewish Council in Jerusalem as we heed our Peters say: *8God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us* [as of now I get the feeling that we would rather have a Jew who is not full of the Holy Spirit evangelize in our ministries than have a Gentile full of the Holy Spirit. That is an error!] *9He did not discriminate between us and them* [but we do], *for he purified their hearts by faith* [a pure-hearted Gentile is of more use in God’s hand than an impure-hearted Jew]. *10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? 11No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved [and serve!], just as they are”* (Acts 15:8-11)

Now James: *15The words of the prophets are in agreement with this* [Gentile inclusion], *as it is written: 16"’After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, 17that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things* [Amos 15:17, 9:11-12]*--18things known from long ago* [Amos 15:18]. **What on earth had gentile inclusion to do with the tabernacle of David?: Obed –Edom!**

Let me make it clear to my gentile peeps, **until we return to give priority to rebuild and restore David’s fallen tent (the Obed-Edomization of Jewish evangelism in this case), we will never see the remaining unengaged, unreached people groups come to seek the Lord!** *Seek first his kingdom, his righteousness and his Jewish people, and all the other people groups shall be added unto us!* (a play on Matthew 6:33)

**IV. OUR NEW MIND AND METHOD | Creative and Innovative Obed-Edomization**

As with Peter in the book of Acts, could there be something mentally blocking us from this new vision of an old mission of Gentile inclusion? Are there philosophies of ministry, organizational systems and structures, including policies, that are getting in the way and keeping or even building a dividing wall of hostility?

It is time for paradigm shifts and repentance—*metanoia*—particularly the notion to have only Jews as missionaries to other Jews rather than looking for the hand of the Lord upon a person and who the blessing of the Lord is blessing (whether Obed Edom in 1 Chronicles or Antioch in Acts), has the character (including humility) and passion and competence like Obed-Edom. Look, pragmatically you wonderful messianic Jews don't have enough workers, hybridity is overtaking you, there’s the reality of multicultural society and polycentric mission (no longer west to rest or from the Jews to the rest or Jews to Jews but God's people everywhere of all shades going to people everywhere of all stripes).

We urgently need sanctified innovation and creativity in Gentile inclusion and collaboration. **Creativity** is the capability or act of conceiving something original or unusual. **Innovation** is the implementation of something new. Let me start with a few examples of creative and innovative Obed-Edomization from Asia, to Europe and to North America.

**ASIA INNOVATION**

I think of the homestays in China, Nepal and India for the many Israeli backpackers, millennials hiking. Ketzia Barron (Andrew and Laura’s first daughter) is on Massah right now. That’s wonderful but she’s going to come back home. Is she going to cast vision for the locals to engage in the mission of God to the Jewish people?

How about the Chinese Back to Jerusalem movement—can the vision for the Jewish people themselves be better strengthened beyond reaching all the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim peoples in the 51 countries ‘between’ China and Jerusalem along the Silk Road?

17 April 2019, Tel Aviv—Filipino caregiver Charmaine Fernandez “received a special citation from Philippine Ambassador to Israel Neal Imperial at the Philippine Embassy in Tel Aviv for her bravery and quick action, which helped save her employer, a Holocaust survivor, from being run over by a wayward vehicle.”

According to Dr. Abraham Schindler, the son of Ms. Fernandez' employer, Ms. Fernandez was walking on a pedestrian lane with 95-year-old Missa Schindler when a speeding vehicle came toward them. Ms. Fernandez quickly shielded Ms. Schindler with her own body, protecting her from harm.[[5]](#footnote-5)

What if beyond physical salvation Charmaine and other Filipino caregivers could be the channels of spiritual salvation in Yeshua? As I speak to you now, there is a Filipino caregivers project in the works—we’re looking at collaborating with the Lausanne catalyst for diaspora, who is himself Filipino, to train Filipino caregivers of Holocaust survivors in Israel to share the Gospel of Yeshua.

**EUROPEAN CREATIVITY**

In a recent report I heard from France, “Julien and Béatrice Petit, who played music at the colloquy are in the process of joining our team via secondment. **Neither Julien nor Béatrice** are Jewish, but have a heart for Jewish people and see themselves working with Jews for Jesus. You can Google or search in YouTube for “A Rabbi Discovers Jesus’ and find them.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**AMERICAN COLLABORATION**

Pieter and Alike and the entire van den Beukel family who are Dutch “have been called to share the good news of Jesus the Messiah with Jewish people around the world. The Lord has lead them to Brooklyn, New York where half a million Jews are living this day. With over two million Jewish people, New York has the second largest concentration of Jewish people worldwide.”

“Pieter and Alike work with the organization [Life in Messiah](http://www.lifeinmessiah.org/). The mission statement of Life in Messiah is: “Sharing God’s heart for the Jewish people.” This goes two ways: On the one hand we share God’s heart for the Jewish people with Christians. We share that God remains faithful to His people Israel who therefore are still the first address of the gospel. We ask Christians to pray for the Jewish people. On the other hand, we share with Jewish people that their Messiah has come already and that true hope and salvation can be found in Jesus alone.” [[7]](#footnote-7)

**CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

The 2018 extensive study of Jews in Canada shows they tend to be among the most educated demographic—80% of jews have at least a bachelor’s degree. It is true that 70% of the nearly 572,415 international students in Canada are from the 10/40, mainly China and India which have all the most unreached people group. But I’m ashamed to say that until working on this paper and being convicted by the Holy Spirit about not prioritizing **the Jews first** I had never really considered a ministry to 715 students from Israel (as at December 2018). Yes, Israel is only the 58th largest country number comprising merely 0.12% of the International student population but it’s not about their numbers; it’s about the fact that they are first in order, priority, sequence, time and resources. Perhaps my organization and one of you can work towards a specialized ministry to Jewish international students?

These examples all represent Obed-Edomization of Jewish Evangelism. These are all gentile-initiated or at least gentile-included attempts to reach the Jewish people for Yeshua! They are good. But as the hymn writer says, “mercy drops round us are falling, *but for the showers we plead*.” **Can you imagine all such Obed-Edmonized initiatives on steroids?! That’s the radical and rapid new vision I’m talking about!**

**CONCLUSION**

In the book of our study, Paul refers to the Colossian gentiles as “God’s chosen people” (Colossians 3:12) in the New Covenant, which the Jews are *first* under the Old Covenant. At the end of the day, who is most qualified to be used of God on His mission is not based on ethnicity or gender, circumcision or social status (the verse before in Colossians 3:11) but who God’s anointing is clearly on for his task, like Obed-Edom.

Have we not seen how God is blessing the socks off Obed-Edoms, (Gentiles like Gateway Church), in global mission? Is that not enough evidence that the LORD is with them? Shall we not, as true descendants of King David, not also quickly invite and include Obed-Edoms for the essential work of God in our generation? At LCJE ’19 shall we not fulfill the prophecy of Amos to restore David’s fallen tent.

For **the fulfillment of the worth and work of global Jewish evangelism is directly proportional to its alignment with God's vision of Gentile co-worker inclusion as exemplified by the Jewish king David with Obed-Edom, even under the old covenant.** Pragmatically, we are attempting the impossible to attempt Jewish evangelism solely or even only largely by Jewish people to Jewish people as long as the messianic demographic remains less than 2%. **Until the messianic demographic has a strong, powerfully evangelizing church within in it (E1 witness), “E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from outside [the Obed-Edoms] are still essential and highly urgent**.”

May the LORD not only **open our eyes to this new vision of a radical and rapid Obed-Edomization of Jewish evangelism and fill our hearts with a fervent enthusiasm, beyond a cursory mental assent and mere tolerance, of Gentile co-worker inclusion in Jewish evangelism efforts as well as a passionate prioritization of Jewish evangelism in Gentile efforts in global mission**, and anoint out our minds with innovation and our hands with creativity to make this happen, until all the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea!

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