

[Film: 5 minutes](#)

What does it mean to be Jewish? Rabbi Engelman guides us through Jerusalem explaining the meaning of Judaism.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Grades 3 - 8
World History

World History - Standard 7 : Understand technological and cultural innovation and change from 1000 to 600 BCE

- Understand elements of Judaism and how it compares to other religions
- Understand social development and religious beliefs of Jewish civilization (e.g., the course of development of the Jewish kingdoms and the Jews' maintenance of religious and cultural traditions despite destruction of these kingdoms, the significance of the Torah in Judaism)

Resource - [McREL Content Knowledge – Standards & Benchmarks](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 🗨️ *Explain the statement, “Judaism is about lifelong learning”. Why do those who study the Talmud never “graduate from this class”?*
- 🗨️ *Charlie describes the Jewish people as “searchers and wanderers”. What do you think they are searching for?*
- 🗨️ *The Torah contains the Ten Commandments, as given to Moses from God. How do these commandments represent the “essence of humanity”?*
- 🗨️ *Which question makes more sense to you? “Do you believe in God?” or “Does God believe in me?”*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Excerpts from interview at **explore.org**

Rabbi Engelman is the rabbi of Yakar in Tel Aviv, Israel. He is also a psychotherapist and has composed four musical albums based on texts from the Tanach and modern Israeli poetry.



If there is one place or issue out there in the world you could personally explore, what would it be?

I would most love to explore cultures close to home, Arab and Muslim countries surrounding Israel, preferably in their own language. One so often hears about "conflicts" as if these follow a pattern, rather than each being a result of a unique interaction in which two people, countries or cultures find themselves, from which they could rather learn and grow. The closer these are to us, the more they mirror us and can enhance our own search for identity.

What is the mission statement of your organization?

Yakar believes in commitment to learning Torah that is relevant to our deepest being while upholding our intellectual integrity. Yakar challenges its community to think deeply and creatively about their identity and its relationship with world at large.

What would you consider Yakar's greatest accomplishment?

Overcoming many people's preconceptions and prejudices about what a Jewish center is and can be, for them personally too, that it can be professedly Jewish yet open and engaging and part of their cultural menu. Also in empowering congregants' and students' own ability to teach, work, help and enhance others, do charitable work, lead services and spread their own wings.

What are three things about Yakar that you wish people knew?

- That we are open to every person of any persuasion, creed, belief, religion and race
- That we seek, hope and desire to learn from all those who enter
- That we do not have "the answers"

What do you believe to be the biggest challenge facing our planet today?

Ignorance, and greed. People seek increasing possessions and power for fear, fear of not "having" enough, measuring up, etc. One cannot fight evil, stupidity, faithlessness, only try to broaden and spread wisdom, goodness, faith. A planet where people seek wisdom and understanding - seek being - would be one where people are interested only in that which facilitates freedom and is needed to pursue these, a world disdaining distractions from knowledge, which abhors avarice.
