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# ANSWER A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY

STEP-BY-STEP BIBLICAL REFUTATIONS

By Rabbi Michael Skobac *Jews for Judaism.*

# STUDY GUIDE FOR HOW TO ANSWER A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY STEP-BY-STEP BIBLICAL REFUTATIONS

By

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## THE PROBLEM

Today, Evangelical Christians are aggressively targeting Jewish people for conversion. There are over 1000 different organizations operating in North America specifically working to bring Jewish people into the Christian faith. Many of these groups camouflage themselves to appear Jewish in order to lessen resistance to conversion. They may call their clergy “rabbis” and refer to their churches as “synagogues”. They often celebrate Jewish holidays with a Christological spin and wear traditional Jewish skullcaps and prayer shawls. Their goal is to create the impression that a Jew can become a Christian and still maintain his or her Jewish identity.

Aside from these groups specializing in reaching Jews, there are thousands of missionary organizations evangelizing all non-Christians. They operate widely over the Internet, broadcast television and radio programs, run large public events, send their field workers to distribute literature and visit people at their homes and places of work. Obviously, we Jews will also encounter this missionary threat, and all too frequently, the person asking us to embrace Jesus will simply be a Christian friend, neighbour or business associate.

This audio recording was created to provide you with a basic understanding of the issues most commonly raised by Christian missionaries. It is intimidating to be confronted with a barrage of Biblical quotations from someone intent on subverting your faith. This recording will help you learn that there is another side to the story that missionaries present. May you continue to explore and experience the profound wisdom, beauty and joy of Judaism.

## MESSIAH

The Hebrew term “Mashiach” means “anointed”. In the Bible this refers to anyone initiated into G-d’s service by being anointed with oil. Every king and high priest was a Mashiach, (or “Messiah” in English). King Saul is called G-d’s Messiah (G-d’s anointed) in I Samuel 26:11. David is referred to as G-d’s Messiah in II Samuel 23:1. Sometimes, prophets or non-Jewish kings are referred to as messiahs (anointed ones) (I Kings 19:16, Isaiah 45:1).

## **THE MESSIAH**

The term “the Messiah” never appears in the Bible in reference to an anointed person who will come in the future. The Bible is replete with references to a future age of perfection: Isaiah 2:1-4; 32:15-18; 60:15-18; 66:23, Zephaniah 3:9, Hosea 2:20-22 [2:18-20 in Christian editions], Amos 9:13-15, Micah 4:1-4, Zechariah 8:23, 14:9, Jeremiah 31:33-34, Psalm 86:9, etc. Several of these passages speak of a king from the line of David who will rule Israel during this utopian age: Isaiah 11:1-9, Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:7-10; 33:14-16, Ezekiel 34:11-31; 37:21-28, Hoseah 3:4-5, Zechariah 9:9-10.

The Bible never calls this king “The Messiah”. However, because he is the special future anointed one of history, we conventionally refer to him as the Messiah.

The Bible never speaks about *believing* in the Messiah, because we will be able to empirically verify who the Messiah is. The Bible speaks about a time when the knowledge of G-d has spread throughout the world, when all weapons have been destroyed, when there is an end to all conflict, when the Jewish people have been regathered to their homeland, when the Temple has been rebuilt in Jerusalem, and when Jews are sought out by the world as spiritual teachers. These dramatic utopian events will be plainly evident to every human and impossible to miss. The Bible tells us that the Messiah will reign as the king of Israel when this utopia is established. It is clear that Jesus, Shabbtai Tzvi, Bar Kochba, etc. failed to fulfill these Biblical criteria of the Messiah.

### **In response to the Christian claim that Jesus will fulfill the Messianic prophecies when he returns:**

- a) The Bible never speaks about a second coming for the Messiah.
- b) All Messianic passages relegated by Christians as “second coming” prophecies have a “first coming” perspective; they speak about someone coming, not returning.
- c) A “second coming” could be claimed for any failed Messiah, and gives no credibility to Jesus’ “first coming”.
- d) The New Testament has Jesus promise his disciples that he would return during their lifetimes - he didn’t. Matthew 16:28; 24:34, Mark 13:30, Romans 16:20, Hebrews 10:37, Revelation 22:10,12,20.

### **THE PROBLEM OF ELIJAH:**

Malachi 3:23-24 (4:5-6 in Christian editions) says that the prophet Elijah would return before the Messiah appears. Matthew’s Gospel says that John the Baptist was Elijah the prophet (11:13-14, 17:10-13). However, the Gospel of John 1:21 has John the Baptist denying he is Elijah.

Missionaries may claim that John came back in the spirit of Elijah, but:

- a) Malachi predicted that Elijah would return, not someone in his spirit.
- b) John didn't claim any association with Elijah at all.
- c) John didn't fulfill Malachi's prophecy that Elijah would restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.

### **THE PROBLEM OF JESUS' GENEALOGY:**

According to scripture, the Messiah must be a descendant of King David (Jeremiah 23:5, 33:17, Psalm 89:35-37, etc.)

The Gospel of Matthew traces Joseph, the husband of Mary, back to King David, but then says that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus. To the claim that he was the legal father of Jesus by adoption:

- a) You can't pass on genealogy by adoption.
- b) Even if Joseph could pass on his genealogy by adoption, he couldn't help Jesus because he descends from Jeconiah, whose line was disqualified from kingship as part of G-d's curse (Jeremiah 22:30,36:30).

### **THE CLAIM THAT JESUS DESCENDS FROM DAVID VIA HIS MOTHER MARY (LUKE CHAPTER 3):**

- a) Luke 3 doesn't mention Mary at all; it traces only Joseph's genealogy.
- b) Even if Luke were recounting Mary's pedigree, family genealogy only goes through the father: Numbers 1:18. Jesus couldn't trace himself back to King David through his mother. (Whether one is Jewish or not is determined by the mother, but tribal affiliation goes through the father).
- c) Even if genealogy could go through the mother, Luke's Mary descends from David's son Nathan, and the Messianic line only goes through David's son Solomon (II Samuel 7:12-14, I Chronicles 17:11-14, 22:9-10, 28:4-6).
- d) Mary, as well, may descend from the cursed Jeconiah via Shealtiel and Zerrubabel: Matthew 1:12, Luke 3:27.

### **THE CLAIM THAT JESUS PERFORMED MIRACLES:**

- a) There is no reason to uncritically assume that the New Testament accounts are true; they were not written by historians or journalists, but by followers of Jesus to convince others to believe (John 20:31).

b) Much of the New Testament has been shown to be historically suspect. For example, the accounts about Pilate in Josephus and Philo contradict the way he's treated in the gospels.

c) Miracles don't prove anything, and therefore, the Bible never tells us that we'll be able to identify the Messiah by his performing miracles.

1. Pharaoh's magicians performed miracles: Exodus chapters 7 and 8.
2. Deuteronomy 13:1-4, G-d would send false prophets who could do miracles to test the loyalty of the Jewish people.
3. Even the Christian scriptures state that false Messiahs will be able to perform supernatural miracles (Matthew 24:24). Obviously, then, miracles could never prove someone was the Messiah.

**THE ALLEGED RESURRECTION OF JESUS:** The Gospel stories completely contradict themselves:

**a) Who first approached the empty tomb?**

- Mary Magdalene and the other Mary - Matthew 28:1
- Mary Magdalene, the other Mary and Salome - Mark 16:1
- Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, Joanna, and other women - Luke 24:10
- Mary Magdalene alone - John 20:1

**b) Who did they first see at the tomb?**

- One angel outside the tomb - Matthew 28:2,5
- One man inside the tomb - Mark 16:5
- Two men inside the tomb - Luke 24:4
- No one at all - John 20:1

**c) Who first told Mary about the resurrection of Jesus?**

- An angel - Matthew 28:5-6
- A man - Mark 16:6
- Two men - Luke 24:5-6
- Jesus himself - John 20:14-17

**d) To whom did Jesus first appear?**

- To a joyous Mary on the road - Matthew 28:8-9
- To a grief-stricken Mary in the tomb - John 20:14-17

**e) What did the women do when hearing that Jesus had risen?**

- Rushed to tell the disciples - Matthew 28:8, Luke 24:9
- Kept the news to themselves - Mark 16:8

**f) Where did Jesus first reveal himself to his eleven disciples?**

- In the Galilee - Matthew 28:16-17
- In Jerusalem - Luke 24:33-36
- It was only to 10 of his disciples - John 20:10-24

- Note that none of the Gospel writers was an eyewitness.
- Many of Jesus' followers didn't recognize him in the post-resurrection stories of the Gospels, and many doubted that anything even happened: Matthew 28:17, Mark 16:11,13; Luke 24:16, John 20:14, 21:4.
- Jesus allegedly told the rabbis that his resurrection would be a sign to them, yet he never later appeared to them - Matthew 12:38-40.
- The fact that Christians have sacrificed their lives for their belief in the resurrection doesn't prove that it happened. Virtually all religions have martyrs willing to die for what they believe to be true.
- Aside from the alleged resurrection of Jesus hanging exclusively on the weak thread of the New Testament's garbled accounts, a resurrection wouldn't prove that someone is the Messiah - even if it happened.

### **PROOFTEXTING:**

- Shooting the arrow first and then drawing the target around it
- Proliferation of many weak prooftexts doesn't strengthen them:  $300 \times 0 = 0$

#### **a) Verses completely manufactured:**

1. Matthew 2:23 - He shall be called a Nazarene
2. Matthew 27:9-10 - the Potter's field
3. Hebrews 10:5 - a body prepared by G-d, see Psalms 40:6-7

#### **b) Verses misquoted or mistranslated:**

1. Psalms 22:17 (16) - like a lion vs. they pierced: see Isaiah 38:13, Psalms 7:3 (2), Numbers 23:24, 24:9, Ezekiel 22:25
2. Romans 11:26 vs. Isaiah 59:20 - a redeemer will come to vs. out of Zion; he will remove the sin from Jacob vs. he will come to those in Jacob who have overcome sin.

#### **c) Verses quoted out of context:**

1. Matthew 2:15 Out of Egypt I called my son - Hoseah 11:1
2. Matthew 2:17-18 Rachel weeping for her children - Jeremiah 31:14-17
3. Psalms 41:10 (9) Betrayed by a close friend, yet see verse 5 (4)
4. Hebrews 1:5 I will be a father to him, yet see II Samuel 7:14
5. Zechariah 13:6 The pierced one is a false prophet

#### **d) Circular reasoning:**

1. Deuteronomy 18:18 the prophet
2. Isaiah 11:2 - the spirit of G-d will rest on him

### **THE VIRGIN BIRTH PASSAGE: ISAIAH 7:14**

1. Mistranslation of “alma” as virgin, correct translation is “young woman” or “young maiden”. The male form “elem” is always translated as “young man,” I Samuel 17:56; 20:22, Isaiah 54:4.
2. “Betulah” is the Hebrew word for virgin, Deuteronomy 22:13-26, Leviticus 21:3, Judges 11:37-38, I Kings 1:2, Isaiah 62:5.
3. Septuagint translation of alma into the Greek “parthenos” is no proof :
  - a) Greek translation of the Prophetic books was not authorized by rabbinic scholars
  - b) In ancient Greek, “parthenos” refers to a young girl, not necessarily a virgin. The Septuagint uses “parthenos” in reference to Dina after she’s raped in Genesis 34:3
4. Christian Bibles are now translating alma as young woman: Revised Standard Version, the Jerusalem Bible, the Good News Bible, The New English Bible, The New Revised Standard Version, New World Translation, etc.
5. Context of Chapter 7 in Isaiah is not the coming of the Messiah, but the attack on the Kingdom of Judah by Israel and Aram. The fulfillment of the prophecy to Achaz is in II Kings chapters 15-16.
6. Jesus was never named or called Emmanuel.
7. A virgin birth of Jesus couldn’t serve as a sign to reassure Achaz who lived 700 years earlier. Furthermore, a virgin birth could never function as a sign because it can’t be seen. A sign needs to be visible, but not necessarily miraculous (Genesis 9:11-13, I Samuel 2:34, etc.).
8. Numerous pagan sources for a virgin birth concept.

### **THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF ISAIAH 53**

- Christianity explains away the death of Jesus at the hands of the Romans by claiming the Messiah was supposed to die as an atonement for sin. See “When Prophecy Fails” by Leon Festinger re: the difficulty in accepting the disconfirmation of one’s belief. Followers of Shabbtai Tzvi in the 17th century who claimed to be the Messiah faced a similar dilemma when he converted to Islam. They dealt with this disaster by asserting that the Messiah was supposed to convert to another religion. Freud stated, “When it comes to self-deception, every person is a genius.”
- Followers of Jesus didn’t understand Isaiah 53 as being Messianic, Matthew 16:21-22, Mark 9:31-32. There is no reason to assume that this passage is about the Messiah - it certainly isn’t clear.
- There is no corroboration for the Christological reading of this passage anywhere in the Hebrew Bible; the entire case for the Christian concept of the Messiah rests on this controversial chapter. The Jewish picture of the Messiah is based on dozens of clear passages throughout the Bible.

- Circular reasoning: Christians may assume this chapter speaks about the death of the Messiah to atone for sin, yet there is no proof that Jesus is the subject of the passage. It could apply to anyone who suffers.
- It is worth noting that this chapter, the nuclear bomb in the missionary arsenal, suffers from two fatal flaws: it isn't clearly Messianic and it doesn't clearly point exclusively to Jesus.

Actually, Jesus is the one person in the history of the world least likely to be the subject of this passage. Isaiah begins by telling us that G-d's servant will ultimately be exalted, lifted up, and raised very high (52:13). Isaiah goes on to say that when this happens, the kings and nations of the world will be totally stunned and taken by surprise. The one individual whose elevation as Messiah would NOT shock the world would be Jesus of Nazareth!

- Reasons why Isaiah 53 doesn't correspond to the picture painted of Jesus in the New Testament:
  - a) 53:3 says the servant would be despised and rejected by all, yet the Gospels say Jesus was universally popular, ie. Luke 4:14-15, Mark 3:7-9.
  - b) 53:3 says the servant would be well-acquainted with sickness and pain; there is no evidence this was true of Jesus.
  - c) 53:7 says the servant won't open his mouth and protest before his tormentors, yet in the Gospels, Jesus defends himself cleverly at his trial before the Romans, John 18:36; and protests on the cross: "My G-d, my G-d, why have you forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46.
  - d) 53:8 is speaking about a group of people who will suffer, not an individual, "as a result of the transgression of my people, THEY (lamo) were wounded."
  - e) 53:9 says the servant would do no violence, yet Jesus:
    1. Attacked people with a whip in the Temple - John 2:15
    2. Needlessly destroyed a fig tree - Mark 11:12-14
    3. Needlessly killed an entire herd of swine - Matthew 8:30-32
    4. Said in a parable, "Those enemies of mine who didn't want me to rule over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence." - Luke 19:27
  - f) 53:9 says the servant will have no deceit in his mouth, yet Jesus:
    1. Contradicts himself in John 18:20 because he always taught secretly - Mark 4:10-12, Matthew 16:20, Luke 8:56
    2. Told the Romans his was just a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36), yet told his followers to purchase swords - Luke 22:36
  - g) 53:10 the servant would have children and live a long life.



### **G-D'S SUFFERING SERVANT IS ISRAEL:**

- a) Context of surrounding chapters is about the Jewish people who suffer at the hands of the nations, but are ultimately redeemed by G-d.
  - b) Isaiah identifies the servant as the Jewish people, 41:8-9, 43:10, 44:1-2;21, 45:4, 48:20, 49:3, 54:16-17.
  - c) Jewish nation is often identified as an individual, Deuteronomy 32, Hoseah 8:3; 14:5-6, Jeremiah 50:19, Exodus 4:22, etc.
  - d) End of Chapter 52: Jewish nation will be exalted in Messianic age, Isaiah 60:1-3,10,14-15; 61:6-9; 62:2-3, Zepheniah 3:19-20, Nachum 2:2.
  - e) Nations and kings will be astonished when this happens, Micah 7:15-17, Isaiah 41:11, Jeremiah 16:19.
  - f) Chapter 53 is a continuation of 52; the nations express their shock, "Who would have believed what we are hearing?" The chapter continues with the confession the nations will make in the future when they are confronted with the true nature of their relationship to the Jewish people. They will admit that they had mistreated the Jewish people throughout history (Jeremiah 10:25). The nations will confess that the Jewish people suffered "from our sinfulness" (or "as a result of our sinfulness"). They thought that by using the Jewish people as scapegoats, their own problems would be alleviated. The nations will confess that throughout history, they based their mistreatment of Jews on their assumption that G-d had rejected Israel (Jeremiah 50:7).
  - g) Jewish people went through their suffering without rejecting G-d - Psalms 44:12-23. One purpose of Jewish suffering is a test, as in Genesis 22, to purify them and strengthen them.
  - h) By passing this historical test, the Jewish people will be fulfilling G-d's purpose, and will bring about the transformation of the world.
- Numerous non-Jewish and Christian commentaries to the Bible accept this understanding of the Suffering Servant as referring to Israel.

### **ATONEMENT FROM SIN**

Missionaries claim that Leviticus 17:11 teaches that the only way to be forgiven from sin is with a blood sacrifice, however:

1. Context of this passage is not atonement, but the prohibition of consuming blood.
2. It says blood is an atonement, but not the only type of atonement.
3. Leviticus 5:11 says someone who can't afford a blood sacrifice can bring fine flour to atone for their sins.

4. I Kings 8:46-50 teaches if we don't have access to the Temple, we pray to G-d and repent, and we will be forgiven. This applies today, as well as to the 70 years between the destruction of the First Temple and building of the Second.
  5. The prophet Hoseah speaking to the 10 northern tribes who couldn't get to the Temple in the south tells them that their prayers serve as sacrifices, 14:1-3.
  6. Prayer and repentance are actually the primary means of atoning for sin in the Bible, II Chronicles 7:14, Ezekiel 18:21, Jonah 3:10, Daniel 4:24 (4:27 in some editions), Jeremiah 36:3, Proverbs 16:6, Isaiah 55:6-9, Psalms 32:5, 69:30-32, etc.
  7. Christian insistence that without blood sacrifices G-d can't forgive our sins, takes away from the power and mercy of G-d. The Bible says that sometimes G-d forgives us if we don't repent properly, because He is merciful: Micah 7:18, Psalms 78:36-39, Isaiah 43:23-25.
  8. The focus of the Bible is obedience to G-d as the primary way of coming to Him, not sacrifices. Hoseah 6:6, Psalms 51:14-19, Proverbs 21:3, Isaiah 1, I Samuel 15:22, Micah 6:6-8, Amos 5:22-24.
  9. If missionaries insist on reading Leviticus 17:11 literally, then Jesus could never serve as a sacrifice. The verse says that only blood on the altar in the Temple served as an atonement, and Jesus' blood was not offered on the altar.
  10. Other problems with Jesus serving as a sacrifice were that he was not offered up by Priests, he was not burnt, and he was not unblemished.
  11. The Christian assertion that Jesus was the final sacrifice is contradicted by the Bible's prophesy of the future restoration of sacrifices when the Third Temple is built, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 33:17-18, Zechariah 14:20-21, Ezekiel 43-45, Malachi 3:2-4.
  12. The Hebrew scriptures don't accept the idea of an innocent person dying for a guilty one, Exodus 32:32-33, Deuteronomy 24:16, Ezekiel 18:1-4, Proverbs 17:15.
  13. The Hebrew scriptures strongly oppose the idea of human sacrifice, Genesis 22:12, Leviticus 18:21, 20:2.
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Rabbi Michael Skobac is Director of Education and Counselling for the Canadian branch of Jews for Judaism. This tape is a condensed version of The Jews for Judaism Counter-Missionary Survival Seminar, developed by Rabbi Skobac and now taught worldwide. A twelve-tape set of this seminar is available from Jews for Judaism.

JEWS FOR JUDAISM is the only international organization exclusively dedicated to counteracting the efforts of evangelical Christian missionary and cult groups that target Jews for conversion.

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