Like a tidal wave throughout the Jewish community, the 2013 Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews has created seismic ripples in the Jewish community. The results concerning Jewish beliefs, values and concerns are creating discussion and angst among Jewish leaders across a wide swath of Jewish-American society.

The newspaper of American Jewish life, The Forward, devoted several articles of its 11 October edition to what the results of the Pew Survey means. Tzedakah Ministries went through these articles to see if there were insights that could be gleaned that might assist in the work of Jewish evangelism/missions, especially for Christians and churches. Below are some of the interesting survey results …

- While there are 5.3 million Jewish adults in the United States, there are 8.9 million citizens who either have a Jewish background or who affirm a Jewish affinity
- There are more American Jews than previous surveys report; however, the “retention levels are low among all three of the Jewish denominations” with 30% of American Jews reporting no denomination affiliation
- Since 2005, 58% of Jewish marriages are of the interfaith variety
- 32% of American Jews had a Christmas tree in their home last year

Now there are unique twists in each of the above survey results, especially the denominational affiliation question and the number of American Jewish homes which had a Christmas tree. However, there are for Jewish evangelism/missions some both positive and negative results from the Pew Survey that should be explored. First the negative …

- 68% believe that one can be Jewish and not believe in God
- Only 39% of American Jewry are certain that God exists
- 78% of American Jewish citizens would identify their religion as Judaism

(article continued on page two)
Now in many regards, those results could be seen as discouraging. It could be seen that the people of the Book, the people of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David have abandoned at the worst or are questioning at the best their faith and heritage. And this would be absolutely true! Rabbinic Judaism and the vestiges of Jewish denominationalism has failed (yes, failed!) the Jewish people because they can offer them nothing as far as faith or hope or answers to the fundamental questions to life and eternity goes. Jewish people are running towards mysticism (i.e., Kabbalah), Buddhism, nothing because the traditions of Judaism are at their core empty vessels. Rabbinic Judaism left the core teachings of the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament) because Messiah Jesus was staring them in their face and they … blinked and looked away.

HOWEVER … we can find two promising results within the Pew Survey. One is obvious and one is more subtle but both give us a glimpse about how we can bring the truth of Messiah Jesus back into focus for the Jewish people.

- **34% OF AMERICAN JEWRY** believe that one can be Jewish and **BELIEVE IN JESUS**
- **15% of American Jews have attended non-Jewish religious services in the last year, including the ultra-Orthodox. In other words, they are willingly coming to our “home turf” for religious events.**

What these two numbers tell us is that the stigma of previous decades for Jewish people to believe in Jesus is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. A rabbi in the *Forward* article even believes a day is coming in which Jewish believers in Jesus would be recognized in the community. With the stigma gone, Jewish people will be more willing to confront the “elephant in the room” and consider Jesus for themselves. The obstacles that such organizations as Jews for Judaism put up will not be a viable obstacle any longer. **This is a big step forward!**

**HOWEVER,** this requires Christians and churches to step forward and take advantage of the 15% of the time that Jewish people enter our doors. We must be ready to present the Gospel message unashamedly and unreservedly. This requires being equipped and trained for this opportunity when it walks through the church doors. **Tzedakah Ministries** is ready and willing and anxious to help. Will you let us?

The Jewish people are waiting for answers. We have them. Let’s share the truth of Messiah Jesus! Acts 20:24,

Amy Downey
Secular Judaism ... Jews for Nothing

Many churches and Christians have heard of Jews for Jesus. A mission organization that Tzedakah Ministries is proud to work with for the cause of Jewish evangelism. Some of you might have heard of Jews for Judaism, an anti-missionary organization that is devoted to fighting groups like Tzedakah Ministries and other mission organizations that simply want to tell the Jewish people that Jesus is the their Messiah … first.

However, and despite the best efforts of anti-missionary organizations such as the one mentioned above, the greatest danger to the heart and soul of the Jewish people is Secular Judaism. A movement that is growing in size among those who do not yet believe in Jesus. A movement that Tzedakah Ministries has decided to label as Jews for Nothing.

Secular Judaism is growing within the more traditional circles because the teachings of Rabbinic Judaism has failed. Traditional Judaism offers rituals and traditions but no real faith or hope or meaning to life. This statement is made because Rabbinic Judaism does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah and there is no faith, there is no hope, there is no meaning to life without Jesus.

So … what does Secular Judaism believe? Tzedakah Ministries can provide three recent reading examples to answer this unique question. I discovered in the process of researching for a Ph.D. seminar paper a book entitled Good without God written by a Jewish man, Greg Epstein, who also happens to be the Humanist chaplain at Harvard University. Epstein proposes a humanistic system structured along the lines of a Jewish system called Reconstructionism founded by Sherwin Wine. Rabbi Wine (yes, he was a Rabbi) was an atheist who wanted to retain a form of Judaism but without a faith structure. Passover without the Lamb. Yom Kippur without atonement. Judaism without God. This is what Secular Judaism is all about … without and nothing.

Furthermore, and as a result of the Pew Survey, two recent articles have come out in the Forward about a new idea from Secular Judaism … Jewish Cultural Affirmation. The idea behind JCA is that one can identify as Jewish but without any sense of believing in a Jewish or any type of God. In fact, a December 20 editorial defines JCA as permitting someone “to acquire a measure of familiarity with being Jewish, and to undergo a non-religious pathway to recognized belonging to the Jewish people.”

In other words, Secular Judaism is truly nothing more than Jews for Nothing. But … we as churches and Christians have the truth of Messiah Jesus, the most Jewish person who has ever lived. We have the opportunity to share the most Jewish act a Jewish person can ever do … believe in Jesus. But, we as Christians and churches have seemingly abandoned the Jewish people to being Jews for Nothing when we could be offering them the chance to be JEWISH BELIEVERS IN THE JEWISH JESUS. Why are we waiting?
When the picture of this “innocent” kindergartener was taken in 1976, no one could have imagined that at the end of 2013, I (Amy Downey) would be celebrating my 15th year of Jewish ministry. I loved Jesus, even though I was not yet a believer in Him. Happily, I was blessed to belong to a family that showered me with unconditional love that would enable me to understand the depth of God’s love for sinners just about a year later in September 1977. But no one could look at that face and seriously think, “She will become a Jewish missionary someday.” Not even my mother!

However, the milestone is now a reality and as I look at the picture of that mischievous six-year old, I still wonder why God chose someone like me. Today, I am 44 years old with some gray hair and wrinkles and missionary scars. However, I would only change one moment of the last 15 years and that involves the eternity of my dear friend Josef. There has been highs and lows but I have always known that I was in the center of God’s will for my life. I have lost friends and the support of some family members who have not understood God’s call on my life but I have gained new friends and seen the souls of God’s Chosen People added to my spiritual family. And it has all been worth it!

I do not know what the next 5, 10, 15 years might hold for my life; however, I do know one thing … Jewish evangelism will be at the center of every breath I take. Tzedakah Ministries will be the heartbeat of my life and this will be true until the day that God calls me home. My life verse is Acts 20:24 and my soul exists for no other cause but to share the Gospel of Messiah Jesus with His Chosen People.